THE BOOK OF ISAIAH: CHAPTERS XL.-LXVI.

II. The Prologue.

The Prophet's position, whether in vision or in actual life, was amidst the circumstances of the Exile; and the bulk of the prophecy at least is from the hand of one writer. Its general unity is not to be questioned. The great conception of the Servant, along with many other common conceptions, may be held to bind the passage into a unity up to Chapter liii. It can hardly be doubted, however, that the speaker in Chapter lxi., who says: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound," is the same lofty ideal figure who says in Chapter l. 4, "The Lord hath given me the tongue of disciples, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary," and of whom the Lord says, Chapter xlii., "Behold my servant, I have put my spirit upon him . . . I will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." The characteristic phrase occurring in the very beginning of the prophecy: "his reward is with him and his recompence before him," is repeated verbatim in lxii. 11. The great promise regarding the Servant: "I will make thee a covenant of the people, a light of the Gentiles," is given twice at wide intervals (xlii. 6, xlix. 6), and we cannot fail to perceive that in his glorious picture of restored Israel, Chapter lx., the Prophet is presenting what he regards as the fulfilment of his former prediction: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light,

and kings to the brightness of thy rising." It is unnecessary to multiply proofs of unity further.

The passage lvi. 9 *seq.* has been thought by some to be drawn from another source. It may be so. There is nothing surprising in this. The greatest prophets borrow passages from their predecessors or contemporaries. Isaiah almost to a certainty, and possibly Micah also, has adopted from a brother prophet the beautiful passage regarding the mountain of the Lord in the latter days (Isa. ii.; Mic. iv.). The conclusion, however, which some would found on the passage in Chapter lvi., that there the Prophet reveals his true standing point, while in the great body of the prophecy he is transported in spirit to another distant region, inverts every rule of probability. The passage is one of several (*e.g.* lxv. *seq.*) in which the Prophet charging home upon Israel her present evil conduct, represents her whole history as marked by the same; as he says in an earlier passage, "for I knew that thou didst deal very treacherously and wast called a transgressor from the womb" (xlviii. 8). And whether the verses be a dark summary of Israel's history in the Prophet's own language, or words borrowed from another which, as he proceeds, melt into his own, is of little consequence. Ezekiel's allegories of Aholah and Aholibamah shew that it was the manner of the prophets of the Exile to give these moral surveys of Israel's history. (Chap. xxiii. cf. Chap. xvi.)

The chapters toward the end of the prophecy have not the same close coherence as those in the earlier part of the book, neither are they so homogeneous in contents. The tone of the Prophet shifts from key to key. He is less continuously rapt and ideal, more often practical. He drops the prevailing note of comfort and relapses into rebuke, shewing unto Jacob his sins with a severity that seems strangely to contrast with his former tenderness. Yet inferences from all this to a change of circumstances, not to

speak of a difference of authorship, are in the highest degree precarious. The strong accents of this severe voice are already heard in Chapter xlviii., and the two strains of severity and tenderness, promise and threat, are combined in consecutive sentences in the end of this chapter: "With a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth, say ye, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob . . . There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked." And a similar conjunction appears in l. 10 *seq.* The contrast between the consolation, soothing and melodious as to a child, ministered to Israel, the servant, in Chapter xli. 8 *seq.*, and the severe remonstrance with the same in xlii. 18 *seq.*, shews how readily the Prophet could descend from the ideal to the actual, and how different his tone could be when interpreting the Divine compassions, and when exposing the blindness and rebellion of the people. In life one often observes a strange streak of severity running through the tenderest natures, just as, on the other hand, a sensibility which is almost weakness sometimes besets a mind the ground tone of which is stringency. And criticism must beware lest she draw upon herself the charge of idleness, if in any place she insists on superficial dissimilarities of language or ideas, while failing to advert to the subtler harmonies of mind which may explain them.

