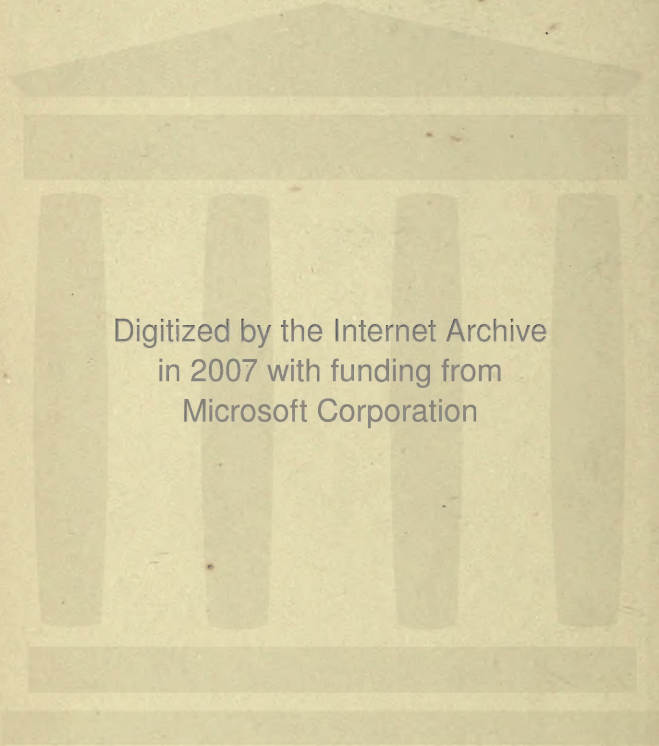




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OLD TESTAMENT PROBLEMS

CRITICAL STUDIES IN THE PSALMS & ISAIAH

BY

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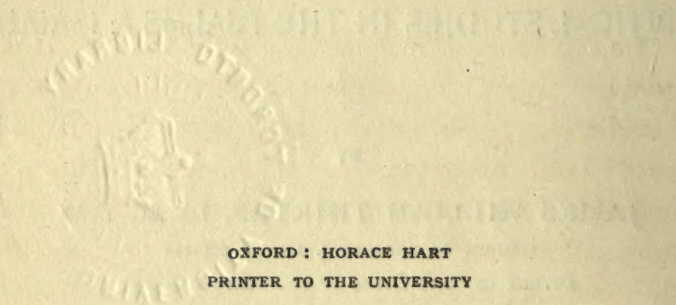
AUTHOR OF 'THE TITLES OF THE PSALMS: THEIR
NATURE AND MEANING EXPLAINED'

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PREFACE

IN my book *The Titles of the Psalms* (second edition, 1905), I proposed a new view of the inscriptions which have so long been a puzzle to critics and exegetes. As a result of further research, I now make another contribution to the same subject, and present observations on some of the problems involved in the Psalter as a whole, and in 'the Book of the Prophet Isaiah'.

When I first entered upon these investigations, it was in the hope of being able to throw some light upon 'The Songs of Degrees'—the titular expression and the poems themselves. At length, I am in a position to present my findings on this deeply interesting group of psalms—120-134. A study of the inscriptional material, as discriminated according to the method advocated in my earlier work, has yielded important results in this piece of labour.

From studying a group of psalms, I passed to the consideration of questions affecting the Psalter as a whole—as I believe, with results of far-reaching interest. Quite naturally, I proceeded

to examine 'the Book of the Prophet Isaiah' in the light of the things I had found. The outcome of these combined investigations is given in the volume now sent forth. In a word, my labours tend to assert a new place in the Old Testament literature for Hezekiah king of Judah. It is not pretended that the final word is spoken on many of the points raised; but it is confidently believed that this attempt to explain great problems along lines that are altogether new, will justify itself, not only by the general cogency of its results, but also by its bearing upon Hebrew literature in some of its larger aspects.

I have more or less assumed on the part of readers a certain familiarity with the questions discussed. Hence I have not stated every problem with formal precision; but I have generally been content to address myself to a direct development of my thesis, with positive conclusions. Moreover, being concerned with original and independent work, I have not been careful to elaborate in every case the divergent views of others. That would not only have added to the bulk of my book, but would likewise have introduced the controversial element in greater measure than was necessary or desirable.

If my views, as here unfolded, are well grounded,

then one conclusion arrived at is that none of the psalms can be really *late*; and from that point there follows another—namely, the question of the formation of the Old Testament Canon. If there are, in reality, no late psalms, then the Canon dates from an earlier time than modern scholarship has been disposed to think. Again, as to the Book of Isaiah, if the positions here contended for are allowed, then not only is the substantial unity of that book demonstrated, but a supremely important section of Old Testament prophecy comes under the influence of relations that have so far been disregarded.

It will be observed that on some points of detail I modify views that were expressed in my earlier volume. The main position there assumed, however, has undergone no change. I have still much to set forth that could not be presented in connexion with the accompanying studies. In the meantime, I venture to think that enough has been said to justify the claim that such lines of research as I have pursued represent an alternative Criticism of the Old Testament from which results of peculiar interest may be expected.

J. W. T

LONDON :

June 27, 1907.

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THE SONGS OF DEGREES

PSALMS 120-134

CHAPTER I

THE SONGS OF DEGREES

I. FACTS AND THEORIES

THE group of psalms known as Songs of Degrees (or Ascents) has been the subject of much controversy. At a glance the Songs present features of uniformity, and declare themselves as properly constituting a 'Little Psalter'; yet why they stand together, and the meaning of their common designation, are questions that have greatly perplexed critics and expositors.

Recent research¹ has found important results as accruing from a due recognition of the conditions of ancient Hebrew writing. The headings and titles of the psalms have been presented in their literary and liturgical relations, and have been found to indicate a system at once harmonious and well defined. In a word, it has been shown that the inscriptions which have hitherto stood over certain psalms require discrimination.

That is to say, the notices relating to authorship of psalms (David, Asaph, &c.), with intimations of the character of the compositions (Psalm, Song, &c.), and the occasion or object of the writing ('when he fled from Absalom,' 'to bring to remembrance,' &c.),

¹ As developed in the author's work, *The Titles of the Psalms : their Nature and Meaning explained.*

require to be distinguished from inscriptions of a liturgical nature ('To the Chief Musician upon Gittith,' &c.). And a study of the various features in the light of Habakkuk 3. 1, 19^b has shown that, while the literary headings may stand where they are at present, the musical titles should in every case be regarded as subscript lines to the psalms preceding. Bearing in mind the broad distinctions emerging from these investigations, we are in an advantageous position in the closer study of the interesting group known as Songs of Degrees.

First of all, let us survey the ground. Over each of the fifteen psalms answering to the numbers 120-34 in the Hebrew text there stands the heading שִׁיר הַמַּעְלֹת , rendered in the A. V. 'A Song of degrees,' and in the R. V. 'A Song of Ascents'.¹ In four cases (122, 124, 131, 133) the title is followed by לְדָוִד ('of David'), and in one (127) by לְשֹׁלֹמֹה ('of Solomon,' R. V.). In the early versions the title was rendered with severe literality: in the Septuagint by $\phi\delta\delta\eta\ \tau\omega\nu\ \alpha\nu\alpha\beta\alpha\theta\mu\omega\nu$; in the Vulgate (and Jerome) *canticum graduum*. Hence, alike in the original and the versions, we have over each of these psalms words that mean 'A Song of the Steps', or 'A Song of the Degrees' (for steps ARE degrees).²

¹ Over Ps. 121 the formula is varied to שִׁיר לַמַּעְלֹת ; but the distinctive prefix (= 'for') contributes little to the solution of exegetical difficulties, and presents no insuperable obstacle to such views as have been advanced hitherto.

² As appearing in the Targum and the Syriac version, the headline does not demand serious attention. In each case, it combines features *additional* to those of the Hebrew original. The Syriac styles them 'of Ascension' and in several cases supplies further words, definitely associating the Songs with

Let it be borne in mind that in early times Hebrew writing was continuous; there was neither punctuation nor division of material as we know these to-day. Hence in the Psalter (or psalters) one piece would follow another in unbroken succession. If, in such circumstances, separate pieces were to be kept distinct from one another, it could only be by means of inscriptions; before they served as formal headings, these stood *between* the psalms. In a word, the inscrip-tional material served to individualize the psalms; and where such tokens of division are not found, editors have had reason to question the point at which one 'orphan' psalm may end and another may properly begin. The suggestion that the group now under consideration was originally entitled '*Songs of Degrees*', and that such plural headline was at length reduced to a singular form and 'transferred to each separate psalm'¹ or 'prefixed in error'² would not have been hazarded if the actual conditions of ancient Hebrew writing had been borne in mind.

As a fact, we have in this group fifteen Songs, the number being assured by a headline standing over each of them. Five of the number are given as selections (four from David's remains, one from Solomon's), and the remainder are presented as

the return of the Jews from Babylon. The Targum calls them 'Praise uttered concerning the Rising of the Deep', a title based on a Talmudic legend to the effect that, when digging to find the deep, David was startled to find the waters rising and threatening to flood the world. He said these fifteen psalms, and the deep retired! (*Succah*, fol. 53^a). Neither of these renderings brings any message from a positive antiquity.

¹ Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms*, Introd. p. xxviii.

² Cheyne, *Origin of the Bible*, p. 59.

original. Each is 'A Song of the Degrees', whatever the words may mean. If we trace the headlines backward, we find them in their present position in centuries anterior to any serious debate or speculation regarding the Songs themselves or their particular *motif*. We must allow that they are in their rightful place; and while recognizing the duty of investigation, we cannot in reason ignore the lines or regard them as unimportant. If, as Cheyne suggests, the Septuagint rendering is an 'uncomprehending literal translation',¹ then the acknowledged mystery of the formula brings in proof of the great antiquity of the compositions over which it stands.

There is no need to enlarge upon the explanations that have been given to the headline of these psalms. Here are some in brief outline:—

1. From the early centuries of our era the words have been understood by some expositors to connote 'A Song of the Return'—the homeward march, the *ascent* from Babylon. Though the verb עָלָה (whence מַעְלֵה = 'degrees') might well be used in such circumstances,² the psalms themselves cannot be said to make any particular response to the implied purpose. No one will deny that Ps. 122 presupposes the existence of the Temple in its place in the Holy City; and it is unnecessary to do more than

¹ *Origin of the Psalter*, p. 60. And if the earliest *rendering* was 'uncomprehending', so also was the transmission of the title, under the care of the Sopherim and Massoretes. The absence of any reliable Hebrew tradition as to the purpose of the headline goes to prove this.

² Note Ezra 7. 9, where the return from exile is designated הַמַּעְלָה מִבָּבֶל—'the going up from Babylon'.

point out that Ps. 134 recognizes the Temple service as in full exercise. Hence the exilic sentiments which have been read in Pss. 120 and 126, being inconsistent with the situation as a whole, must be held to exemplify an unsound interpretation.¹

2. A view more widely held is that these psalms were sung during the journeys to Jerusalem of pilgrims attending the great festivals. That the pilgrimage was accompanied by expressions of joy² is not to be called in question; that such a formula as שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת describes the practice, is quite another thing. To suggest that the steps or degrees answer to 'stations' or 'stages' in the journey, brings no relief. In the words of Delitzsch:—

The right name for 'stations' would be מַעְמָדוֹת or מַסְעוֹת; and, moreover, the notion borrowed from the processions to Mount Calvary is without historical footing in the cultus of Israel.³

While the suggested custom lacks historical support, it cannot be said that the Songs as a whole specially fit the occasion thus proposed for them.⁴

3. A third view, put forth by Gesenius, explains the headline as descriptive of a special poetical structure. A step-like movement is marked in some of the Songs. For instance, note in Ps. 121:—

I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains:
From whence SHALL MY HELP COME?

¹ In due course we shall explain the terms which, as we contend, the post-exilic view has exhibited in an erroneous light.

² See Isa. 30. 29; Ps. 42. 4 (5).

³ *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, Eng. trans. by Eaton, vol. iii. p. 257.

⁴ Note in particular as irresponsive in their general terms, Pss. 120, 124, 126-32.

MY HELP COMETH from the Lord
 Which made heaven and earth.
 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved :
 HE THAT KEEPETH thee SHALL NOT SLUMBER.
 Behold, HE THAT KEEPETH Israel
 SHALL NEITHER SLUMBER NOR sleep.

And so on. This theory has nothing to say regarding the substance of the Songs; it is silent as to their purpose or object. It merely deals with their literary or metrical form, and suggests a technical discrimination which, it must be confessed, the term 'degree', 'step', or 'stair', is but ill-fitted to express. Moreover, though in itself easy of detection, the figure¹ is hardly apparent in Pss. 120, 127, 129, 131, and not at all observable in Pss. 128, 132. Yet each of these is acknowledged to be 'A Song of Degrees'. Can they have been so styled on the ground that, in reality, they were NOT such? If the proposed explanation is true, this absurdity follows on the entire facts of the case.²

4. A fourth view, known as the later Jewish interpretation, associates the title with a flight of fifteen steps which led from the Court of Israel to the Court of the Women in the Second Temple. Upon these steps, it is said, the Levites stood with instruments of music, on the evening of the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, making melody during the

¹ *Anadiplosis* (according to Baethgen). Illustrations are found in Pss. 93, 96, 98; Isa. 17. 12 sq.; 26. 5 sq.; in the Song of Deborah (Judges 5. 3-6); and elsewhere.

² Also it is important to observe that the figure of parallelism, so common in Hebrew poetry, is more prominent in these Songs than is any such figure as Gesenius and Delitzsch (with others) have conjectured the headline to describe.

ceremony of drawing water from the Pool of Siloam, while above them, in the portal, stood two priests with trumpets. Delitzsch has shown¹ that this explanation lacks historical basis, and has been built on nothing more substantial than a Talmudical allusion, in which a parallel is drawn between the fifteen steps and the fifteen psalms.² There is nothing about the chanting of psalms on the steps, nor about the derivation of the title from any such circumstance.

Needless to add, an external reference of this nature in an inscription would have been unique in the system of headlines and titles—in fact, out of harmony with features characteristic of the Psalter. Yet, in view of the confusion that has enveloped the entire subject, it is not surprising that even this improbable 'explanation' should have enjoyed a considerable vogue among expositors.

These various views—not the only ones, but such as have been most generally held—are 'explanations' that do not explain. In some cases, they are only partial in their application; and many expositors have preferred one above the other with the candid admission that the true meaning of *Shir hām-ma'alôth* has yet to be found. The constituent psalms do not suggest the formula as thus variously interpreted; and the formula, in turn, proves to be of no service in throwing light upon the psalms themselves.

If the first explanation is correct, how comes it

¹ *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, Eng. trans., vol. iii. 257, 258.

² *Middoth*, ii. 5; *Succah*, 51^b.

that the Songs as a whole are *silent* regarding the Exile and the journey home?

If the second explanation is correct, then the title is unhappy, if not misleading. In its simplest sense מַעֲלֵה signifies, not a going up, but something which causes and promotes ascent; not a person moving upward, but the steps by which he reaches a point of elevation.

The third view is an assumption rather than a deduction from the facts. If the Songs exhibited uniformity of structure, there might have been some ground for the suggestion that the title was descriptive of a special rhythmical movement or poetical style.

Apart from the fact that no trace can be found of this technical meaning of the word *ascent* elsewhere, the structure is neither peculiar to these psalms nor characteristic of all of them.¹

As to the fourth view, it may be set aside as furnishing no explanation whatever. It is founded on a fanciful allusion, and the Songs themselves gain nothing from all that the theory may involve or imply.

In a word, explanations which assume הַמַּעֲלֵה to indicate a *time* ('the Return'), or specify a *place* ('stations' on the festal pilgrimages), break down; while the contention that the word defines the *character* of the poetry assumes without reason a technical signification, and unjustifiably disregards the emphatic prefix of the second word—'THE degrees'. A true explanation of the title will have regard to the Hebrew words in their simplicity,² and in the nature of things it will find harmonious echo, not merely in one or

¹ Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms*, Introd. p. xxviii.

² Not disregarding, at the same time, the 'uncomprehending literal translation' of the Septuagint.

two but in the entire body of Songs that make up the group. A theory that fails along either of these lines proclaims its insufficiency as an interpretation of the title.

Before proceeding to examine the headline, we may note the distinct spirituality of the Songs. What is on the surface of most of them is applicable to each and all—they are Temple hymns. They were obviously designed for use in the worship of Jehovah; and their language is that of the Sanctuary. We read of 'Jerusalem' (122. 2, 3, 6; 125. 2; 128. 5); 'Zion,' 'Mount Zion,' 'the mountains of Zion' (125. 1; 126. 1; 128. 5; 129. 5; 132. 13; 133. 3; 134. 3); 'the House of the Lord' (122. 1, 9; 134. 1); 'the Sanctuary' (134. 2); 'priests' (132. 9, 16).¹ The Tetragrammaton occurs over fifty times, no single Song being without it.

In form and substance, the Songs show themselves to have been designed for part-singing. If they begin in the first person of the pronoun, they are continued in the second or third. There is solo and chorus, recitative and address, statement of experience and prayer to Jehovah. Antiphonal features such as are found in many other parts of the Book of Psalms specially characterize this 'Little Psalter'. The Songs divide up in parts (approximately) as follows:—

PSALM 120. Opens in the first person, 'I,' 'my' (1, 2); a second person is addressed in *vv.* 3, 4; the remainder is in the first person.

PSALM 121. Opens with a solo, 'I,' 'my' (1, 2); a second

¹ Indirect allusions are passed by for the present purpose. The references to House and City in Ps. 127 may be regarded as proverbial rather than specific. The formula 'Let Israel now say' (124. 1; 129. 1) is obviously liturgical (comp. 118 2).

person is addressed, 'thy,' 'thee' (3); assurance regarding the Keeper of Israel (4); the remainder is made up of words spoken to a second person.

PSALM 122. Opens with a solo, 'I,' 'me' (1); chorus, 'our' (2); recitative (3-5); call to prayer, and invocation of blessing on Jerusalem (6, 7); solo resumed, 'my,' 'I' (8, 9).

PSALM 123. Solo (1); chorus, 'our,' 'us' (2); united prayer (3, 4).

PSALM 124. Common prayer (1-5); praise for deliverance (6-8).

PSALM 125. Statement regarding those who trust in Jehovah (1-3); prayer for Israel (4, 5).

PSALM 126. Chorus, 'we,' 'our' (1, 2^a); what the nations said, 'they,' 'them' (2^b); chorus continued, 'us,' 'we' (3); prayer in first person, plural (4); statement regarding sowers, in general and in particular (5, 6).

PSALM 127. General statement, 'they,' 'the watchman' (1); address to second person, plural (2); recitative (3); reference to third person (4, 5).

PSALM 128. Benediction upon the God-fearing (1); address to second person, 'thou,' 'thee,' 'thy' (2, 3); renewed reference to the God-fearing man (4); further words to second person, 'thee,' 'thou,' 'thy' (5, 6).

PSALM 129. Solo in the name of Israel, 'me,' 'my' (1-3); praise (4); judgement invoked upon them that hate Zion (5-8).

PSALM 130. Solo prayer, 'I,' 'my' (1-4); the soul's confession, 'I,' 'my' (5, 6); appeal to Israel (7, 8).

PSALM 131. Personal confession (1, 2); call to Israel (3).

PSALM 132. David's piety celebrated (1-7); appeal to Jehovah (8-10); the oath to David (11, 12); Zion's glory (13-18).

PSALM 133. Admiration expressed (1); a twofold comparison (2, 3^a); blessing (3^b).

PSALM 134. Call to the servants of Jehovah, 'ye,' 'your' (1, 2); response in blessing upon a person unnamed, 'thee' (3).

CHAPTER II

THE SONGS OF DEGREES

2. MEANING OF THE TITLE

IN such a title as שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת the case relation may easily be misapprehended. In fact, not lying on the surface, it has to be discovered; and like other lost or forgotten things, this must be searched for if it is to be found. As to the *nomen regens*, it is enough to render it 'A Song'. It is with the *nomen rectum* that difficulty arises, as the confusing variety of the proposed interpretations manifestly proves. Does the word suggest a time or place? Does it imply a custom or specify a method? Are the Songs qualified, or is an occasion indicated? Expressed by what is known as the 'construct state', the interdependence of the words is implicit rather than explicit.

Lacking information regarding the Temple forms of ancient Israel, expositors have doubtless laboured under great disadvantages when investigating the problems of the Psalter. Moreover, with the psalm inscriptions handed down in a confused and disordered state, critics have not had that help and guidance which would properly be afforded by a well-considered and consistent theory, either as to the formation of the Psalter, or as to the constituent parts of

what have so long been considered (without distinction) as the 'superscriptions'.

The discrimination of these latter, as recently set forth,¹ simplifies the problem before us in an important direction. There are certain things to be expected in headlines, and other certain things that are not to be expected. The headlines are literary in character and not musical; they may describe a poem as to its class (a Psalm, a Song, &c.), attribute it to an author (David, Asaph, &c.), associate it with a special occasion or some historical incident ('At the Dedication of the House,' 'When Nathan the prophet came,' &c.). In no case, however, do we find these headlines serving a liturgical purpose; and therefore we should not expect the one before us to indicate the Songs as for 'Praise with a Loud Voice', as Saadyah Gaon understood the words, or as 'Songs for the Higher Choir', as Luther and others have interpreted them. The liturgical element being, with good and sufficient reason, ruled out of *superscriptions*, as rightly understood, our field of inquiry is considerably narrowed, and safely so.²

We are still further guarded from misunderstanding by a due observance of the definite article prefixed to the *nomen rectum*. In the absence of reasons compelling an abstract rendering of the word, we must translate 'A Song of THE Degrees'—THE steps, THE stairs. A true explanation of the headline as a whole

¹ In the author's work, *The Titles of the Psalms*.

² The exceptional character of Ps. 119 makes it clear that the heading over Ps. 120 is in its right place, and can have no liturgical application to the psalm preceding. By all their features, the fifteen Songs declare themselves a distinct group.

cannot be built on a misconception of the particulars. On the surface, we have here something concrete, to which each Song sustains a relation. And until the words have been considered in their fundamental and unquestioned usage, we should not think of proposing arbitrary or speculative senses for them.

If we would inquire regarding Hebrew titular forms, we have little upon which to go outside the book of Psalms itself. In 2 Sam. i. 18 David's lament over Saul and Jonathan is entitled *קֶשֶׁת* (*qêsheth*) = 'Bow,' not assuredly because that word occurs in the poem (v. 22), but because the composition was designed to celebrate personal bravery and military prowess, of which the bow is a fitting symbol.¹ Outside poetry, it would seem to have been the custom among the early Hebrews to present or imply the title of a document in its opening section, in harmony with the practice of other Oriental peoples. The book of Proverbs furnishes a good example of this, its opening passage being an explanatory title of great force. First comes a statement of authorship, 'The Proverbs of Solomon the son of David, King of Israel' (i. 1);

¹ In view of the reading of the Septuagint (cod. B) some are disposed to regard the text as corrupt in this place. The case is by no means made out. At the same time, the supposition that the word *qêsheth* has found its way into the text from the margin, where it stood as indicating the place of the 'lamentation', is not impossible. And if such has been the case, then no argument is required to show that *qêsheth* was of the nature of a title, and is so still. The words of Christ, as given in Mark 12. 26, and Luke 20. 37, have been generally understood to imply that Ex. 3 (at least the earlier portion) was designated 'The Bush', because therein is related the story of 'the bush that burned, and was not consumed'.

and then an expression of object and purpose, 'To know wisdom and instruction,' &c. (2-6). There is a similar title to the book Ecclesiastes (I. 1-11). The pronoun of the first person in *v.* 12 indicates the beginning of 'The Words of Koheleth,' &c. The general message of the book is summarized in the extension of the title (*vv.* 2-11). In like manner, the Song of Songs has its title; and the same is the case with Nehemiah's 'words' or chronicle. The writings of the prophets also are similarly introduced, the title being in every instance *included in the text*.

In our present inquiry, it is unnecessary to follow the developments of Talmudic times. To designate Genesis by its opening word, *Bereshith* ('In the beginning'), and Exodus by its opening words, *Elleh Shemoth* ('These are the words'), is a constructive admission that those books had no formal titles when the practice thus described came into being. As to the so-called 'technical' names,¹ they are avowedly artificial, and in no sense literary in character or genius. In studying the Psalter, however, we are dealing with literature, and that of the highest order; and the poetry of which the book is composed exhibits but few features that can be regarded as artificial.

For the most part the headlines in the Psalter

¹ For example, *Tanach* (or *Tenack*) as a designation for the Old Testament, the word being formed from the initial letters of the Hebrew equivalent of 'Law, Prophets, and Writings'. Great rabbis and writers came to be known by names constructed in like manner, e.g. *Rashi* (=Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac); *Radak* (=Rabbi David Kimchi); *Shedal* (=Samuel David Luzzatto).

proclaim their own simplicity. While some are explicit, however, others imply more than they express. For instance, Psalms 38 and 70 are 'To bring to remembrance'—'To make memorial'. Remembrance of what? It is not affirmed. The particular title which at present engages us is of a similar order. It alludes to 'the degrees'; and at once we ask, What degrees? Some have looked for a liturgical allusion, others for reference to a time or place. We have endeavoured to show that nothing liturgical is to be expected in a *headline*; and further we have come to realize that the construct state (expressing our genitive) may imply a variety of relations.¹

Among things indisputable are the following facts: *Shir* means 'song'; *hām-mā'alôth* means 'the steps', 'the stairs,' 'the degrees.' The heading means then 'A Song of the Degrees', or steps, or stairs. To suppress the emphatic prefix (*the*) is to accommodate the words to some preconceived notion as regards their character or intention. Such a course would

¹ The field of literature affords ample illustration of this. Hood's 'Song of the Shirt' is *about* a shirt in its making. Wordsworth's 'Poems of the Imagination' were so called because they *originated in* a certain order of mental activity. Crabbe's 'Tales of the Hall' were so designated because *told in* a Hall. Apart from the facts, any one of these titles might easily be misunderstood. In a word, the genitive form requires *interpretation*; its meaning is not always self-evident. A pertinent illustration of such a construction is afforded by the fact that the Song of Moses, as given in Exod. 15, when set to synagogue music is known as *Shir ha-yam* ('The Song of the Sea'). Only in a measure, however, is the sea the subject of the poem. Yet it was sung when the sea was reached, therefore *by the sea*, and from that fact it received certain characteristics—and its title.

be essentially uncritical, and would not advance a sound solution of the problem which the headline represents. Yet, even when rendered with precision, the formula is not explicit. We ask, What is meant by 'the Degrees'? A working assumption is needed in order to the next step. That assumption is, that the title was intended to recall a reign or period, and to associate the Songs therewith.

In other words, the title 'A Song of the Degrees' comes from a time when every one knew King Hezekiah to have contributed to the Psalter; and it indicated every Song over which it stood as 'of the degrees', that is, associated with the 'degrees' incident of the king's career. In this view, the grammatical relation is not profound: it is on the surface. And as 'Upon His Blindness' would send us to the works of Milton, and 'On My Wedding Day' to those of Byron, so 'A Song of the Degrees' was intended to recall Hezekiah, with the implication that, while many psalms might relate to him, these as a group were specially concerned with certain great incidents of his life. The assumption thus advanced may easily be tested. What of the Songs? We shall show that, in the totality of their features, they respond to this as to no other theory of the meaning of the headline.¹

¹ As the Ark might stand for Noah, and the Keys for Peter, so 'the Degrees' might symbolize Hezekiah. It is not, however, contended that the term is used in figure for the king. It is sufficient to recognize it as recalling an eventful period. We hope later on to show that Hezekiah had much to do with the formation of the Psalter: in which case the implication of the headline would be 'the most natural thing in the world'.

Meanwhile, we note that the Songs are *fifteen* in number, thus in an impressive manner commemorating the fact that *fifteen* years was the period added to the king's life when Jehovah 'brought back again the shadow of THE DEGREES on the sundial of Ahaz'.¹ And before proceeding to consider the life of the King, and to examine the Songs *seriatim*, we call passing attention to the words with which Hezekiah closed his Writing on being 'recovered of his sickness': 'The Lord is my Saviour: THEREFORE WE WILL SING MY SONGS TO THE STRINGED INSTRUMENTS ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIFE IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.'² Here is a solemn statement of purpose on the part of the royal worshipper. Was it carried out?

¹ For the purposes of our present inquiry, it matters little whether the shadow receded on a sundial, or rested on a flight of steps, as some have understood the record.

² In due course we shall deal with the terms of this remarkable passage.

CHAPTER III

THE SONGS OF DEGREES

3. HEZEKIAH AND HIS TIMES.

HEZEKIAH was no ordinary man. If he was 'a man at the best', so also was he one of the best of men. It was written of him: 'He wrought that which was good and right and faithful before the Lord his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered' (2 Chron. 31. 20, 21). The Son of Sirach brackets his name with those of David and Josiah, declaring them more faithful than all the other kings of Israel. 'Hezekiah did that which was pleasing to the Lord, and was strong in the ways of David his father, which Isaiah the prophet commanded, who was great and faithful in his vision' (Ecclus. 48. 22; cp. 49. 4).¹

As we have seen that the Songs of the Degrees were Temple songs, so we must recognize that Hezekiah was a man whose heart was set upon the worship of God. His purpose, as expressed in his 'Writing'

¹ Hezekiah's piety, according to the Talmudists, alone occasioned the destruction of the Assyrian army, and the signal deliverance of the Israelites when Jerusalem was attacked by Sennacherib; and, in fact, caused him to be considered by some as the Messiah (*Sanh.* 99^a). *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, vol. vi. 380^b.

already referred to, was in harmony with his royal conduct regarded as a whole. He opened the house of God after it had been closed; cleansed it after it had been desecrated; restored its services 'according to the commandment of David'; and, as we shall show immediately, when stricken with mortal sickness, he grieved above all that he was thus cut off from the worship of Jehovah in the sanctuary. Is it surprising that it should have been recorded of him: 'He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him'? (2 Kings 18. 5).

The order of events in the life of Hezekiah may be (and is) subject of controversy; but the events themselves, and not their order, rendered the king famous in his generation. These may be summarized in a few sentences. He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. He came to the throne about 725 B.C., and without delay set himself to undo the evil work of his father and others who had gone before him. Having opened the doors of the House of the Lord, he reorganized the services, and made ample provision for their reverential continuance. In view of a celebration of the Passover feast, he sent messengers throughout the ten tribes as well as the two; with the result that from the extreme north Israelites came and joined with the pious in Judah—'So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem' (2 Chron. 30. 26).

With the enthusiastic co-operation of like-minded

worshippers of Jehovah, the king 'removed the high places', and destroyed other symbols and monuments of evil in the land. In the heyday of his prosperity, however—the fourteenth year of his reign—he was brought face to face with death. Isaiah the prophet came to him, and said: 'Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.' As there was no heir to the throne, this message was understood as a Divine rejection of the king, fraught with disastrous consequences to the people. 'Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord.' A merciful God was propitiated, and sent the prophet with a message of healing: 'Say to Hezekiah, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years.' The king sought a sign that the Lord would heal him, and that he should go up unto the house of the Lord the third day; and that sign was graciously given—the shadow on the dial of Ahaz went back ten degrees.

This great event in the king's life gave rise to the wonderful 'Writing' which appears in Isa. 38. Here is the mourner and the man of prayer; and having received assurance of an extension of days, and seeing therein the promise of a successor to the throne, he delivered the resolve already noticed: 'WE WILL SING MY SONGS TO THE STRINGED INSTRUMENTS ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIFE IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.' He received the sign of the degrees because of his anxiety to know of a certainty that he should 'go up unto the house of the Lord the third day'. As the promise through Isaiah satisfied him on that very point—'On

the third day thou shalt go up unto the House of the Lord'—was it not fitting that the life-purpose of the king should have relation to Temple worship?

Whatever estimate criticism may form of this part of the record, there can be no doubt that a widespread impression was made by the story of Hezekiah's recovery. In Babylon even, it was reported as a wonder; and Merodach-baladan, the king, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, who in turn was so appreciative of the patronage thus shown to him that he exhibited to his visitors every precious thing he possessed. Being prompted by a spirit of haughtiness and self-complacency, this act was displeasing to the Lord, who by the mouth of Isaiah the prophet sent word that, in coming days, the treasures which had been exhibited with so much satisfaction would be deported to the land of the aliens who had inspected them, and that the posterity of the king of Judah would become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

Even in these untoward experiences, however, Hezekiah enjoyed a large measure of the Divine favour. He was assured of peace and stability during the remaining years of his reign: whatever might be the clouds that loomed overhead, nothing was allowed to qualify his fame or give anxiety to his mind. The encomium of 2 Kings 18. 5 is supported by the words of the Son of Sirach: 'Except David and HEZEKIAH and Josiah, all committed trespass: the kings of Judah failed' (Ecclus. 49. 4).

Another great event in the reign of Hezekiah was the invasion of Judah by Sennacherib. There is reason to believe that this synchronized with the

sickness of the king. The story may be told in few words. Having 'encamped against the fenced cities', and taken many of them, the Assyrian extorted submission on the part of the king of Judah (2 Kings 18. 14). Without delay, however, in defiance of influences which counselled assent, or would have sought Egyptian aid in a contest with the invader, Hezekiah rebelled against Sennacherib, and committed the issue to the God of Israel (*v.* 20). The Assyrian lost no time in sending an army against Jerusalem, under Rabshakeh, who demanded an unconditional surrender. The message thus conveyed was not only insulting to Hezekiah, but blasphemous in its reflections upon Jehovah. The king of Judah at once sought the advice of Isaiah, and both of them made the situation a subject of prayer. The answer was reassuring: the city was spared the horrors of a prolonged siege; and 'that night the angel of the Lord went forth, and cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains, in the camp of the king of Assyria'. So Sennacherib 'returned with shame of face to his own land'.¹

These and such like occurrences could not but make the name of Hezekiah a great one in Judah and beyond. Not only did the Lord save him and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, but 'from the hand of all other, and guided them² on every side' (2 Chron. 32. 22). And that

¹ For details of the story of Hezekiah, see 2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chron. 29-32; Isa. 36-39.

