

Again, Wisdom—the moral order of the world—is introduced saying: ‘In three things I was beautified . . . in a woman and her husband that walk together in agreement’ (xxv. 1). And the author says: ‘There be nine things that I have counted happy . . . happy is he that dwelleth with a wife of understanding’ (xxv. 8). And again: ‘Forego not a wise and good wife, for her grace is above gold’ (vii. 19). The fullest portrait stands in ch. xxvi. 13–17—

‘The grace (charm) of a wife will delight a husband,
And her discretion will fatten his bones,
A silent woman is a gift of the Lord,
And there is nothing so much worth as a well-instructed soul.

A shamefast woman is grace upon grace.
As the sun when it arises in the highest places of the Lord,
So is the beauty of a good wife in the fair order of a man’s house.

As the lamp that shineth upon the holy candlestick,
So is the beauty of the face on a comely stature.’

Others render the last words, ‘in ripe age.’
Less flowery—

‘Happy is the husband of a good wife,
And the number of his days shall be twofold. . . .
Whether a man be rich or poor,’ etc. (xxvi. 1–4).

Sirach, indeed, cannot find words to express himself in regard to good women—

‘The beauty of a woman cheereth the countenance,
And a man desireth nothing so much;
If there is on her tongue mercy and meekness,
Her husband is not like the sons of men—

he is godlike in his felicity (xxxvi. 22). The wretch who ‘hath no wife will mourn as he wandereth up and down.’ He is a bird without a nest, and as he goes about seeking for a lodging, people will readily take him for a footpad.

Sirach has nothing distinctive in him. He is of the same school as the authors of Proverbs, but an inferior artist who lays on thicker colours. The conclusion of the whole matter appears to be this: A man’s most-blessed possession is the fear of the Lord, and next to that is the companionship of a brave woman (xl. 19, 23, 26).

Hebrew Prophecy and Modern Criticism.

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IX.

‘He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.’—ISA. liii. 5.

I ENDEAVOURED in my last two papers to trace briefly the conception of the Messiah, as it gradually took shape among the Jewish people. But there is one aspect of the Messiah from the Christian point of view, and that perhaps the most important of all, which I have hitherto left untouched, the innocent victim suffering for the sins of the world. Was this also foretold by the prophets? Christians have from the earliest times confidently answered ‘Yes.’ The Jews have, speaking generally, answered ‘No.’ Of course, it is well known that we do find in the Talmud, and elsewhere in Jewish literature, instances of a belief in a suffering Messiah; but whatever be the true explanation of this fact,¹ the belief itself can hardly be considered as forming part of the generally accepted Messianic doctrine, at least as it existed in the time of Christ. At most it falls very short of the Christian idea of

the great atoning sacrifice. Now, how far, or in what sense, does this idea find a place in the prediction of the Jewish prophets? This question I will now try to answer. But it is only possible to do so fairly and honestly by an impartial examination of those passages which have been understood to foretell the sufferings of Christ. In the short limits at my disposal, I can only deal with very few of these. But I think they will be enough to establish some general conclusions, and will serve as an example of a method of exegesis capable of a much wider application.

But there is a larger question which is really involved in the immediate subject of our inquiry, and cannot wisely be separated from it, the belief of the Jews concerning the divine purpose of suffering. There was a time when they believed that suffering was inflicted by God merely as a punishment for sin. A man’s or a nation’s sinful-

¹ See Essay on this subject in Cheyne’s *Isaiah*.