Something more precise, however, can be said than that the position of the prophet is in the Exile. He stands near its close: Israel's warfare is accomplished. The victories of Cyrus have spread terror among the idolators, though he has not yet delivered his assault against Babylon: "Who hath raised up one from the east . . . giveth nations before him, and maketh him rule over kings? . . . The isles saw it and feared, the ends of the earth trembled" (xli. 1 *seq.*). "For your sakes have I sent unto Babylon, and I will bring down all of them as fugitives, even the Chaldeans in their ships of rejoicing" (xliii. 14). "Thus saith the Lord

to his anointed, to Cyrus, I will go before thee; I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron" (xlv. 1 *seq.*) Some parts of Chapter xlviii. might seem to imply that Babylon had fallen; other expressions however, shew that the Prophet is only anticipating her fall, and giving a picture of it, as in the two preceding chapters, beforehand: "He whom the Lord loveth (Cyrus) shall perform his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans" (xlviii. 14). Though the Prophet is more occupied in the chapters that follow this with developing the meaning of Israel's internal history and the sufferings of the Servant, and adverts less to external events, several allusions occur which indicate that the condition of affairs remains unchanged. In xlix. 24, in answer to the desponding fears of the captives: "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty (the Chaldean), or the captives of the terrible be delivered?" it is said: "Thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered; for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, etc." And again, lii. 5: "Now therefore what have I here (in Babylon) that my people is taken away (destroyed) for nought? They that rule over them (cf. xlix. 7, a servant of rulers) do howl (the shout of the driver), and continually all the day my name is blasphemed."

Enough has been said to make the point of view from which the Prophet speaks clear. The condition of the world also amidst which he stands is plain, and the forces operating there whether in concert or in conflict. Out of this conflict a reconstructed world rises before his view. Every prophet reconstructs the world, in a way more or less complete in details, out of the forces of his own day. From one we may have but a few rude and gigantic outlines, merely enough to suggest his conception; from another a finished structure. Such constructions are not history and never become history. They are ideal moral

fabrics, shaped of necessity out of the cosmical materials lying around the prophet, but embodying universal conceptions, and illuminated with a glory that falls on them from another sun than ours. The materials drawn from the earth that serve to embody and express the conceptions, change and decay, and have from age to age to be replaced; but the ideal abides, and is as perfect and heavenly in our day as it was in that of the prophet. A first glimpse of his construction is given us in the Prophet's Prologue, Chapter xl. 1–11, which presents an outline of his whole prophecy.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.
2 Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

3 Hark, one crying, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the Lord, make level in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Let every valley be exalted, and every mountain and hill be made low; and let the rugged be made a level and the rough places a plain: 5 and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

6 Hark, one saying, Cry; and one said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: 7 the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, when the breath of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is grass. 8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

9 O Zion that bringeth good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem that bringeth good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength: lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God. 10 Behold the Lord God cometh as a mighty one, his arm ruling for him: behold his reward is with him and his recompence before him. 11 He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs in his arm and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that give suck.

Any attempt to treat these verses as poetry and put them in lines would not have been successful; for the prophetic discourses, though highly poetical, have not the regular and measured form of poetry, and scholars would hardly be found to agree on any arrangement of parallelisms.

The passage forms the prologue of the whole prophecy, striking its keynote in the words, "Comfort ye my people," —for the prophecy is but a series of homilies of comfort preached to an oppressed and forsaken people, of which the text is, Jehovah the God of Israel—and containing in small almost its whole contents. The passage itself has two divisions; first, Verses 1–2, announcement of the comfort and wherein it lies: "Comfort ye my people; speak unto Jerusalem and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned"—two short clauses that sum up the meaning of the twenty-seven chapters. There is an end of Israel's sin and an end of Israel's trouble. Second, Verses 3–11, a picture of the fulfilment of the comfort in Jehovah's return with his people to their ancient abodes, in glory, which seems to the prophet to transpire before his eyes. The glorious pageant passes before his mind in two great steps. First, Jehovah is on his way through the wilderness, bringing back his people, and superhuman voices are heard heralding his approach and commanding that his way be prepared, that He may appear in Zion in his glory (Verses 3–5). Second, He has reached the place of his rest, He is come, and Zion is bidden to get her up into the high mountains and cry across the valleys to the cities of Judah, Behold your God. He is come to abide with his people for ever, to feed his flock like a shepherd (Verses 9–11). These are the two steps of Jehovah's advent; but between the two steps there is an interlude (Verses 6–8). Other superhuman voices are heard speaking in response to one another, commenting on this march of Jehovah which is pressing forward, and giving

expression to the everlasting truth which it suggests: "All flesh is grass, but the word of our God shall stand for ever. Though men perish and their projects come to nought, yet, by whatever delays and hindrances intercepted, the word of our God shall stand."