² 'And gave them rest' is the reading of the early versions; cp., however, Isa. 49. 10. Thus there is reason for the more difficult reading to be retained.

there was a religious outcome of the favour thus shown to the king is indicated on the face of the record: 'Many brought gifts unto the Lord to Jerusalem, and precious things to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations from thenceforth' (*v.* 23). Moreover, not only in life was the king held in honour; but when he died 'they buried him in the ascent of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death' (*v.* 33).

Thus we see that the man of sorrows was also a man of faith. To criticize his actions, and impute unworthy motives for the same, is not justifiable; for the sources of our information concerning Hezekiah know nothing of disparagement. Subjected to peculiar trials, and beset with many difficulties, he was from beginning to end a God-fearing man. He received letters from Sennacherib (*2 Kings* 19. 14; *2 Chron.* 32. 17; *Isa.* 37. 14). Did he write nothing? Assuredly he was a mighty patron of letters. At his right hand was Isaiah, whom we must regard as a great author, and he had court officers that were equal to all the demands of a strenuous time (*2 Kings* 18. 18; 19. 2). Moreover, in a book wherein we should hardly expect to trace his influence, we read that certain Proverbs of Solomon were 'copied out' by 'the men of Hezekiah' (*Prov.* 25. 1).

Even though there is no reason to believe that Jewish tradition hands on much that is reliable from so remote a period, yet we may recall for what it is worth that the Talmudists attribute to Hezekiah the redaction of Isaiah, Proverbs, the Song of Solomon,

and Ecclesiastes.¹ Certainly it is but reasonable to suppose that the king who 'commanded the Levites to praise Jehovah in the words of David, and of Asaph the seer' (2 Chron. 29. 30) would have literary resources commensurate with such an undertaking—involving selection and 'copying out' as well as original composition—and in sympathy with a past time which so manifestly excited his emulation, and so warmly stirred his devotion in the service of God.

Before proceeding to examine the Songs of the Degrees, we will notice very briefly two objections which have been raised—the first, that the Writing of Hezekiah, in which the purpose to 'sing songs all the days of our life' is announced, is not in itself a genuine document; the second, that, even if the poem is genuine, the terms in which the life-purpose is expressed are not such as to contemplate poems of the שיר class.

1. Against the authenticity of the Writing, it is alleged that nothing therein characterizes the author as a king, or shows that his sickness happened at a time of crisis; or, again, that his recovery was a pledge of better times. Moreover, it has been contended that, had the Writing been authentic, it would have been given in the Book of Kings. In our judgement these features conspire with others to prove the authenticity of the document. Had the Writing been filled with boastful arrogance, it would, with good reason, have come under suspicion as having been fabricated in order to suit circumstances that were little appreciated; and had it set out minute details of its occasion it would not have been the

¹ *Baba Bathra*, 15^a.

poem that it is, but would have been a narration of incidents rather than the expression of a personal experience. If, however, the marks of royal authorship are few, may it not be because, at the point of death, a king is little besides *a man*? In the Writing we find a mourner at prayer, and that well becomes such a good king as Hezekiah.

Again, if the Writing had appeared in half a dozen other parts of the Old Testament, it would not have escaped the criticism of those who stipulate inclusion in the book of Kings as conclusive proof of authenticity. As a fact, it is where we might best expect it, in the writings of Isaiah, the trusted adviser of the king,¹ the prophet who, in the first instance, announced the approach of death, and, later on, was commissioned to intimate recovery and the 'bringing back again of the shadow of THE DEGREES'.² This is made plain beyond dispute in the Book of Kings itself (2 Kings 20. 1-11). This objection moreover, altogether overlooks the fact that Hezekiah was *sui generis*. If others would have written in a boastful strain, that was not his way. Even the 'haughtiness' which he exhibited when the ambassadors from Babylon visited him, was not chargeable with the boastfulness of the typical Oriental.

2. It may be objected, in the second place, that the verb שָׁמַע and its derivatives imply music and not

¹ The relations between king and prophet come under a significant light from the language of Ecclus. 48. 22: Isaiah, 'who was great and faithful in his vision,' *commanded* Hezekiah in regard to 'the ways of David'.

² Note also that the shadow returned after Isaiah had 'cried unto the Lord' (2 Kings 20. 11).

singing, stringed instruments and not lyrics, and that the language of Isa. 38. 20 rules out songs such as make up the collection now under notice. The objection is easily met. Nothing is more evident than that the 'instruments of music' so frequently referred to in the Psalter stood in a definite relation to 'songs of praise'. The accompaniment calls for words; in like manner, ננ involves a song. Hence the substantive ננינה not only means 'a stringed instrument' but also 'a song' (Lam. 3. 14: 'their song all the day'). In Ps. 77. 6 (7) the 'song in the night' is ננינה; in Ps. 42. 8 (9) it is שירה. In the former case 'meditation' (שיח) is the associated exercise; in the latter 'prayer' (תפילה). Moreover, in Ps. 33. 3 we have שיר and ננ in a parallel; in Isa. 23. 16 we have ננ and שיר. Again, in Ps. 68. 26 (25) we find שרים and ננים together.¹ Such usage makes it impossible for us to limit the meaning of ננ to a mechanical movement of the fingers on strings or wires. Accordingly, the terms of Isa. 38. 20 must be regarded as capacious enough for all that the common renderings suggest: that is to say, ננ and its derivatives include 'song' as expressed by שיר. The playing was

¹ Note also Ezek. 33. 32, where שיר (substantive) and ננ are in company. It is significant, moreover, that Ps. 66 which is headed 'A Song-Psalm', is in the liturgical subscription (standing in ordinary editions over Ps. 67) assigned 'To the Chief Musician, on *Stringed Instruments*'. Like features are found in connexion with Ps. 75, over which stands 'A Psalm-Song of Asaph', while its subscription (over Ps. 76) reads 'To the Chief Musician, on *Stringed Instruments*'. In each of these cases שיר and ננינת are brought into close association: in fact, into the relation of WORDS AND ACCOMPANIMENT.

not a self-contained exercise: it presupposed the 'Song'.

Should it be further objected that the language of the Songs of the Degrees bears few if any traces of the times of Hezekiah, the answer is supplied by a fact which in itself is undeniable, though in criticism it is insufficiently recognized—that is, that, speaking generally, the Hebrew of the Old Testament represents ONE style or age rather than several. In course of transmission, the face of the text has undergone continual change; in particular, the orthography has been dealt with more or less systematically. Hence, between two writings, one going back (say) to the time of Moses, and the other belonging (say) to the era of the Return, the difference is accidental rather than typical. In the words of Chwolson¹:—

It is quite absurd to try to determine the age of a work of the Old Testament by the orthography employed in it, as has frequently been attempted. For it is certain that what the ancient authors wrote had exactly the appearance of the Phoenician text of the inscription on the tomb of Ashmunazar, in which neither vowel letters nor separation of the words appear. . . .

The peculiar grammatical forms occurring in this or that Old Testament book are frequently used as a criterion of its age. Critics have hunted out so-called Chaldaisms or Aramaisms, and have said this book must, therefore, have been composed in the period when the Hebrews came into connexion with Aramaean nations, and were influenced by their language. But in their arguing they forgot the most elementary principle of linguistic inquiry, namely, that whilst a people may enrich its lexicons with foreign words by intercourse with another nation or nations, it never enriches its grammar with foreign grammatical forms. . . . If we look closer at these grammatical Aramaisms, we find

¹ *Hebraica*, vol. vi. pp. 102, 103.

them to be nothing else but *genuine ancient Hebrew grammatical forms*, which have been accidentally retained here and there.

Moreover, by the labours of Sopherim and Massorettes, the text has from time to time been subjected to a process of rejuvenation, in order that its meanings might be rendered as clear as possible. Whether, originally, in the form of ideographs or in cuneiform, in Phoenician or 'Assyrian' character, makes no matter: the documents have come to our day with a more or less common experience, and while the oldest of them show few archaisms the youngest exhibit fewer novelties.¹ Hence there is no argument from language against the Songs of the Degrees having come to us from the age of that king of Judah who was the subject of the 'Degrees' wonder.

It may be objected that if Hezekiah and his men wrote psalms, their names would have been connected with such compositions. The inference is by no means a necessary one. In fact, a survey of the Psalter as we now have it, effectually discredits the

¹ Such a treatment of books is not without a certain parallel in English literature. Our Authorized Version of the Bible was made in 1611; but since then the spelling and punctuation have undergone many changes. *For practical purposes* the book as we have it was made in 1611; but for critical purposes, IN REGARD TO ENGLISH, we should hesitate to work at the modern book: we should rather seek the original edition or an exact copy. The need for a like discrimination is frequently forgotten by critics of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Massoretic text, which fully answers practical purposes, is treated as if it could serve the ends of literary criticism. The history of the text furnishes ample grounds on which to conclude that such criticism must be uncertain as a process, and prove untrustworthy in its results.

objection. One-third of the psalms, or thereabouts, are anonymous; and if there is any truth in the 'common consent' that these include the most recent compositions, then this point emerges—that the latest contributors to the Psalter, however jealous to give the place of honour to David, were indifferent in the matter of guarding any fame which may have been their own due.

A study of the content of the later psalms will easily detect echoes of the age of Hezekiah; but where does the name appear? The 'orphan' psalms were obviously by men whose one desire it was to lead the nation to serve the Lord 'according to the commandment of David'; but those who saw that justice was done to the literary fame of the pioneers in psalmody had no successors to perform a like service for them. The 'men of Hezekiah' did a great work, which the wickedness of Manasseh could not neutralize. Yet with the good days of Josiah still in mind, we are compelled to say that at no period in the history of the people was the worship of Jehovah sustained with the same vigour as in the reign of Hezekiah, at least from the point of view of the Temple and its appointments for the expression of thanksgiving and praise (2 Chron. 29. 30).

In the light of these considerations, we are not only justified in associating the Songs of the Degrees with the reign of Hezekiah and his eventful career,¹ but, as already hinted, we are compelled to give weight to

¹ Leaving, as altogether secondary, the question whether those that are anonymous were written by himself, or whether his 'men' wrote them in commemoration of his wonderful reign.

the fact that the Songs are fifteen in number, corresponding to the years that were miraculously added to the king's life. Now, also, we are in a position to see why each Song has its own heading. Without some such token, and in the absence of definite enumeration such as prevails to-day, the various pieces would not have been distinguished. In other words, if such a formula as 'Songs of Degrees' had stood over the entire series (as some have suggested by 'emendation') who would have been able so to individualize the Songs as to arrive at certainty on points of detail?¹ But, as we see, the Songs are *fifteen*; and no one can divide up the material so as to make the number more or less.

As to Isa. 38. 20, we would not for a moment suggest that its terms contemplate in any *exclusive* sense such a collection of Songs as the one now under consideration. Doubtless the life-purpose there expressed had in view larger measures and a more comprehensive repertory of pieces. But, however that may be, we maintain that the Songs of the Degrees were specifically compiled and in a definite manner associated with King Hezekiah and his experiences on the throne of Judah.

¹ The presence of the heading, or some corresponding mark of division, was, as we must conclude, an essential condition of the *number* of the poems being preserved. Besides, there is no instance of psalms being grouped under a heading in the plural number. The *singular* form is a distinctive feature of the system of Psalter inscriptions.

CHAPTER IV

THE SONGS OF DEGREES

4. THE SONGS AND THEIR STORY

WHEN speaking of the story of the Songs, we mean the story which they reflect. It is not suggested that poetry should perform the functions of prose. If, however, the Songs of the Degrees really bear upon the career of Hezekiah in the manner here contended for, they will be found to agree in general terms with his experiences as outlined in history. The king's career was made up of a few striking events. The Songs of the Degrees, some original, others selected, constitute a commentary upon these events. History gives narrative: the Songs underscore particular aspects of the more important occurrences. If these poems are what we suggest them to be, there will be no instance in which the story and the Song will be foreign one to the other. Let us place the two elements in relation¹:—

THE ASSYRIAN INVASION: 'LYING LIPS' AND 'DECITFUL TONGUE'.

A SONG OF THE DEGREES.

| | |
|---|---------|
| In my distress I cried unto the LORD, | 1 [120] |
| And he answered me. | |
| Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, | 2 |

¹ Apart from the title-line, 'A Song of the Degrees,' we give the text of the Revised Version.

And from a deceitful tongue.

What shall be given unto thee, and what shall be done 3
more unto thee,

Thou deceitful tongue ?

Sharp arrows of the mighty, 4

With coals of juniper.

Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech, 5

That I dwell among the tents of Kedar !

My soul hath long had her dwelling 6

With him that hateth peace.

I am *for* peace : 7

But when I speak, they are for war.

When Sennacherib encamped against the fenced cities of Judah, Hezekiah saw that his purpose was to fight against Jerusalem (2 Chron. 32. 1, 2. *Heb.*: 'His face was for war'; cp. *v.* 7 of psalm, 'they are for war'). Later on, a force was sent against Zion, and surrender was demanded by Rabshakeh in terms that were not only hurtful to the king's dignity but dishonouring to the God of Israel (2 Kings 18. 31-5; 2 Chron. 32. 19). Boastful words were supported by letters that were an outrage upon the name of Jehovah; and having sought the prayers of Isaiah, the king went up into the Temple, and spread one such letter before the Lord in earnest supplication. (2 Kings 19. 14, 15; Isa. 37. 14; 2 Chron. 32. 17.) The words of Sennacherib were stigmatized as 'a reproach to the living God', who commissioned Isaiah to prophesy the destruction of the Assyrian army and to assure Hezekiah of Divine protection: 'I will defend this city, to save it, for Mine own sake' (2 Kings 19. 16-18, 22, 23, 32-4; Isa. 37. 23, 24, 34, 35).

The historical record finds its evident echo in the

first verse of the psalm. For the 'distress', see 2 Kings 19. 3, and Isa. 37. 3, where the word צָרָה is rendered 'trouble'. The prayer of *v.* 2, 'Deliver my soul,' is in terms of the profession put into the mouth of Hezekiah by Rabshakeh, 'Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, The Lord will surely DELIVER us' (2 Kings 18. 30, 32; 2 Chron. 32. 11-15; Isa. 36. 18). The Assyrian leader was all that is implied in *vv.* 2 and 3; and in *v.* 4 we have a singularly appropriate denunciation upon his impiety and deceit. In *v.* 5 the king bemoans his situation as one surrounded by barbarians—men who know not the God of Israel and who hate peace.¹ (The heathen were known in Israel as those who 'delight in war'—Ps. 68. 30.) From first to last the Song is true to the experiences of Hezekiah. On 'they are for war' (*v.* 7), see 2 Kings 18. 19 sq.; Isa. 36. 5 sq.; 2 Chron. 32. 2 sq.

HEZEKIAH AND HIS DIVINE PROTECTOR.

A SONG OF THE DEGREES.

| | |
|---|---------|
| I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains : | 1 [121] |
| From whence shall my help come ? | |
| My help <i>cometh</i> from the LORD, | 2 |
| Which made heaven and earth. | |
| He will not suffer thy foot to be moved : | 3 |
| He that keepeth thee will not slumber. | |
| Behold, he that keepeth Israel | 4 |
| Shall neither slumber nor sleep. | |
| The LORD is thy keeper : | 5 |
| The LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. | |
| The sun shall not smite thee by day, | 6 |

¹ Note that Kedar is denounced as an enemy of Judah in the time of Hezekiah (Isa. 21. 16, 17). We shall show, later on, that Isa. 42. 11; 60. 7 belong to the same time.

Nor the moon by night.

The LORD shall keep thee from all evil; 7

He shall keep thy soul.

The LORD shall keep thy going out and thy coming in, 8

From this time forth and for evermore.

This Song is a declaration of complete confidence in Jehovah, such as the career of Hezekiah furnished on more than one occasion.¹ When Rabshakeh spoke in words of blasphemy to the people of Judah, the king's order was 'Answer him not'; and forthwith he went into the house of the Lord, and committed the issue of the day to his Divine Keeper (2 Kings 18. 36; 19. 1 sq. and refs.). Again, when spreading the Assyrian's letter before the Lord, Hezekiah prayed, 'O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel . . . Thou hast made heaven and earth' (Isa. 37. 16). Though not distinctive, the latter expression is noteworthy, by reason of its occurrence in substance in this Song (*v.* 2; cp. also 124. 8; 134. 3).

Likewise, when brought to the gates of death, Jehovah was Hezekiah's mighty deliverer. In a single day—'from day even to night'—the king

¹ The opening verses propound a sharp contrast. The meaning may be (1) 'If I lift up mine eyes to the hills' so as to participate in the idolatrous worship there enacted, 'whence cometh my help?' (2) 'If I lift up mine eyes to the hills,' and consider the wickedness of Israel, as exhibited in idolatrous worship thereon, what can I expect in the way of help from Jehovah? (3) 'If I lift up mine eyes to the hills,' the sides of which are covered with Assyrian encampments, how hopeless is my case! But, NEVERTHELESS, 'my help cometh from the Lord,' &c. Both ideas of suggestion (3) are found in Isa. 42. In judgement, Jehovah 'lays waste the mountains and hills' (15); yet He is the One who 'created the heavens and spread abroad the earth' (5).

is to be cut off (Isa. 38. 12, 13); but such is the care of his unslumbering Keeper—‘the sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night’ (v. 6). Again, the prayer was, ‘Recover thou me, and make me live’ (Isa. 38. 16); the Song tells of Divine deliverance, ‘The Lord shall keep thee from all evil; He shall keep thy soul’ (v. 7).

Possibly the psalm commemorates the entire situation; as the crisis for the city and that for the king appear to have occurred at the same time. Hence, simultaneously with the healing word, the prophet announced the undertaking of the Lord: ‘I will add unto thy days; I will defend this city’ (Isa. 38. 5, 6). Though, in its broad outlines, true of many a servant of God, the Song seems specially responsive to the experiences of Hezekiah. As a poem it is made up of two parts: (a) the King’s profession regarding his Helper (vv. 1, 2); (b) the Prophet’s assurance of Divine protection from all evil, in all circumstances, and unto the uttermost (v. 3 to end).

HEZEKIAH AND THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.

A SONG OF THE DEGREES; OF DAVID.

| | |
|--|---------|
| I was glad when they said unto me, | 1 [122] |
| Let us go unto the house of the LORD. | |
| Our feet are standing | 2 |
| Within thy gates, O Jerusalem; | |
| Jerusalem, that art builded | 3 |
| As a city that is compact together: | |
| Whither the tribes go up, even the tribes of the LORD, | 4 |
| For a testimony unto Israel, | |
| To give thanks unto the name of the LORD. | |
| For there are set thrones for judgement, | 5 |
| The thrones of the house of David. | |
| Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: | 6 |

| | |
|---|---|
| They shall prosper that love thee. | |
| Peace be within thy walls, | 7 |
| And prosperity within thy palaces. | |
| For my brethren and companions' sakes, | 8 |
| I will now say, Peace be within thee. | |
| For the sake of the house of the LORD our God | 9 |
| I will seek thy good. | |

The love of Hezekiah for the house of the Lord, and his exertions for the good of Jerusalem were a passion. He opened the doors of the house of the Lord in the first year of his reign (2 Chron. 29. 3); and after setting in order the services, he sent letters to the tribes that made up the northern kingdom, as well as to those over whom he reigned—'that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the Lord, the God of Israel' (2 Chron. 30. 1). Later on, as we have seen, the house of the Lord was his resort in political stress; and again, when he was raised from his sickness, he announced a solemn purpose to engage in exercises of worship 'all the days of our life in the house of the Lord' (Isa. 38. 20). Moreover, the sign of the DEGREES was not given merely to assure the king of continued life, but also to console him on this very point: 'Hezekiah had said unto Isaiah, What shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up unto the house of the Lord the third day?'¹ (2 Kings 20. 8; Isa. 38. 22). THEN it was that the shadow 'returned backward ten steps', or degrees.

While more than one occasion in the life of David

¹ Herein the nature of the malady is suggested; for leprosy, with its uncleanness, excluded from the House of the Lord.

may be recalled by this beautiful psalm, its application to the experiences of Hezekiah points to some definite event, possibly to the passover celebration, just alluded to,¹ which was attended, not only by the people of Judah, but by 'divers of Asher and Manasseh, and of Zebulun', also some from Ephraim and Issachar, who 'humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem' (2 Chron. 30. 11, 18). The proceedings were significant in many senses: 'There was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David, there was not the like in Jerusalem' (v. 26). The entire language of the psalm is agreeable to such an occasion as this.²

THE ASSYRIAN INVASION: HEZEKIAH'S RELIANCE
ON JEHOVAH.

A SONG OF THE DEGREES.

| | |
|---|---------|
| Unto thee do I lift up mine eyes, | 1 [123] |
| O thou that sittest in the heavens. | |
| Behold, as the eyes of servants <i>look</i> unto the hand | 2 |
| of their master, | |
| As the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; | |
| So our eyes <i>look</i> unto the LORD our God, | |
| Until he have mercy upon us. | |

¹ Or to some celebration of the Feast of Weeks (see *Titles of the Psalms*, Second Edition, p. 47, note).

² The criticism that David could not have written it, because of its reference to 'the house of the Lord' before the Temple had been built, is pointless; for it was clearly customary to describe the Tabernacle in quite similar terms (Exod. 23. 19; Joshua 6. 24; Judges 18. 31; 1 Sam. 1. 7, 24; 3. 15; 2 Sam. 12. 20; & cp. Pss. 5. 7 (8); 11. 4). Besides, in regard to this as well as other psalms, it is quite possible that (as hymns have even been) they were *adapted* for the use now under consideration. See later, ch. viii.

Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: 3
 For we are exceedingly filled with contempt.
 Our soul is exceedingly filled 4
 With the scorning of those that are at ease,
 And with the contempt of the proud.

Yet another memorial of the grief which seized Hezekiah during the Assyrian invasion; yet another demonstration of his reliance upon Jehovah. Isaiah had delivered a word of comfort, 'Be not afraid,' and the eyes of the king were directed towards his Deliverer (2 Kings 19. 6). To Rabshakeh's boastful appeals and blasphemous denunciations no answer was given; the letter which caused so much distress was 'spread before the Lord', with the prayer—'Now therefore, save us, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art the Lord God, even Thou only' (2 Kings 18. 36; 19. 14, 19).

The reproachful Assyrian lifted up his eyes *against* the Holy One of Israel (2 Kings 19. 22); Hezekiah, on the contrary, says, 'UNTO Thee do I lift up mine eyes, O Thou that sittest in the heavens' (v. 1. Cp. the King's prayer in Isa. 37. 16: 'O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, that sittest upon the cherubim'). With great submission of spirit, he asks for mercy in circumstances of distress. Rabshakeh had spoken of the God of Jerusalem 'as of the gods of the peoples of the earth, which are the work of men's hands'; and he had asked the citizens of Jerusalem to pay no heed to Hezekiah, adding: 'Make your peace with me, and come out to me' (2 Chron. 32. 19; 2 Kings 18. 29-31). Rending his clothes, and covering himself with sackcloth, what could Hezekiah say but 'My soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are

at ease¹ and with the contempt of the proud'?
(v. 4).

THE ASSYRIAN INVASION: HEZEKIAH'S WONDERFUL ESCAPE.

A SONG OF THE DEGREES; OF DAVID.

| | |
|---|---------|
| If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, | 1 [124] |
| Let Israel now say; | |
| If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, | 2 |
| When men rose up against us: | |
| Then they had swallowed us up alive, | 3 |
| When their wrath was kindled against us: | |
| Then the waters had overwhelmed us, | 4 |
| The stream had gone over our soul: | |
| Then the proud waters had gone over our soul. | 5 |
| Blessed be the LORD, | 6 |
| Who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. | |
| Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: | 7 |
| The snare is broken, and we are escaped. | |
| Our help is in the name of the LORD, | 8 |
| Who made heaven and earth. | |

A psalm of David, written to recall a great deliverance, and selected (possibly with adaptation) to commemorate another equally wonderful. It is all true of Hezekiah and his experiences during the Assyrian invasion. The first four verses reflect the desperate character of the situation, when there was no resource but Jehovah. David was enabled to effect many escapes; the great escape of Hezekiah is outlined in

¹ The word used is שְׁאָנָן (*sha'anân*), which in its bad sense imputes pride or arrogance. Observe its occurrence in Isaiah's message to Hezekiah with reference to the proceedings of Rabshakeh: 'Thus saith the Lord, Because of thy raging against me, and for that thine ARROGANCY (*marg.* careless ease) is come into mine ears, therefore,' &c. (2 Kings 19. 20, 28; Isa. 37. 21, 29).

his remarkable story. That it was comparable to a bird securing its freedom after being imprisoned in a cage (*v.* 7^a), may be gathered from the boastful words of Sennacherib himself, as appearing in the well-known Taylor cylinder: ¹ 'Hezekiah of Judah . . . I shut up like a caged bird in Jerusalem, his royal city. . . . He was overwhelmed by the fear of the brightness of my lordship' (lines 11-30).

In view of Hezekiah's prayer, 'Now, therefore, O Lord, save us' (2 Kings 19. 19), and of the miraculous deliverance that followed (*vv.* 35, 36), what words could have been more appropriate in celebration of the issue, than 'The snare is broken, and we are escaped'? (*v.* 7^b). As to 'Our help is in the name of the Lord' (8^a), recall 'The Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all other' (2 Chron. 32. 22). 'Who made heaven and earth' (8^b) is the same descriptive term as was met with in Ps. 121. 2 (see also Ps. 134. 3). Note the liturgical expression, 'Let Israel now say' (*v.* 1). It occurs twice in the Songs (129. 1; cp. Ps. 118. 2).

THE ASSYRIAN INVASION: DIVINE PROTECTION ASSURED.

A SONG OF THE DEGREES.

| | |
|---|---|
| [125] They that trust in the LORD | 1 |
| Are as mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever. | |
| As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, | 2 |
| So the LORD is round about his people, | |
| From this time forth and for evermore. | |

¹ *Records of the Past*, Second Series, vol. vi, pp. 90, 91. See notes on Psalm 126 (pp. 44-7).

For the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest upon the lot 3
of the righteous ;
That the righteous put not forth their hands unto iniquity.
Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, 4
And to them that are upright in their hearts.
But as for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, 5
The LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.
Peace be upon Israel.

A Song in vindication of implicit reliance upon the Lord. While the troops of Sennacherib were around the city, Isaiah encouraged the king to put his trust in the Lord. In words already quoted, Hezekiah told his officers not to be afraid 'nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him : for there is a greater with us than with him : with him is an arm of flesh ; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles' (2 Chron. 32. 7, 8).

It would seem as if the prophet were the speaker in this Song. 'The rod of the wicked,' 'the sceptre of wickedness' (*v.* 3), is the power of the invading enemy, of which Isaiah said : 'Through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be broken in pieces, which smote with a rod' (Isa. 30, 31). 'The righteous' and 'the upright' (*vv.* 3, 4) were Hezekiah and his loyal supporters in Divine worship 'according to the commandment of David' (2 Kings 18. 3 ; 2 Chron. 29. 2 ; 31. 20). And what was the 'turning aside to crooked ways' (*v.* 5) but giving heed to the enticements of Rabshakeh, as he cried in the ears of the men of Jerusalem, 'Make your peace with me, and come out' (2 Kings 18. 31) ? To accept the invitation of the enemy would involve participation in his fate (*v.* 5), when at length 'the voice of the Lord' would

become 'the angel of death' to the hosts of Assyria (2 Kings 19. 35, and refs.).

The benediction with which this psalm is sealed, 'Peace be upon Israel,' is sufficient proof that we have here no homily of a general character. The political situation was one which called for the encouragement ministered by the words; and the conduct of Hezekiah in the day of adversity shows the mighty influence of Isaiah's advice, and the prevailing efficacy of his prayers.¹

THE ASSYRIAN INVASION: THE JOY OF DELIVERANCE.

A SONG OF THE DEGREES.

| | | |
|-------|--|---|
| [126] | When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, | 1 |
| | We were like unto them that dream. | |
| | Then was our mouth filled with laughter, | 2 |
| | And our tongue with singing: | |
| | Then said they among the nations, | |
| | The LORD hath done great things for them. | |
| | The LORD hath done great things for us; | 3 |
| | <i>Whereof</i> we are glad. | |
| | Turn again our captivity, O LORD, | 4 |
| | As the streams in the South. | |
| | They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. | 5 |
| | Though he goeth on his way weeping, bearing forth the | 6 |
| | seed; | |
| | He shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves <i>with him</i> . | |

This is a psalm into which exilic sentiments have generally been read, through misapprehension. The

¹ The concluding verse finds its opposite in Isa. 59. 8, where it is said of certain sinners: 'The way of peace they know not; . . . they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein doth not know peace.' The moral difference between שָׁקֵץ, which is here rendered 'crooked', and לִקְלָקֵץ, which is found in the psalm, is but slight.

'captivity' of a city, in the Hebrew idiom, does not necessitate the deportation of its people; the 'captivity' of a people, in fact, may be predicated of a condition of misfortune and disaster endured in their home and fatherland. This psalm, in its first part, celebrates a deliverance that gave joy in Zion, and caused surprise among the surrounding nations. The viewpoint is Zion itself: when its fortunes were turned, by the destruction of Sennacherib's army, the citizens were so overcome with joy as to be 'like unto them that dream' (v. 1).

The phrase *שׁוּב לְשִׁבְתָּ* (in this place appearing as *שׁוּב לְשִׁבְתָּ*) does not in an exclusive sense mean 'to bring captives back from exile'; its simple significance is 'to restore to a former state'. The words were applied, not only to peoples and nations, but even to individuals who had been overtaken by great affliction and trial (though never going into exile), as in the case of Job (Job 42. 10); also to a land whose restoration to its former state of prosperity was alone implied in the reference (Jer. 33. 11).¹ When used to describe return from exile, the phrase is frequently supported by explanatory words intended to make the meaning definite and plain.²

From the political the psalmist passes to the social. The second part of the poem is a prayer for a reversal

¹ As appearing in Ezek. 16. 53, the phrase is *explained* (in v. 55) to mean 'their former estate'.

² For example, 'The Lord will turn thy captivity . . . and gather thee from all the peoples' (Deut. 30. 3; Jer. 29. 14). 'I will bring again the captivity . . . and cause to return into the land' (Ezek. 29. 14; Jer. 30. 3). 'At that time will I bring you in and gather you: when I bring again your captivity' (Zeph. 3. 20).

of fortune along another line—that the Lord will give plenty as well as peace. The Assyrian invasion had brought ruin to the country, and in conditions of famine (2 Chron. 32. 11) seed-corn was precious, and the sower had to be encouraged by promises of a future harvest. Just at this time Isaiah was sent to the king with the message that God would give speedy deliverance. A sign was given: there would be neither sowing nor reaping for two seasons, but in the third year there would be sowing and reaping; vineyards would be planted, and the fruit thereof would be eaten (2 Kings 19. 29, 30; Isa. 37. 30).

The deliverance of the city being an accomplished fact, the realization of the harvest blessing was the next thing. This is the second subject of prayer—that as the autumn rains fill the stream beds of the thirsty regions, so the restored prosperity of Judah may be speedy and abounding.¹ In view of the scarcity from which the people had suffered, it is easy to understand the allusion to ‘tears’ in the sowing, also to appreciate the assurance of ‘joy’ in the reaping: ‘They may sow in tears, but in joy shall they reap. Though one may venture forth weeping, bearing the trail of seed, yet assuredly he shall come again with joy bearing his harvest sheaves!’ This is the sense. The passage is no mere abstract parable, but a prayer suited to a particular experience, and in harmony with what we know of the times of Hezekiah. And the prophet who gave the sign to the king, also, in a portion of his writings belonging to the same

¹ The ‘streams of the South’=the ‘brooks of Judah’ as found in Joel 3. 18. In each case the word is נַחֲלִים, and the picture one of harvest plenty.

period, gave further encouragement along this precise line (Isa. 30. 23; 32. 20).

The form and substance of the Song favour an interpretation which finds the expression of a home-experience as distinguished from oppression in a foreign land. The story of Hezekiah explains both sections. The miraculous smiting of the Assyrian host turned the fortunes of Zion in a manner which amply justified the opening lines.¹ In the situation thus indicated, the second section has a definite relation to the first; and the same cannot be said of any other exposition of the poem. There is, in fact, a truly striking harmony between the Song and the history.

THE ASSYRIAN INVASION : ALL BLESSING FROM JEHOVAH.

A SONG OF THE DEGREES; OF SOLOMON.

| | |
|--|---------|
| Except the LORD build the house, | 1 [127] |
| They labour in vain that build it: | |
| Except the LORD keep the city, | |
| The watchman waketh but in vain. | |
| It is vain for you that ye rise up early, and so late take a | |
| rest, | |
| And eat the bread of toil: | |
| For so he giveth unto his beloved sleep. | |
| Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: | 3 |
| And the fruit of the womb is his reward. | |
| As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, | 4 |
| So are the children of youth. | |
| Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: | 5 |
| They shall not be ashamed, | |
| When they speak with their enemies in the gate. | |

¹ As illustrating the vitality of this great incident in the life of Hezekiah, see Ecclus. 48. 18-21; 1 Macc. 7. 41, 42 (cp. 2 Macc. 8. 19).