ness might be measured by their temporal calamities. We have an excellent example of this view in Ps. xxxvii. : 'Fret not thyself because of evil-doers,' even though they seem to prosper and thou to suffer. Why not? Because God's righteousness must vindicate itself. Their good fortunes, thy ill fortunes are but temporary. 'They shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb,' and then the time will come when 'the meek shall inherit the land; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.' But experience must have continually given the lie to this limited view of Providence. How often it happened that the wicked prospered, and went on prospering, while the righteous suffered and even perished altogether! The thoughtful Jew must have felt that the problem of suffering needed another solution. What tended more than anything else to enlarge his view was the great national calamity of the Exile. What seemed at the time only a crushing disaster proved in reality to be an immense educational force, moulding the Jewish character. We see this strikingly brought out in that most fascinating of Old Testament books, the Book of Job. It was, I believe, Bishop Warburton, who, in his *Divine Legation of Moses*, first propounded the, in his day, most startling opinion that this book was not written by Moses, but by some unknown writer of the time of the Exile. It was in his view no record of men and women once living, but a religious allegory—Job himself being a personification of the Jewish people. In so thinking, the keen-sighted bishop anticipated more than a century ago many of the results of modern criticism. At anyrate, it is now pretty well agreed that Job does not belong to the historical books of the Old Testament, but to a far later group, those ethical and philosophical treatises collectively known as the *Chokmah* or *Wisdom*. Whether the book is allegorical or not, it is considered that its real value for the theological student lies not so much in the story of Job himself, as in the supposititious dialogue with his companions. The true meaning of suffering is the main theme throughout, and the conclusion gradually arrived at is this: If Job suffered more than all men, it was not because he had committed greater sins, but because God loved him more, and therefore corrected him for his good. His punishment brought about his confession of sin, and on this followed his restoration to prosperity. And

yet we must feel that this book leaves something to be desired. The concluding section of the last chapter (xlii. 7-17), in which Job is compensated manifold in kind for his previous losses, is disappointing after the magnificent climax which precedes it (chs. xxxviii.-xlii. 6). We should have been better content to have left Job still poor in earthly possessions but rich in the spiritual wealth which his sufferings had brought him. And so we can sympathise, if we cannot agree, with the suggestion of at least one modern critic,¹ that the last part was added by a later writer, who tried to satisfy in this way his idea of poetic justice. But we have no necessity to adopt such a view. For we cannot reasonably expect to find the writer as yet able to rid himself entirely of the cruder ideas of the past.

When we turn to the great prophet of the Captivity, we find a still more spiritual view of suffering. There is, indeed, some resemblance in detail between the history of Job and the description of the suffering servant of Jahweh. But, as has recently been pointed out with justice, there is this essential difference between the two, that in Isa. lii. 13-14, the affliction of the servant has a vicarious value, whereas we do not find this thought in Job. But who is the suffering servant of Isaiah liii.? To some it might seem unnecessary to ask the question. The great bulk of Christian commentators, until very recent times, have seen in this description a direct prediction of Christ crucified on the cross for the sins of the world, and nothing else. Can we do so now? Not, I think, if we study the prophecy with perfectly open minds. For if so, such a sudden portraiture of the crucified Saviour would in the immediate context of the prophecy, and in the whole religious and mental atmosphere of the prophet, be quite unintelligible. And besides, such a graphic Messianic picture would prevent no analogies to the other great Messianic predictions of the Old Testament. For these are invariably connected most closely with the events of the time in which the prophet lived, and in many cases the prophet appears to have seen his Messiah in some person of his own day. If, then, Isaiah liii. is Messianic, even so we should expect that we have here an immediate description of some contemporary Jewish martyr.

And so commentators have seen in this chapter

¹ Froude, for example.

a direct reference to the sufferings of either Josiah or Jeremiah. But neither of them at all satisfies the requirements of the prophecy. The death of Josiah was certainly most pathetic. The universal lamentation which it evoked became a proverb. There was no mourning like 'the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.'¹ But by what flight of poetic imagination could the sad result of the young king's foolhardiness be called a sin-offering for the people? Or what possible meaning could be assigned to such expressions as 'his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.'² Indeed it is obvious that nearly the whole description could not possibly refer to one who, by a sudden death, was cut off from what might have been a glorious career.

The same objections do not apply, or, at any rate, with at all the same force, to Jeremiah. He may be said to have suffered during a large part of his career, in a certain sense, for the sins of his people. He was the constant victim of religious persecution, and suffered many bodily injuries, and he bore them with singular meekness of spirit. In fact, he uses of himself words which seem to find an echo in this very prophecy: 'I was like a gentle lamb that is led to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof.'³ Lastly, if we accept the tradition of his violent death, it was true of him, that 'he was taken away by oppression and by judgment.' But we are met with an insuperable difficulty in the end of the prophecy—in the glorious end which was to follow the period of suffering. 'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Jahweh shall prosper in his hand. . . . Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great; and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.' These words might have been applied to any Jewish king in whose line were centred the prophet's hopes of a Messiah. But it is very difficult to see how we can, without altogether wresting their meaning, refer them to Jeremiah. For example, to say that prophecy would revive and flourish again after the martyrdom of Jeremiah is to put an interpretation which the expressions used do not the least suggest. For these reasons, as well as others, it is even more certain that we cannot regard