A few illustrative notes may be added, and then some inferences drawn from the passage in regard to the structure of the prophecy as a whole. The Speaker is Jehovah, who has been long estranged from his people, so long that it seems to Himself to have been for ever: "I have holden my peace from everlasting, I have been still and refrained myself" (xlii. 14); though in comparison of the true eternal abode which He will now make with them, his hiding of his face has in truth been but for a moment: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee. In an overflow of wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer" (liv. 7). In the haste and importunity of his returning compassion, He utters his words twice, "Comfort ye, comfort ye;" flinging them out upon the ears of all who may hear them, and summoning every one who can speak into his service of comforting his people. There is tenderness, almost self-upbraiding for the past, in the words *my people*. For long they had been called Lo Ammi, Not-my-People (Hos. i. 9 *seq.*); formerly He had spoken of them with disdain as "this people" (Isa. vi. 9). They had accepted his judgment of them, too, in a far more absolute sense than ever He meant it: "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, Yet will I not forget thee" (xlix. 14 *seq.*, cf. xl. 27 *seq.*). It is not a new, but a reviving, kindness and pity for the forsaken that fills the heart of the Redeemer

of Israel: "The Lord calleth thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth that hath been rejected, saith the Lord"; and hence the impassioned hurry with which He summons all to "speak to the heart" of Jerusalem. That He would so speak He had promised long ago through the prophet Hosea (ii. 14 *seq.*); and now He fulfils the promise made through him by the hand of a prophet liker to Isaiah than to any other.

That in which the comfort lies is told in two brief clauses: "her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned;" the general meaning of both being summed up in an intenser way in a third clause: "for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sin." *Israel's warfare is accomplished;* the appointed time of hard service (Job vii. 1) is fulfilled; the day of discharge has come; she shall obtain joy and gladness, sorrow and sighing shall flee away. The reference is greatly to the severe trials of the Exile, but all Israel's past afflictions from age to age of her history are included. "Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth," might Israel say; but now all her afflictions are come to an end, an everlasting peace lies before her. "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion. For thus saith the Lord God, My people went down aforetime to Egypt to sojourn there; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause; and now what have I here (in Babylon) that my people is taken away for nought? therefore my people shall know my name. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace" (Chapter lii.). "Thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth (Egypt), and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood (Babylon) any more" (liv. 4, cf. xlix. 20). The next clause, *her iniquity is pardoned,* means properly, perhaps, her iniquity is paid off (Lev. xxvi. 41, 43), as Delitzsch annotates: The guilt is paid off through suffer-

ing the punishment of the sin. The clause, therefore, does not say another thing from the former one, but sets its statement in a moral light. Israel's warfare is accomplished, for the warfare was the consequence and the penalty of her iniquity, which has been exhausted. Here we have already the idea of Chapter liii., at least in its most general form. In no other form was it to be expected in a prologue where the Prophet but sketches his conceptions. Israel, through sufferings, has paid off her guilt. Later he may come to particulars and analyze Israel into its component parts, teaching that the guilt of the mass of Israel has been exhausted through the suffering of some element in Israel. But he cannot contradict himself. His general statement is true, as well as his particular one. This element, be it one or many, is of Israel, is one with Israel, realizes the idea of Israel—that which it performs Israel performs; in like manner, as an apostle has said, "As by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." The third clause adds nothing to the other two, but repeats the same truth in a strong and somewhat paradoxical way: *She hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.* Her chastisement has been ample, even beyond what her sin demanded. The idea is altogether unevangelical, cries Stier, his heart trembling for the ark of human depravity, and contends for another meaning. The Prophet, however, is bidden speak "to the heart" of Jerusalem, not to her dogmatic consciousness. That is evangelical which awakens in man's heart the feeling of God's love; and if this feeling be awakened by an anthropomorphism so bold as to be a doctrinal paradox, the feeling will be more vivid, and therefore the words more evangelical. In Chapter liv. 7, the Divine Husband confesses to an "ebullition of anger," and now, when his repentings are kindled, He feels that He has exacted double penalty from his afflicted people—

"for I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth, for the spirit should fail before me and the souls which I have made" (lvii. 16).