This psalm of Solomon suits the case of Hezekiah in every detail. When the Assyrian was at the walls of Zion, the king said to his captains of war: 'There is a greater with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight our battles' (2 Chron. 32. 7, 8). In other words, the Lord is the real Worker, the real Warrior: not to reckon on Him is to labour in vain. 'I will defend this city to save it' was Jehovah's word to Hezekiah (2 Kings 19. 34). The psalm suggests just such a relation. It were vain to take anxious thought.

The second verse supports the first: watching and labouring being expressed in other terms. Another element is brought in, however: in view of the wear and tear of long hours and hard toil, the Lord, in beneficence, ordains sleep and rest. To 'rise up early and take late rest' were indeed *vain* in such circumstances.¹ If the Lord is Builder and Keeper, then His people should repose themselves in His loving care. At least, this should be the case with 'his beloved one', who is specified in the passage. Hezekiah learned the lesson of resting in patience while the Lord wrought deliverance for him. Sleep made trust imperative, and therefore, as a Divine ordinance, expressed the mind of the Lord against taking anxious thought. The king could adopt the words

¹ The view of this verse, which implies that the Lord gives to His beloved *while asleep* that for which others toil so anxiously, cannot be derived from the words employed. Rather, the object of the passage is to celebrate the goodness of God in ordaining sleep in those strenuous conditions of life which most urgently demand it.

of David: 'In peace will I both lay me down and sleep: for thou, Lord, alone makest me dwell in safety' (Ps. 4. 8).

The second part of the Song (*vv.* 3-6) strikes another note, which was peculiarly relevant to Hezekiah's experience. In an emphatic manner did the king learn that 'children are an heritage of the Lord'. When smitten with sickness, he had no heir;¹ and the Divine promise that David should never lack a successor on the throne was apparently imperilled (see 1 Kings 8. 25, 26; 11. 36 and refs.; 2 Chron. 6. 16; 7. 17, 18). Later on, in his Writing, after recovery, he said: 'The living, the living, he shall praise Thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known Thy truth' (Isa. 38. 19). For twelve years after that, as Manasseh and possibly other children (*cp.* 2 Kings 20. 18; Isa. 39. 7) grew up before him, he was permitted to indulge the hope that his sons would follow noble ideals while 'speaking with their enemies in the gate' (*v.* 5).

Or possibly the Song has another drift. It may

¹ This is shown by the fact that, when he died, fifteen years later, he was succeeded by Manasseh his son, who was then twelve years of age. Josephus rehearses the facts in the way they would impress the Jewish nation: 'The trouble he was in at the idea of death was not because he was soon to lose the advantages he enjoyed as king, nor did he on that account pray that he might have a longer life afforded him, but only in order to have sons to succeed him' (*Antiq.*, Bk. x, ch. ii, sect. 1). There is a Rabbinical story on the point. When intimating the approach of death, Isaiah reproached Hezekiah for having neglected marriage. Not losing heart, however, the king prayed for recovery, and subsequently married Hephzibah, the daughter of Isaiah, who bore him Manasseh (*Ber.* 10^a; *cp.* 2 Kings 21. 1).

have been proposed for the consolation of the king when called upon to 'set his house in order', with a view to death. In that case, its message would be: The Lord is in everything connected with the nation—to build without Him is vain, and so also is any effort for the protection of the city. If, then, He is the great Worker and Keeper, an individual may be dispensed with: 'so He brings the sleep of death upon His beloved one.'¹ The remainder of the Song is capable of treatment in harmony with this situation. The king was thinking of the succession to the throne; and, whether by adaptation or otherwise, the Song deals with that point. True, 'children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is His reward,' yet all the advantage is with 'the children of one's youth'—a man in his primal vigour. Oh that Hezekiah already had his quiver full of them!²

HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS: WHAT FOLLOWED ON RECOVERY.

A SONG OF THE DEGREES.

| | | |
|-------|---|---|
| [128] | Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD, | 1 |
| | That walketh in his ways. | |
| | For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: | 2 |

¹ The following are typical passages in the Old Testament in which death is mentioned under the figure of sleep, or lying down to rest: Ps. 13. 3 (4); 76. 5 (6); Job 14. 12; Jer. 51. 39, 57; Dan. 12. 2; also 1 Kings 2. 10; 11. 21, and similar statements throughout the historical books.

² As if rebuking the king for having neglected marriage. The Talmudists have inferred that he did so (*loc. cit.*); and the fact (already noticed) that Manasseh was born three years after the recovery from sickness has been held to favour the inference—always supposing that he had no wife before Hephzibah (2 Kings 21. 1; cp. Isa. 62. 4).

Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.
 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine, in the innermost parts 3
 of thine house :
 Thy children like olive plants, round about thy table.
 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed 4
 That feareth the LORD.
 The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion : 5
 And thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.
 Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children. 6
 Peace be upon Israel.

This Song is more hopeful than its predecessor. Being a righteous man, Hezekiah shall yet know domestic blessedness. After his wonderful recovery, 'as father to the children,' the king was able 'to make known the faithfulness of God'—once more recalling the words of the Writing (Isa. 38. 19). The Song teaches, in brief, that the fear of the Lord brings blessing, not only reward of daily labour, but also domestic prosperity. The prophet is addressing the king ; and having drawn a word-picture of family joys, he says, 'Thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord' (*v.* 4).

The benediction of *v.* 5^a is repeated in Ps. 134. 2 : the other member of the verse recalls the words of the king to the prophet, 'There shall be peace and truth in my days' (Isa. 39. 8)—a hope which was historically realized : 'The wrath of the Lord came not upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah' (2 Chron. 32. 26). The concluding verse expresses desires which it was given to the king to know in part : he rejoiced in offspring, whereby the succession to the throne was made secure, and saw the blessings of peace among his people (Isa. 39. 7, 8. Cp. Ps. 126. 5).

JUDGEMENT UPON THE ENEMIES OF ZION.

A SONG OF THE DEGREES.

| | |
|--|---|
| [129] Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth up, | 1 |
| Let Israel now say ; | |
| Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth up : | 2 |
| Yet they have not prevailed against me. | |
| The plowers plowed upon my back ; | 3 |
| They made long their furrows. | |
| The LORD is righteous : | 4 |
| He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked. | |
| Let them be ashamed and turned backward, | 5 |
| All they that hate Zion. | |
| Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, | 6 |
| Which withereth afore it groweth up : | |
| Wherewith the reaper filleth not his hand, | 7 |
| Nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom. | |
| Neither do they which go by say, | 8 |
| The blessing of the LORD be upon you ; | |
| We bless you in the name of the LORD. | |

Once again, the theme is the afflictions of the king; but these are rehearsed in order to show that Jehovah is greater than all the enemies of Israel. The liturgical note, 'Let Israel now say,' was met with in Ps. 124. 1; it introduces a repetition of sentiment, and shows that these poems are songs in the definite sense of the word (cp. Ps. 118. 2).

Jehovah is righteous, not simply to rectify the wrongs of His people, but to neutralize the machinations of the wicked (*vv.* 2-4). This truth was marvellously realized in the destruction of Sennacherib's army. The next verse, 'Let them be ashamed and turned backward, all they that hate Zion,' finds its counterpart in the record, 'And the Lord sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains, in the camp of the king

of Assyria. So *he returned with shame of face to his own land* (2 Chron. 32. 21).

The next section of the poem (*vv.* 6, 7) presents another instance of striking harmony with the story of Hezekiah. In his march of conquest the Assyrian laid waste fenced cities, reducing them to heaps of ruins (2 Kings 19. 25). The people being dismayed and confounded, became 'as the grass of the field, as the green herb, as the grass on the housetops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up' (2 Kings 19. 26; cp. Isa. 37. 27). Acknowledging Jehovah as a righteous God, how should Hezekiah pray, but that the Assyrian might have measured out to him according to his wanton treatment of those whose lands he had invaded? So, in the terms of the historical narrative, he prays that the enemies of Zion may themselves be 'as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up,' &c. The concluding verse completes the sentiment of execration.

HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS: DIVINE MERCY CELEBRATED.

A SONG OF THE DEGREES.

| | |
|---|---------|
| Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. | 1 [130] |
| Lord, hear my voice: | 2 |
| Let thine ears be attentive | |
| To the voice of my supplications. | |
| If thou, LORD, shouldst mark iniquities, | 3 |
| O Lord, who shall stand? | |
| But there is forgiveness with thee, | 4 |
| That thou mayest be feared. | |
| I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, | 5 |
| And in his word do I hope. | |
| My soul <i>looketh</i> for the Lord, | 6 |
| More than watchmen <i>look</i> for the morning; | |

Yea, more than watchmen for the morning.
 O Israel, hope in the LORD ; 7
 For with the LORD there is mercy,
 And with him is plenteous redemption.
 And he shall redeem Israel 8
 From all his iniquities.

This psalm is plainly reminiscent of 'the Writing of Hezekiah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness' (Isa. 38. 9). The 'depths', or deep waters, imply distress (cp. Ps. 120. 1: 'In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and He heard me'). Once again we meet with notes of humiliation and penitence, also with the king's assurance of forgiveness and deliverance. 'There is forgiveness with Thee' (v. 4) suggests 'Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back' (Isa. 38. 17). Again, 'My soul looketh for the Lord more than watchmen look for the morning' (v. 6), finds its response in 'From day even to night wilt Thou make an end of me. I quieted myself until morning' (Isa. 38. 13). Here, indeed, there may be fear: but the Song brings in hope of mercy, and a conviction of 'plenteous redemption'—not alone for the individual penitent, but also for Israel as a people. On the last verse, compare Pss. 25. 22; 34. 22, as explained with reference to Hezekiah's reign, in ch. viii *infra*.

HEZEKIAH AND THE AMBASSADORS FROM BABYLON.

A SONG OF THE DEGREES; OF DAVID.

[131] LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; 1
 Neither do I exercise myself in great matters,
 Or in things too wonderful for me.
 Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul; 2
 Like a weaned child with his mother,

My soul is with me like a weaned child.

O Israel, hope in the LORD

3

From this time forth and for evermore.

If David looked back with repentance upon acts of haughtiness, so also did Hezekiah; and no memorial of his career would have been complete while his faults remained unrecognized. When the king of Judah was recovered of his sickness, Merodach-baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present by the hands of ambassadors. The men came 'to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land'; whereat Hezekiah's heart was 'lifted up'. This displeased the Lord, and led to the denunciation of judgement upon the nation. 'Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah' (2 Kings 20. 12-19; 2 Chron. 32. 25-31; Isa. 39. 1-8). This submission of spirit is recalled by the psalm before us.

In the opening line we have the very idiom of 2 Chron. 32. 25, 26: the 'lifting up of heart', and the 'being haughty of heart', are expressed in the same Hebrew words—*גָּבַהַ לִבּוֹ*, in an unworthy sense, means to be lifted up with pride, to be haughty. The line 'Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul' contains an echo of Hezekiah's well-known psalm of praise: 'I have stilled,' as found in *v.* 2, corresponding with 'I quieted myself' (R.V.) in Isa. 38. 13—the *piel*, or intensive form of *שָׁן*, conveying the idea of mind composure, *abandon* of spirit. The last verse opens with a line already noted in Ps. 130. 7, implying, after *v.* 2, a childlike dependence on the Lord. Hezekiah

came to this indeed ; for even when Isaiah predicted evil things for his posterity, the king showed complete resignation to the Divine will—' Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken ' (Isa. 39. 8).

HEZEKIAH AS TRUE SUCCESSOR OF DAVID.

A SONG OF THE DEGREES.

| | | |
|-------|---|----|
| [132] | LORD, remember for David | 1 |
| | All his affliction ; | |
| | How he swear unto the LORD, | 2 |
| | And vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob : | |
| | Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, | 3 |
| | Nor go up into my bed ; | |
| | I will not give sleep to mine eyes, | 4 |
| | Or slumber to mine eyelids ; | |
| | Until I find out a place for the LORD, | 5 |
| | A tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob. | |
| | Lo, we heard of it in Ephrathah : | 6 |
| | We found it in the field of the wood. | |
| | We will go into his tabernacles ; | 7 |
| | We will worship at his footstool. | |
| | Arise, O LORD, into thy resting place ; | 8 |
| | Thou, and the ark of thy strength. | |
| | Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness ; | 9 |
| | And let thy saints shout for joy. | |
| | For thy servant David's sake | 10 |
| | Turn not away the face of thine anointed. | |
| | The LORD hath sworn unto David in truth ; | 11 |
| | He will not turn from it : | |
| | Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. | |
| | If thy children will keep my covenant | 12 |
| | And my testimony that I shall teach them, | |
| | Their children also shall sit upon thy throne for evermore. | |
| | For the LORD hath chosen Zion ; | 13 |
| | He hath desired it for his habitation. | |
| | This is my resting place for ever ; | 14 |
| | Here will I dwell ; for I have desired it. | |
| | I will abundantly bless her provision : | 15 |

| | |
|---|----|
| I will satisfy her poor with bread. | |
| Her priests also will I clothe with salvation : | 16 |
| And her saints shall shout aloud for joy. | |
| There will I make the horn of David to bud : | 17 |
| I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. | |
| His enemies will I clothe with shame : | 18 |
| But upon himself shall his crown flourish. | |

As noticed under Psalm 127, when Hezekiah was sick unto death he had the sorrowful reflection that no successor had been given him. Hence, when told to 'set his house in order', he was, in the circumstances, driven to conclude that he had come under the Divine displeasure. God was casting him off; and the covenant with David, 'to give a lamp to him and his children alway' (2 Chron. 21. 7), was in danger of being dishonoured. The point of this Song is that, though Hezekiah may be unworthy, surely it was not so with David to whom Jehovah made a promise which had been held in respect from generation to generation—'an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure' (2 Sam. 23. 5).

The afflictions of David—what he endured for his God, and what he did out of a godly fear—are described in words with which, in his life, Hezekiah showed a practical sympathy; for had he not reopened the Temple which Solomon built of materials supplied by David, and had he not set in order the services of the House, appointing the priests and Levites to do their part 'according to the commandment of David'? (2 Chron. 29. 3, 25. 27). Well may Hezekiah himself be the author of this psalm,¹ in which, after recount-

¹ Embodying therein some lines already familiar in 'the Praises of Israel' (*vv.* 8-10; *cp.* 2 Chron. 6. 41, 42).

ing some of the noble deeds of David, prayer is offered to the Lord in his prevailing name: 'For Thy servant David's sake, turn not away the face of Thine anointed. The Lord hath sworn unto David in truth; He will not turn from it: Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne' (*vv.* 10, 11).¹ The oath of Jehovah is pleaded by Hezekiah as of continuing force.

Besides, what about Zion? Had the Lord made no undertaking regarding the city—'Mount Zion which He loved,' the city which He had chosen to put His name there? (2 Chron. 12. 13; cp. Ps. 78. 68). Yea verily; and the Divine choice is pleaded in support of the unalterable oath. Such pledges as these were the king's confidence in a time of contradiction and grief. Hence the psalm proceeds to rehearse the position of Zion as the centre of rule and worship (*vv.* 13-16); and in view of promises that cannot be set aside, alike regarding the throne and the city, the royal poet looks forward to a future of blessing (17, 18).

The general language of the Song reminds us that, when the Assyrian attacked the city, the Lord said: 'I will defend this city to save it, *for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake*'; also that it was as '*the God of David thy father*' that the Lord interposed to prolong the king's life (2 Kings 19. 34; 20. 5). The 'priests clothed in righteousness', and 'saints shouting aloud for joy' (*vv.* 9, 16), recall the glories of the Temple worship as restored by Hezekiah (2 Chron. chaps. 29-31); though obviously some lines of the psalm

¹ The promise set forth in 1 Kings 11. 36 (and refs.) was the rock foundation of 'things hoped for' in the Israelitish breast.

contemplate 'glory upon glory' in the future history of the Israel of God.

IN MEMORY OF HEZEKIAH'S PASSOVER CELEBRATION.

A SONG OF THE DEGREES; OF DAVID.

| | |
|--|---------|
| Behold, how good and how pleasant it is | 1 [133] |
| For brethren to dwell together in unity! | |
| It is like the precious oil upon the head, | 2 |
| That ran down upon the beard, | |
| Even Aaron's beard; | |
| That came down upon the skirt of his garments; | |
| Like the dew of Hermon, | 3 |
| That cometh down upon the mountains of Zion: | |
| For there the LORD commanded the blessing, | |
| Even life for evermore. | |

There was no event in the life-time of Hezekiah more remarkable than the Passover celebration which he organized in the first year of his reign, as described in 2 Chron. 30. Not only was this great convocation announced among the people of Judah; but 'throughout all Israel, from Beersheba even to Dan' messengers were sent, who urged the people to return unto Jehovah.¹ Such was the alienation of the tribes from the old ways, that we read of the posts being mocked, and 'laughed to scorn'. This, however, was not so wonderful as the conduct of

¹ A sympathetic inference as to the meaning of this expression is drawn by Josephus as follows: 'The king . . . also sent to the Israelites and exhorted them to leave off their present way of living, and return to their ancient practices, and to worship God, for he gave them leave to come to Jerusalem, and to celebrate ALL IN ONE BODY the Feast of Unleavened Bread; and he said this was by way of invitation only, and to be done, not out of obedience to him, but of their own free will, and for their own advantage, because it would make them happy' (*Antiq.*, Bk. ix, ch. xiii, sect. 2).

others, 'divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun,' also many of Ephraim and Issachar, who 'humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem' (*vv.* 11, 18).

The result was a specially joyous celebration of the feast: 'Since the time of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, there was not the like in Jerusalem.' Once again there was a united Israel—not, it is true, united in political action, but united in the solemnities of the worship of Jehovah. David had known this joy in his time; and a psalm by him was employed to commemorate the happy event as it entered into the experience of the God-fearing king who received the sign of the Degrees.

Now as to the psalm. It is more than a commonplace on 'brotherly love'. It is an eulogium upon a scene of unexampled beauty. The first verse expresses admiration at 'brethren dwelling together in unity'. Then follow two impressive similes designed to animate the picture. (1) Such a condition *has a fragrance which excels*: it is as if the goodly anointing oil not only ran down upon the beard of Aaron, but continued to overflow so as to cover the collar of his garments. (2) Such a condition, moreover, *is abundantly refreshing*: it is as if the dew of Hermon in the far North came down in such diffusion as to cover the hills of the distant South—the mountains of Zion.¹

¹ This interpretation is true to the Hebrew text. Many versions have failed to express the meaning because made on the assumption that something normal and ordinary is described, whereas it is obvious that the intention is to delineate something altogether abnormal and extraordinary.

A sound interpretation of these figures must treat them from the point of view of their obvious intention, as supporting and enriching the meaning of the first verse—'How good and how pleasant!' The object of either figure is to express a sublime superfluity; a rich abundance—of fragrance in the one case, of refreshment in the other.¹ In the latter simile an additional content may be found. Men of the far North—from Asher, Zebulun, and Issachar—joined their brethren in the far South. How welcome they were! Their coming was as the dew of Hermon (under which they lived) flowing down on the mountains of Zion (where the brotherhood was pledged in a common worship of Jehovah).

The concluding verse asserts, not only the condition of blessing, but also the place from which it was dispensed (cp. 2 Chron. 30. 26, 27). The 'Songs of the Degrees' are Songs of ZION.

HEZEKIAH AND THE SERVICE OF THE LORD'S HOUSE.

A SONG OF THE DEGREES.

| | |
|---|---------|
| Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, | 1 [134] |
| Which by night stand in the house of the LORD. | |
| Lift up your hands to the sanctuary, | 2 |
| And bless ye the LORD. | |
| The LORD bless thee out of Zion; | 3 |
| Even he that made heaven and earth. | |

¹ In other words, the similes are not so much concerned with the oil as with its *overflow*, not so much with dew as with its *expansive descent*. In each case, the relative clause שִׁירָה introduces the distinguishing sentiment of the Song. The fact that the sacred anointing oil was absent from the Second Temple, decides against the post-exilic authorship which many expositors claim for this psalm.

The king who declared with a well-defined reason that he 'would play his stringed instruments all the days of his life in the house of the Lord' (Isa. 38. 20) was the man to use these words. Having, when sick, asked for a sign, not only that he should be healed, but also that he 'should go up to the house of the Lord the third day' (2 Kings 20. 8)—the house which he had opened, and for the services of which he had made royal provision (2 Chron. chaps. 29, 31); these words were suited to his mind and spirit. (See notes on Pss. 122 and 133.)

The language speaks of such a full order of service as the history attributes to Hezekiah's ordinance. Once more Jehovah is spoken of as 'He that made heaven and earth' (cp. Pss. 121. 1; 124. 8), as distinguished from gods which 'were no gods, but the work of men's hands' (2 Kings 19. 18). And the attribute of power is associated with the grace of blessing: 'the Lord . . . bless thee out of Zion' (cp. 128. 5).

CHAPTER V

THE SONGS OF DEGREES

5. COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS

THIS is not the first time that the Songs of Degrees have been associated in exposition with the name of Hezekiah; although as now advanced the association is for the most part on grounds that have not hitherto been suggested. Two hundred and fifty years ago, John Lightfoot discerned a harmony between the spirit of the Songs and the events of Hezekiah's life.¹ He wrote:—

The degrees of the sun's reversing, and the fifteen years of Hezekiah's life-prolonging, may call to our minds the fifteen psalms of degrees, viz. from Psalm 120, and forward. There were Hezekiah's songs that were sung to the stringed instruments in the house of the Lord (Isa. 38. 20): whether these were picked out by him for that purpose, be it left to censure. . . . Whoso, in reading those psalms, shall have his thoughts upon the danger of Jerusalem by Sennacherib, and her delivery,—and the sickness of Hezekiah, and his recovery,—shall find that they fit those occasions in many places very well. But I assert nothing, but leave it to examination.

Again, in 1882, Abraham Wolfson, a Jewish writer, published (at Warsaw) a treatise entitled: על המעלות או מכתב לחזקיהו: *The Shadow of the Degrees, or the*

¹ *Chronicle and Harmony of the Old Testament*. Pitman's edition of Lightfoot's Works, vol. ii, pp. 268, 269.

*Writing of Hezekiah.*¹ He associated the Songs with Isa. 38. 20, and found in them allusions to great events in the reign of the king of Judah. He saw in the delineations of distress references to the captivity of the Ten Tribes, and supposed the Songs to be arranged according to their fitness for use at certain hours of the day. In some of these views he weighted his thesis with unprovable assumptions.

Through a discrimination of the psalm inscriptions, the titles of the Songs are faced in a manner unrealized by Lightfoot and Wolfson. For the first time, it is shown that the title is *literary*: standing in its proper place as a headline, it has nothing to do with liturgical order or description. Each piece is 'A Song'; and, that the number of the series might be placed beyond dispute, the words 'A Song of the Degrees' stand over each. As we have already explained, such words as 'A Psalm,' 'A Song,' 'Of David,' 'Of Asaph,' &c., are the natural and effective tokens of division throughout the Psalter.

In this group then, the individualization of the psalms is not a problem but a fact: and the number is fifteen. The significance of this, as bearing on the story of Hezekiah, needs not to be emphasized. The studied precision of the titles, moreover, demands attention. They come to us from days with which the most hoary tradition has lost contact; and off-hand criticism does not in reality dispose of them. Ten of the Songs are anonymous, four are by David, and one is by Solomon. In other words, ten are original, and five selected². And again, the group

¹ Noticed by Stevens in *Hebraica*, vol. xi, pp. 22-5.

² If there were anything in the suggestion that a plural

constitutes a compact series. The Songs are not fugitive pieces: they are nowhere found in any order other than the one with which we are familiar. And although the words 'Of David' (as standing over some) are wanting in the inscriptions in a few MSS. and in early versions, there is no doubt about the stability of the essential part of the title—'A Song of the Degrees'; and this headline, which distinguishes every psalm of the series, has commanded the unflinching respect of Hebrew copyists, and in some way or other been reckoned with by all the old translators.

We repeat, that the formula 'A Song of the Degrees' is in full harmony with the system of headlines as properly discriminated. First, we have a poem designated according to its class—'A Song.' Then we have the Song associated with an event which recalls a person—the man of the Degrees, King Hezekiah. Following that headline back to days anterior to all controversy regarding its nature or meaning, we find it, at length, 'uncomprehendingly' copied and translated. It is assuredly reasonable to suppose that it was fully understood when placed in the position in which we now find it. At length, moreover, the headlines and Songs together show

heading, 'Songs of Degrees,' had been transferred, and distributed through the series in a promiscuous manner, then what explanation could be given of the occurrence of the words 'Of David', standing over Pss. 122, 124, 131, 133; and of 'Of Solomon', standing over Ps. 127? Why did not the redactor put 'Of David' over all? Why did he put 'Of Solomon' over only one, and leave ten anonymous? It becomes obvious that a conscientious jealousy has guarded the inscriptions, notwithstanding that they have, all the while, been so largely misunderstood, both as to their nature and meaning.

their relation to pre-exilic times, a fact which explains in some measure the mystery which has enveloped this entire series of psalms. In a word, the chaos of Babylonian captivity is seen to be responsible for this with many other sad consequences for the kingdom and people of Judah.

We began by assuming that the Songs were styled 'Of Degrees' because THEY WERE (AND ARE) SUCH. We have sought the reason for the designation; and do not hesitate, in conclusion, to pronounce it in harmony with sound literary conceptions. We have found the title to be consistent with the Songs themselves; and we suggest, with all confidence, that the qualities of simplicity and truth support the view presented. The topics of the Songs are few; the hero is one—the man of the Degrees, a man of sign in many respects. After leading his people for years in the worship of God, he was brought to the gates of death; and in answer to prayer was 'recovered of his sickness', and given an assurance of fifteen more years of life. In the words of John Lightfoot: 'To Hezekiah alone is it given to know the term of his life; and the sun in the firmament knoweth not his going down, that Hezekiah may know his.'¹

Whether original or selected, the various Songs echo the reign. Many of them contain notes of striking harmony: Pss. 126, 128, 129, 131, and 133 exhibit literary and historical links which should make it exceedingly difficult to question the conclusions to which our investigations have pointed.² Given the soundness

¹ *Works*, Pitman's edition, vol. ii, p. 268.

² After an examination of the five Songs here specified, one is in a position to consider the recent statement that the Songs

of those conclusions, two thoughts arise. First, Hezekiah was a greater man than we have been disposed to think, and must be accorded a larger place in the Old Testament story. Second, between the king and his people there was a moral and spiritual contrast which, when duly weighed, is calculated to invest the life and character of Hezekiah with a significance which has not, so far, been allowed in the adumbration of Messianic ideals.

Questions as to the authorship of the individual Songs have not, so far, come within the scope of our inquiry. Suffice it to remark, on this point, that for Hezekiah and his men to import Davidic poems into the compilation should not occasion difficulty. Enlarging views regarding the literatures of the East may one day furnish an unexpected foil for the doubts which prevail in some quarters as to the influence of the Sweet Singer of Israel. On the other hand, we hope in what follows to show that Hezekiah and his men had much to do with the formation of the Psalter. Whether original or selected, the Songs were suited for the representation of Hezekiah's times: and that fact explains the formation of the group. That some are from the remains of David and one from those of Solomon, suggests the thought that the great and good kings of Israel and Judah had many experiences in common. Hezekiah as well as David was regarded as a type of the Messiah; and in certain respects Solomon shared typical features of the ideal Ruler. In view of the possibility of occasional adaptation, which has ever been the

were 'all composed in the Greek period, except 129, which is Maccabean'! (Briggs).

way with hymns,¹ the whole of the fifteen Songs, notwithstanding the occasional extension of the headlines, may be treated as simply commemorative of Hezekiah, and as if written for the purposes of the descriptive series with which we have dealt.

From what has been exhibited, it is clear that a discrimination of the inscriptional material of the Psalter 'makes all the difference'. It has had a controlling influence upon our investigations, and accounts for the conclusions at which we have arrived. Expositors in past days have not had these considerations before them. Hence there is much diversity in their judgements as to the meaning of the headline; and the admission of ignorance on the part of some ill-assorts with the positive (though conflicting) pronouncements of others:—

SHÍR HÄMMÄ'ALÔTH; A SONG OF THE DEGREES.

DAVISON. No certain meaning can be given to the title of this group of lovely psalms. Hastings's *Bible Dictionary*, vol. iv, p. 154.

BRIGGS. A collection of songs for the use of pilgrims on their way to the three great feasts. . . . They were all composed in the Greek period, except 129, which is Maccabean. *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, vol. i, pp. lxxix, lxxx.

FÜRST. It is better to take *ma'aloth* in the modern Hebrew *excellence*, according to which these fifteen poems received the inscription *superior* or *excellent songs*, being a peculiar collection. *Heb. Lex.* s. v., Davidson's edition.

KIRKPATRICK. 'To go up' was the regular term for making pilgrimage to Jerusalem at the great festivals (1 Sam. 1. 3; Ps. 122. 4). 'The songs of the goings up' may have been the name for the songs which were sung on these occasions. . .

¹ See ch. viii *infra*.

This is on the whole the most probable explanation, although the substantive 'going up' is not used elsewhere in this technical sense. *The Book of Psalms*, Intro., p. xxix.

DELITZSCH. The songs are called Songs of Degrees as being songs that move onwards climactically, and that too by means of *πλοκή* (*ἐπιπλοκή*), in Latin *anastrophe* (*epanastrophe*), to use the terminology of rhetoric : i. e. by means of the resumption of the immediately preceding word ; and they are placed together because of this common characteristic. *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, vol. iii, p. 259.

GESENIUS. In Robinson's edition (1854) the view for which the lexicographer himself contended is given as follows : ' The name refers to that peculiar rhythm obvious in some of them, by which the sense advances by *degrees*, or steps, some words of a preceding clause being repeated at the beginning of the succeeding one, with additions and amplification, so that the sense as it were *ascends*. In Buhl's German edition (1905) various views are given : psalms of the temple steps ; psalms of the return from Babylon ; pilgrimage psalms ; and psalms displaying a step-like rhythm : with no expression of preference for any one view. In the Oxford edition (1906) the definition is : *Song of Ascents*, to the three great pilgrim feasts, i. e. to be sung on the way up to Jerusalem.'

WELLHAUSEN. The meaning of the expression cannot be regarded as finally determined. *Polychrome Bible : The Book of Psalms*, p. 210.

Taken as a whole, these views are mutually exclusive. Their authors or advocates discredit one another in the conclusions which they venture to present. Perhaps the most plausible of the theories, and the one which finds most favour among modern scholars, is that which would discern in the title a description of the Songs as designed for use at the three great pilgrim feasts, i. e. 'to be sung on the way up to Jerusalem.' But, in the words of Wellhausen, 'the majority of them have, as it seems, nothing at

all to do with pilgrimages.' And to find 'festal' sentiments in Pss. 120, 124, 125, 129, 130, 131, assuredly shows an indifferent sense of the fitness of things. It is claimed that THE exposition developed in these pages SUITS ALL THE FACTS. No other view, so far as our observation has extended, has complied with this necessary condition of a sound interpretation.

THE FORMATION OF THE PSALTER

CHAPTER VI

THE FORMATION OF THE PSALTER

I. A SURVEY OF THE MATERIAL

THE fact that it has long been customary to set aside as of little or no value those psalm inscriptions which relate to authorship, should not deter the investigator from treating such inscriptions seriously while dealing with the subject along altogether new lines. It does not follow that the disappointments of one method of inquiry will attend the pursuit of a method entirely different.

Some have concluded that the assigning of one psalm to David and another to Asaph, and so on, was a perfectly easy thing to do: indeed, that the caprice of some redactor at a time long since out of mind accounts for the headlines with their remarkable variety of form and detail. If such speculators had thought the question out in the light of old-time literary conditions, and with due regard to the political and religious bearings of the subject, they would certainly have hesitated before advancing such a gratuitous suggestion.

Estimating the aberrations of copyists at their proper value, we are compelled to regard the Massoretic headlines as part of the text: in fact, we have no text without them. When we, moreover, proceed to discriminate the inscriptional material, in

the manner contended for in this work,¹ we arrive at this important result: at a time when the Chief Musician was lost to knowledge and had passed out of mind, and the subscript lines were passed down in confused amalgamation with the superscriptions, fifty-five psalms were ascribed to David. And if there is another significant fact to put alongside this, it is that a number of other psalms are found as 'orphans', not being associated with any author—psalms that have, in fact, come down to us without any headings indicative of authorship or specific character. If it was so easy to put David's name over Ps. 3, why was the name not also put over Ps. 1? Why were any psalms left 'orphans'?

An examination of the material in its simplest form should assist inquiry. First, we must regard with suspicion any divisions that are not effected by headlines or notes having such a character.² Then, we must resign ourselves to the fact that we have but one recension of the Psalter. We have not, as some have supposed, several recensions: the early versions represent nothing systematic in their differences. If the Massoretic text has come, as is doubtless the case, from the hands of men who in some particulars did not understand their work, then from that very fact we should gather confidence, for the reverential 'uncomprehending' copying of a document is likely to yield a more reliable result than would be probable in other circumstances.

¹ And set out with more precision in *The Titles of the Psalms*.

² e. g. such formulae as 'Hallelujah', 'Bless the Lord, O my soul,' which served the same individualizing purpose as the headlines properly so called.