as the subject of this prophecy the writer himself.⁴

But there is another interpretation which, if to some it seems to fall short of the full meaning of the prophecy, is, at any rate, not liable to the same objections as those already discussed, that which sees in the suffering servant of Jahweh the Jewish nation itself. This interpretation is at least as old as the great Rashi, who wrote his commentary in the last half of the eleventh century, and though the Spanish school of Jews defended it and used it as a weapon against Christianity, we have no reason whatever to doubt their perfect sincerity. They certainly went far by their clear-headed, if somewhat prosaic, exposition to justify their view. Orthodox divines cannot afford to ignore such men as Kimchi and Ibn Ezra. If this interpretation is right, it will form an exact parallel to that of Job proposed by Dr. Warburton. In both cases the sufferings are those which the nation underwent in exile, and the prosperity which followed is the vision of post-Exilic glory which was to follow the Return.

It will be readily seen that this interpretation has many advantages, and that in the very points in which the others, speaking generally, failed. It leaves the passage in agreement with the whole tenor of the so-called Deutero-Isaiah, at any rate, with that part of it which stands in obvious connexion with this prophecy. It has its natural place in the Book of the Restoration. For the theme of the book is its theme. Above all, this interpretation gives the same meaning to the servant of Jahweh that it has almost invariably in these chapters. This expression is twice used apparently of the prophet himself as God's messenger to His people;⁵ but elsewhere, where as frequently the meaning is obvious, it is used of the nation Israel. This usage occurs especially in the chapters preceding ch. liii. Such phrases as 'Hear, O Jacob, my servant,' 'For my servant Jacob's sake,' are of common occurrence. The most important passage for our purpose is ch. xlix. Here begins that series of prophecies, sometimes called the Book of the Servant, which finds its climax in ch. liii. It is difficult to see how the servant of ch. liii. can be other than the servant of

⁴ Those interpretations which refer the passage to Abraham, or one of the other patriarchs, are obviously open to even graver objections.

⁵ Isa. xlv. 26, l. 10.

¹ Zech. xii. 11.

² Isa. lii. 14.

³ Jer. xi. 19.

ch. xlix. But in ch. xlix. 3 the servant is expressly identified as Israel. 'Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye peoples, from far; Jahweh hath called me from the womb: from the bowels of my mother hath He made mention of my name. And He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me: and He hath made me a polished shaft; in His quiver hath He kept me close; and He said unto me, Thou art My servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.'¹ God had called Israel from the womb. From the beginning of his national existence He had destined him to be His agent in His redemptive work for himself and others. This last is the thought expressed in the fifth and sixth verses: 'And now, saith Jahweh, that formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, and that Israel be gathered unto Him. . . . It is too light a thing that thou shouldst be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth.' A difficulty has sometimes been raised that these verses make a distinction between the servant of Jahweh and the Israelitish nation.² But this distinction partly arises from the fact that the Israel of the Captivity was only a small fraction of the Jewish nation, partly it is a distinction drawn between the idealised servant of Jahweh, Israel as he ought to be, and Israel as he was. The contrast between the ideal and the actual is brought out with the most pathetic irony in ch. xlii. 19: 'Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I send? Who is blind as he that is at peace with me, and blind as Jahweh's servant?'

That our interpretation of ch. xlix. is right, is clear from the verse that follows. Israel had been the servant of the rulers (ver. 7), but now as Jahweh's servant was to summon the prisoners out of darkness. These are to come, it is said, not from Babylon, but from many distant lands: 'Lo, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and the west: and these from the land of Sinim' (ver. 12). The return from Babylon was typical of a far larger and wider deliverance.

The leading idea of ch. xlix. is further developed in chs. lii. 13–liii. The chief thought of this passage is the contrast between future glory and past calamity. Captive Israel had been mocked by his enemies,

¹ Isa. xlix. 1–3.

² See Cheyne's *Isaiah*, *in loco*.

maligned and ill-treated, 'despised and rejected of men'; a poor, hopeless outcast, like a root in a barren soil, having no happiness to look forward to for himself or his offspring. And yet he had borne all this with dignity and patience. And now all was to be reversed. He would prosper, and be exalted very high. He would command the respect of the nations who had despised him. A victorious conqueror, he would divide his spoil with the strong. He would have a long and successful career, and finally would bequeath his prosperity to his descendants. He would see his seed; he would prolong his days; the pleasure of Jahweh would prosper in his hand. We are reminded of those visions of national happiness which the prophets so frequently connected with the Restoration.