Verses 3–11 give a picture of the realizing of this comfort and the consummation of Israel's blessedness, through the return of Jehovah to his people and his manifestation in glory among them. It is a prophetic commonplace that the perfection of Israel's salvation is reached through Jehovah's full revelation of himself in the midst of them. Later prophets, such as Ezekiel, give a more precise turn to the idea, representing Jehovah as abandoning Jerusalem simultaneously with the destruction of the temple, or perhaps at a time prior to this, when the flower of the people was transported into exile, and returning to it with the restored captives. This prophet's mind is filled with the parallel, in some points a contrast, between the redemption and exodus from Egypt, and the new exodus from Babylon; and now, as before in cloud and fire, Jehovah marches at the head of his people through the wilderness on the way to Zion. "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her. Ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rereward" (lii. 11 *seq.*). Though the redemption of Israel is realized on earth, the advent of Jehovah which effects it is altogether supernatural, and superhuman voices are heard heralding it, and other voices proclaiming, as it passes into effect, its meaning. The air, or rather, the world is vocal; for the restoration of the people of God is the restitution of all things—it is "planting the heavens and laying the foundation of the earth, and saying to Zion, thou art my people" (li. 16) all in one; and not only is the "new song" which celebrates it sung by all that dwell upon the earth, rising from the sea and taken up by the villages that Kedar doth in-

habit, and swelling till the inhabitants of the Rock return it in shouts from the tops of the mountains (xlii. 10 *seq.*), but creation in all its parts shares the joy: "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout ye lower parts of the earth, for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob and glorified himself in Israel" (xliv. 23 *seq.*).

First, Verses 3–5, the Prophet hears superhuman voices preceding the great King, heralding his coming, and commanding that all hindrances in his way be removed, for He cometh in haste and in majesty; and his coming is the revelation of his glory in the eyes of all flesh. By the "glory" of Jehovah the Prophet elsewhere tells us that he means his glory as being God alone: "My glory will I not give to another, nor my praise to graven images" (xlii. 8); and also the glory of the being of Him who is God alone: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (lx. 1). Jehovah manifests his glory in the redemption of Israel, but even more in Israel redeemed. In the extreme concreteness of his conceptions the Prophet sometimes seems to imagine Jehovah's dwelling among his people as the actual personal presence of a Being outwardly luminous, and enveloping all his people in his glorious light: "The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be to thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory" (lx. 19). In less exalted moments, however, when his idea struggles free from the gorgeous cloud of phantasy that often envelopes it, he seems to regard Jehovah's presence and glory as manifested through Israel; Jehovah reveals Himself by means of Israel, whose light may be called his glory: "Thou art Israel in whom I will shew myself glorious" (xlix. 3); "They shall be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified" (lxi. 3, cf. xliv. 23); though in these last four passages the word for glory

is different, signifying glorious beauty. The essential glory of Him who is God alone, revealed in Israel, is the light which draws the Gentiles (Chapter lx.), who come from all lands, Egypt, Ethiopia and Sheba, bowing down at the soles of Israel's feet and saying: "Surely God is in thee, and there is none else; there is no God" (xlv. 14). The idea that the revelation of Jehovah's glory to all flesh shall accompany the restoration of Israel, is one common to all the literature of the Exile: "When the Lord shall build up Zion he shall appear in his glory" (Ps. cii. 16).

Second, Verses 9-11, Jehovah is seen to be present; her watchmen behold eye to eye the Lord's restoration of Zion: and she herself is summoned to be the evangelist of her daughter towns, to get her up into the high mountains and announce Jehovah's presence, saying to the cities of Judah, Behold your God. This is the meaning if we read, "O Zion, that bringest good tidings." Another translation is possible, "O thou (company of heralds) that tellest good tidings unto Zion, get thee up," etc. The last rendering is very hard in construction, but certainly more according to the analogy of other parts of the prophecy. In Verses 1, 2, it is Jerusalem herself that is spoken to comfortably. In xli. 27, the Lord gives "to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings" (cf. xliv. 26); and in the more detailed passage, lii. 7, it is said, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth." And no passage in the prophecy occurs to our remembrance where Jerusalem or Zion addresses Israel. The Servant appeals to his countrymen, and also to the Gentiles; but this is a different conception. With less exaltation of mind the Prophet proceeds in the following verses to expand the meaning of Jehovah's advent. He cometh "as a strong one," in power and fulness. His coming is retributive: "his reward is with him, and his recompence before him,"

that is, in his presence, dispensed immediately. It is doubtful if these words refer to any general retribution or judgment beyond Israel, for in the passage where they occur again (Chapter lxii. 11), they serve to expand the idea of Israel's salvation: "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompence before him." And, finally, Jehovah having come, abides for ever with his people, feeding his flock like a shepherd, with compassionate grace to old and young.