The Septuagint version, though representing a certain independence in the reading of the Hebrew text, while as yet unpointed, was obviously made from material which can hardly be distinguished from that preserved in the Massoretic text: the confusion of the inscriptions—literary headlines being amalgamated with liturgical subscriptions—alike in the text and the version, affords proof of this. The inscriptions are confused in both cases: the version follows the text to a *fault*, and perpetuates an error which is responsible for more misunderstanding than can easily be explained. Without dwelling upon the amalgamation of the titles, in a manner whereby the Chief Musician line was displaced with consequences so disastrous to criticism and exegesis, we cannot avoid the conclusion that the entire circumstances bear witness to the great antiquity of the Psalter, and show it to belong to a period much earlier than that in which the Septuagint translation was made. The work originated in one age; the translation was done in another. Hence the editorial judgement of the translators failed them, and the material was wrongly divided in the details of the inscriptions.

Hence we find ourselves, by the problems of the text, transported into days and conditions that are little understood. We know something of the forms of writing in the time when the Septuagint translation was made; but we know much less of the forms which prevailed in earlier centuries among the Hebrews of Palestine. It is almost certain that writings of the period of David would have to pass through an experience widely different from such as would attend literature of the Greek period. In the

earlier age the tablet and the stylus, in varying degrees of development, may have prevailed: in the latter age, skin and ink would doubtless be used. However this may have been, it is beyond question that, in MSS. and in versions alike, the poems which make up the Book of Psalms maintain a common order—there is no varying form, no alternative recension.

In other words, we have no contact with times in which the psalms enjoyed an individual, separate, fugitive existence. Psalm 1 is always at the beginning of the book; Psalm 119 is always where we find it in relation to the 'Songs of the Degrees' group which follows. Here and there, a manuscript may exhibit an inscriptional variation, but this only by way of error, never as indicating another system or arrangement of the collection. Now and again, moreover, a Greek codex may show a tendency to justify the title of the collection as given in Cod. R^a, whereby the book is called '*The Psalter of David*'.¹ Nevertheless, in substance there is agreement. We trace the text known as Massoretic, that upon which the early versions were founded either directly or indirectly, to an individual archetype. There is no more trace of free and independent psalms than there

¹ It is easy to understand how the collection came to be named after the founder of Hebrew psalmody—after the writer whose name appears first and most frequently in the book. The old English versions showed a tendency to express the title in this form; but the chief influence in popularizing the designation in modern times must be attributed to Church Service books. In both the Book of Common Prayer and the Metrical Psalms of the Church of Scotland, the title appears as '*The Psalms of David*'.

is of Hebrew prophetic writings outside the canonical books.¹

These facts exhibit the Psalter as an inflexible and compact document. We meet the Psalms as a whole, and we know them only as such. In order and quantity, they early assumed a fixity which has characterized them to this day. Though, in the nature of things, originating as individual poems, they have been transmitted as a collection: they are not as it were a quire of leaflets, but rather an indissoluble book. For the most part, the Davidic psalms are together, those of Asaph and the Sons of Korah are in groups; and there are other indications of a practical design in the gathering of the material and combining it as a book.

That the book *grew*, is beyond question. The psalms of David begin with Ps. 3, and the first group ends with Ps. 41. We require no manuscript or version to tell us that Ps. 10 is to read on to Ps. 9, as part of the *Higgaion*, or Meditation (= Epilogue) furnished by a changed experience²; nor to inform us that Ps. 33 is an addition to Ps. 32. This arrangement presents the first Book³ as a Davidic collection,

¹ The nearest approach to free and independent psalms is found in the duplication of psalms within the Old Testament literature: e. g. Ps. 18 is taken from 2 Sam. 22, a single line being prefixed by way of introduction. Ps. 14 reappears (with variations) as Ps. 53; and Ps. 108 is found again, part in Ps. 57, and part in Ps. 60.

² Doubtless by a later writer. See allusions in ch. viii *infra*.

³ Excluding from this calculation Pss. 1 and 2, of which more immediately. The fact that some obscure codex of the Septuagint heads Ps. 2 'A Psalm of David' no more qualifies our statement than does the exegetical heading of the Peshito Syriac

a fact which furnishes a reason for the Psalter as a whole having in the popular mind become associated so closely with the poet-king. A study of these psalms merely should serve as a good introduction to the subject of Hebrew poetry; and in the measure that we appreciate the relation of poetry to prose, mark its features, note its distinctions, so shall we occupy solid ground in regard to the characteristics, form, and purposes of that species of writing. A survey of the collection so far fully supports our contention that the inscriptions served to divide the psalms. The absence of any line of such a nature, as in the cases of Pss. 10 and 33, may well suggest the propriety of combining forthwith portions of psalms that have been improperly sundered.

The second Davidic section of the Psalter begins with Ps. 51, and ends with Ps. 71. The constituent poems are all ascribed to David except 66, 67 and 71. The first and second of these are styled respectively 'A Song, a Psalm' and 'A Psalm, a Song'; the third has no headline, but is in reality a part of Ps. 70.¹ A study of the material will make this clear; the division was purely arbitrary. In putting forth this collection—Pss. 51-71—Solomon appears to have added a psalm by himself, placing it as a seal upon his royal father's work.² This is the force of the version: 'Concerning the call of the Gentiles; and prophetic allusion to the Passion of the Messiah.' On the face of the Psalter as a compact document, the psalms of David begin with Ps. 3.

¹ The two strike the same note: Ps. 70. 2; 71. 24.

² As the Talmudical writers describe the prophecy of Malachi, as coming *last*. It may be noticed that Solomon speaks of himself in the third person, as 'the king . . . the son

colophon, 'The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended' (Ps. 72. 20). As the preface to the first book, Pss. 1, 2, was prefixed long after David's day, so the psalms of Book II, which precede the Prayers, —namely Pss. 42-50—are all of a later date. The designation of the colophon is, moreover, strictly correct as applied to Pss. 51-71. They *are* prayers. There is more of earnest petition here than in any other section of the Psalter.¹

Glancing at these two groups of psalms, we observe on the face of things reasons for their being combined as they are. And the fact that poems by other authors are not 'sandwiched' between them, indicates very plainly that when, with other groups, they were compacted in one volume, they virtually formed small psalters by themselves, and were treated as such. Accordingly, when the time came to make additions to these collections, the said additions were not made by distribution, or the insertion of new poems between those that were old and familiar, but rather by the simple method of laying the new material beside the old, either before it or after it. See this in Book I: the new matter was placed before the old, and appears

of a king' (v. 1). Some codices, on the other hand, omit the line לשלמה from over Ps. 72, thus including this psalm in 'the Prayers of David' in a more definite sense. The inference that the prayer was 'for Solomon' might in that case have led to the placing of the headline that has come down to us. Certainly the language would have been altogether becoming in King David at the time his son Solomon ascended the throne (1 Kings 2. 1-3).

¹ Here, accordingly, we find three of the four psalms (56-58), which bear the liturgical subscript-title *Al-tashheth*, 'Destroy not!' psalms for a time of special prayer.

as Pss. 1 and 2. Look again at Book II; the new matter, consisting of Korahitic and Asaphite psalms, was placed first, and comprises Pss. 42-50. In this simple observation we have traces of the growth of the Psalter, and glimpses of editorial method as followed by the earliest scribes of Israel and Judah.

The entire Psalter was compiled by some such method as is hereby indicated; except that in the last three Books poems of a later date form the basis or bulk, and psalms of David are only introduced occasionally.¹ For instance, Pss. 73-83 are by Asaph; then come two by the sons of Korah, followed by a 'prayer' by David, and then another by the sons of Korah. Next, all in good order, come three other individual psalms, i. e. psalms by writers not otherwise represented in the collection—Heman, Ethan, Moses.² Ps. 91, like the *Higgaion*, Ps. 9. 17 to end of Ps. 10, is an 'improvement' of Ps. 90, obviously written with reference thereto. As belonging to the age in which these were brought into their present place and order, we then note 'A Psalm, a Song for the Sabbath Day', which without reason has been broken up into six short psalms (92-97); and then 'A Psalm', also divided by early editors (98, 99),³ with 'A Psalm of

¹ Apparently as selected from the 'remains' of David in the Royal Library—of which institution we shall say more later on (see chaps. viii and xviii).

² Again from 'remains'. The first two were apparently by the wise men contemporary with Solomon, and named in 1 Kings 4. 31.

³ These psalms had already been divided when the Septuagint translation was made. This fact suggests that we are here in presence of editorial work done for the Second Temple. And it would appear that the inscriptions were then amalgamated,

Thanksgiving', 'A Psalm of David,' 'A Prayer of the Afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his Complaint before the Lord,' and a Davidic psalm in two parts (103, 104), this group seems to reach its end. It is on the face of things a collection; old and new psalms being compacted with the substantial Asaphic section (73-83).

The substance of the next section appears in what are called 'The Songs of the Degrees' (120-134). There are, however, some pieces placed before and some after. First come three 'Hallelujah' psalms (105-107)¹; then three more from the remains of David; followed by a longer series of 'Hallelujah' psalms (111-118).² The most ornate psalm of the collection, constructed on the alphabetical system, eight verses to each successive letter, introduces the heart of the section. After the 'Songs of the Degrees' come two more 'Hallelujah' psalms (135, 136), an 'orphan' psalm, eight more by David (138-145); and more 'Hallelujah' psalms, these concluding the book. If the writings of David were the foundation, so also and the Psalter divided into five books as we have received it. The fact that the 'Chief Musician' line belonging as subscript to Ps. 41 (Bk. i) stands over Ps. 42 (Bk. ii) indicates that the division of the Psalter into books took place *after* the confusion of the inscriptional material.

¹ The 'Hallelujah' with which the first and last of these should begin, has here been assigned (in error) to the conclusion of the preceding psalms.

² Here again the word 'Hallelujah', which should be at the beginning of the psalms, has in several instances been assigned to pieces preceding those to which it rightly belongs. That the rabbis debated the proper place of the formula, shows with what ease the displacement had been effected, in days when the glorious temple customs were out of mind. Ps. 115 is part of 114.

were they round about the topstone. From first to last, moreover, we are in the presence of a nameless editor, who at one time lays anonymous pieces alongside the work of the founder of Hebrew Psalmody, and at another time lays Davidic work alongside that of writers whose names have not come down to us. There was certainly great care to give David his due; but equally certain is it that little or no solicitude was shown to provide a literary reputation for the man who compiled the book as a whole.

Some will be disposed to object that, in what has been said, we have 'made too much' of the headlines of the psalms—that we have trusted too implicitly such lines as 'A Psalm of David', 'Maschil of Asaph,' and so forth. True, we have trusted the headlines; but with reason. This formula, we repeat, is part of the material; and consequently, it has to be reckoned with. The headlines, as a body, are where they have been from time immemorial; and they submit themselves for sane criticism, not for contemptuous neglect. How can we brush them aside, and then retain as reputable literature the documents with which they are connected? For some time past these headlines have been treated as no such feature has been treated in any other ancient literature. Not only have they been virtually disregarded, but scholars have actually brought out editions of the Psalter without the headlines! Two general reasons account for this attitude: first, the relation of the headlines to the psalms themselves has not been properly understood; secondly, the inscriptional material, as we have shown, has come to us in a disordered condition, through the fault of copyists. Neither of these

considerations, however, disposes of the headlines. There they stand, dividing the successive psalms, as they stood when the Septuagint translation was made over two thousand years ago; and proclaiming themselves as belonging to an age anterior to that of the Greek domination, by the fact that the translators of that time did not understand the essential difference between the literary superscriptions and the liturgical subscript lines.

That there has been confusion and misapprehension, is no justification for a cavalier contempt of the headlines. Has such unscientific treatment been meted out to the systematic features of documents recovered in recent times in Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt? When a statue has been found with a descriptive cartouche, or a tomb with an account of its deceased occupant, have we said: 'These inscriptions indicate a tendency to attribute statues (or bodies) to certain national heroes'? To come closer to our subject: when among the tablets and cylinders of the ancient East we have found hymns and prayers, not only with superscriptions as to authorship, but also with subscript lines intimating that the document was a Temple copy of a state original, have we disregarded these features as of no importance? No: experts have rendered these with all diligence; but, so far, Biblical expositors have been slow to heed the constructive message which these documents have brought from early times.¹

¹ See translations of such documents as given in *Records of the Past* (Second Series); the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*; also the volumes of *Hebraica* and its successor *The American Journal of Semitic Languages*, &c.

What is that message? Mainly this, that such hymns and prayers had, like many of the Hebrew psalms, headlines associating them with certain personages, as having written or promulgated them. There are prayers (to Marduk and others) by Nabopolassar, Nebuchadrezzar, Nabonidus, and other kings of Babylon. Does any one attribute their headlines to a tendency to put prayers to the account of great kings? No, indeed. Why? Because, since the days when the headlines of the Hebrew psalms were first called in question, another lesson has been learned, and that is, that, as literature, Oriental psalms are simply in due order when provided with headlines, supplying particulars of authorship, &c. In other words, the feature of the Psalter which has caused so much perplexity, is one which, in the light of recent research, must be declared altogether fitting and proper. Moreover, if these headlines were not placed where we find them by the actual authors (or their scribes) at the time of writing, they must assuredly have been placed there when the documents were first deposited in the royal library. Without this measure they could not have been stored, and at the same time have been ready for reproduction on demand.

It comes then to this: as there was an annalistic and epistolary style in Bible times, so also there was a style in which religious texts were written. Hence the Hebrew psalms have come down to us, in a manner similar to those of other ancient people—in many cases with headlines intimating authorship. Before we had found the remains of other Oriental nations of past ages, we might with some excuse

be disposed to call in question the authority of the headlines. Now, however, in view of what we have learned of practices that ruled among surrounding nations, we must mend our ways, and admit that, in the particular under consideration, the Hebrews simply followed a practice that was regular in the larger literary world of the Orient. In other words, the inscriptional features of the Psalter stand explained in the light of the literature of ancient Assyria and Babylon.

Hence, in surveying the material, we have placed a strong confidence in the headlines. Without them there would have been no Psalter, but simply a conglomeration of pieces. As it is, we have a series of hymns and poems, individualized and made distinct the one from the other. The headlines were not placed afterwards, as 'late guesses' or fictitious embellishments; they belong to the psalms as literature.¹ We shall shortly see that, in some cases, psalms have been so extended by later hands, as to create a measure of confusion; but we shall find no instance in which the headline is obviously inconsistent with the beginning, or opening section of a psalm.

Let another point be made clear. Against our observations, based on an examination of the text as we have it, we can set no difficulty arising from

¹ There is no reason to believe that it was possible to do this. Writing in old times, on tablets and cylinders, was generally arranged with an economical closeness which precluded anything like a subsequent prefixing of elaborate headlines. The work of copying would yield little opportunity for such an act of interference—an act which has been readily suggested as likely, but so far has never been shown to be possible in the circumstances of ancient Hebrew writing and book storage.

verbal peculiarities. If we had the autographs, such features might raise questions for comparative study; but seeing that our copies come of other copies, and have been edited and re-edited in the passage of generations, we can find no safe criteria for such study. Verbal peculiarities suggesting anachronism as between the language and the historical headings of individual psalms, may all be placed to the account of editorial revision. The Massorettes and their predecessors transformed the Hebrew characters from the Phoenician to the so-called 'Assyrian'; they modified the spelling by inserting the quiescent letters; and then they stereotyped upon the text such a sense as they approved by placing the points and accents. Moreover, they divided the material, topically and otherwise.

The *Keri* and *Kethib* variations by no means comprise the complete body of controverted readings. The Sopherim effected changes on grounds which would make but a slight appeal to the modern sense of critical duty—as, for instance, when dealing with passages reflecting upon the Divine Name.¹ Taken as a whole, however, the labours of these men and their successors were devoted to reducing the text to legibility for the purposes of their own day—in the spirit of Ezra, who was desirous that the people 'should understand the reading' (Neh. 8. 8). Surely a text which has come through such experiences cannot represent a variety of ages, but is typical of one age, and that the age of the editors, according to their individual preferences or the preferences of

¹ See Ginsburg's *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, ch. xi, especially sections 9-12.

the schools to which they belonged. Hence, as already stated, the Massoretic text is *for practical purposes*, the Book of the Old Covenant; but *for critical purposes* it is not so. Rather, it is a copy which, having undergone repeated revision, presents an appearance very different from the primitive text, having, in the last instance, been edited centuries after the loss of all traditional contact with the events recorded—long after the fall of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish people among the nations.

We have already seen reason to associate Hezekiah with the Psalter. We have found the 'Songs of the Degrees' to illustrate and commemorate the experiences of that good king. The times were favourable for psalmody: the Temple was open, and the services were in order with a completeness which obtained in no previous reign. The period found full employment in religious activities for prophet, priest, and king (2 Chron. 29. 3, 35; 31. 2, 3, 21; 32. 20, 32). We proceed to show that, in some of its most distinctive portions, the Psalter is a reflection of the reign of Hezekiah, and an expression of his thought as a servant of the Lord, the God of Israel.

CHAPTER VII

THE FORMATION OF THE PSALTER

2. THE WORK OF HEZEKIAH

WHEN dealing with the Songs of the Degrees, we assumed that King Hezekiah had much to do with the formation of the Psalter, and the message of the fifteen Songs amply justified that assumption. We found the life and work of Hezekiah reflected in a section of the Psalter, and reflected in a manner which suggested that he had a great part in the formation of the entire Book. If there were Songs regarding the period of 'the Degrees', why should there not have been longer poems, and, moreover, psalms reflecting the larger experiences of the same great king of Judah?

To bring together such a collection of praise-writings as compose the Psalter, necessitated a force and influence such as Hezekiah was well able to exert and command. No other king after Solomon had the disposition and capacity to play such a part. During the intervening reigns religious devotion was fitful: there was assuredly no call for a collection of the Songs of Zion: and there was little to stimulate or evoke additions to the body of psalm-writings. The service of Jehovah was intermittent and uncertain: with no Temple worship, there was no demand for prayer and praise in the central sanctuary. All at once, however,

a change took place: the Temple service was organized as had not been the case for centuries; the psalms of David were collected and new ones were composed; and the Praises of Israel were consolidated in the volume which has, ever since that time, engaged the hearts and souls of those who seek after God.

In a word, we here contend that the life and experiences of Hezekiah furnish an adequate influence for the formation of the Psalter. In spiritual directions, to quote the language of the Son of Sirach, 'the kings of Judah failed.' The piety of Hezekiah was his source of strength, and the explanation of his unique experiences. It is permissible to say that, as the doctrine of Christ took a new shape and put on a new vigour after His resurrection, so also the spiritual influence of Hezekiah made a mighty advance immediately after his miraculous restoration to health when he had been sick unto death. All that the king had been before, in devotion to God and religious energy, he was now with added strength and enlarged purpose; and especially was he pledged to 'sing his songs in the house of the Lord all the days of his life'. From the first he was the servant of God, and the patron of all who in any way contributed to the national worship: now he was all this, and much besides.

Leaving for the moment the wonderful crisis in the king's life, we remark that even his earlier years were more significant from a religious point of view than was the corresponding period of any other reign since David's. The man who opened the house of the Lord and cleansed it—surely he was the man to restore the worship of ancient days. And it is recorded, not only that the priests stood in their place after their manner,

'according to the law of Moses the man of God,' but also that the Levites 'sang praise unto the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer' (2 Chron. 30. 16; 29. 30). Yet, while he may have done much as a good king, he must have done still more as one who was the subject of the more marvellous experiences associated with his name. He 'whom the Lord upholds' was not a king among kings merely, but emphatically a king *above* kings.

Both the authorship headlines and the musical titles of the psalms point to the reign of Hezekiah as a time of great activity in the making of hymns. The poets and transcribing men of the great king may be unknown by name, but their work survives in writings that are only explained when brought to the touchstone of Hezekiah's life and times. Yet there are traces of some of the writers. When we read over a poem 'A Psalm of Asaph', we have no instruction to associate it with '*the sons* of Asaph': rather, we should look for an individual of the name of Asaph. Again, when we read 'A Psalm of the Sons of Korah', we may well presume that one intention of the formula was to connect the poem with a specific historical period: by no means should we conclude that the psalms so designated, were accumulating for generations as the productions of some priestly guild. Alongside the facts which point the inference that the reign of Hezekiah could not but yield large additions to the Praises of Israel, we have a definite mention of 'Asaph the seer', also repeated allusions to the Levites in connexion with the celebrated reformation which the king carried through. Not without result then, shall we assume the relation of the Asaphite and

Korahite psalms to the history of Hezekiah and the events of his time.¹

If Hezekiah issued anew the old psalms, and reinforced the collection with additional pieces, he was virtually editor of the Psalter as we have it. And this we claim for him: to show this is our immediate purpose. The Talmud has attributed to him the redaction of Isaiah, Proverbs, Canticles, and Ecclesiastes; but this is to give him small honour: for none of these works entailed such an amount of labour as the making of a hymnal would require. We hope to show that the Psalter as we have it—not of course, as to the Massoretic divisions, but as to substance and bulk—was formed in Hezekiah's reign.² It could not have been compiled later: there was neither the historical occasion nor the essential and indispensable man.

Passing to the Musical Titles, we approach another problem. When were those subscript lines attached to the psalms to which they belong—not to those

¹ Hezekiah the king and the princes 'commanded the Levites to sing praises unto the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer' (2 Chron. 29. 30). In other words, ordained the use of the old and new collections of Temple songs. The sons of Korah were a branch of the descendants of Kohath, the second son of Levi (2 Chron. 20. 19: cp. Gen. 46. 11). The various sections of the Levites in the time of Hezekiah are comprehended in the record of 2 Chron. 29. 12-15. We are clearly to infer that, like David of old, Hezekiah had a prophet named Nathan, and seers named Asaph and Gad (*vv.* 25, 30). These men seem to have assisted the king in realizing the ideals of David in the service of praise. Then also Isaiah and Micah were at hand, and possibly other prophets, ready to advise in spiritual things.

² Even Ps. 137, which has been so readily and so confidently written down post-exilic. Of this further, in ch. ix *infra*.

with which for two thousand years they have been wrongly connected as *superscriptions*. Are they part of the psalms as written, or do they indicate a stage in its subsequent experience? An examination will show. Some of these titles indicate a selection of psalms for set feasts; and we are distinctly told that Hezekiah attended to this (2 Chron. 31. 3). Confining ourselves, for the moment, to the class regarding whose title there will be least dispute, we look at the *Gittith* psalms (7, 80, 83). As we have shown elsewhere¹ the purpose of this title is to indicate these psalms for use during the Feast of Tabernacles (= *Gittôth*, 'Winepresses'). This feast was designed to commemorate the goodness of the Lord to Israel while they were in the wilderness after their redemption from Egypt. He 'made them to dwell in booths'—protected them, kept them.

What about the psalms selected? Just this—While in their terms they are responsive to the *Gittith* note, they could only have been selected as suitable for such a feast at a time when the nation had been passing through days of contradiction and trial such as characterized the beginning of Hezekiah's reign. In each of the three psalms, Jehovah is spoken of as the Trust, Keeper, Shepherd, of His people, the One who will deliver, avenge, and save to the uttermost. There is another note, however. Wild men and wild beasts are around; and enemies whom Jehovah drove out to make place for Israel are slowly regaining 'the pastures of God'. Instead of the peaceful 'booths' of Jacob, we see the 'tents' of Edomites and Ishmaelites. In what reign could these psalms have

¹ In *The Titles of the Psalms*, Second Edition, ch. viii.

been chosen for the great feast with such force and propriety as in that of Hezekiah? Just before he came to the throne, Edomites and Philistines invaded the country; and the Assyrians, whose aid was sought by Ahaz—but who ‘strengthened him not’—had at length joined the other enemies of Judah. Hence, deliverance from enemies is the burden of prayer and the point of each of the three psalms.

As with the *Gittith*, so with the other psalms for seasons, as they stand before us when the titles are discriminated on the lines advocated in this work. These psalms include those marked *Shoshannim* (44, 68), and those marked *Shoshannim* (or *Shushan*) *Eduth* (59, 79); the former for a Passover celebration, and the latter for the Feast of Weeks. The selections were evidently made in troublous times, and the nature of the troubles is well indicated in the undertones of the psalms. In this reign, above all, there was reason to pray in the language of the *Al-tashheth* psalms (‘Destroy not’); and who but the king that undertook to ‘sing his songs with stringed instruments all the days of his life in the house of the Lord’ would have chosen the *Neginoth* psalms (‘with stringed instruments’) as expressions of joy in God who never turned away his prayer, but always gave him victory over his adversaries?¹ On these and such like considerations, we base our suggestion that Hezekiah had more to do with the Psalter than historical records have placed to his credit.

An examination of the psalms attributed to Asaph and the Sons of Korah shows them to demand

¹ The *Al-tashheth* psalms are 56, 57, 58, 74; and the *Neginoth* psalms: 3, 5, 53, 54, 60, 66, 75.

a common situation, and that a situation such as the times of Hezekiah provided. This is more than an assumption: it is an inference from a careful survey of the text as a whole. Hereby many passages which otherwise defy explanation are illumined. Take one of them—Ps. 48. 14 (15)—‘He will be our guide, even unto death’. It has been suggested that this clause is corrupt: in brief, that ‘unto death’ brings in a personal experience, whereas the psalm is national and political in its scope and terms. Moreover, it has been suggested that the words על מות constitute ‘a musical term’, and belong to the inscriptional material standing over Ps. 49. A discrimination of the titles, as here contended for, shows this latter to be impossible: the formula למנצח (‘to the Chief Musician’) *uniformly introduces* the titles, and never follows them, as would be the case in the suggested emendation. The text must stand as it is; and, as conveying some definite sense, על מות must continue to balance the עולם ועד of the former member of the verse. We say ‘continue to balance’, for it is not required to *repeat* the sentiment of the preceding clause, by supposing, as the Septuagint translators (and versions dependent) concluded, a *feminine* form of עולמים (‘ages’), or any other term nowhere else to be met with in ancient Hebrew.

Bearing in mind, however, that this psalm, like others by the Sons of Korah, belongs to the reign of Hezekiah—a fact which easily emerges from an examination of them all as a body—we have an explanation ready to hand in the most critical experience of the king’s life. The psalm is an expression of praise for the destruction of the great

enemy of Judah. The Assyrian has found his end, and Zion rejoices at the Divine mercy and judgement (*vv.* 4-11). Not only had the city been established by the deliverance (*v.* 8); but renewal of life having, at the same time, been granted to the king, with the prospect of a successor to the throne, the state had been spared from threatened disruption. When, in such circumstances as these, Hezekiah was confronted with death, surely the matter was not merely personal. The nation as a whole was brought face to face with disaster. So, when, in *v.* 14, God is spoken of as the one who will 'guide' (lead) against, or notwithstanding, or in spite of, death, it is not simply (as has been assumed) an individual faith that is affirmed. The psalm as a whole deals with national concerns; and the concluding line is in complete harmony with the body of the poem.

In these circumstances, critical speculation, arising from a failure to discern the situation of the psalm, may be dispensed with. The 'death' of the verse is not the 'king of terrors' as met by men in general, but a national calamity, first feared and then averted, when Hezekiah became sick into death—being stricken with leprosy. Says the psalm, God 'will be our guide in spite of death-plague'.¹ The God of Israel is equal

¹ The idea of leading, or guiding, is expressed in the same terms in Isa. 49. 10. For the use of *maveth* in the sense of 'death-plague' or mortal sickness, see (in the light of formula expressed in Jer. 21. 7, 9; 24. 10; 42. 17, 22, and elsewhere) Jer. 15. 2; 18. 21; 43. 11; Job 27. 14, 15, and cp. the Greek *thanatos* in Rev. 6. 8; 18. 8. The Assyrian and Syriac cognates sometimes conveyed the same meaning. Cp. also the mediaeval 'black death' (=plague), and the modern 'white death' (=consumption); and see note on Ps. 8 in the Appendix.

to anything that can possibly threaten or befall His people, and ever will be so. Hence, we cannot regard the last line of Ps. 48 as matter of doubt. That many Hebrew manuscripts read the concluding word as *one* (עלמות) is of little significance in the circumstances; for the situation being out of sight, copyists were without any exegetical help. And besides, the faulty reading of the Septuagint, pointing in the direction we have seen, could not but exert some influence upon the Hebrew Text in a matter rendered so difficult when considered in the abstract.

It is, of course, impossible here to work through the Psalter in illustration of the suggestion that the collection, as we now have it, was edited in the reign of Hezekiah.¹ A careful study of the life and times of the king will place any one in a position to undertake such study; and from the more obvious allusions it will not be difficult to pass on to a consideration of psalms which are less definite in the suggestion of their historical situation. Not only, however, will it be found that the psalms of the Sons of Korah, and those of Asaph, exhibit a relation to the reign of Hezekiah, but it will also be found that psalms which were written in an earlier age, some of them bearing the name of David, were made acceptable for the later time by a process of 'adaptation'.

Whether originating in the time of the king we have named, or made suitable for his age by 'adaptation', the psalms as a whole speak of Hezekiah. From time to time we find references to the most

¹ In the Appendix, however, an endeavour is made to indicate the influence of Hezekiah as shown in all parts of the collection.

distinctive incidents of his life—incidents the very opposite of commonplace. First, we would note the plague, or sore, with which he was smitten (e. g. in Ps. 38. 11; 39. 10; 91. 10); and secondly, the renewal of life, or extension of days, which was granted him (e. g. in Ps. 49. 15; 61. 5, 6; 91. 16; 115. 17, 18; cp. 30. 11, 12; 102. 23-8). These are concrete conceptions, and at once suggest the times of Hezekiah. The former experience was associated with 'hiding of face' on the part of God (e. g. Ps. 10. 11; 44. 24; 102. 2): the latter was sometimes expressed by the thought of 'deliverance from death' (e. g. Ps. 49. 15; 56. 13; 116. 8). In addition to manifest allusions to these experiences of the king, the psalms of the period, and earlier ones by adaptation, continually acknowledge the Divine mercy in delivering Israel from the oppression of the heathen; and assuredly no reign afforded a more signal deliverance than did that of Hezekiah, when the Assyrian army was destroyed by the blast of God.

This view of the Psalter brings two men to the fore, and both of them kings. Only kings could do what was required; and David and Hezekiah, above all others, were patrons of the worship of Jehovah. Herein we have an explanation of the religio-political character of the psalms. In things liturgical as well as things literary the kings could command; and the records show that they did so (1 Chron. 15. 16; 2 Chron. 29. 5, 30). An obvious inference is that, without Temple or King, there would be no psalms—anyhow of such a character as those that make up the Psalter. Therefore, to suppose psalms to come into being in times when there was no King, and

when the Temple was a desolation, is the same as to expect effects where there are no efficient causes. The history of Israel and the substance of the psalms, to say nothing of the bringing together of the book, which must devolve upon some one of commanding influence, call for both Temple and King.

Can it be reasonable to look for the origination of psalms in post-exilic times? The Chief Musician belonged to the Temple of Solomon; he was a functionary of the old days, and we find traces of him throughout the collection. Acknowledging for convenience the Massoretic arrangement, we meet with the Chief Musician in the fifth Book of Psalms as well as in the first, second, and third. Though he is not found in the fourth Book, yet it is significant that that division contains psalms which are specially mentioned as having been rendered in David's time.¹ If, then, the book as a whole is old, it is not difficult to understand the problem presented by the displacement of the musical line, which the Septuagint translators found as a puzzle, and did not understand.

In order to a due appreciation of the problem of the headlines, there are one or two points to be borne in mind. First of all, that, like other Oriental monarchs, the kings of Judah had their libraries. Assuredly Hezekiah had, for we read of Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, in his reign (2 Kings 18. 18). In the court library writings of national importance were stored, also documents of interest to the king. Some of these were old, some new: here were chronicles, prophecies, psalms.

¹ The so-called *Hôdû* psalms, 105, 106, 107—(cp. 1 Chron. 16. 8-36).

Among these last, in the reign of Hezekiah, were some poems handed down from the days of David, and others by different writers—Moses, Heman, Ethan, also anonymous hymns. As the years passed, other psalms were written, by the men of Hezekiah; and having been read to the king, these also would be deposited in the royal library.

This, however, was not all. Hymns do not come to their true end, or serve the purpose of their production, by being placed on the shelves of a library. Whether written in honour of the king, or designed to give expression to the praise of God, these were, in the nature of things, intended for the Temple, and thither at length they would find their way. How? The librarian's duty is to preserve the writings committed to his charge. If it devolves upon him to transfer documents to other hands, is this done without rule or form? When the Temple was standing, the question presented no difficulty. The king who appointed the librarian for his palace, also appointed the Chief Musician, precentor, or director, for the oversight of Temple worship. If lyric treasures are to leave the library, it must be through the medium of this functionary. The 'scribe's chamber' of the palace was, as it were, the office of the librarian. If the king could call for 'the records of the chronicles'; so also the Chief Musician, being 'under the king's order', could call for psalms for use in the Temple (Jer. 36. 10-21; Esther 6. 1-3; 1 Chron. 16. 7; 25. 6, 7).

We can easily fill in the details. When a psalm by Asaph was introduced into the library, it was treated as all such documents should be—as the older docu-

ments were already: it was supplied with a headline, indicating authorship, and perhaps more. Now it could be placed with other documents of a like kind, and by the same author: though not so, with the same ease, if it had no headline. Say Ps. 80, by Asaph the seer, is thus handed in. It is placed with other Asaphite psalms. At length, the Chief Musician, or precentor, looking over the stores, detects its note as suitable for the Feast of Tabernacles. In due course, the document is handed to him; but as, in the first instance, it was labelled with the name of the author, so now it must be furnished with a line indicating that it has passed into the possession of the Chief Musician (hence the formula למנצח) 'for the Winepresses'. So also with regard to other psalms, selected for other occasions.