But this is only a broad outline of the passage. We have purposely reserved for more careful consideration what is perhaps its most essential feature, and the special subject of our present discussion, the vicarious character of the sufferings of the Servant. It will be remembered that in the first message to captive Israel it was said, 'She hath received of Jahweh's hand double for all her sins,'³ *i.e.* She had been punished twice as much as her sins deserved. It was but a step further to regard Israel's sufferings as an atonement for the sins of other nations. God had punished Israel not so much for his own sake as for theirs. Through him they would be brought at last to perceive the arm of God, which had been so long hidden by their own blindness,⁴ and would be able to say of Israel, 'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.'⁵ The nobility of suffering, the potency of sacrifice for a righteous cause—these were the great lessons which the Captivity had to teach, and such thoughts find expression in many a later psalm. It is of no little importance that parallel with these feelings there was a new development in the doctrine of sacrifice which found its most significant expression in the rites which marked the Great Day of Atonement.

There is one psalm which is connected by such sacred associations with the suffering Messiah of the Gospels that I cannot altogether pass it over. I refer to the twenty-second. It forms in some respects a

³ Isa. xl. 2.

⁴ Isa. lii. 10.

⁵ Cf. Ibn Ezra's comment on the passage in Rabbinical interpretations of Isa. liii.—Neubauer and Driver.

parallel to Isa. lii.—liii. There is the same innocent suffering, the same scorn and persecution on the enemies' part, the same joyous termination, only in this case the end is still more glorious; at any rate, more evidently religious and spiritual. The sufferer released from his distress is to preach God's name till he converts all the nations of the world. Nor is the resemblance between the two really affected by the fact that the psalm is cast in a different mould; that here it is the sufferer himself who speaks of his persecutions, his prayer, and his final glorious mission. In this case, again, it is obvious that the same question arises as before. Who is the subject of the psalm? Is it Christ Himself directly foretelling His Passion and work of salvation in the Christian Church? Or is it some Jewish martyr, Jeremiah for example, describing his own persecution and hopes? Or is it again some ideal personification of the whole or part of the Jewish nation?

1. The first alternative will not bear a thorough examination. For is it not obvious that the Psalmist is describing not a single occasion of accentuated misery, but a long period of continued persecution; and, what is still more important, of incessant but fruitless prayer. Christ could not have said, 'O my God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou answerest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.' To refer it to the agony on the cross by day, the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane by night, shows a want of poetic feeling which amounts to gross ignorance. It is indeed somewhat difficult to separate the facts implied in the description from the metaphorical dress in which they are clothed. But what is certainly suggested is a general loss of bodily strength through different forms of privation, especially the loss of clothes, which his enemies take for themselves, like the rich oppressors so often condemned by the prophets;¹ and of food, so that the body is reduced to a living skeleton: 'They may count all my bones.' It is obvious that these words are intended to portray an element in the sufferer's wretched condition. They cannot be meant to describe primarily the (from his persecutors' point of view) accidental honour which our Lord's body received by not having the legs broken.

It is not easy to decide between the two remaining alternatives of interpretation. For giving the psalm (2) a personal character there is much to be

said. (a) To begin with, there is the negative reason that we have not here, as in Isaiah liii., the strong argument from the whole surroundings of the passage, which almost compelled us to give a national sense to the expression 'Servant of Jahweh.' A psalm will not from its very nature admit an argument of that kind. (b) But, what is more important, the psalm itself gives at first sight the impression that we have here some Jewish martyr pouring out his own personal experience. Without is the bitter persecution to the death by a relentless and godless enemy. Within, the death-struggle and final triumph of a faith which determines, in spite of all difficulties, to believe in God's power and love. Had the psalm ended with the 21st verse, probably few would have any hesitation in accepting this view. But the last part of the psalm makes it very difficult to do so. It is not merely that the one oppressed martyr confidently asserts that he is to be the means of converting the whole world. This is startling enough;² but it is by no means an insuperable difficulty, if we believe that he is a type of the world's Great Martyr. The great difficulty is that the subject of the preaching, the ground for conversion, is the goodness of God shown in the deliverance of the Sufferer. We cannot understand the Psalmist conceiving such a thought of himself, nor would it be suitable if referred to the work of Christ. The subject of the gospel is not the deliverance of Christ, but the deliverance of man through Christ.