Between these two steps there is an interlude as of an interpreting chorus, Verses 6–8. Other supernatural voices are heard commenting on the advent of Jehovah: "Hark, one saying, Cry! and one said, What shall I cry?" The second voice which replies to the first is not that of the prophet; superhuman voices answer one another. They comment on the great event of Jehovah's advent now transpiring, and give utterance to the reflection which it suggests: "All flesh is grass, which perisheth, but the word of our God shall stand." The language is precisely similar to that in Verse 30, "The youths shall faint and be weary, but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." In both cases "the youths" and "all flesh" are introduced merely to point an antithesis and throw the truth to be taught into relief—*though* all flesh be grass, the word of our God shall stand. Though men and all things human, giant empires, mighty projects of ambition with the hearts that cherished them, wither like the grass when the hot wind blows upon it, the word of our God, his promises, though they seemed forgotten, shall stand for ever. The Prophet is a master in the art of putting in a strong background to give his main object relief: "The heavens shall vanish away like smoke, but my salvation shall be for ever" (li. 6). These verses might have a slightly different purpose, viz. to convey the *as-*

surance of the Lord's speedy appearing. This would fit into a somewhat qualified view of the whole passage, which would be less an ecstatic picture of Jehovah's actual advent, than a very vivid prophecy of it as imminent. The general meaning remains unaffected.

Now the question arises, What conclusion must we draw from this prologue and the many passages from the prophecy which have been adduced in illustration of it, in regard to the general meaning of the whole prophecy? First of all, we must bid History begone! History is always intruding herself upon the reader of prophecy, and offering her services as an interpreter. We must decline for a while her good offices. She is prone to take too much upon her. Though the ideas of the prophets find fulfilment in history, prophecy is not history written beforehand, and it is only in a qualified sense that History can assume to be an authorized interpreter. Besides, History is but a fragment, while the conceptions of prophecy are universal, and reach out to the end of all things. It will be time enough for History to claim to control interpretation when she herself is complete. Then the events of history and the conceptions of prophecy may be formed into an equation. Meanwhile the reader of prophecy does well to keep fulfilment out of his view. The unequal lights which fall from it upon the prophet's page trouble the eye and derange its functions. The conceptions of the prophet may be understood from himself, and the interpreter's part is to give back truly the thoughts of his author.

The Prophet says in this prologue that the exile of Israel is near an end; but he expresses that idea with a strange grandeur of phraseology, saying that her warfare is accomplished, her sorrow has come to a full end, and her peace shall be like a river. With similar lofty words, he says that *her sin* is pardoned, her guilt of all generations

has been paid off, and is wiped absolutely out. Again, the exiles return to their ancient home; but he represents their return as the march of Jehovah through the wilderness to the place of his rest, his revelation of Himself there in his fulness, so that it is said to the cities of Judah, Behold your God! And having returned in all his power, and dispensed to all their rewards, He abides for ever, feeding his flock like a shepherd. The Church has entered into the Rest of God. And, once more, for the Prophet's view embraces all, Jehovah approves Himself to be God in the delivery of his people: but this proof assumes a strange bulk; it is the revelation of his "glory" in the eyes of "all flesh." The nations look unto Him from all the ends of the earth, and are saved (xlv. 22). The events and forces are just those of the time, the collision between Cyrus and Babylon, the liberation of the captives and their restoration to their own land; but the prophet invests them with a supernatural light. He animates each of them with a moral force that makes them all stand out with a religious significance which is absolute. The whole situation has this universal meaning to him. The evils of the Captivity are the last evils of Israel for their sins—they are the evils of sin; deliverance from the Captivity is restoration from the condition of evil to the final state of blessedness. Within the empire of Babylon at this era, for Babylon was the World, all the moral forces that operate upon the earth concentrate themselves; there they come into collision; and there ensues the defeat of evil. The conflict of Israel, aided by Cyrus, with Babylon, is the conflict of the religion of Jehovah and Idolatry—of good and evil. With Babylon, Idolatry perishes. With the restoration of Israel, all the redemptive forces concentrated in Israel have free play; she shines, and the Gentiles come to her light. Restoration from exile is Israel's final redemption, and the event bounds the prophet's horizon. No occurrences

transpire subsequent to this. The condition of the world is that described in Chapter lx. The glory of the Lord has risen upon Israel, and the Gentiles come to her light. The gates of Jerusalem stand open continually, day and night, that the forces of the Gentiles may be brought in, and their kings in procession. The long troops of dromedaries come laden with gold and incense, the riches of the inland nations ; while the fleets of Tarshish, with gleaming sails, like clouds of white doves, bear in the abundance of the sea. The place of the Lord's feet is glorious. His people are all righteous, and shall inherit the earth for ever.