It is difficult to conceive it possible that documents could be taken from the palace library without some such formality or record of the act. It is equally difficult to conceive that any obstacle would be placed in the way of the Chief Musician, through whose agency the songs came to their proper use, and were made to serve the spiritual interests of the king and nation. Hence, one after another, psalms were given out, and as they left the care of the royal scribe they were supplied with a subscript line 'To the Chief Musician', with additional words where a special occasion was thus provided for.

These considerations enable us to appreciate the position of the Chief Musician, and to see how literary works were preserved in Israel. The fact that the Chief Musician line never occurs in the psalms comprised in Bk. iv (90-106), and only three times in

Bk. v (107-150), is significant. As the three in question are from the remains of David (108, 138, 139), we must conclude them to have come from the library. The fact that other Davidic psalms in this section have not the same mark, may imply occasional disregard of the practical rule ; but with the ' Hallelujah ' and other ' orphan ' lyrics, which compose these books, the case seems different. Dating for the most part from the time of Hezekiah, they may have been written *ad hoc* for the Temple, and never have been deposited in the library at all.

Thus, all the varied phenomena of the Psalter take us back to days anterior to the Babylonish captivity ; and compel us to recognize the book as belonging to an age altogether different from that of the Return. In these circumstances, the ignorance as to psalm structure which prevailed during the Greek period, is easy to account for. And if the book is pre-exilic, to what period shall we look as furnishing a situation for its compilation, but to that of Hezekiah, the king in whose life and times some of the most striking anticipations of Messianic glory were realized—for a time at least.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FORMATION OF THE PSALTER

3. ADAPTED PSALMS

WE have seen that the headlines serve to individualize psalms. A survey of the Psalter as a whole with this fact in mind, will yield important results. It is not too much to say that it will bring the literature before us in some such form as it sustained long before the Massorettes and their predecessors came on the scene. If it is true that (e. g.) Pss. 32 and 33 are one, also that Ps. 43 is but an extension of Ps. 42, then a realization of this fact will land us in a quite distant antiquity.¹ For, standing before us at the outset of our inquiries is a fact of the utmost importance, namely, when the Septuagint translation was made, these psalms had already undergone division—the two had become four as we find them in the familiar

¹ There is no headline to Ps. 33, so on the surface it belongs to Ps. 32. A study of the material places the relation beyond question. There is no headline over Ps. 43: it is obviously an extension of its predecessor. It is worthy of note that in each case the Septuagint provides a headline for the portions divided off (33, 43). First comes the tendency to divide in an arbitrary manner: then the tendency to supply headings. The transmitters of the text are content with the former: the early translators go further. Judgement declines to follow them.

Massoretic Text. And as it is with these, so it is with several others.¹

Though there may be individual cases in which headlines have a doubtful stability, it may be affirmed as a general proposition that, taken as a whole, they serve a purpose of great importance. The psalms over which one finds such a formula as 'A Psalm of David', 'Maschil of Asaph,' 'A Song of the Sons of Korah,' are never confused with their predecessors. The headlines assure the individuality of the psalms: in conditions when there was no such token of division as is to-day expressed by numerals, or contents' lines, there was an equally effective divisor—a headline, even although in some cases it might consist of one word only.² It is clear that, long before the Massorettes touched the text, the editorial hand had been at work upon it. And the individualizing virtues of the headlines were not recognized on the part of those who, by various unauthorized divisions which have persisted to this day, made a hundred and fifty psalms out of less than a hundred and forty.

If we would realize the primitive Psalter, we must pass by all marks of division other than those which stand in the text itself. To the ordinary reader, such a formula as 'Psalm ii', 'Psalm xliii' constitutes a title:

¹ Pss. 1 and 2, also Pss. 9 and 10, are in each case one psalm in two parts. The former part of 9 and 10 is constructed on the method of alphabetical acrostic; the latter part, beginning with *v.* 17 of Ps. 9, is an adaptation to express an altered set of circumstances—a meditative epilogue (*Higgaion*), with the alphabetic characteristics almost obliterated. Other psalms that have been similarly divided are—70-71; 90-91; 92-97; 98, 99; 114-115.

² e. g. 'A Psalm' (98); or 'Hallelujah' (111, and other psalms).

if told that the formula in such cases is an intrusion, he is unable to realize how such divisions can have been made in the text. All the same, it is a fact, that every division which is not supported by a headline or inscription of a definite character, is arbitrary, and represents no more than the editorial act or judgement of those who have handed down the book. And as against the tradition thus set up, there is the other fact, already noted, that different MSS. of the Hebrew, and various codices of the early versions, exhibit the occasional feature of psalms made up of material which we have been in the habit of regarding as constituting two psalms or more. There was no headline: hence the material was kept closed up, and treated as making one poem.

It is clear that, in substance, the Massorettes merely handed on what they received. Their vocalization of words is sometimes faulty; their divisions of material may be called in question: all the same they were careful *to lose nothing*.¹ So we have in the text all that could be preserved—this applying to the headlines as well as to the psalms themselves. Accordingly, the Massoretic tradition is in no way responsible for such indiscriminate ascription of psalms to David as

¹ Those that went before them were equally jealous in this respect. So it comes about that where, in some portions of the ancient documents, there were cross-lines, dividing the material into sections, as is the case in the Assyrian tablets, the early copyists, when omitting the said line, marked its place with the word *Selah*—for with them, no doubt, the line represented a 'pause', or 'rest'. In this light of the mysterious formula, the term found in the Septuagint translation, *διάψαλμα*, becomes self-explanatory, as implying a line drawn *across a psalm*.

appears in some of the later codices of the Septuagint. To style the collection 'The Psalter of David', and Psalm 2 as 'A Psalm of David' (as appears in Cod. R^a of the Septuagint), is not chargeable upon the Masoretes. Even where misunderstood, the inscriptions have been guarded with jealousy, and the absence of such formulae over some psalms is as significant as their presence over others.

The religio-political character of the book has already been noted. This feature is one to be observed with care. The struggles of the king were in reality the struggles of the nation; and even though originating in personal prayer or praise, psalms were not, on that account merely, brought into Temple use. Rather, they were given a place among 'the Praises of Israel' because expressive of thoughts and aspirations in which the nation could combine. The fact that Ps. 14 reappears in 'The Prayers of David' (53), and with the subscript line 'To the Chief Musician', seems to prove this. And the repetition of Ps. 108 in the same section, part in Ps. 57 (*vv.* 7-11) and part in Ps. 60 (*vv.* 5-12), points a like conclusion. In a word, these two psalms were not only given among others attributed to David, but they were likewise repeated by inclusion in a special group of PRAYERS from the pen of the royal psalmist. If there is another inference of a like interest, it is that they were obviously brought in by editorial selection, and in that selection there was some definite object.

A recognition of the political situation is essential to a sound interpretation. Though expressing the highest feelings of the most pious in Israel, the psalms ever voice a judgement in which all Israel might be

expected to join. Any one of the psalmists may, indeed, disparage himself—'born in sin and shapen in iniquity'—but the writers do not censure the elect nation itself. Throughout the Psalter, Israel is the people of God, and such epithets as 'the wicked', 'the ungodly,' 'fools,' 'hypocrites,' and so forth, are reserved for the heathen round about, who know not God and persecute His people.¹ Herein the psalmists join hands with the prophets, who, though speaking of the sin and transgression of Israel—forgetfulness of God and contempt of His commandments—had a special vocabulary for the idolaters who blasphemed Jehovah and 'ate up' the seed of Abraham.²

This brings us to a feature of great significance in the study of the Psalter. Observation makes it plain beyond question that psalms arising in one age were in some cases 'adapted' for use in a later age. In other words, a practice which obtains to-day, in the making of hymnals, was followed by those who compiled the Psalter. That is to say, by the excision of portions that were no longer applicable, and the addition of new clauses or verses, Davidic poems were rendered suitable for use in Temple worship in a subsequent reign. There are numerous illustrations of this editorial adaptation, and the note of the added portions indicates the reign of Hezekiah as supplying the occasion.

¹ Ps. I. I, 4-6; 9. 5, 17 (where 'wicked' = nations), *et passim*.

² Cp. Isa. 13. 11; 14. 5. The use of רשע in allusion to Israelites implies disloyal association with the heathen, the impious outsiders (Ps. 26. 5). The term is opposed to 'the righteous': cp. Exod. 9. 27; Hab. 1. 4, 13; Prov. 3. 33; 28. 1-4, 12, 28; 29. 2. (Also cp. of ἄνομοι in I Macc. 2. 44; 3. 5, 6.)

An examination of the Alphabetic or Acrostic Psalms establishes this point. Let it be noted, in the first place, that there are eight specimens of this form of Hebrew poetry in the Psalter—Ps. 9 and 10 (taken together), 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, and 145. Outside the Psalter this form of writing is found in Lam. 1-4 (in each chapter) and Prov. 31. 10-31. The acrostic is much broken in Pss. 9 and 10: as in other cases, the peculiar form of writing was disregarded in the revision with addition of new sentiments. In Pss. 25, 34, and 145, the form shows irregularities and defects. As a fact, Pss. 9 and 10 represent two expressions of thought: the former belongs to the time of David, the latter, beginning with the cross-heading *Higgaion* ('Meditation' = Epilogue) standing over *v.* 17, belongs to the time of Hezekiah. There is similarity of expression, but the note is altogether different. Moreover, the alphabetic structure is first broken, and then quite departed from. It was apparently regarded as immaterial.

PSALMS 25 AND 34.

The peculiar feature of these psalms consists in the additions that have been made to them. Not to dwell upon irregularities that may well be attributed to adaptation, we note as to the former (25) that it consists of an ardent prayer in which the first person singular of the pronoun dominates. Coming into liturgical use, in a time of national distress, an addition was made in an impersonal form, as follows:—

Redeem Israel, O God,
Out of all his troubles.

This addition would have been less obvious if the psalm had not been of the acrostic order. Clearly it was made at a time when national redemption was the prevailing passion in prayer.

As to the second of the psalms in question (34), it was designed for the expression of praise, and is also in the first person singular of the pronoun. At the end, however, is the following verse:—

The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants:

And none of them that trust in him shall be condemned.

In this case also the note is redemption. There is a correspondence between the two psalms; and the same verb is used, פָּדָה, to redeem, to set free. The former psalm was used in a day of anxiety, the latter when prayer gave place to praise.¹

Let it be observed that these psalms both bear the name of David: so also does Ps. 145, in which the

¹ That both the additions begin with **D** is no proof that at one time there was such a letter after **ן**. The addition was plainly made at a time when Redemption occupied an imperial place in the prayers of the Temple. In other psalms diverse terms are used; but ever and anon the petition is for Deliverance, Restoration, Salvation. And the circumstances which account for the addition may be held to have justified the omission of the verses beginning with *vav* in each case, and the displacement of that which should have begun with *qôph* by a second beginning with *resh* in Ps. 25. There are features of Ps. 37 that may likewise receive explanation along the line suggested. Pss. 9 and 10 (considered as one) present many textual difficulties; but if we take into account the editing for Temple purposes, whereby the first part (*vv.* 1-16) was adapted to an actual situation, and the second part (17 to end of Ps. 10) definitely written for the later time, we have all that we need in the way of a working theory of the formation of the text as we now possess it.

stanza beginning with *nun* (after *v.* 13) is absent.¹ We see in them modifications and additions ; and it is suggested that these are explained in the very reasonable object of adaptation—the psalms having been adapted for Temple use in a time when the scope and force of their words was of supreme importance.

On the other hand, we have three anonymous acrostic psalms—the anonymity indicating them as belonging to a later age. These psalms—111, 112, 119—being made for the age in which they came into Temple use, had an entirely different experience. As distinguished from the earlier songs, these have come to us in perfect condition. Not being *old* when the collection was brought together, they required no adaptation. For it is ever the case that the old hymns are altered: the new are generally more acceptable in terms, more up to date in sentiment.² As it is to-day, so it seems to have been 2,500 years ago.

It should also be borne in mind that the original form of a hymn is never accorded the same jealous respect as is conceded to a historical narrative or dogmatic statement. A hymn is FOR USE, and it is ever liable to be modified in terms so as to subserve the practical ends of its being. Other acrostic writings have a totally different experience. That portion of

¹ There is nothing more than an attempted accommodation to structural requirements in the reading given by the Septuagint and versions dependent thereon: 'Faithful is the Lord in all His words, and holy in all His works.' With the exception of two words, this is a repetition of *v.* 17.

² In like manner in Christian hymnology, the hymns of Watts, Doddridge, and the Wesleys are nowadays cut down as to length and modified in language. In well-known cases also, modern conclusions are furnished to old hymns.

Prov. 31 which is of the acrostic order has remained intact through the ages: and the same is true of each of the four acrostic chapters of the book of Lamentations.¹ The moral is that acrostic poems, as such, do not of themselves 'fall to pieces', do not of themselves 'become hopelessly corrupt': if so, how can we explain the stability and persistence in form and substance of these latter specimens of such literature? Also, how do we account for the perfect form of Pss. 111 and 112, of which we have already spoken, as owing their completeness to the fact that, being made in the time of Hezekiah, they stood in no need of adaptation?

An adequate explanation of the phenomena described is assuredly supplied by the fate and experience of hymns all down the ages. In a word, the Temple songs were submitted to revision, in order that they might meet the needs of a particular time.

PSALM 51.

Additions such as we find in the case of Pss. 25 and 34 may also be detected in other parts of the Psalter. If alphabetic psalms were extended so as to render them more completely suited for situations different from those which brought them into existence, so also might other psalms be treated with a like object. An instance that requires little

¹ That the verses beginning **Y** and **D** should stand *transposed* in chh. 2-4, is not a defect but a peculiarity, the threefold occurrence of which proves a definite design. The transposition brings **D** into prominence, possibly in order to associate the poems with a particular person or place—an association such as might well have been provoked by the persecuting conduct of *Pashhur* the son of Immer (Jer. 20. 1-6).

argument or explanation is found in Ps. 51. From the beginning down to *v.* 17 there is little but what David might say in reference to the occasion described in the headline.¹ The remaining verses are:—

Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion:

Build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

Then shalt thou delight in the sacrifices of righteousness, in burnt offering and whole burnt offering:

Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

Obviously these two verses are of a later date, and belong to the time when, taken in hand by the Chief Musician, the collection was reduced to its present form. We have advanced reasons to show that this was in the reign of Hezekiah. Only at that time could the groups of psalms selected for the great feasts—indicated by the Musical Titles *Gittith*, *Shoshannim*, and *Shushan Eduth*—have been rendered with consistent appropriateness. The same holds good here. When, at the beginning of Hezekiah's reign, the prayer went up with reference to the walls of Jerusalem, the king took the work in hand (2 Chron. 32. 5); when, by the mouth of Isaiah, 'vain oblations' were denounced, and Jehovah protested 'I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats' (Isa. I. 11-13), the king, by the pen of his scribe directed his people to pray for the return of God's good pleasure unto Zion, and the days when He would 'delight in the sacrifices of righteousness'—to use the words of the addition to the psalm.

The reign of Hezekiah, especially at the beginning,

¹ Though the terms of *vv.* 8 and 9 (with 'bones broken and face hidden') suggest the possibility of adaptation in the early part of the psalm. See note on this psalm in the Appendix.

called for just such confession of sin, and humiliation in view of national apostasy, as the psalm expresses in the language of an individual transgression followed by penitence of heart. But at the same time, there were broken walls, and the city was as a place from which Jehovah had virtually departed. Hence the addition: 'Do good to Zion: build Thou the walls: let the ordinances of Temple worship have Thy smile and blessing!'

PSALM 14 (AND 53).

Another instance of an addition such as the later age demanded, is found in Ps. 14, which reappears in Ps. 53. The added verse is:—

Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!
When the Lord [Ps. 53—God] bringeth back the captivity of
his people,

Then shall Jacob rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

The psalm, as written by David, may have originated at the time of the taking of Jebus, and be an expression of the indignation felt by the king at the contempt which was shown by the heathen for Israel and Israel's God (2 Sam. 5. 6-8; cp. also *v.* 10). In the reign of Hezekiah, however, the agent of another enemy of Israel blasphemed Jehovah. Rabshakeh and his companions 'spake against the Lord God and against His servant Hezekiah',—'spake of the God of Jerusalem, as of the gods of the peoples of the earth, which are the work of men's hands' (2 Chron. 32. 15-19). Here again was 'the fool' who 'said in his heart, there is no God'. The special circumstances of the city afforded ground for the additional verse. The 'captivity' is that of a besieged people; and the terms recall Ps. 126, which

has already been explained in the light of Hezekiah's reign.¹

PSALM 69.

Yet another instance of a like adaptation of old psalms to new situations is found in Ps. 69. Ascribed to David, this is a cry to God for help in circumstances of great desperation. There were foes all around, and upon these the Divine judgement was invoked. Whatever else may have been done to make this psalm acceptable for the times of Hezekiah, certain it is that *vv.* 35 and 36 were such as could then be added with the utmost propriety. Of course there could have been no such petition as 'Build the cities of *Judah*' in the time of David. The kingdom had to become divided before such language could be possible. In Hezekiah's reign, however, there was a wonderful appropriateness in the assurances contained in the added verses:—

For God will save Zion, and build the cities of Judah ;
And they shall abide there, and have it in possession.
The seed also of his servants shall inherit it ;
And they that love his name shall dwell therein.

As we have seen again and again, it was 'against all the fenced cities of Judah' that the Assyrian came up ; and many of them fell into his hands (2 Kings 18. 13). Then, advancing upon Jerusalem, Rabshakeh demanded submission, proceeding to

¹ The two periods are connected by the following striking statements : 'David dwelt in the strong hold, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward' (2 Sam. 5. 9). Hezekiah 'built up all the wall that was broken down, and raised it up to the towers, . . . and strengthened Millo in the city of David' (2 Chron. 32. 5).

'reproach' Hezekiah in some such manner as his counterpart of an earlier time 'reproached' David (cp. *vv.* 6-11). The prayer for personal deliverance, in the circumstances of the case, could not but be combined with one that was satisfied that God would 'save Zion, and build the cities of Judah'.¹

PSALM 110.

Coming down from the times of David, Ps. 110 was also furnished with its concluding verses in a later age. Our present concern is with the first significance of the psalm as it may be found to originate in the history of Israel, rather than with the deeper meaning discovered therein by the old Palestinian theology, and clearly endorsed by our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 22. 41 ff. and parallels). Doubtless we have in this psalm a Divine oracle: at the same time, however, we have a prophecy bearing a definite relation to certain events in the past history of Israel and Judah.

The first part of the psalm (*vv.* 1-4) is unquestionably Davidic, as the situation will prove. The style is somewhat exceptional, for the king is spoken of as 'my lord' (*v.* 1) an expression afterwards applied to his 'greater Son' (Matt. 22. 44). It is as if one of David's writing-men—the counterpart of Hezekiah's men (Prov. 25. 1), held the pen:—

The LORD saith unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand, 1
Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

¹ Cp. Ps. 102. 28, belonging to the same time and set of circumstances; also Isa. 44. 26; 65. 9; to be noticed hereafter. (See Chap. xvi., *infra*.)

The LORD shall send forth the rod of thy strength out of Zion :

Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

Thy people offer themselves willingly in the day of thy power :

In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning,
Thou hast the dew of thy youth.

The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, 4

Thou art a priest for ever

After the order of Melchizedek.

There may be difficulties in the language: yet certain things are plain. At the outset, the king is represented as called to the right hand of power by Jehovah until all his enemies should be reduced to subjection. Thus far, the intention is obvious: a man is given authority to rule for God. This might be affirmed of any one whom Jehovah might call to sit on the throne of Israel or Judah. The next clause, however, is less general: 'Jehovah shall send forth the rod of thy strength out of Zion.' Here we have an indication of time. The psalm takes us back to days anterior to the taking of Jebus, when as yet the sceptre of authority had not been set up in Zion. The king is being encouraged, in this psalm, to make Zion the seat of his government. Established in Zion, he is to 'rule in the midst of his enemies'. The language deals with the *beginnings* of dominion from a specified centre. The story is told in 2 Sam. chh. 5-8.

As the historical records show, after making Jerusalem the seat of government, David proceeded to make it the centre of religious life. Gathering 'all the chosen men of Israel', he took up the Ark of God. In the course of these proceedings, though

a king, he performed priestly functions: 'Girded with a linen ephod, . . . David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord' (2 Sam. 6. 14, 17).¹ This was a realization of the language of the psalm: 'Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek' (v. 4). The personage who met Abram the Hebrew when returning from the slaughter of the kings, in like manner combined the royal and the priestly, not through blood descent, but by Divine appointment. David is viewed as doing the same. In other ways besides the offering of sacrifice the king played a priestly part. We read of Melchizedek that he 'brought forth bread and wine' and 'blessed' the patriarch (Gen 14. 18, 19). So also it was with David: 'He blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts. And he dealt . . . to every one a cake of bread, and a portion (of wine)², and a cake of raisins' (2 Sam. 6. 18, 19). In this particular also the king of Israel walked in the footsteps of Melchizedek.

Whatever may be the precise meaning of v. 3—the language involving discussions which need not detain us—we can easily detect in this part of the psalm an echo of other great occurrences in this period of David's reign. The 'chosen men of Israel' were with him, and he so increased in might that the Lord 'gave him rest from all his enemies round about' (2 Sam. 6. 1; 7. 1, 11). In other words, with his sceptre established on Mount Zion, he 'ruled in the midst of his enemies' (v. 2). He 'smote the Philis-

¹ Also the parallel in 1 Chron. 15. 27—16. 37.

² In the A. V. 'a cake of bread, a good piece (of flesh), and a flagon (of wine)'. The second and third items are in terms of doubtful significance. We follow the R.V. *marg.*

tines, and subdued them'; 'the Moabites became servants to David, and brought presents'; 'when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer King of Zobah, David smote of Syrians two and twenty thousand men'; and 'the Lord gave victory to David whithersoever he went' (2 Sam. 8. 1, 2, 5, 14). To these and suchlike events the psalm looked forward. Called to the right hand of power, David saw his enemies made to be his footstool (*v.* 1).

At length the Lord gave King David 'rest from all his enemies round about' (2 Sam. 7. 1).¹ It could not but be held that such a psalm expressed sentiments well suited for the reign of such a one as Hezekiah. With the latter it was not, indeed, a case of conquering Jebus, but rather of retaining the stronghold which David had taken from the enemy. It was not a case of taking the Ark to Zion, but rather of restoring the worship which David had done so much to promote. In the important particular of being surrounded by enemies, moreover, Hezekiah found himself in circumstances very similar to those which attended his great ancestor at the time of national crisis which has engaged our attention.

Again the prophetic pen is at work, and the psalm which had been 'of David' becomes virtually 'of Hezekiah'. The things affirmed and promised all apply in some degree to the Judæan reformer. Like David he had been called to the right hand of power; and in spite of the Assyrian, Jehovah will 'send forth the rod of strength from Zion'—by delivering the

¹ It is obvious that the chronological order is broken by ch. 7. The words quoted anticipate the issue of the wars described in the next chapter.

city, and giving prosperity in coming years: and so on. There were people who offered themselves willingly: the king made priestly appointments from his throne: every line of the early part of the psalm might be applied to the experience of Hezekiah. But an addition must be made.

At *v.* 5 the form of address changes, thus introducing the second part of the psalm, added in the reign of Hezekiah:—

| | |
|---|---|
| The Lord at thy right hand | 5 |
| Shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. | |
| He shall judge among the nations, | 6 |
| He shall fill <i>the places</i> with dead bodies; | |
| He shall strike through the head in many countries. | |
| He shall drink of the brook in the way: | 7 |
| Therefore shall he lift up the head. | |

Looking back to *v.* 1, we recall that the king, spoken of as 'my lord' (אֲדֹנָי) is called to the right hand of Jehovah. How comes it then that, in *v.* 5, the relation is reversed, and Jehovah, expressed by the formula אֲדֹנָי is represented as at the king's right hand? It is the result of faulty treatment on the part of the Massorettes, whereby אֲדֹנָי 'my lord' has been so pointed as to designate the Divine Being. The intention of the verse is to extend the idea of *v.* 2 'Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies'. It is no longer Jehovah who speaks, as in *vv.* 1, 4, nor are the words addressed to the ruler himself in the second person of the pronoun, as in *vv.* 2, 3. Rather, it is Jehovah who is addressed ('Thy right hand') regarding the great things to be performed by 'my lord', seated at His right hand—namely, to strike through kings, judge among the nations, drink of

the brook, &c. As the early portion was written for David by one speaking of him as 'my lord', so the latter portion is by one who speaks of the ruler, his master, in the third person of the pronoun. Hence we should render: 'My lord at Thy right hand' &c.

The point of *vv.* 5, 6 is that the king at Jehovah's right hand has before him a victorious future. His relation to the heathen is that reflected in Ps. 2. 8, 9, only the language is general. The last verse, however, brings in a more distinctive experience, which is explained by the story of the Assyrian invasion. It implies that, even in the conflict with that formidable enemy, Hezekiah shall be given the victory. 'He shall drink of the brook by the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.' At the time when the Assyrian was at the walls of Jerusalem this was a prophetic assurance of the utmost importance; and it was with that crisis in view that the psalm received its present 'adapted' shape.

Recall the facts. When Sennacherib was approaching Jerusalem, Hezekiah and his people 'stopped all the fountains, and the brook that flowed through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water'? (2 Chron. 32. 4). The work was not one of destruction, but of obstruction and concealment, in order that the enemy might not take that which the citizens required. Hence the brook coming from the Gihon spring was turned underground into an aqueduct, and was thus, in a local sense, '*in* the way,' or beneath the road. By drinking of this brook, the king was enabled to 'lift up the head'—courageously to hold out

in the conflict (2 Kings 20. 20 ; 2 Chron. 32. 4, 30 ; cp. Isa. 22. 11).

The undertaking to which allusion is here made was prodigious as an engineering achievement, epoch-making in war tactics. More than that, it became a glorious memory in the history of the nation. For, in Ps. 46, belonging to the same reign, we meet with 'the brook' once more. There, in a song which, in the light of its concluding lines, must be regarded as looking back upon a mighty deliverance, the king is made to express himself as without fear 'though the earth do change and though the mountains be moved in the heart of the seas'. On the one hand, he rejoiced because 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble'; on the other hand, he sang: 'There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.'¹ History shows how wonderfully Hezekiah 'lifted up his head'. He looked abroad upon discomfited foes, through a Divine intervention: 'He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariots in the fire' (Ps. 46. 9).

The conclusion, to repeat what has already been said, is that when the Assyrian was approaching, this psalm of David was taken in hand by one of 'the men of Hezekiah'—a man of prophetic power and insight. The psalm bore a message of encouragement fitted for the occasion. Hezekiah, being in his appointed position, was safe, and Jehovah would vindicate him

¹ The terms are magniloquent, as becomes a poetical celebration. The 'brook' of the historical record and Ps. 110. 7, becomes 'a river with streams' in Ps. 46. 4.

by scattering his enemies. A final assurance was based upon the divergence of the Gihon spring: having done this, and provided drink for his people, the king would realize a mighty deliverance. The incident is bound up with the historic fame of the man. 'This same Hezekiah stopped the upper spring of the waters of Gihon, and brought them straight down on the west side of the city of David' (2 Chron. 32. 30). 'He made the pool and the conduit, and brought water into the city' (2 Kings 20. 20; cp. Eccus. 48. 17).

PSALM 144.

In this psalm, the composite character is very obvious. The language of the first part (*vv.* 1-8) recalls Pss. 8, 18, and 39; and that of the second part (*vv.* 9-15) recalls Pss. 33 and 104. The psalm seems to have been compiled from others by David, as to its first part more particularly.

The words 'I will sing a new song unto thee, O God' (*v.* 9) suggest an addition; but *v.* 10 appears to demonstrate the fact, for it can hardly have been David who, recalling the terms of *v.* 7, prayed, in effect: 'As thou didst rescue David from the hurtful sword, so rescue me, and deliver me from the hand of strangers' (*vv.* 10, 11). And so to the end. One who has succeeded to the trials of David, prays for deliverances such as were vouchsafed to his ancestor.

The verses which constitute Hezekiah's addition afford just such an outlook of peace and plenty as was realized in the fifteen years that followed the king's recovery from sickness—family joys (*v.* 12), economic prosperity (*v.* 13), national security and social contentment (*v.* 14). With the Lord as God, these

things are assured, and those who come into such an inheritance are truly blessed (*v.* 15).

PSALM 18.

In Ps. 18 there is also evidence of adaptation, but it is at the beginning rather than the end. This song which David 'spake unto the Lord in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul', also appears in 2 Sam. 22.¹ Not only have some of the terms been modified, so as to make the psalm suitable for Temple use in a later age; but a line has been prefixed to make the whole acceptable in special circumstances.

David began, as in *v.* 2 (3), 'The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer'; and went on to rehearse the wonderful acts of God in his daily deliverance. Hezekiah had as much to say, if not more; but he must begin differently. His deliverance from death, and a host of enemies, induced in him a tenderness of expression which suggested a new beginning for the psalm, even although confined to a single line. So he prefixed the words 'I love thee, O Lord, my Strength'. The terms are striking—'Fervently do I love thee': 'warmly do I cherish thee' (רחם). After such a pledge of affection, the king could proceed, and appropriate to his own lips lines which, in the language

¹ It is hardly a worthy criticism that says that David cannot have written such a psalm as this, because no such deliverance was enacted on any *single day*. As a fact, the language does not even suggest such an absurdity. The formula בְּיִוְם , followed by an infinitive, and sometimes otherwise, means 'when' in the broadest sense. There is no article: hence no *day* is emphasized.

of poetry, are suitable for the description of any notable intervention on the part of Jehovah.

When realizing the greatness of his emancipation, Hezekiah declared that in consequence of (על) the bitterness of his experiences—not *in* them—he would go softly all his years (Isa. 38. 15). This, indeed, made no promise of heroics: it suggests, however, that the grateful soul must entertain a warm affection for Jehovah by whom it had been loved (*v.* 17—חשק). Hence, he says in one place; 'I love (אהב) the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplication' (Ps. 116. 1); and the Lord spoke in response 'Because he hath set his love (חשק) upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high because he hath known my name' (Ps. 91. 14).¹ In view of his deep experiences, it is not surprising that Hezekiah should use such intense words as those prefixed to David's Song, appearing in Ps. 18. His love was effectually drawn out by the altogether exceptional character of the deliverances afforded him.² Hence, he says, 'I love thee' (אֶרְחֶמֶךָ).

Upon whom is the king's affection lavished? Upon 'Jehovah, MY STRENGTH'. Who could say this like Hezekiah? The man whose name was חזקיהו speaks of his Deliverer as יהוה חזקי. All the promise and assurance of the king's name has been realized; and now love is returned, in warmest emotion, to a faithful God.

¹ Both these psalms (116 and 91) are eloquent in their allusions to the experiences of Hezekiah.

² The 'emendation' which would read 'extol' for 'love', is without authority, either in MSS. or versions. There is no reason why this verse should be conformed to Ps. 30. 1; which is different in all its distinguishing features.

In other words, in the terms used we have the elements of the name Hezekiah.¹ This fact suggests the origin of the prefixed line. It does more: it favours the presumption that this poem is found in its primitive form in 2 Samuel, and as appearing in the Book of Psalms has been subjected to just such revision as was deemed wise to render it serviceable in prayer and praise.² What we have seen in regard to other adapted psalms comes to the explanation of the phenomena of this one. And everything favours the conclusion that substantial changes, so far as they may be detected, belong to the reign of Hezekiah.

Leaving other such cases,³ we may remark that this feature of adaptation is not seen in the later psalms—in those by Asaph, the Sons of Korah, and

¹ Among other such cases of paronomasia are the following:—Gen. 49. 8 (Judah—‘praise’): 1 Chron. 22. 9 (Solomon—‘peace’); Jer. 48. 2 (Heshbon—‘devised’); Zech. 9. 3 (Tyre—‘stronghold’). Later on, we shall show that in the latter part of Isaiah, the name of Hezekiah is frequently recalled by the use of parts of the verb *קוּן* in this manner. Note in particular Isa. 45. 1 (as explained in ch. xvi *infra*). Compare also Eccles. 48. 22, in the Hebrew Fragment, edited by Cowley and Neubauer, p. 38—‘Hezekiah . . . was strong (*קוּן*) in the ways of David’.

² The jealousy with which the name and fame of David were guarded is remarkable. Even when his compositions were adapted, either by excision or addition, his name was retained. That, however, is altogether different from placing it over psalms with which he had nothing whatever to do.

³ We cannot desist from pointing out that the concluding verse of Ps. 20 comes under this classification, in the form of the R. V. *marg*: ‘O Lord, save the king; and answer us when we call’; also the second part of Ps. 39 (*vv.* 6–13). The latter passage shows many points of contact with the experiences of Hezekiah. See notes on other psalms in the Appendix.

most of the anonymous poems. While witnessing to the liturgical use of the Psalter, the practice with which we have thus dealt, in briefest outline, affords presumptive proof that those psalms which on the surface claim to be the older, are so in reality and truth. If they had been of the age of the Chief Musician, as we trace his activities in the reign of Hezekiah, they would not have required to be thus subjected to adaptation.

It will be seen at a glance that the treatment thus described is responsible for phenomena that have seemed to favour the theory that the psalmist 'I' represents the community—that the first person singular of the pronoun speaks for Israel, and not for the individual. Adaptation, that is to say, has resulted in confusion of number and enlargement of scope: the 'I' has glided into 'we', and a later experience has been added to that of the original writer. Hence, affixed to general sentiments of prayer or praise, we find allusions to particular and distinctive experiences, including some that have a pointed relation to recovery from sickness and a return to life and vigour from the very gates of the grave. When experiences so divergent are voiced in a single psalm, a certain support is undoubtedly yielded to the view that the 'I' implies more than one person.