But these difficulties at once disappear if (3) we regard the Psalmist as personating the Jewish nation. The Jews once scorned, impoverished, persecuted to the death by their godless enemies, were to become the missionaries of the whole world. All nations and all estates of men would worship Israel's God, Jahweh, and He would reign over the world from generation to generation. Thus understood, the last portion of the psalm is in thorough keeping with the familiar utterances of Messianic prophecy. No motive for the conversion of the nations is more frequent than the power of God manifested in the deliverance of His people from oppression. It may be possible, of course, that some later reviser added the last portion to the psalm, and so gave what was originally a personal psalm a national character. There are strong reasons for supposing that many of the

¹ Amos ii. 6-8.

² See Cheyne, *in loco*.

psalms were revised and adapted for liturgical use. But, on the other side, it may be reasonably argued that even in the first part (vers. 3-5) the Psalmist's grounds for trusting in God are not his own personal experiences of His goodness, but the favour shown to the nation.

Let me now sum up the conclusion to which our inquiry seems to point. Suffering was not merely the punishment of sin, or the vindication of God's righteousness, but the manifestation of His love; first for the good of the sufferer himself, and then through him of others. Hence came the thought, based on the fact of Israel's suffering, of an ideal suffering potent enough to heal the spiritual wounds, and bring about the salvation of all mankind. This was to be the work of Israel, himself purified and glorified through suffering. These thoughts were closely connected with the great Messianic hopes of the nation which were raised by the prophets, but they were not so closely, if at all, connected with the personal Messiah. Yet they were the moral force which produced what was noblest and best in the Jewish character, which evoked the spirit of patriotic religious zeal, that inspired the great Maccabæan martyrs; and though it at times blazed forth in acts

of religious fanaticism, has often enabled the Jews to bear unspeakable wrongs with a wonderful patience and hope.

In saying this we do not forget the most perfect example of this spirit, one Who raised it to an infinitely higher level than it had hitherto attained, the depths of Whose soul were stirred with sadness for the fate of His people, in spite of all the wrong which He was suffering at their hands; Who on the cross bore the sins of many, and made atonement for the transgressors; Who through His sufferings won a great crown of glory, not for Himself alone, but for the whole of humanity. But while we remember all this, we must not limit these truths of Hebrew prophecy to Jesus of Nazareth. They are principles in the moral world of God, of which Jesus was indeed the one perfect example; but they are exemplified in a measure also in all those who, following their Great Captain, suffer in the cause of righteousness and truth, and so, to use the impressive language of St. Paul, fill up that which is lacking of the affliction of Christ for His body's sake, which is the Church. 'If we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him.'¹

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.

At the Literary Table.

THE BOOKS OF THE MONTH.

(The Prices of the Books mentioned below will generally be found in the Advertisement pages.)

THE CHRISTIAN PICTORIAL. VOL. IV. (Alexander & Shephard. 4to, pp. 426.) There are few of our weekly periodicals that are counted worthy of full-dress binding. *The Christian Pictorial* is as alive as any of them to the things that are passing, and its illustrations and sketches are full of vigour. But it has an eye to the things that remain also, and every half-year's volume is filled with matter that we shall be glad to read again and even again.

THE TRAGEDY OF MORANT BAY. By EDWARD BEAN UNDERHILL, LL.D. (Alexander & Shephard. Crown 8vo, pp. xix, 219.) The story is here told of that deplorable uprising and subsequent massacre which took place in Jamaica in 1865. Dr. Underhill had more interest

in it than any man outside the island itself. Nevertheless, he tells the tale with manifest fairness. It is very surprising, indeed, how he permits us at the outset to sympathise with General Eyre, though he regards him and his incompetency as the real cause of all the trouble and disorder.

THE DIVINE LEGATION OF PAUL. By EDWARD BEAN UNDERHILL, LL.D. (Alexander & Shephard. Crown 8vo, pp. x, 155.) It is a marvel that some books survive their titles. A worse title than this (Warburton notwithstanding) could not easily have been discovered, yet Dr. Underhill's book has got over it. It has reached a new edition, and is very likely now to go forward. This is the impression which St. Paul's personality makes on a modern educated and Christian