This solid moral method, which loads the events occurring around the Prophet with a religious significance that is universal and final, and brings up the consummation of the Church's history close upon the back of them, is not peculiar to this prophet, but common to him with all the prophets of the Old Testament, and also with the Apocalyptist, the prophet of the New. The prophet Isaiah in his earlier chapters, when the Assyrian invasion lay under his view, sees the "Son born, the Child given," the Prince of Peace appearing amidst the desolations of this invasion, and sharing with his countrymen the "milk and honey," which is the food furnished by a land no more cultivated but reduced to a pastoral state. To the prophet of Chapters xiii. and xiv., who has under his eye the collision of Babylon with the Medes, the terrible commotions upon the earth, accompanying the downfall of the Babylonian empire, seem to usher in the "day of the Lord." It was the same with all the prophets. Their moral presentiments were continually rising up in their hearts and calling for realization; and the truths they held in regard to the kingdom of God,—its peace and righteousness and universal extent, and the very presence of God in it,—truths so certain, seemed always to be on the point of clothing them-

selves in acts and fulfilment. Like the first Christians they stood looking for the coming of the Lord. The salvation was ready to be revealed, and every wave of Providence more than ordinarily high seemed to them the precursor of the full tide. The consummation of all, and the perfection of the Church's blessedness, seemed to them so imminent because its connexion with the events of their day was not one of time but of moral causation. The moral causes and forces of their time seemed to them necessarily to issue through Jehovah's intervention in the realization of his final purposes with the world. This moral aspect of their view perhaps relieves it from the imputation of being merely subjective. For though the moral causes of their time did not immediately issue in the consummation, as it seemed to them they must do, these moral energies only became transmuted into others, which will run out into God's short work upon the earth. God's providence in bringing in his kingdom is a chain, every link of which, those near the beginning as well as those at the end, sustains its whole weight. Assyria, Babylon, Persia are but links passing into one another. And to the view of successive prophets each of them seems successively to have the kingdom hanging on it.

It is of the utmost consequence, if this prophet is to be read with intelligence, to apprehend the boundaries of his view. Mr. Cheyne, in his valuable commentary, to which we refer as the standard English work on Isaiah, has said that he holds "that the prophetic horizon of these chapters is not limited by the Exile, but extends to the advent of the historical Christ and even beyond" (vol. i. p. 237). The language is slightly vague. We certainly think that the prophetic horizon extends "beyond," even to the end of all earthly development; but we also think that it is limited by the restoration from exile, because this event and the end of all were to the prophet's mind synchronous, or rather

synonymous. We are glad, in default of Mr. Cheyne's concurrence with our view, to have that of Delitzsch, who says: "It must not be forgotten that throughout these prophecies the breaking forth of salvation, not for Israel only but for all mankind, is regarded as bound up with the termination of the Captivity, and from this its basis, the restoration of the people who were then in exile, it is never separated." And again, "But as we shall never be tired of repeating, this is the human element in these prophecies, that they regard the appearance of the 'Servant of Jehovah,' the Saviour of Israel and the heathen, as connected with the Captivity; the punishment of Israel terminating, according to the perspective foreshortening of prophetic vision, with the termination of the Captivity; and the final glory of Israel, and the final salvation of all mankind, beginning to dawn on the border of the Captivity" (Trans., vol. ii. pp. 258, 276). This means that the Prophet did not write history, if we regard time as an element of history. Time is exhausted out from between the historical momenta, and they draw up close behind one another, concentrated into the Prophet's own epoch, though they succeed one another in the proper order of cause and effect; for the sufferings of the Servant are the exhaustion of Israel's sin, which leads to her pardon, to be followed by her restoration. Perhaps to an eye looking out upon history beforehand, if it could see as the Prophet did to the end, the effect would be much the same as to an eye looking back across the finished evolutions of history. In both cases history would contract to a narrow zone exhibiting a few bright points—the principles whose expansive force created it.

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