We have shown that the 'I' often means two persons, and neither of them ordinary persons, either in character or experience. A recognition of this simple fact, as it bears upon the adaptation of the older psalms for use in a subsequent time, points the way to a sound interpretation of the 'I' psalms. Strictly speaking, some of the psalms are more than indi-

vidual: all the same, in no real or definite sense do they speak for the community. They are full of humanity and spirituality: they are personal, although sometimes the personality is twofold. The phenomena are capable of explanation, without the suggestion of a mock passion, or the presence of fictitious elements in words of prayer and praise.

The cases of adaptation which we have examined are typical: and we have been careful to illustrate this method of treatment, in order, first, to show the part of Hezekiah in the formation of the Psalter; and second, to make it clear that the Book of Psalms, as it has come into our hands, has not been preserved as a budget of literary antiquities or documentary remains of the great men of a past age, but rather has been compiled, and cherished, and otherwise dealt with, so as to give voice to 'the Praises of Israel'.¹

¹ In a later chapter we shall show that the argument for the theory that the psalmist 'I' represented the nation receives no support from Isa. 53.

CHAPTER IX

THE FORMATION OF THE PSALTER

4. THE QUESTION OF AGE

WE leave the reader to test the principles thus laid down, and to see for himself how far our generalizations harmonize with the facts. Observation goes to show that the Psalter originated in few operations, not in many: it comes mainly from two reigns in which psalmody was active, and not from long ages of ever-changing national experience. The associated names are few: and the anonymous poems are much of one kind. The entire collection falls into few classes, and the acknowledged groups are but two—'The Prayers of David' and the series of 'Songs of the Degrees'.

The reigns of David and Hezekiah account for most of the pieces; and in the time of the last-named king the work of selection and editing took place. That tradition is silent as to the measures by which the book was brought together, is not surprising. Indeed, tradition finds the collection in existence, and merely echoes the fact of its being copied from time to time. The origination of the book goes back to a time with which tradition has no contact—in a word to pre-exilic days, of which the life conditions and literary history in the kingdom of Judah constitute

an unsolved problem. The literature, however, is its own witness, and it reflects with comparative plainness the reigns in which it originated.

We find no *recent* psalms in the entire collection. Some, of course, are older than others: some, for instance, of the time of David; some, again, of the time of Hezekiah. Yet, there are no psalms which can be declared recent in any positive sense. If the changes and modifications of which we have spoken, mean anything, they mean that the psalms antedate all the experiences which have involved their text in partial confusion. In other words, the psalms take us back to a time before the literary headlines were amalgamated with the liturgical subscript lines; to a time when as yet the document comprising the entire book had not been divided up on a pentateuchal principle, provided with doxologies, and so forth.

What does this mean? It means, among other things, that in its component parts the Psalter is older than we have been disposed to allow. It belongs to an age anterior to recognized tradition, and only stands explained in the historical memorials of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Tradition in fact, arose after the nation had lost contact with its golden age: hence it is not vital in such a sense as to provide a solution of the problems of a distant past.

To recall the moral of the alphabetic psalms. Of these we found two classes: (1) Those that are, generally speaking, perfect; and (2) those that are incomplete in structure, and have been provided with additional verses. The headlines of the latter associate them with the reign of David, thereby assigning them an early place in the Psalter. If, as we have maintained,

the collection as a whole was brought together in the reign of Hezekiah, then we have a reason for the specific note of the added verses, both in the alphabetic and other adapted psalms: for Redemption was the great need of Judah at the time. Moreover, as, for the most part, the hymns that are altered and curtailed, as well as brought up to date by addition, are the *old* ones, so we suggest that, in the relative antiquity of these adapted psalms, an explanation is found of the deficiencies and other characteristics which they exhibit.

As to the other class of acrostic psalms—those which show no points but such as are regular: their outstanding features speak very plainly of these having arisen in the later age. The substance of the pieces is agreeable to the reign of Hezekiah; and if they were, as we have suggested, written for that time, then there was no need for adaptation, either by way of omission or addition. The newer hymns are acceptable *as they are*: the older are subjected to adaptive treatment, in order that they may express the thoughts and desires of a subsequent time. Thus, any way, the acrostic psalms are old; but those which exhibit irregularities are (as their inscriptions affirm) the older of the two classes. As modified, these latter were rendered as suitable for the reign of Hezekiah, as they would have been if they had been written for that time.¹

¹ With these considerations before us, in the light of the experiences of hymns in general, we are hardly interested in speculations such as that which suggests a cipher as being intended in the concluding verses of Pss. 25 and 34, bringing in such names as Pedaël or Pedaiah! The acrostic psalms as a whole justify an inference more in harmony with the greatness of the constituent parts of the collection.

We proceed to consider a psalm which, above most, has been assigned, with little hesitation, an origin in days subsequent to those of the kingdom.

PSALM 137.

The mere presence of the word 'Babylon' (*v.* 1), has secured for this psalm an exilic or post-exilic application; and has sufficed to bring its various statements—whether historical allusions or patriotic petitions—under the influence of a foregone conclusion. The proximity of the psalm to compositions bearing the mark of the Chief Musician (Pss. 138, 139, the formula standing over 139, 140 in the ordinary editions of the Psalter), should have suggested caution; and in view of the manner in which the Psalter is compacted by this ancient note, which was quite misunderstood by the Septuagint translators, efforts should rather have been made to find a situation belonging to pre-exilic times. An examination of the psalm as a whole will show that it comes from the days of the Kings of Judah.

To begin with, the psalm is not a picture of Judæan captives weeping 'by the rivers of Babylon', but rather a reminiscence of their feelings at such a time, placed in contrast with antecedent joys and the passion of a regained liberty.

Having returned to the land of their birth, the quondam exiles relate their sad experiences: 'By the rivers of Babylon there we sat, and wept as we remembered Zion. Our captors asked us to sing our native songs: they that wasted us sought to provoke us to mirth! How could we sing the song of Jehovah on alien soil?' So much in reference to past sorrows,

expressed in the plural number (*vv.* 1-4). Then the dear homeland occupies heart and lip, and the writer speaks for himself, in the singular number (*vv.* 5, 6). Recalling that, in the foreign land, the captives 'remembered Zion' (*v.* 1), he speaks his present feelings: 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget! Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I remember thee not; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy' (*vv.* 5, 6). There is a city to 'prefer': the site is not waste and void. The writer is filled with joy as he realizes the security of home. Now his tongue is free to sing, and his hand to touch the harp (*cp. vv.* 5, 6 with 2, 4).

Then follows the denunciation of Edom, which is an expression of essential importance, as implying that the captivity which had been endured was in some way attributable to the spite and treachery of the implacable enemy of Israel. The language is distinctive: it is not affirmed that the children of Edom did any more than urge on another enemy. To some advancing foe, the Edomites said, in regard to Jerusalem, 'Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof'—in other words, 'Go, and do your utmost: we wish you all success!' For ages, on every possible occasion, the Edomites sought the hurt of Israel, and from time to time judgement was denounced against them by the prophets of the elect nation. Here, however, is a specific instance of malign desire: and there is no reason why we should regard it as the last. Jerusalem, or the land of which it was the capital, suffered ill at the hands of the foe whose progress the children of Edom promoted; and the Lord is asked in the psalm to remember against the

Edomites the misfortune of the city, in other words, the sufferings of the kingdom of Judah (*v.* 7).

Moreover, judgement is invoked upon 'the daughter of Babylon' who had done her utmost to 'destroy' the people of Zion; and blessing is pronounced upon such as should reward the tyrant power as she had served Jerusalem (*vv.* 8, 9). In other words, the historical situation is one in which the power of Babylon was exerted with encouragement from Edom. If, as we have held, the Psalter was compiled by Hezekiah, and its latest pieces were contributed in this reign, then we shall not look in vain for events such as throw light on this psalm. It is important, however, to recognize that the words bear the stamp of having been written by one emancipated from captivity and once more settled in his native land. There he may recount the sorrow of past days: there he may look forward to the judgements of Heaven being visited upon those who had persecuted and oppressed himself and companions.

Why assume that this was impossible in the time of Hezekiah? It was easily possible. We have no grounds on which to suppose an allusion to the seventy years' exile in Babylon. Ready to sing the songs of Zion and finger the harp the while, the writer would hardly have been one of those 'ancient men' who, returning from Babylon under the decree of Cyrus, wept for the absence in the second Temple of the glory of the first. He had evidently come from a captivity more brief, and the historic records make it perfectly plain that there was such a captivity in Hezekiah's reign. This we proceed to show.

Let it be remembered that Tiglath Pileser III (745-27), a year before his death, became 'king of Babylon', as he had already been king of Assyria, Sumer, and Akkad. He was now 'king of the four regions—king of the world'. Like claims were made by his successors—Shalmaneser, Sargon, and Sennacherib, although from time to time Babylon rebelled. It was as kings of Babylon that these Assyrian monarchs did as they would in the region of the south. Let it also be borne in mind that those were days in which rulers were accustomed to deport the populations of conquered lands; thus it was that cities or states in which trouble arose were 'punished'. So it came about that the Samaritans were 'placed in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozan, in the cities of the Medes'—cities from which the Medes had been driven (2 Kings 17. 6). In this manner also, later on, 'the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, even from Cuthah, and Avva, from Hamath and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel' (v. 24). In this last passage we find the king of Assyria depopulating Babylonian cities. Could he not as easily send captives thither, even as he placed Israelites in 'the cities of the Medes'?

Such proceedings were incidental to the campaigns conducted by the kings of Assyria throughout the period when Ahaz and Hezekiah reigned in Judah. Hence Rabshakeh, when at the walls of Jerusalem, spoke of such acts as familiar and commonplace: 'Hath any of the gods of the nations ever delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad?

Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivvah? have they delivered Samaria out of my hand?' (2 Kings 18. 33, 34). Then, again, in his blasphemous letter to Hezekiah, Sennacherib said: 'Have the gods of the nations delivered them, which my fathers have destroyed, Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Telassar?' (2 Kings 19. 12, 13). In other words, these places had severally been destroyed in spite of their gods (cp. 2 Kings 17. 30, 31). In the northern group of cities the Samaritans had been placed (2 Kings 17. 6). From the southern group, in Babylon, men were brought, 'and placed in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel' (v. 24). Were the vacated settlements, 'by the rivers of Babylon,' left unoccupied? It is quite unlikely.

In the midst of these campaigns there was a Judæan captivity which has not received the attention it deserves. The story is told by Sennacherib on the well-known Taylor Cylinder in the British Museum, and is also mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures. That captivity took place in the reign of Hezekiah, and the facts are thus outlined in 2 Kings 18: 'Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them' (v. 13). The statement in the Cylinder is more circumstantial:—

But as for Hezekiah of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke, I besieged forty-six of his strong cities, fortresses, and small cities of their environs without number; and by casting down the walls and advancing the engines, by an assault of the light-armed soldiers, by breaches, by striking, and by axes, I took them; 200,150 persons, young and old, male and female,

horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen, and sheep without number, I brought out from them; I counted them as spoil.¹

Here was an enormous deportation, between seven and eight times as large as the number of captives taken from Samaria by Sargon (27,280).²

Whither were these captives taken? Though there is no categorical statement bearing on the point, the suggestion that they were carried to the cities of Babylon whence Samaria's new population had come, works out a very reasonable result. In the first place, such a course would be quite likely. The tyrant by whose order the Sepharvites, Avvites, and other Babylonians took their abominations to Samaria, would be just the man to command the transportation of the Jews to the region thus vacated, in the hope that 'all Israel', northern and southern kingdoms alike, would be indoctrinated with the rites of Bel (cp. 2 Kings 17. 29-31). Thus the Babylonians in Samaria, who 'feared the Lord, and served their own gods' (v. 32), appear to be like-minded with those who, 'by the rivers of Babylon,' said to the Jewish captives, 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.' In the second place, the reference to the children of Edom is agreeable to the facts of the situation; for we read that, as Sennacherib made his way westward, among the various kings who assisted his disastrous advance was Malik-rammu, of Edom, who, with the rulers of Moab and Ammon, and others, not only kissed the feet of the invader, but brought 'rich presents and heavy gifts with merchandise'³.

¹ Inscriptions of Sennacherib: Rogers's Translation, col. iii, lines 11-20. *Records of the Past* (Second Series), vol. vi, p. 90.

² Schrader, *Cuneiform Inscriptions* (tr. Whitehouse), vol. i, p. 265.

³ Taylor Cylinder, col. ii, lines 54-7.

Here was an opportunity for the spiteful word regarding Jerusalem: 'Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.' Whether spoken or not, this wish was ever in the heart of Edom.

When it is suggested that it was at this particular time that the writer of the psalm was taken away, an assumption is made which may at least be submitted to certain tests. Among other things, the language of the psalm finds a distinct echo in the language of the great contemporary prophet, Isaiah.¹

First, as to Babylon. We read:—

O daughter of Babylon, that art to be destroyed;
Happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee
As thou hast served us.
Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones
Against the rock (8, 9).

The fate of Babylon was the subject of explicit 'burdens' by Isaiah; and not only was its destruction placed beyond question (cp. 13. 6; 21. 9; 47. 14, 15); but in the said 'burdens' and prophecies we meet with the very language of this psalm:—

'Their infants also shall be dashed in pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished. Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them . . . their bows shall dash the young men in pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb' (Isa. 13 16-18; and cp. Nahum 3. 10, against *Assyria*).

And according to the scheme of the book, this 'burden' which affirms in prophecy what the psalm denounced in indignation, apparently belongs to the reign of Ahaz (ch. 14. 28). The language may vary, but the

¹ In the second part as well as the first: a reference to be justified in future chapters of this volume.

barbarities described are like those invoked; and in each case they are by way of recompense, or reward—‘as thou hast served us’ (cp. *v.* 2). And assuredly the experiences of Judah at the hands of the cruel Assyrian in the reign of Ahaz were such as fully justified the forward glance which we find here. The prophet is not, it would seem, concerned with a distant future, which could make but small appeal to the king before whom he stood; but rather he looks to the execution of a speedy vengeance upon the overbearing power which was ‘eating up’ the people of God ‘as men eat bread’.

If, then, in the psalm, ‘the rivers of Babylon’ bring us into the presence of the Assyrian power, so also, in the prophecy, are we to understand that same dread enemy of Judah when Isaiah speaks of ‘Babylon’. This is made clear by the fact that, in concluding his ‘burden’, the prophet says: ‘The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying: . . . I will break the ASSYRIAN in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot’ (I4. 24, 25). Moreover, if, as we are about to contend, the personality of Hezekiah is observable throughout the latter portion of the Book of Isaiah, then there need be no argument to show that the Babylon which is before us in this book is not the empire known as New Babylon, founded by Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar II, but that it is the Assyrian power, viewed under an aspect suited to the times and circumstances, inasmuch as the rulers called themselves, among other titles, ‘kings of Babylon,’ and thus were as free to place Jews in the cities of Babylon as they were to place Samaritans in the cities of the Medes.

Second, as to the children of Edom. We read:—

Remember, O LORD, against the children of Edom
The day of Jerusalem;
Who said, Rase it, rase it,
Even to the foundation thereof (7).

Though the curse of Edom is not set out on the page of history, yet it finds mention in the prophetic writings. In dealing with the destiny of Jacob's enemy, the prophets could not but throw light upon the sins of Edom. In Isaiah there are two important passages bearing on the subject, and their similarity, like other such correspondences, bind the two main portions of the book, and declare it as a whole to be of one age. In Isa. 34. 6, we read: 'The Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom'; and in Isa. 63. 1-6, is a picture of the Divine deliverer of Israel returning from the work of vengeance, in garments stained with blood. And in each statement of judgement there is a virtual explanation of *v.* 7 of the psalm. To remember against Edom the woes of Jerusalem, is to bring upon the Edomites themselves just such evils as they invoked upon the Holy City (cp. Obad. 15, 18, 19).

The prophetic utterances are explicit on this point—Edom was dealt with judicially. In Isa. 34. 8, the words are: 'It is the day of the Lord's vengeance, the year of recompence in the controversy of Zion.' In Isa. 63. 4, they are: 'The day of vengeance was in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.' These notes, indicating a settlement for the present of the account with Edom, associate the prophetic writings with the words of the psalm. And this conception of recompence or reward holds the psalmist's

mind, so that, in conclusion, he speaks of the fate of Babylon in similar terms: 'Happy shall he be, that *rewardeth* thee as thou hast served us.'

If, as we have found, the Judaeans captives taken by Sennacherib were placed in Babylon, when were they brought back? Apparently without very long delay; for in prophecies of Isaiah which belong to the reign of Hezekiah, as we shall immediately show, there are distinct statements in regard to such a return. In fact, we are compelled to conclude that, at the beginning of the fifteen years of peace—years in which Judah knew unbounded prosperity—the word went forth, 'Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans; 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' (Isa. 48. 20; cp. 43. 14-21).

How different is this from the circumstances of the captivity which came to an end under Cyrus the Persian! After seventy years of exile, the situation was made pathetic through the heads of families and old men 'weeping with a loud voice' when they compared the Temple of the Return with that which Nebuchadnezzar destroyed (Ezra 3. 12; cp. Hag. 2. 3). The psalm before us, however, while written by one who, to begin with, was familiar with the songs of Zion, suggests a man by no means lacking in strength and vigour, whose fingers can yet play the harp (*v.* 5), and whose tongue was not beyond the exercises of song (*v.* 6). Hence, to regard the psalm before us as post-exilic in the historic sense of that term, involves obvious difficulties, and also sunders it from the Old Testament literature in which

its precise terms are explained—including Isa. 13. 1-14. 27, a 'burden' which obviously relates to a Babylon that was under Assyrian dominance.

It is not possible here to examine the various other psalms which, as it were by common consent, have been assigned to an exilic or post-exilic age. It is desirable, however, to note the general drift of two others which have already been mentioned in connexion with Hezekiah's name.

PSALMS 1 AND 2

This psalm, in two parts, was placed at the beginning of the general body of psalms in the reign of Hezekiah.¹ Some verses (1, 2) of the second part have been attributed to David—Acts 4. 25, 26. To question this relation would be to ignore the great extent to which Hezekiah's men availed themselves of Davidic material in the making of their own psalms. Yet it is possible that the name 'David' in the passage in question means no more than 'the Psalmist', as in the well-known quotation in Heb. 4. 7, introduced by the words 'saying in David'—that is, in the Psalter. However, if not by actual writing, at least by adaptation, this psalm delineates incidents which arose in the time of Hezekiah.

¹ The division into two psalms has all along been challenged by the fact that many codices have presented the material as constituting but one psalm, for the Hebrew text has never exhibited any intermediate headline, to act as a mark of division. Similar features are observable in the best codices of the Septuagint; and this recalls the interesting reading of Acts 13. 33, in cod. D (several other ancient authorities agreeing), where the citation of Ps. 2. 7 is introduced by the words, 'As it is written in the FIRST psalm.'

Ps. 1. This part of the composition is an appeal to the people of Jerusalem, issued in the name of that king who was an enthusiast for the Law of the Lord. The Assyrian scorner, Rabshakeh, was at the walls of the city, and there were those within that were disposed to listen to his invitations to 'come out' and make terms (2 Kings 18. 17-22, 31, 32). In fact, the rulers of the city were of a like mind, and by their disloyalty caused defection from the ways of God (Isa. 28. 14 sq.). In these circumstances, notice is given of good things in store for such as keep clean from ungodly associations, and occupy themselves with things becoming in members of the Theocratic nation. Over against the counsels of the ungodly, there was the counsel of the good king, who called upon the people to put their trust in the Lord and have no fear (2 Chron. 32. 3-8). The situation, as the writings of the prophet Isaiah show, demanded reformation of life—returning to the Lord; and this is the appeal of the passage. Verses 4, 5, 6^b foretell the end of the enemy in terms strikingly true to the historic result; and *vv.* 3 and 6^a indicate the prosperity which is assured to the righteous. The fundamental meaning of *v.* 5 is that the Assyrian scheme shall not succeed—his judgement shall not stand—the enemy should not enter the Holy City (2 Kings 19. 32-4). The 'wicked', the 'scornful', and the 'sinners' are the heathen, and those of Judah that were disposed to make cause with them: those whose 'delight' was 'in the Law of the Lord', are the faithful few of the nation.

Ps. 2. This part falls into three sections, the first of which comprises *vv.* 1-6. The rage of 'the kings of

the earth' recalls the arrogancy and raging of the Assyrian kings, or great king (2 Kings 19. 28; 2 Chron. 32. 4; Isa. 10. 8), who conspired for the oppression of Judah and its king (*vv.* 1, 2). Verse 3 is not to be regarded as the utterance of the heathen. When was such a declaration called for by reason of endeavours at unrighteous enslavement on the part of the people of God? Assuredly never: on the contrary, the case was one of 'the kings of the earth' encroaching upon the inheritance of Israel; and the oppressed tribes, in the spirit of Hezekiah's noble rebellion, are represented as saying: 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us' (cp. 2 Kings 18. 20). The Lord is with His people: 'He that sitteth in the heavens doth laugh: the Lord doth have them in derision.' In a word, the Divine answer to the counsels of the ungodly is to establish, as never before, His anointed king 'upon His holy hill of Zion'. Hence, in a Song of the Degrees dealing with the same situation, we read: 'He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked. Let them be ashamed and turned backward, all they that hate Zion' (Ps. 129. 4, 5).

The second section of the psalm (*vv.* 7-9) explains the Divine attitude. The king speaks, and sets forth the meaning of the decree upon which all depends. 'The Lord said unto me, Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee' (*v.* 7; cp. Ps. 8. 5; 45. 6, 7). The new life that was given to Hezekiah, simultaneously with the discomfiture of the Assyrian host, justifies these remarkable words—words of resurrection. The king advances to greater honour and glory, and receives authority corresponding to the

special unction that rests upon him—'the nations for his inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.' This recalls the words of the historian that, after his recovery from sickness, Hezekiah 'was exalted in the sight of all nations from thenceforth' (2 Chron. 32. 23); also the significant prophetic references to the king who should 'judge among the nations, and reprove many peoples', and, moreover, 'bring forth judgement to the Gentiles' (Isa. 2. 4; 42. 1).

The concluding section (*vv.* 10-12) calls upon another class. Whereas in the first section kings and rulers were spoken of in the third person, because *spoken about*, here we have kings and judges addressed in the second person, because *spoken to*. The former act 'against the Lord and against His anointed'; the latter are professed worshippers of the Lord, but lacking in fidelity. This section deals with those holding allegiance to Hezekiah—the princes, petty kings, and judges of Judah. They serve the Lord, but not from motives of piety; they engage in national joys, but not with becoming restraint. They had shown a disposition to suborn the king, making him 'a servant of rulers' (Isa. 49. 7); to oppress the people (*ibid.* 1. 23; 3. 13-15; Mic. 3. 1-3, 11; 7. 3); while in religious matters they had set an example of insincere formalism (Isa. 1. 11-15; 66. 3). In these circumstances, amendment of life was demanded, in terms which denounced a terrible penalty in case of continued disobedience or contempt. It would take but little provocation now, so to anger the Lord that He would cut them off summarily. Therefore, they were also to submit them-

selves at once, and to be sincere in their attitude towards God and their king.¹

The correspondence of this poem with the situation thus proposed arrests attention. To say that these psalms arose in the Greek period, and that the ideal rather than the actual is to be discerned in their measures, is to lift them clear of all historical influences such as are in any way calculated to promote a sound interpretation. A comparison of the most approved expositions shows how much may be read *into* the words of these psalms, how little brought away *from* them, in the course of such treatment. Speaking of the Law and Zion, of wicked enemies and an anointed king, they seek a political as well as a religious atmosphere, and this we find in the reign of Hezekiah, which, as we have already shown, was so wonderful in many respects, and so rich in great events. Certain it is that a sound

¹ The first words of *v.* 12, as pointed by the Massorettes, are נִשְׁקֵי-בָר (nashku-bar)—‘kiss the son.’ Clearly this reading originated in misapprehension; for in *v.* 7 we find the regular Hebrew word for ‘son’ (בֵּן=ben). Moreover, had ‘kiss the son’ been intended, the substantive must have had an article prefixed. The absence of this mark of emphasis suggests that we should here read the abstract substantive בָּר (bôr)—‘cleanness’. Hence the idea of embracing purity, or sincerity; which is the sentiment demanded by every line of this section. See such ‘cleanness of hands’ referred to in Ps. 18. 20 (21), 24 (25); Job 9. 30; 22. 30. This reading has the support of ancient authorities. The Greek versions of Aquila and Symmachus evidently read נִשְׁקֵי-בָר (nashku-bôr) here, for they rendered ‘worship in purity’; and with this the Latin version of Jerome agrees. The Septuagint rendering is loosely paraphrastic—‘accept correction’—affording no support, however, to the ‘son’ reading.

interpretation will yield the most reliable and stable results in any spiritual application of the sacred records.

To recapitulate in few words the things that have been said. Hezekiah received the Davidic psalms, either in budgets or in individual form, and having placed with them other psalms, or budgets of psalms, belonging to his own age, compiled a book. He did not 'mix' the items, but placed his new psalms either before or after the substantial groups which formed the basis of his compilation. Either he or his men—it is reasonable to suppose that his men worked to his order—edited the older compositions so as to make them suited for the needs of the later day. That is to say, the good king made the older psalms his own by a pious appropriation such as others have exercised, all down the ages since then: having found the holy words, they have eaten them, to the joy and rejoicing of their hearts. All the psalms, at length, were reduced to such a shape and form as the service of the Temple demanded. Thus it comes about that, from beginning to end the collection exhibits points of contact with Hezekiah's reign.

The collection was in this form when the exile came. Chaos followed. By and by, with the Second Temple in view, Nehemiah collected the writings of David¹, and in due course the book came under editorial hands once more. By this time much had been forgotten. The songs of Zion had not been sung for many a year; and so, when the material was

¹ τὰ τοῦ Δαυὶδ (2 Macc. 2. 13).

revised, and reduced to the form which it has since maintained, the liturgical notes were combined with the literary headlines—an error that has ever since occasioned much misunderstanding. Afterwards the collection was divided into five books on the model of the Pentateuch, and doxologies added where deemed requisite.¹ When, later on, the Septuagint translation was made, the confusion in the inscriptions was perpetuated; and a thousand years afterwards came the Massoretic revision of the text, which, however, was devoted to verbal forms rather than to a treatment of the literature in its larger features.

From these facts one thing seems certain. The text of the Psalter comes into history, not as so many fugitive poems, but rather as a single document, continuously written. Though arising in different ages, and originally written in various styles, the constituent psalms as a whole were reduced to a common character, and had impressed upon them a literary complexion generally speaking peculiar to one age. That was the Hebrew of the age which the Massorettes approved as classic: hence

¹ That the doxologies were thus added *after the amalgamation of the inscriptions*, is proved by the fact that the one following Ps. 41 (the end of Book I) so divided off the subscript 'Chief Musician' line of that psalm as to combine it with the literary headline of Ps. 42 (with which Book II begins). Also, the proper function of 'Hallelujah' having been forgotten, that formula, as designed to introduce Ps. 107 (with which Book V begins), was, by the pentateuchal division, made to follow Ps. 106 (the end of Book IV) as if forming part of the doxology. See note on pp. 80-1 *ante*, also in the Appendix, under Pss. 105-107.

the Massoretic Text. From this simple fact, it is clear that no one can expect to distinguish with precision various authors or periods through verbal affinities or stylistic forms. These features, to a large extent, have been covered over, obliterated. Here and there peculiarities have come down to us, but these are accidental rather than typical, and afford no sufficient ground for documentary theories.

Thus we find the message of the Songs of the Degrees repeated in the Psalter at large, in so far as it bears upon the question of the formation of the book. The suggestions of a general survey are, moreover, emphasized by the indications of the 'adapted' psalms, all of which point to Hezekiah and his men as the compilers of the Psalter as a whole. It becomes obvious that but few writers are represented in the authorship, and fewer periods of time. The spirit of the psalmist was specially active in times of crisis, whether in the days of David or in those of Hezekiah; and the idea of psalms arising in the more ordinary experiences of the nation or the individual receives no support from the inscriptions, so far as they are explicit, nor indeed, from the substance of the psalms themselves.

All our observations go to show that Hezekiah was a greater man, and a more influential monarch, than history has yet judged him to be. Some idea of our findings as to the work of himself or his 'men' upon the Psalter, may be gathered from the 'Brief Notes on the Psalms' given as an Appendix to this volume. These 'Brief Notes' will not only

advance our main argument, but also throw light upon a variety of questions relating to the Psalter.

We are now to see that, in a manner not hitherto recognized, King Hezekiah realized in his godly rule those Messianic ideals which, in the writings of the prophets, have been so precious a heritage of Israel, and so mighty a source of blessing to the Church of Christ.

KING HEZEKIAH IN THE BOOK
OF ISAIAH

CHAPTER X

KING HEZEKIAH IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

I. INTRODUCTORY

IN the various 'adapted' psalms, as well as in such psalms as originated in the reign of Hezekiah, we observe certain notes of a distinctive character. On the one hand, we find denunciations of the idolatry of 'the wicked', i.e. the surrounding nations (e.g. Ps. 10. 3, 4; 97. 7; 115. 4-8; 135. 15-18); on the other hand, allusions to their habitual oppression of the people of God (e.g. Ps. 2. 2, 3; 7. 15, 16; 10. 2; 14. 4; 94. 23; 141. 10). Again, we are confronted with references to the plague, sore, or stroke, of the psalmist (e.g. Ps. 38. 11; 39. 10; 91. 10; see also Ps. 89. 32, and cp. with 2 Sam. 7. 14, 'stripes': in each case the Hebrew word is *נֶגַע*); and also to the renewal of his life, or extension of days (e.g. Ps. 30. 11, 12; 49. 15; 56. 13; 61. 5, 6; 102. 23-8; 115. 17, 18). There are likewise references to the redemption of Jacob, the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah (e.g. Ps. 14. 7; 25. 22; 34. 22; 51. 18, 19; 69. 35, 36). If, as we have held, these sentiments and experiences reflect the life and time of Hezekiah, then we shall find points of contact, topical and literary, between the Psalter and the writings of the great prophet of Hezekiah's reign—Isaiah of Jerusalem.

Such points of contact are numerous and impressive. They belong to the subject-matter rather than to detached words; and we shall discern them with ease in the writings of Isaiah regarded as a whole. A slight analysis of the book, with a cursory survey of its contents, will suffice to place the case in a convincing light. On the face of things, ch. 1 is a preface to the entire book; and if, as is customary, it was written *last*, then it reflects the condition of things when the prophet's messages were collected: that is, in the reign of Hezekiah.¹ This introductory section, as in such circumstances we should expect, is replete with allusions pertinent to the last and most eventful of the four reigns named in the first verse—the primitive *title* of the book—allusions, moreover, which find their explicit counterpart in the so-called Second Isaiah.

For instance, the sinful nation of *v.* 4—'laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers'—is matched in ch. 57. 3, 4, where we read of 'children of transgression, a seed of falsehood'. Verses 11-13, expressing a Divine revulsion from the multitude of sacrifices, 'vain oblations,' finds its explanation in ch. 66. 3, where outward acts of worship are shown to be utterly divorced from moral and spiritual motive—'he that killeth an ox is as he that slayeth a man', &c. Again, in *v.* 15, we read, 'when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you . . . your hands are

¹ The opening verse plainly implies this. Only at the end of his career could the prophet, or his literary executor—possibly the royal librarian for the time being, in whose hands the documents had accumulated—speak of the vision as covering such a period of time as is actually specified.

full of blood.' Here we have a glimpse of the condition described in ch. 59. 2, 3, 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you . . . your hands are defiled with blood.'

Again, in *v.* 18, those whose sins are as scarlet are invited to reason with Jehovah; and in ch. 43. 25, 26. we have the assurance, 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake . . . let us plead together.' Perhaps more striking still is the delineation of sinful practices in *v.* 29, with its reference to 'the oaks which ye have desired, and the gardens that ye have chosen'. The picture is given in fuller detail in ch. 57. 5; 65. 3; 66. 17, where other abominations are also denounced. Finally, *v.* 31 recalls ch. 66. 24, where the same unquenchable fire is spoken of as effecting the work of judgement. In a word, the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah would have been that of the wayward people of Judah had it not been that 'a very small remnant' remained true to Jehovah (*v.* 9; cp. ch. 37. 31, 32, for a like condition of things, though expressed in different terms).

These considerations, dealing, not with mere verbal features, but with the substance of the document, suggest that the *latter* part of the book belongs to the same age as the prefatory chapter. And what should we expect? The historical records, as well as the earlier part of the book, show that the reign of Hezekiah was one of great activity on the part of Isaiah. The prophet's ministry at the court of Hezekiah is, in fact, the story of his life according to the Books of Kings and Chronicles; and beyond the fact that he was the biographer of Hezekiah, and the

exponent of his life, nothing is placed to his account except that he wrote 'the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last' (2 Chron. 26. 22 ; 32. 32). Reason would suggest that the writings of Isaiah would show a preponderating reference to the reign of Hezekiah: but by chh. 40-66 of his book being regarded as belonging to a subsequent period in the history of the nation, a quite common-sense expectation is disappointed. All the grounds on which the modern view is based notwithstanding, we maintain that what is called the Second part of the Book, equally with a considerable portion of the earlier part, belongs to the time of Hezekiah. In the first place, the king's age demands it; in the second place, his career and character explain it.

We have already seen that, above most of the kings of Judah, Hezekiah was a man of sign. The events of his life are distinctive; things are said of him that are said of no one else. Chronological difficulties in regard to his time do not dispose of the marvellous occurrences which characterize his career. In brief, there were (1) the Assyrian invasion, which threatened national ruin; and (2) the king's mortal sickness, which threatened dynastic downfall. The destruction of the Assyrian army was a mighty wonder; the restoration of the king to health and the addition of fifteen years to his life was a great marvel. The prophetic adviser of the king could not be silent on these events, and we have a right to look for a reflection of them in the works of Isaiah. The historical narrative of these events—whether appearing in the Books of Kings or Chronicles, or as included in the first part of Isaiah—is ONE in substance. Is there

no prophetic treatment, no 'improvement' of these events, for the comfort of Hezekiah, for the instruction of the nation?

The answer is, Yes; and it is in what modern writers have come to call the Second Isaiah. There, in Isa. 40-66, we find a whole literature of allusions, in which reference is made, quite naturally and from a point of view which the history would prompt us to expect, to the motives behind the events, and the consequences flowing from them. Let us look at the book as a whole.

First, observe some notes of time. In ch. 6, we have a vision given 'in the year that king Uzziah died'. The next chapter brings Ahaz on the scene (ch. 7. 1, 10, 12); and ch. 14 gives a burden received 'in the year that king Ahaz died' (*v.* 28). Then come some prophecies regarding surrounding nations—Moab, Syria, Egypt, Babylon, and others (chh. 15-23). The sections that follow are appropriate for that period of the reign of Hezekiah in which the Assyrian was threatening the very existence of the kingdom of Judah. The prophet tells of judgements issuing in blessing (ch. 24); encourages Judah to glory in Jehovah (chh. 25, 26); and asserts the Divine care over His people (ch. 28). He denounces the hypocrisy of the ruling classes in Jerusalem, and foretells coming judgement (ch. 28. 14, to ch. 29. 24). The 'rebellious children' are reprov'd for 'going down to Egypt for help' (ch. 30. 2; 31. 1); they are shown to have given themselves to idolatry like the surrounding nations (ch. 30. 22; 31. 7). Yet the incoming Assyrian, after spending his wrath upon Judah, shall be discomfited by the act of God (ch. 30. 30-32; 31. 8); and at length

the weeping of Zion's people shall come to an end, and joy shall abound (ch. 30. 19, 23, 29). 'A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgement. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest' (ch. 32. 1, 2).

According to the scheme of the book as we have it, chh. 15-35 belong to the reign of Hezekiah; and as if to let us know how to understand them, the prophet proceeds to rehearse the story of the great and many trials that beset the king. Chapters 36-39 make a section by themselves; and from the court point of view the story of the king's sickness is as intensely political and national in its bearings as are the other parts of the narrative. As we read this historical section, expressions in those parts of the book that are more distinctly prophetic become fraught with a new significance. And all along, there is a complete contrast as between Hezekiah and his people. If they are rebellious, he is God-fearing; and everything conspires to exhibit the parties as severely opposed in regard to the service of Jehovah.

It is of the utmost importance to note this cleavage between the king and his people. Of no other ruler in Judah was it witnessed, as was the case with Hezekiah: 'He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him. For he clave to the Lord, he departed not from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses' (2 Kings 18. 5, 6). Yet what was his experience? Did he realize present comfort, and blessing corresponding to his piety and devotion? Indeed not. The case of Hezekiah disproves the

hasty generalization that godliness and virtue under the Old Covenant brought present consolation, reward in the life that now is.

Though a righteous man, Hezekiah was called upon to endure peculiar trial, to submit to much suffering. It was not for transgression of his own, however, that many pains and sorrows came upon him. Like other righteous men, he grieved for the sins of his nation, and in the providence of God he was made to suffer for others. His ungodly predecessors knew no distresses such as he endured. Of them it might be said, in the words of Asaph¹, 'Pride is as a chain about their neck; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish' (Ps. 73. 6, 7). On the other hand, at this critical period of his life, Hezekiah might have been tempted to say: 'Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart, and washed my hands in innocency; for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning' (*vv.* 13, 14).

What the king endured through the Assyrian invasion was but an aspect of sorrow and distress. His people were given up to corrupt ways: their worship of Jehovah was formal and insincere; and those who should have been loyal to the God of Abraham, urged an alliance with Egypt, or the making of terms with Assyria. Not so Hezekiah. 'He clave to the Lord, and departed not from following Him.' Social and political troubles, however, were but a slight vexation in comparison with the calamity which confronted the

¹ Asaph wrote in the reign of Hezekiah: as 'the king's seer', he probably wrote FOR HIM, i. e. giving expression to his thoughts and desires. See note on p. 91 *ante*.

king when Isaiah brought him a message of despair in the following words: 'Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live' (Isa. 38. 1). The grief which this occasioned is portrayed in the Writing with which Hezekiah memorialized the event (38. 9-20). As he had no son, the king could only read one meaning out of the trial: God had rejected him.¹ To what end and purpose was his piety? The ungodly occupants of the throne in earlier days had left successors: he was to 'go into the gates of Sheol in the noontide of his days', to be 'deprived of the residue of his years'.

The message caused profound perplexity. Did the Lord really regard the way of the righteous? How could such treatment be harmonized with the Divine justice? And did it not involve a breach of the covenant with David that there should be no failure of a man upon the throne of Israel (1 Kings 2. 4)? In answer to prayer, the disquieting message was revoked, and fifteen years were added to the king's life. The event was an acknowledged marvel, and news thereof soon reached far-off Babylon (2 Kings 20. 12; 2 Chron. 32. 31): in after years the extraordinary experience of the king was celebrated with patriotic satisfaction (Ecclus. 48. 23). Surely it is reasonable to ask whether such experiences have no inwardness? Has the court prophet nothing to say by way of illuminating these great events of Hezekiah's life? Here is a man who stood for God in his day and generation, who endured a chastening which was uncalled-for on account of any heinous sins of his own. When

¹ See note on p. 49 *ante*, and Chaps. xi, xii *infra*.

notified of death, which would at least have given him rest from the contradictions of a troubled life, we find him praying for an extension of days, in order that through his body the Davidic line might be prolonged, and that 'the father to the children might make known the faithfulness' of God (Ps. 132. 11; Isa. 38. 19). The prayer was heard; the king's life was extended; and children being given him, the succession to the throne was, for the time being, rendered secure.¹

These are not simply 'occurrences': they are wonders. Nothing like these things is read in the records of other kings. If, therefore, the prophet is, in the first place, a man with a message for his own times, we expect something from Isaiah on these matters. Those who would foreclose investigation by saying that the Second Isaiah brings us into the presence of Cyrus the Persian, and deals with the Return, are asked to leave those points for future consideration, that we may now, for a few moments, attend to things that are plain and unmistakable. It will be good time to look into the Cyrus passages when we have faced the evident portraiture of Hezekiah in what is called the Second Book of the Isaianic prophecies. And if at the outset we admit, as assuredly we must, that the historic section (36-9) may as well be a digression in a continuous work as constitute a conclusion (as some have too readily

¹ That the son who succeeded was Manasseh, who 'did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord', by no means qualifies the importance of the occasion. The dynasty was preserved: the Davidic line did not cease or fail with the righteous king.

assumed it to be), we are in a position to proceed with our investigations.

After the historic digression, Isaiah resumes the prophetic style.¹ And here, as we maintain, whatever wealth of spiritual significance may lie behind the language of chh. 40-66, the initial intention of the prophet was to minister instruction and encouragement to the citizens of Jerusalem during the critical period of Hezekiah's reign. During that reign, we must remember, there were captives abroad, and there was a 'captivity' at home: there were Jews in exile, and there was a fatherland invaded by the enemy. The history shows this; and the writings of Isaiah and Micah (not to mention other prophets) delineate a like picture.

The historical outline presents the king before us as meek in disposition and loyal to Jehovah. The prophet Isaiah gives a portrait in thorough harmony. He writes of—'My servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I will put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles' (ch. 42. 1). Why should not this have been said of Hezekiah? In many of the psalms David speaks of himself as the servant of the Lord. In like manner, the term is applied to Hezekiah in Ps. 116. 16.² Moreover, in 2 Chron. 32. 16 the king is specifically referred to under the same designation.³ It remained for the eloquent prophet to apply the epithet with greater fullness.

¹ See remarks on the prophetic style of writing, pp. 242-3.

² See on this psalm in the Appendix.

³ The servants of Sennacherib spake 'against the Lord God, and against HIS SERVANT Hezekiah' (2 Chron. 32. 16).

CHAPTER XI

KING HEZEKIAH IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

2. 'THE SERVANT OF THE LORD'

ALTHOUGH the nation of Israel as a whole might occasionally be styled Jehovah's servant (e.g. Isa. 41. 8), yet the designation was more generally associated with a person; and of that person things were said that could not be affirmed of a nation—certainly not of the nation of Judah in the days of Hezekiah, and assuredly not with truth in the days of the Return. When was it possible, for example, to say of Israel: 'He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgement in truth'? (Isa. 42. 2, 3).¹

Note, however, how this description of the Upright one harmonizes with the outline of the righteous one in Isa. 33. 15, who 'stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from looking upon evil'. In this manner, the Servant of the Lord is proposed as a model to others: 'Who is blind

¹ Cp. *v.* 1: 'He shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles.' The outlook was of a just lawgiver, of commanding influence. (See *v.* 4, and cp. Ps. 2. 8.)

except (עַבְדִּי) my servant, and deaf like my messenger which I send' (Isa. 42. 19). The description should prepare us for others regarding the same personality: the one who shut his eyes and stopped his ears was afterwards described as suffering without complaining: he 'opened not his mouth' (Isa. 53. 7). Without discussing whether, in such a case as Isa. 44. 1-5, the king may not be addressed as the *head* of Israel; and leaving for the present the passages in which Cyrus is named (44. 28; 45. 1), we pass to chapters dealing specifically with the oppressors of the people of Judah.

As in the earlier part of the book (chh. 13, 14, and 21), so in the latter the Assyrian Power is occasionally spoken of as 'Babylon'; for the kings of Assyria, for several reigns, had added the title 'king of Babylon' to their other proud designations (ch. 47. 1; 48. 20; cp. 46. 1).¹ The situation, with its Jews in exile, is not one that waits on events which took place generations after Hezekiah's time. In the year that he came to the throne, the good king lamented that the wrath of the Lord had fallen upon Judah and Jerusalem: 'and He hath delivered them to be tossed to and fro, to be an astonishment, and an hissing, . . . For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this' (2 Chron. 29. 8, 9). Things did not greatly improve in this respect during the early part of Hezekiah's reign; and in the fourteenth year Sennacherib 'came up against all the fenced cities

¹ See various documents in *The Records of the Past* (Second Series); also article ASSYRIA, by Hommel, in Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible*.

of Judah, and took them' (Isa. 36. 1). As we have already shown, this involved the deportation of 200,150 souls, besides great national plunder. What the historic records of Scripture do not relate, we gather from the boastful words of the Assyrian king himself, as set forth on the Taylor Cylinder, and given in a previous chapter.¹

The prophetic page shows how the heads of the nation were encouraged in these humiliating circumstances. Yet, in their sad waywardness, the people disregarded the Servant of the Lord. He was as one 'whom man despised, and whom the nation abhorred' (Isa. 49. 7). To brighten the days of the king's sickness, and to instruct the people in the meaning of the same, the prophet delivered his greatest message regarding the Servant of the Lord. In words that once and for all settled the issue of the king's sickness, he began: 'Behold, my Servant shall prosper²; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Like as many were astonished at thee, (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men,) so shall he startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been

¹ See p. 134. It is not too much to say that, when this inscription was discovered, the hour arrived for a complete revision of views in regard to Isaiah's prophecies. Here were details of a captivity of which expositors had lost sight, with consequences that had reduced the prophetic writings to a mass of documents of which the time-reference was in doubt.

² Not 'deal wisely'. The parallel expressions indicate the sense 'prosper', as implying recovery from sickness, or being restored to health. The man of the marred visage is to be raised up, and exalted to a position of mighty influence.

told them shall they see ; and that which they had not heard shall they understand' (Isa. 52. 13-15). In effect, something without parallel in individual observation or historic report, is affirmed in regard to the suffering Servant.

Not for a moment would we call in question the application of these words to One whom the prophet saw as standing in a distant future, and sustaining an unique position to Israel and the world. Nevertheless it is confidently suggested that the initial interpretation of the words points to Hezekiah at the time of his illness, with every stage of which Isaiah must have had something to say or do as the prophet of Jehovah passing his days in the king's court. All that remains of this wonderful prophecy likewise finds its primary fulfilment in Hezekiah. Well might men wonder why the good king should suffer ! Was he not righteous—the righteous Servant of the Lord ? Yet of him the prophet tells a story of pain and suffering such as would befit a sinner or one accursed of God, and that in the midst of men who in their transgression from the ways of the Lord despised their king, 'esteemed him not.'

Isaiah goes on to see the redeeming mercy of God in these things. Not for himself did the king suffer, but for his people. The prophet continues : 'Surely he hath borne our sicknesses and carried our sorrows : yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But 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. All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own

way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.' If the prophet speaks to his own age—and assuredly he had an immediate message—then there was some experience which his words were designed to explain and illuminate. With the life of Hezekiah in mind, we can have no doubt as to the application of the prophet's words.

Let it be recalled that, in moral and spiritual things, no less than in national ideals, the king and the people were 'wide as the poles asunder'. Isaiah's 'report' then throws light on this aspect of the king's trials. The righteous one is bearing the sin of the unrighteous. In the descriptive lines which follow, so long as we leave on one side New Testament applications, we are able to read very clearly the experiences of Hezekiah. 'He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself and opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb; yea, he opened not his mouth.' From the midst of oppression on the one hand, and deprived of his just rights on the other, he is to be taken away¹—without son to succeed him, stricken, cut off²—for no fault of his own (53. 7, 8; cp. 38. 12). Suffering for others, he was marked for death like a sinner: 'His grave was appointed with the wicked, with the impious his mound of burial,

¹ The idea of imprisonment is neither radical nor essential. See the R.V., and cp. the Septuagint, as quoted in Acts 8. 33.

² The 'generation' of Isa. 53. 8 is the 'age' of 38. 12 (*dôr*). The chapter opens with an expression of wonder as to the story of the Servant. Now the cutting off of his seed is also a question of marvel: 'As for his posterity, who can consider it?' Or 'who can declare it?' seeing there is none!

although he had done no violence, neither was there any deceit in his mouth.' So we understand verse 9.

As in regard to no one else in Old Testament times, the remainder of the chapter had its allusions to Hezekiah. For the sake of the king, Jehovah extends mercy to the people, and the issue finds expression in the familiar and remarkable words: 'He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand' (*v.* 10). These signally distinctive promises were, it is hardly necessary to say, fulfilled to the letter in the experience of Hezekiah: fifteen years are added to his life, and when three of them had elapsed, Manasseh was born of Hephzibah. And the added years constituted a period of peace and prosperity, as we have repeatedly seen.

Unquestionably there is something arresting in the terms—'see a seed . . . prolong his days'. They do not constitute a commonplace: rather, they proclaim their relevancy to some definite situation in the life of an individual, to whom, in the Divine mercy, special privileges are vouchsafed. Their first significance must be literal; and almost certainly they must relate to some king or ruler, for it is with such that the problems of length of days and seed succession are of supreme importance. Who but Isaiah, we ask, should 'improve' the story of the king who, as the historical records tell us, desired, and was granted, prolongation of days in order that he might see a son to follow him on the throne of Judah? As the continuance of life was prayed for in order that a successor might be provided for the throne of David, the arrangement of the clauses is fitting and

just: 'He shall see a seed' (singular number); 'he shall prolong his days; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.' No merely mystical design, certainly no portrayal of an ideal nation, could have suggested such a form of words as makes up this part of the prophet's 'report'.

We cannot but conclude that, from first to last, Hezekiah was before the prophet in this delineation of the Servant of the Lord. However much the seer may have looked beyond, to One of whom the very best of the kings of Judah could exemplify no more than a weak adumbration, the reigning king could not be out of view. And if, in any sense, a king of the Jews ever furnished a type of the Messiah, what shall be said of the *rôle* sustained by Hezekiah, with whom God's dealings were so extraordinary, so full of miracle, so distinctive in character? Like Moses before him, the king shielded his people from the wrath of God: a man was 'a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest' (Isa. 32. 2; cp. 2 Chron. 32. 26). In turn, also, he was a figure of that great Successor to the throne of David and of the world, who in a sense still more complete 'bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors'.

In its fullness, then, the prophecy before us is of one who was brought low and raised up; of one who, from being 'despised and rejected of men', became 'exalted, and lifted up, and very high'. Not only did the sick one recover, but he enjoyed a victorious retrospect; the one of whose generation (posterity) no declaration could be made, lived to see children rise in his royal home; and he who was to go to his

grave in dishonour, had his days prolonged and was made a mighty blessing to his people. How wonderful! The prophet asks, 'Who would believe such a report?'¹ To marvellous purpose, indeed, has 'the arm of the Lord been revealed' that the sick should recover in such a manner, and the humiliated Servant should be dealt with in such wise that 'kings should shut their mouths at him' in astonishment.

But it has been said that the Servant of the Lord in this part of Isaiah is a portrait of the ideal Israel. In reply, we remark that, were the nation in the mind of the writer, it would have been easy for him to point such reference in a way that could have raised no question. That the ideal nation has its place in prophecy, is not here disputed: that it should be found in the passage before us, is quite another thing. Note the words of the prophet: 'He bare *our* sicknesses, and carried *our* sorrows' (that is, he had these on our account) . . . 'for the transgression of *my* people was he stricken' (ch. 53. 4, 8). Could the people in one aspect suffer for the people in another aspect? The message is obviously concerning one whom the people, the nation, did not understand or recognize: 'He was despised and rejected of men.'

On the other hand, it is certain that the aspect of Israel that is uppermost in the prophecies of Isaiah is the reverse of the ideal. The heavens and earth are

¹ Even as, later on, he exclaimed that, in all past time, men had never seen, heard, or conceived such a case as that of the man who, though 'rejoicing and working righteousness', was yet stricken by God because of the sins of the people (Isa. 64. 4, 5; and cp. pp. 258-9 *infra*).

called to witness, in the opening verses of the book, that the Lord 'had nourished and brought up children, and they had rebelled against Him' (Isa. i. 2). In the view here set forth, we find the ideal represented by the king, even Hezekiah: the people, the nation, were 'sinful', 'laden with iniquity,' 'a seed of evil-doers' (v. 4). Not many could say with the king: 'I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting' (Isa. 50. 5, 6).

Thus interpreted, the story of Hezekiah compacts into ONE BOOK the writings of Isaiah of Jerusalem and those of 'the Unknown', or 'the Second Isaiah'; it justifies the opening verse of the book, and enables us to receive without hesitation the traditional title, 'The Book of the Prophet Isaiah.' Moreover, when, in the New Testament records, we find Isaiah 53 quoted as the work of Isaiah the prophet, we are in face of statements that are absolutely beyond cavil, and in harmony with the results of a thorough and consistent criticism. Hezekiah stands behind the great prophecies of the book from ch. 15 onward. Hence we must hold that those prophecies belong to his age and not to a later age. And as, according to history, Isaiah flourished in the reign of Hezekiah, we reach a conclusion which has the support of a reasonable expectation. Therefore, it is with unquestioning approval that we find the book as a whole described, in its opening words, as 'the vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and HEZEKIAH'.

Here then, in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, we find the very features which, at the opening of chapter x, were signalized as among the distinctive notes of the Psalter, and as evidences of the work upon the same of Hezekiah and his men. The idolatry of the Assyrians is denounced in terms quite similar to those employed in the Psalms (see Isa. 37. 19; 42. 17; 44. 9-20; 46. 6, 7),¹ as also is their treachery and oppression of the people of God (see Isa. 10. 24, 25; 14. 25; and the entire story of the Assyrian invasion). Moreover, in a portion of the book which has never been studied in the light of the great experiences of Hezekiah, we find definite mention of the plague-stroke from which he suffered (Isa. 53. 4, 8),² with the attendant hiding of the face of God and man (*v.* 3); also mention of the marvellous renewal of life or extension of days granted to him (*v.* 10; see also Isa. 32. 1, 2; 33. 17, 24; 38 *passim*; 57. 18, 19).³ As for the other topics, the redemption of Jacob, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, these form the absorbing subject of the last six chapters of the book.

So the Psalter is shown to supply the shadings of a picture which, after being outlined in the historical books, is presented in its fuller spiritual perspective in the prophecies of Isaiah. All that the psalms suggested is borne out by the prophetic writings. Isaiah depicts the one who passed from experiences of sorrow to exercises of joyous worship. The Psalter supplies the songs and prayers of the man,

¹ Cp. with Ps. 97. 7; 115. 4-8; 135. 15-18.

² Cp. with Ps. 38. 11; 39. 10; 91. 10.

³ Cp. with Ps. 30. 11, 12; 49. 15; 56. 13; 61. 5-8; 102. 23-8; 115. 17, 18.

and expands the Messianic typology so as to exhibit, in the sufferings and victories of one who was the Lord's anointed, a living picture and concrete prophecy of Him whom the Christian revelation has set forth as David's Son and David's Lord.

CHAPTER XII

KING HEZEKIAH IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

3. 'THE SERVANT' UNDER VARIOUS ASPECTS

IF we would secure a prophetic picture of the king in any measure corresponding to that desiderated by our studies in the Psalter, we must continue to trace in the writings of Isaiah still further allusions to Hezekiah and his times.

It would appear that the sickness of the king and the great Assyrian invasion synchronized. This is the evident implication of the records in 2 Kings 20. 1; Isa. 38. 1; 2 Chron. 32. 24, the expression 'in those days' recalling in each case the destruction of the army of Sennacherib, as described in the verses immediately preceding. That is to say, the sickness was in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign (2 Kings 18. 13; Isa. 36. 1). And the fact that, by the fifteen years added to his life, the king completed his reign of twenty-nine years (2 Kings 18. 2; 2 Chron. 29. 1), affords proof that the sickness did not occur earlier in his career. Moreover, the prophecies of Isaiah deal with the two events conjointly, even as the historical record combines them, thus: 'I will add unto thy days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city' (Isa. 38. 5, 6).

The allusion to Hezekiah in Isa. 49 is one that may be easily detected; and it may here be considered as typical. Having great things to announce, the prophet appeals to distant people to give attention: 'Listen, O isles.' The subject of the passage is 'the Servant of the Lord', a designation which we have already shown to befit Hezekiah; and that *a person* is addressed, and not Israel as a whole, is clear from *vv.* 5, 6, where the Servant's work is shown to consist in bringing Jacob back to the Lord—'to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the preserved of Israel'. There is no need to adduce proof that the life-work of Hezekiah amply justified this designation. We proceed to note that the descriptive terms which immediately follow are true of him to the letter. This Servant was one 'whom man despiseth, whom the nation abhorreth', in fact, one who was being denied his liberty by underlings, who in some acts made him their unwilling agent. Yet events were impending which would command universal surprise—'kings shall see and arise to do homage, princes also shall render worship because of the doings of the God of Israel' (*v.* 7).

The language suggests that which we have already noticed (*ch.* 52. 13-15) in regard to the surprise of on-lookers at the recovery of the Lord's Servant from a mortal sickness. In the passage before us, we have another aspect of the same great incident. The subject is the king's prayer for recovery, and the real purpose of the Lord in prolonging his life. 'Thus saith the Lord, in a time of favour have I answered thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee; and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant

of the people, to establish the land (in security), and to make the desolate heritages to be inherited' (*v.* 8).

In other connexions we have seen that the king was raised up, in order that the dynasty of David might be extended, also for a sign of the Divine power and mercy upon which men should gaze with astonishment. These thoughts are expanded here: prayer is heard, and life is preserved for the settlement of the kingdom—'to establish the land'; and to undo the ravages of the Assyrian who had spread ruin on every hand—'make the desolate heritages to be inherited'. This is not all, however. The king was raised from the gates of death in order that captivities might be reversed—that to them that were bound, whether in besieged cities or in the lands of the enemy, he might say, 'Go forth'; and to them who, through fear, were in hiding, i.e. in darkness, he might say, 'Show yourselves.' And this with a wonderful result—they should come to a time and condition of perfect peace and prosperity—finding food where formerly there were naked ways, and pastures on what had been barren heights: 'They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the sun's heat smite them: for He that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall He guide them' (*vv.* 9, 10).

In brief, the prophet goes on to declare that the Lord will have mercy on Zion. Though the city is, as it were, *in extremis*, He has not forsaken her, but will drive the enemy from the land—'thy destroyers and they that have made thee waste shall go forth of thee,' i.e. the invader shall leave the land (*vv.* 13-17). In important particulars, the language is like that of

ch. 42, where we read of 'My servant whom I uphold; My chosen in whom My soul delighteth'—one who, though humble and meek, shall not fail nor be discouraged till he hath set judgement in the land, and the isles shall wait for his law (*vv.* 1-4). In verbal harmony with this, 'the isles' are called upon to 'listen' in ch. 49. 1; and in both passages the personage in the foreground is described as having been given 'for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles' (ch. 42. 6; 49. 6, 8).¹ As strictly construed, these terms imply a *king* as distinguished from 'people', an *Israelite* as distinguished from 'Gentiles'.

The so-called Second Isaiah has this situation continually in sight—the situation of Hezekiah and his times. The chapters which follow the one we have been examining—of necessity only in part—present a series of pictures of the man and his surroundings. The Lord hath not 'put away' His people: His salvation is near, to avenge their wrongs (ch. 50. 1; 51. 4, 5). As, in another message, the prophet spoke of speedy relief because Jerusalem had 'received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins' (ch. 40. 2), so, again, he ushers in the day of peace and joy with the proclamation, 'Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem,

¹ The restoration of Hezekiah and the deliverance of Jerusalem formed a conspicuous token of Divine favour; and as a consequence the little Judæan kingdom became great in the eyes of surrounding nations. Here we see one aspect of the king's position as 'a covenant of the people', over whom he ruled; and as 'a light of the Gentiles', who heard with astonishment of the wonderful dealings of God with him. 'Many brought gifts unto the Lord to Jerusalem, and precious things to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations from thenceforth' (2 Chron. 32. 23).

which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of His fury . . . Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of staggering, even the bowl of the cup of My fury; thou shalt no more drink it again' (ch. 51. 17, 22).

This as to the city and its people. With reference to those who were in the land of the enemy, carried thither by Sennacherib as we have already seen¹, there was also a word of hope: 'The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads' (ch. 51. 11; cp. 35. 10). So it appears that there was to be a *going* of the invading enemy and a *coming* of the emancipated captives; while all the time assurances were given of deliverance from the distress and disaster which constituted the sad experience of Judah during this period. Though utter destruction had been threatened, release was at hand; and though heathen hosts were encamped round the walls of Jerusalem, they were not to enter the holy city (ch. 52. 1). Thus far had they come, but they should go no further.²

Deliverance hastens. 'What do I here, saith the Lord, seeing that My people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them' (in tyranny and oppression) 'do howl' (in anticipation of speedy victory), 'saith the Lord, and My name continually all the day is blasphemed. Therefore My people shall know My name: therefore they shall know in that day that

¹ See p. 134 *ante*.

² The uncircumcised and unclean had entered in the past: they were to do so no longer. The Lord had said: 'I will deliver thee and this city . . . I will defend this city' (ch. 38. 6).

I am He that doth speak—Behold it is I' (ch. 52. 5, 6). The messenger of deliverance, announcing that the God of Israel reigneth, and, at length, is asserting His power, comes over the mountains; and in view of the forthcoming reversal of fortune, the waste places of Jerusalem are called upon to sing for joy. Meantime, the watchmen on the towers may relax their vigilance. Now that the Lord returns to Zion in mercy, they cease to scan the movements of enemies; but, realizing the joy of a national redemption, they look one another in the face—'see eye to eye'—and lift up their voice in praise. 'The Lord hath comforted His people; He hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God'¹ (52. 7-10).

The enemy being gone, the city gates are open. The people are no longer prisoners, but free citizens in a beloved fatherland. They may go in and out; but as they use their freedom, they must beware of contracting defilement through contact with abominations such as might have been introduced by the

¹ This explanation does full justice to the language of *v.* 4; 'My people went down at the first into Egypt to sojourn there: and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.' The earliest and latest historic 'oppressions' are named; and then, quite naturally, we read:—'And now what have I here, &c.?' To say, with Orelli, on the strength of this verse, that 'the time of the Assyrians lies far behind', and then to argue that the passage as a whole relates to the subsequent Babylonian captivity (606-534 B. C.) is quite gratuitous. To confine attention to the Southern kingdom, one finds in the reign of Ahaz an ample justification of the statement: 'the Assyrian oppressed them without cause' (see 2 Chron. 28. 20, 21).

heathen hordes who had lately swarmed the country. Hence the prophet cries: 'Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord' (v. 11). And such is the security with which this may be done, the word is added: 'Ye shall not go out in haste, neither shall ye go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rearward' (v. 12). Thus the prophecy which began with a declaration that the enemy should not *enter* the city, ends with another statement describing how the citizens themselves were empowered to *leave* it.

In the ordinary sense of the word, the chapter knows nothing of an 'Exilic' situation. Though forming part of the so-called Deutero-Isaiah, it corresponds with history as unfolded in the writings of Isaiah of Jerusalem. That the language adequately describes the events which stand out above all others in the reign of Hezekiah, cannot be questioned. In a word, as here brought before us, the Servant of the Lord is a personage, not a nation—one to whom the people owed implicit obedience: 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant? Though he walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let such an one trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God' (ch. 50. 10). While owing obedience, however, they rendered otherwise—as we have seen, and shall now realize more fully.

The prophet's next message relates to the Servant under specific aspects; and of this we furnish a free rendering in the light of the situation provided by the experiences of Hezekiah.

PROPHETIC EXPLANATION OF THE KING'S SICKNESS.

Isa. 52. 13—53. 12.

[*The Issue Foretold.*]

[Ch. 52] (13). Behold, my servant shall prosper¹ (i. e. flourish after recovery from sickness): he shall be exalted, and lifted up, and be very high. (14) Even as many were astonished at thee—so marred more than any man's was his face, and his form more than any of the sons of Adam—(15) yet shall he surprise² many nations: at him kings shall shut their mouths (in wonderment), for that which had never been told them they shall see, and that which they had never heard shall they understand.

[*The King set at Nought.*]

[Ch. 53] (1) Who would believe the report that we bring? And on whom is it that the arm of the LORD has been made bare (in visitations of affliction and trouble)? (2) For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he had no form nor comeliness, and when we saw him there was no beauty that we should desire him (i. e. we were not drawn to him by any personal attractions). (3) He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with sickness; and as one from whom faces are hidden (or turned) he was despised and we esteemed him not.

[*Vicarious Nature of His Sufferings.*]

(4) Surely they were our sicknesses that he bore, and our sorrows that he carried; and yet we did esteem him to be stricken³, smitten of God, and afflicted. (5) And he was wounded on account of our transgressions, bruised on account of our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace (i. e. needful to secure our peace) was upon him, and in his stripes there is healing for us.

[*Cut off without Posterity.*]

(6) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath caused to fall

¹ See note on p. 163.

² Similarly the Septuagint, and most modern versions.

³ 'Stricken.' The verb שָׁחַט , whence שָׁחַט (cp. *v.* 8), the stroke, sore, plague, particularly of leprosy (see pp. 151, 170, 189).

upon him (as in violent assault) the iniquity of us all. (7) He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb—yet he opened not his mouth. (8) Through oppression and judgement he was taken away,¹ and who shall declare his generation²? Yea, he was cut off out of the land of the living, because of the transgression of my people was he stricken³.

[*Seed promised: Days prolonged.*]

(9) And his grave was appointed with the wicked⁴, and his mound of burial with the impious⁵, even though he had done no wrong, neither was there any deceit in his mouth. (10) Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him: He made him sick. If thou makest his soul to be a trespass-offering, he shall see a seed, he shall prolong his days⁶; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

[*The Outcome.*]

(11) He shall see (fruit, or outcome) of the travail of his soul; he shall be satisfied: by his knowledge (or experience—that

¹ Or 'As a consequence of oppression and sentence pronounced', he is taken away. Cp. Isa. 57. 1, as explained later (ch. xiv). The Septuagint reads 'In his humiliation his judgement was taken away'. See note on p. 165, and cp. Acts 8. 33.

² That is 'his posterity'. There was, in fact, none to 'declare'. It is to this that the question points. Note the same word *dôr*, in this same sense, in Hezekiah's Writing (Isa. 38. 12), 'my generation is removed,' i. e. 'posterity is denied me.'

³ 'Stricken.' See note on v. 4.

⁴ That is the 'ungodly', by implication the heathen, upon whom such a 'stroke' might well fall. Cp. note on p. 106 *ante*.

⁵ Again the heathen, whose 'riches' are the subject of contemptuous denunciation by Old Testament writers (cp. Ps. 49. 6, 16; 73. 3, 12; Isa. 2. 7; Mic. 6. 12). Some would read עֲשֵׂי רָע ('evil doers'), instead of עֲשִׂיר ('the rich'). This exhibits a plural form, pertinent to the general sense, and in harmony with the רָשָׁעִים ('the wicked') of the preceding clause.

⁶ On these expressions, see pp. 166-7 *ante*.

which he has *come to know*) shall the righteous one my servant justify¹ many, for theirs are the iniquities he has borne. (12) Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because (or, in return for the fact that) he poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and was smitten for the transgressors.²

We have already noted some of the points of similarity between the language of this prophecy and that of the well-known Writing of Hezekiah. Before instituting a comparison on points of detail, we will consider a free rendering of the latter.

HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS AND RECOVERY, AS RECORDED BY ISAIAH.

Isa. 38.

(1) In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, came to him, and said unto him: Thus saith the LORD, Set thy house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live. (2) Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, (3) and said: Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth

¹ In Isaiah, in many places, 'justify' covers the meaning of deliver and save (cp. ch. 46. 13; 51. 5, 6; 56. 1). The personal experiences of Hezekiah brought deliverance to Judah.

² The concluding lines recall the 'prosperity' which was announced in the opening paragraph. The aggrandizement has a definite relation to the vicarious experiences of the king. On the final clause, 'and was smitten for the transgressors,' cp. p. 259 *infra*, and note occurrence of the same word פָּגַע (*pāgā*) in another aspect, in the line where we read, earlier on, that 'the Lord hath caused to fall upon him the iniquity of us all'. Like a foe, the sins of others violently assailed him. The 'intercession' of the passage is that of one who receives without deserving it the blow due to the offender or transgressor.

and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

(4) Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying: (5) Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father,¹ I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. (6) Moreover, from the hand of the king of Assyria will I deliver thee and this city: and I will defend this city.² (7) And this shall be the sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken: (8) behold, I will cause the shadow on the steps, which is gone down on the dial³ of Ahaz with the sun, to return backward ten steps. So the sun returned ten steps on the dial whereon it was gone down.

(9) The Writing of Hezekiah, King of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness:—

[*Life cut short.*]

(10) I said: In the stillness⁴ of my days I shall go into the gates of Sheol: I am deprived of the residue of my years.⁵

(11) I said, I shall not see the LORD, even the LORD⁶, in the land

¹ This description is evidently designed to associate the message which follows with the promise, often repeated, that David should never lack a man to sit on the throne of Israel. The death of Hezekiah at the time before us would have involved a violation of the Divine covenant with the founder of the royal house. See pp. 49, 158 *ante*.

² 'Defend' by covering: see the expression again in Isa. 37. 35. The act implied shielding, with deliverance as the result.

³ Whether staircase or dial, whether steps or degrees, is immaterial in the present connexion.

⁴ 'Stillness': i. e. not in times of commotion and anxiety when death might be a relief, but in times of quiet, when life has joy and satisfaction.

⁵ 'Residue of years', i. e. those of greatest usefulness, and which, in the maturity of life, count for most in the service of God.

⁶ 'Jah' repeated. The king grieves above all else that he will be denied the joys of worship. Cp. the ardent desire of the psalmist: 'That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the

of the living: I shall behold man no more when among those that are rejected¹

[*Posterity Denied.*]

(12) My generation² is removed, and is carried away from me as a shepherd's tent. Like a weaver, I must fold up my life,³ I must be cut off as a thread from the thrum. From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me⁴? (13) I quieted myself until morning: as a lion, so he may break all my bones.⁵ From day even to night wilt thou make an end of me? (14) As a twittering swallow, so did I chatter: I did moan as a dove: mine eyes failing with looking upward. O LORD, I am oppressed: take thou in hand my cause.⁶

days of my life, TO BEHOLD THE BEAUTY OF THE LORD, and to care for his temple' (Ps. 27. 4).

¹ Lit. 'The inhabitants of rejection'—*יושבי חרל*. We must stand by the Massoretic reading here. The reason will be given immediately (p. 186).

² The word is *דור*; and here, as well as in ch. 53. 8, it means posterity'. The king mourns over the forcible removal of his generation, i. e. the denial of posterity, whereby all hope of a successor to the throne is frustrated. Note a similar sentiment in Job 4. 21, where *יתר* (which we have just met, and rendered 'residue') is conjoined with *נסע* (here rendered 'removed') and yields a similar sense. The word *דור* never means 'habitation' or 'dwelling' in the concrete.

³ The figures are taken from the work of the weaver; and their purpose is to express extinction of *family*.

⁴ This formula, to be repeated presently, is addressed to the Lord, anticipating the *second person* note of the latter half of the Writing (*vv.* 15-20). It is matched by the words 'betwixt morning and evening' in Job 4. 20; and means 'wilt thou make an end of me once and for all? or outright?' That is to say, not only taking my life, but also excluding the possibility of posterity.

⁵ 'As a lion . . . all my bones.' Cp. Ps. 22. 16, 17 (17, 18), in the Hebrew text.

⁶ That is, 'be my surety,' with the object of protection and deliverance (cp. Ps. 119. 122).

[*Assurance of Renewed Life.*]

(15) What shall I say¹? Now hath he spoken to me, and himself hath done it.² I will go softly all my years because of the bitterness of my soul.³ (16) O Lord, in the strength of these things men may live: and by reason of such things is the life of my own spirit. So thou dost recover me and makest me to live. (17) Behold it was for peace⁴ that I had great bitterness; but thou hast regarded my soul, delivering it from the pit of corruption: because thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.

[*Sons to be Given.*]

(18) For Sheol cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.⁵ (19) The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to his sons shall make known thy truth.⁶

[*A Life-prospect of Praise.*]

(20) The LORD is my salvation. Therefore we will sing praise with my stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD.

¹ The second part begins here. The first part opened with 'I said', and dealt with the sickness and its sorrows. We pass to the recovery, and its outcome. 'What shall I say?' indicates the forward look.

² That is, He has answered the prayer of the preceding verse, 'Take my cause in hand.'

³ Already a continuance of life is implied. Remembering the visitation, the king pledges himself to a submissive spirit—'go softly all my years.'

⁴ Presumably, 'with peaceful ends in view'; assuredly not consequent upon peace. Cp. Isa. 53. 5—'chastisement leading to our peace.'

⁵ That is, 'wait upon thy faithfulness' in a spiritual experience.

⁶ The Septuagint reads, 'From this day shall I beget children who shall declare thy righteousness.' Truth = faithfulness.

[Two Explanatory Facts.]

(21) Now Isaiah had said, Let them take a cake of figs, and lay it for a plaister upon the boil, and he shall recover.

(22) Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD? ¹

COMPARISONS AND CONTRASTS.

In some respects the Report and the Writing agree in their characteristic terms: in others they exhibit just such differences as change of circumstances and divergent points of view immediately suggest.² Whether parallels or contrasts, the fundamental expressions of these portions of Scripture proclaim their relation to a common subject. Let some of these be placed in juxtaposition:—

| Isaiah 38. | Isaiah 53. |
|---|---|
| Sick unto death . . . had been sick (1, 9). | Acquainted with sickness . . . poured out his soul unto death (3, 12). |
| The gates of the grave (לְמַוְתָּא) . . . death . . . the pit (10, 18). | His grave appointed . . . his death (or mound of burial) &c. (9, cp. Ezek. 28. 8-10). |
| Deprived of residue of years (10, cp. Job 4. 21 <i>margin.</i>). | He was cut off. . . stricken (8). |
| In the land of the living (11). | Out of the land of the living (8). |

¹ These two statements are designed to explain the force of the Writing. The former indicates a fact antecedent to the recovery (*vv.* 9, 16). The latter associates the king's intentions of praise with the sign of the degrees (cp. *vv.* 19, 20, with 2 Kings 20. 5-10). That the sign implied deliverance from the Assyrian as a consequence of the recovery is made clear in the record leading up to the Writing (*v.* 6).

² Where the agreement is not verbal, it is substantial. Literary harmony does not consist in tautology, but in similarity of ideas, correspondence of thought.

| | |
|---|--|
| Recover thou me (16). | My servant shall prosper (i. e. recover and flourish; the context indicating this, as in R.V. <i>marg.</i> as the sense of לִשְׁכַּח here (52. 13). |
| Make me to live: i. e. to continue in life (16). | He shall prolong his days (10). |
| My generation (דֹר) is removed, i. e. posterity is denied me: all hope of a successor is gone (12, cp. Job 4. 21 <i>marg.</i>). | Who shall declare (or consider) his generation (דֹר): i. e. he is without successor, or prospect of posterity (8). |
| I am oppressed (עֲשָׂקָה לִי -14). | He was oppressed (נִנְשָׂא) . . . afflicted (7). |
| The bitterness of my soul (15). | The travail of his soul (11). |
| For peace I had great bitterness (17). | The chastisement of our peace (5). |
| Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back (17). | He bare the sin of many (12). |
| The father to the children shall make known (19). | He shall see his seed (10). |

These features of the Writing and the Report, when placed thus in juxtaposition, show to demonstration that the two documents relate to a common subject. This, however, is not all. There are textual questions connected with both pieces of work; and though we can make no systematic examination of these, we may glance at two of them, in order to show that the Writing is calculated to throw important light upon the Report, and vice versa.

The first of these relates to the word הָדַל (*hēdāl*), as occurring in Isa. 38. 11, and rendered by us 'rejection'. The word has been the sport of copyists, and interpreters have been content to accept their 'emendation' הָלַד (*hēlēd*), a word which occurs in Job 11. 17; Ps. 17. 14; 39. 5 (6); 49. 1 (2); 89. 47 (48); and means 'life', or

'the world', as transient, fleeting, vain. On the other hand, **הָרַל**, which comes from **הָרַל** (and **הָרַל**), to leave off, desist, cease, conveys the idea of rejection, neglect. From the same root comes the verbal adjective found in Isa. 53. 3, used in the sense of destitute, forsaken. Hence the rendering 'He was . . . *rejected* of men'. Let the light of this latter passage be reflected upon the former, and it is no longer easy to contend that we must read **חָלַד** instead of **חָרַל** there. The chapters have a related theme, and in ch. 53. 3 the word **חָרַל** enjoys an unquestioned stability.

Without pursuing the point, it may be remarked that in Ps. 39. 4, 5 (5, 6), the theme is similar to that of Isa. 38. There also we meet with **הָרַל** ('frail'); and as **חָלַד** ('age') occurs also, there is no suggestion of error in the passage. The fact that **יֹשְׁבֵי** ('inhabitants of') is followed in Ps. 49. 1 (2) by **חָלַד** seems to have suggested the reading which has so generally superseded **חָרַל** in Isa. 38. 11, where the same word **יֹשְׁבֵי** is likewise found. The circumstances, however, may well excite suspicion. We require in the verse before us a conception in harmony with the poem as a whole in point of vigour and intensiveness; and that we find in the Massoretic reading, which may be rendered: 'I shall no longer look upon man when I am with the inhabitants of rejection'—i. e. with those who are forsaken = the dead. The expression finds its meaning in the king's feeling that, in the circumstances, death would imply divine rejection. The sentiment was not unusual: recall the language of Heman the Ezrahite, who spoke of the dead as 'those whom God remembered no more', and of death itself as 'the land of forgetfulness' (Ps. 88. 5, 12). In a word, our contention is

that Isa. 53. 3 sheds welcome light upon Isa. 38. 11 (cp. Job 19. 14: 'My kinsfolk have *rejected* me.')

Another word of great importance which is found in both the chapters under consideration is דֹר (*dôr*—'generation'). In the Writing this occurs in *v.* 12, in the Report in *v.* 8. The life experiences of Hezekiah place the meaning beyond question. Called upon to die when childless, he mourned the absence of a successor, and expostulated with the Lord for thus depriving him of posterity. This element in the historical situation not having been appreciated, it has become customary to render דֹר by 'habitation' in Isa. 38. 12 (see *margin*). This, however, is not the meaning of the word, and no case has been made out for a special significance in the passage before us. In all parts of the Old Testament there are occurrences of דֹר in the sense of 'generation' and 'posterity', and no difficulty arises from the fact that we read of 'removal', in terms suggested by the lifting of a shepherd's tent. The idea is expressive of forcible action: as a shepherd's tent was carried clean away, so the prospective succession to the throne was to be violently frustrated by the untimely death of the king. The passage speaks of 'making an end' once and for all (*vv.* 12, 13). In this instance also it is held that the passages explain one another: Isa. 53. 8 gives material assistance in the interpretation of Isa. 38. 12.

The similarity of the language of the two chapters before us is so obvious that it has commonly attracted the attention of expositors. The association, now at length, of ch. 53 with the life of Hezekiah brings that familiar portion under the influence of ch. 38, which avowedly deals with the king's experiences at a critical

time. It is, therefore, only reasonable that the difficulties of one passage should be brought to the touchstone of the more simple statements of the other. We have seen the working of this as to the words **חַדַּל** and **דָּוָר**; and from what we now realize we may infer that further help towards a true exegesis may be sought by the further application of a like method. And as the language of Job has also been compared with that of Isaiah, we may expect to find some of the problems of the former book solved by examination in the light of situations provided by the latter. We now pass to a consideration of some of these.

THE SUFFERING SERVANT AND THE STORY OF JOB.

A tender loyalty controlled the pen of the historian when referring to the sickness of Hezekiah. The Chronicler says simply: 'In those days Hezekiah was sick even unto death: and he prayed unto the Lord; and He spake unto him, and gave him a sign' (2 Chron. 32. 24). In the more detailed statement, in 2 Kings 20, the fatal character of the sickness is indicated. As if implying that the nature of the disease was so well known that a categorical statement was unnecessary, we read: 'And Isaiah said, take a cake of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered' (v. 7). The 'boil' was a **שְׁחִין** (*sh'hin*), a development of the severe form of leprosy called *Elephantiasis*, or the botch of Egypt (Deut. 28. 27, 35). This was the 'stroke' of God, the plague from which no one could be healed (**נֶגַף**—*nēgā'*).

What the historian withholds, the prophet supplies, but again in an indirect manner. It is not in the

chapters of narrative that we find the sickness of the king alluded to in terms that could not but shock Israelitish sensibilities, but rather in the picture presented of the Servant of the Lord suffering for the sins of his people—a part of the Second Isaiah. The broad features of the picture are supplied in the familiar words: 'His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men'; 'we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted' (52. 14; 53. 4). Again, by contrast, and this in the earlier portion of the book, in a time when Zion was in distraction, not only were days of blessing foretold, but the significant word was spoken: 'Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty' (33. 17). How must it have been with the king *then*?

We have no means of knowing how long the dread disease was upon Hezekiah. Doubtless the grievous visitation was a court secret before ever it became a matter of public intelligence. In due course, however, it was announced that the malady was unto death. 'And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live' (2 Kings 20. 1). The king prayed and wept: his prayer was heard and his tears seen, by the Lord the God of David; and from that time there was a rapid recovery, as we have again and again been reminded. Had the prophet no duty in the meantime? Yes, indeed, he was commissioned to explain to the people the meaning of the visitation—'a man was an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest', he was 'wounded for the transgressions' of his people; also he was 'bruised for their iniquities',

and 'the chastisement leading to their peace upon him' (Isa. 32. 2 ; 53. 5).

The prophet did more. He related to the king a story which described the ways of God in a worse case than his. The king was patient in his sufferings: 'He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself and opened not his mouth ; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb ; yea, he opened not his mouth.' The prophet rehearsed the experiences of one who has come down to history as the most patient of men—'ye have heard of the patience of Job'—another case of *Elephantiasis*, aggravated in all its features, and especially trying to the sufferer by reason of his surroundings. To realize the situation thus proposed, certain facts must be borne in mind, and these may be stated with the utmost brevity.

In ancient times in the East, where scribes were the retainers of kings, and prophets had their place at court, books were almost exclusively the possession of the royal household. In view of the explorations of recent years it is difficult to conceive of libraries without taking account of kingly patronage. Biographical records and acts of statecraft, one and all were 'written in the book of the chronicles', of the kings of Israel, or Judah, or Persia, as the case might be. Without following this thought beyond the needs of our immediate inquiry, we may add without hesitation, that Hezekiah was not one whit behind the foremost of the kings of Israel or Judah as a patron of literature. His 'men' have given us some of the proverbs of Solomon, and many of the psalms are eloquent in their allusions to his life and experiences. As for

the prophecies of Isaiah and Micah, they are, as we contend, founded upon the facts of his life and times.

If historical records were made for the kings, and prophetic books were lodged in their libraries—not *published* as we understand the term, but preserved in such a manner as we know to have been the case with the writings of the wise men and scribes of Assyria and Babylon—what about such a work as the book of Job? Reason and historical analogy immediately suggest that it was written for some monarch, written with a distinct motive, written in order to serve some definite and practical end. What king was there to whose case the book would come with fitness, and as a message of hope, as it assuredly would come to Hezekiah in the time of his sickness? We suggest that the reign of Hezekiah supplies the psychological moment for the writing of this wonderful book. Hezekiah had a sickness which was of the nature of leprosy; and before ever the time of crisis arrived, and, in answer to importunate prayer, recovery was vouchsafed, there was placed before him this parabolic narrative for his comfort and encouragement.

In brief, the story of Job shows the king that, in a case far more serious than his, the Lord gave recovery to A RIGHTEOUS MAN. Hezekiah had a boil: Job 'was smitten with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown'. Hezekiah had counsellors who played him false: Job was assuredly in worse case, for he was besieged by avowed friends, who not only denounced his claim to personal integrity, but also vexed him by maintaining that his sufferings were the consequence of heinous sin. In another sense the

advantage was with the king. He suffered in a stately solitude ; while Job, having been bereft of children who had been the objects of warm affection, found himself still joined to a wife who perversely urged him to ' curse God and die '. All the time, to use his own words, Hezekiah was one who ' had walked before the Lord with a perfect heart, and had done that which was good in His sight ' : Job, in like manner, ' was perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil.'

The substantive message of the Book of Job becomes obvious in such a situation as is now suggested. If, by the mercy of God, such a one as Job was raised from the gates of death to a new life, and indeed given days of prosperity and peace, *because he was a righteous man*, then there was hope for Hezekiah, whose case was light in comparison, but whose life and conduct were equally well-pleasing to God. Moreover, if, as the record shows, in conclusion, Job was in such manner accepted in his person that his accusers were forgiven their follies and sin in answer to his prayers (Job 42. 7-10), then some special blessing might be expected to follow the mysterious sufferings of Hezekiah—God would, as we actually read, regard his outpoured soul as an offering for sin, and on account of his righteousness would justify many who were indeed sinners (Isa. 53. 10, 11). In other words, the trials of Hezekiah, in the solitude of his chamber, would not involve permanent alienation from God. The Lord ' blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning '. There was good news for Hezekiah.¹

¹ Hence the problem of the book is not, as some have suggested, ' Doth Job serve God for nought ? ' but rather ' How is it

The theory that has engaged so much attention, that Job is a philosophical debate or abstract discussion of the problem of suffering, is inconsistent with what we know of Oriental thought or history. The book was not circulated, but written for an individual—we must suppose a king. That it should have been subjected to the numerous revisions and textual modifications desiderated by modern critics is quite out of the question; for when we first meet it in the history of Israel it was regarded as purely biographical, and not as a drama, or performance in *belles lettres*, inviting improvement, and ready for retouching or expansion. All we know of the book is that it has been *preserved*. As taken from the royal library, with other writings, presumably some time before the palaces of Judah were burnt during the siege under Nebuchadnezzar, it brought no information as to its age or authorship (see 2 Kings 25. 9; 2 Chron. 36. 19).

In thus suggesting a new 'situation' for the book, we associate a marvellous work of literature with the king whom we have shown to occupy the foreground of the latter part of the Book of Isaiah. Even those who have been content to find 'idealism' in both works have seen a substantial similarity in the figures as well as the language of the two books. Hence the late Dr. A. B. Davidson wrote:—

that a man of conspicuous piety should be the victim of God-sent calamity and trial more suggestive of judgement than of Divine consideration?' That, equally, was the problem of Hezekiah's perplexing experience. And the answer, in the case of both sufferers, is furnished in 'the latter end' of double blessing (Job 42. 10-12; 2 Chron. 32. 27-30: cp. Isa. 53. 10-12).

The similarities between the figure of Job and that of the Servant are numerous and striking. Both are innocent sufferers — 'my servant Job, a perfect and upright man' (Job 1. 8), 'my righteous servant' (Isa. 53. 11); both are afflicted in a way that strikes horror into the beholders, and causes them to deem them smitten of God (Isa. 52. 14; 53. 4, Job *passim*); both are forsaken of men and subjected to mockery and spitting (Job 19. 4 seq; 16. 10; 30. 9 seq.; Isa. 50. 6; 53. 3); both are restored and glorified, and receive 'double', as they both continued faithful, assured that He was near that would justify them (Job 13. 18; 16. 19; 19. 25; Isa. 50. 8).¹

That there should be coincidences of expression and thought between the Book of Job and the story of Hezekiah need not surprise us after what we have already found. The conscious righteousness of the latter is in harmony with that protested by the former (Isa. 38. 3, with Job 23. 11; 32. 1; 33. 9). In the Writing of Hezekiah we read of 'bitterness of soul': the same form of words occurs three times in Job (Isa. 38. 15, with Job 7. 11; 10. 1; 21. 25). If the deprivation of posterity, involving dynastic downfall, was deplored by Hezekiah, a like blight upon family fortunes was a source of terror to Job (Isa. 38. 12, with Job 18. 16-19). In both cases we have allusion to the leprous plague as a 'touch', or 'stroke', of God (Isa. 53. 4, 8; Job 2. 5; 19. 21); and the correlated 'hiding of face' spoken of in regard to 'the Servant of the Lord' (Hezekiah) is also met with in Job's case (Isa. 53. 3, with Job 13. 24). Among other similarities between the two books are these: God is said to 'stretch out the heavens above' (Job 9. 8, with Isa. 44. 24: cp. 45. 12); and 'Rahab' is spoken of in a like

¹ *The Book of Job*, Cambridge Bible series, Intro., p. lxvii.

sense, as referring to Egypt (Job 9. 13 ; 26. 12, with Isa. 30. 7 ; 51. 9).

We have already instituted a comparison between the language of Isa. 38 and Isa. 53, maintaining that, while the harmonies proved that one personality underlay the two statements, so also the contrasts were agreeable to the varying aspects of the experience of Hezekiah. Now we have found in the Book of Job a terminology like to that of Isa. 53—a fact which enforces a conclusion of profound interest and importance in the study of Old Testament problems. While, however, there is a remarkable correspondence between Isa. 53 and the Book of Job, so also, as might be expected—on the axiom that things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another—there is a singular likeness of sentiment when Isa. 38 is, in turn, compared with the Book of Job. We give the following verbal parallels, as collated by Dr. Sinker¹:

ISAIAH 38 AND THE LANGUAGE OF THE BOOK OF JOB.

v. 10. 'The gates of the grave' (Sheol). See Job 38. 17, 'The gates of the shadow of death.'

v. 12^b. 'He will cut me off.' This not very common Hebrew word is also used of cutting off man's life in Job 6. 9 ; 27. 8.

'From day even to night.' So, in this sense, Job 4. 20.

v. 13. For the metaphor of the 'lion', cp. Job 10. 16, where, however, a different word is used.

v. 14. 'Be surety for me.' See Job 17. 3.

v. 15. 'Bitterness of my soul.' See Job 7. 11 ; 10. 1.

v. 16. 'In all these things,' A.V. 'Wholly therein,' R.V. The awkward grammatical phrase of the Hebrew finds a parallel in Job 22. 21.

v. 17. For the essential thought of the verse, see Job 5. 17, 18.

¹ *Hezekiah and His Age*, p. 85.

'Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it.' A tiny change in the pronunciation of the *verb* here would give an exact parallel with Job 33. 18.

v. 18. 'Hades . . . death.' Cf. Job 28. 22.

The similarity of language finds a natural explanation in the presumption—which we present as a virtual demonstration—that the two documents describe experiences corresponding the one to the other. If we can imagine a friend and adviser of Hezekiah, thoroughly acquainted with his sufferings, unfolding the story of Job for the king's encouragement and support, then we can understand the reason why the narrative should harmonize with Hezekiah's own case; and, moreover, we are placed in no difficulty when we find it anticipating the very terms of the Writing put forth by the king 'when he had been sick and was recovered of his sickness'.

In circumstances such as these, the order of events would be approximately as follows:—(a) clinical observations as to the king's disease, with great concern throughout the palace; (b) prayer to God in the terms of Ps. 102 and other compositions, original and adapted, supplicating deliverance from threatened death; (c) the narration of the case of Job who suffered even more acutely, but was mercifully brought through all his troubles in consideration of his personal righteousness; (d) prophetic instruction regarding the visitation—that the righteous king was suffering for the sinful nation, 'bearing the sin of many, and being smitten for the transgressors'; (e) the recovery of the king and the promulgation of his Writing, in which, in the nature of things, there occur so many of the terms met with in Job's story,

terms which, however, were antecedently employed in the description of the sickness of Hezekiah himself.

We cannot but believe that a literature would gather round the incident of the king's sickness, so terrible in its personal bearings, and so full of menace to the nation. In fact, we have found traces of this portion of Hezekiah's experience in many of the Psalms, also in quite unexpected places in the latter part of Isaiah. Hence, if we cannot find the Book of Job as a classic in the days of Hezekiah, we at least find it as a state document, placed in the royal library because some prophet or seer attendant at court had read the wonderful story in the ears of the king, for the comfort and instruction of the afflicted one in days 'when he was overwhelmed, and poured out his complaint before the Lord', as in Ps. 102.¹

In this connexion, it may be remarked that the particular circumstances that brought the Book of Job into existence 'make all the difference' in criticism. For instance, when we have made up our minds that the book is a philosophical debate, it is inevitable that we should view the material as a whole from the standpoint of the presumed subject of debate. It is easy then to misunderstand the object of the Elihu speeches, and to rule that they did not belong to the original work, but rather were added at some subsequent period. By the same standard, also, we may

¹ A psalm which, in its language, recalls many expressions and sentiments, characteristic, on the one hand, of the Book of Job, and on the other hand, of the latter part of the Book of Isaiah—as the margin of a reference Bible makes clear at a glance.

think we detect various changes and interpolations, even although utterly unable to conceive of conditions in which such interpolations or changes could have been effected in times anterior to the date of the making of the Septuagint Version of the book.

If, on the other hand, we find the book to correspond in its story with the experience of a particular personage—Hezekiah, for instance—we bring it under the light of an entirely different set of facts. We then view the friends of Job as so many misguided critics, whose conduct incurred the displeasure of the Lord, concerning whose ways in providence they had less understanding than had the man whom they sought to correct. In Elihu, however, we have no difficulty in recognizing a helpful teacher—unpretending (ch. 32. 6, 7), competent (ch. 32. 17, 18), sincere (32. 21, 22), who was able to explain the sufferings of Job in the light of a gracious purpose on the part of God (ch. 33. 12, 13, 24-6), who, as Sovereign Ruler of the universe, is righteous to all and at all times (ch. 34. 10-15; 36. 5-7, 22-6). Hence the Elihu speeches are essential to the purpose of the book, having a rectifying tendency—reproving Job's 'friends', and weaning Job himself from a contemplation of his own condition to a spirit of submission to the Almighty; who is shown, in terms of great force and beauty, to be worthy of fear, no less because He is compassionate as well as just, than because His ways are past finding out (ch. 37. 23, 24).

Now, at length, after the speeches of Elihu, Job is prepared for the words of the Lord Himself, speaking from the whirlwind (chh. 38-41), leading to intense humiliation of spirit—'repentance in dust and ashes'

(42. 1-6). To this, in the scheme of the book, the said speeches have led up. Such a climax, on the mere criticisms of the friends, or the various protestations of Job himself, would assuredly have been pronounced inartistic from a literary point of view. With the speeches of Elihu, however, proclaiming the perfect righteousness of God, and declaring that He would assuredly vindicate the cause of the afflicted, the conclusion of the book is brought forward by quite natural stages. And it may be added that the theory which has here been outlined enables one to read the entire book with a sympathy which cannot but advance a reliable and practical interpretation. Moreover, it presents the discussion to view as concrete and not abstract—makes it in this respect true to Hebraic conceptions. Also, it shows the design of the book to have been, not the mere holding to a mirror of the awful experiences of Job, but an exhibition of his case in an illustrative light, for the help and encouragement of another who was labouring under similar afflictions.

From these considerations we must conclude that to designate the Book of Job 'a tragedy' or 'a dramatic dialogue' is to ignore the larger question of the practical intention or purpose of the book. All the Old Testament books sustained some relation to the constitutional history of Israel; and in most cases the relation is obvious. If Job was written with such a purpose as that for which we have contended, then it is thereby shown to be of the same general family as the other books. Hence its original inclusion in the royal library, then its preservation, and then its classification among the canonical books. Thus

the Book of Job is conceived to have appeared with a prophetic object—to instruct King Hezekiah and to assure him that he would come forth from his trials victorious; and, moreover that, as we have seen, those who had traduced him would owe their acceptance before God to his righteousness and intercession.

If not a drama, neither is the book a piece of 'Wisdom' literature, in the general sense of that designation, as implying instruction of an abstract character, virtually independent of historical circumstances. On the contrary, we must regard the book as containing a parabolic narrative, written for the consolation and help of a specific person, and that a king, whose case, though singularly distressing, was shown to be by no means hopeless. Indeed, the personal righteousness of the sufferer in the illustrative instance of Job was set forth as furnishing a guarantee that God would grant to another a happy issue out of an ordeal of sorrow and temptation. In a word, the Book of Job is not a debate on a speculative theme, but a biographical sketch, presented in language worthy of the greatest of the Hebrew prophets—designed to show how, by Divine ruling and over-ruling, good may be brought out of evil, and temporary suffering on the part of an individual may be made to redound to the blessing of others, whose abiding well-being may become a factor in the joys of a 'latter end' of prosperity and peace.

So we see that, while the so-called Second Isaiah is explained by the life of Hezekiah, so also does the Book of Job find its exegetical key in a particular chapter of the life and times of the same king of Judah

—the chapter of his sufferings. Thus, moreover, we come to estimate this work as essentially practical in origin, and in no sense as speculative, to say nothing of serving a merely entertaining purpose. Having a definite design, the Book of Job gives a good and profitable account of itself when examined in the light of the situation and occasion now suggested—a situation and occasion which enable us easily to understand how the story of a man who lived ‘in the land of Uz’ was given a place in the literature of the elect nation of Israel.

The sum of what we have seen is—that Hezekiah had a larger place in the history of Judah and Israel than tradition has placed to his account. He is in the Psalms and Isaiah, and but for him the Book of Job might never have been written. That Job’s story in its substance belongs to a time long antecedent to that of Isaiah is no bar to this conclusion. The prophet, or some contemporary writer, recalled the facts, and placed them in a form conducive to a certain impression being made upon the royal sufferer.¹ The king of little Judah was supported by the experiences of one who was ‘the greatest of all the children of the East’. Moreover, he who, in his despondency, said, ‘I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living’ (Isa. 38. 11), was to learn

¹ It is significant that A. B. Davidson, though not having before him the considerations which have emerged in our investigations, came to the conclusion, on grounds of general criticism, that the book ‘cannot be assigned to an earlier date than the seventh century’ B. C. (Cambridge Bible: *Job*, Intro., p. lxii). It is to this period that our studies point with unfailing distinctness. Of course Job himself belonged to an earlier age.

yet another lesson:—From the miraculous example of Job, he was to realize that, by intervention of his living Redeemer, even though his skin might be destroyed through disease, yet in due course he would stand up healed and cleansed, and in newness of flesh would behold his God (see Job 19. 25-7).

CHAPTER XIII

KING HEZEKIAH IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF HEZEKIAH

THAT we are still in presence of Hezekiah, in the so-called 'Second' Isaiah, has been clearly shown. It is important now to recognize that these writings have their centre of interest, not in Babylon, but in Judaea. The book as a whole opens with a vision 'concerning Judah and Jerusalem' (1. 1; 2. 1). In like manner the second part opens: 'Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem' (40. 1). The Holy City is in sight; and the chosen people are regarded as at home, not in a strange land. With the story of Hezekiah still in mind, we cannot but recognize, in the exordium of the second part, a reference to the 'captivity' of Jerusalem during the Assyrian invasion. The historical section (chh. 36-39) is a digression, not the conclusion of a book. There is nothing to indicate a break in the chronology, no reason for concluding that ch. 39 belongs to the times of the kingdom, and ch. 40 to those of the Exile, some 150 years later.

The message with which the Second Isaiah opens is one of comfort, sent by the God of Jacob to His wayward people in a time of national crisis; and it

tells of coming deliverance (*vv.* 9-11). The prophet goes on to show that the Lord is equal to His undertaking in this respect (*vv.* 12-26); and the renewal of strength on the part of the people, weakened but redeemed, is explained as consequent upon patriarchal relations. Though there may be few of them righteous like their king, yet Israel is the servant of the Lord, the seed of Abraham His friend:—'I have chosen thee and not cast thee away: fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness' (41. 8-10). More than that: all the enemies of Israel shall be confounded: 'they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought' (*vv.* 11, 12). That is to say, this portion of the prophecy is altogether agreeable to the record of merciful intervention whereby Jerusalem was delivered and the hosts of Assyria were destroyed (ch. 37. 33-6).

Being delivered from his enemies, Hezekiah shall dominate them. Of this there are intimations of great beauty in this portion of the prophecy. As head of the nation, he might be addressed as 'Israel, my servant', 'Jacob whom I have chosen,' and so forth; but in ch. 42 he is apostrophized in person rather than in reference to official or national relations: 'Behold my servant whom I uphold; my chosen in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles' (*v.* 1). This characterization is true to history. Though the picture has not come down to us in all its light and shade, the outlines have been preserved,

and they are distinct and clear. We read that, after the destruction of the Assyrian, and in the time of Hezekiah's renewed life, the Lord 'guided' the king and people 'on every side'; and that, with honours from far and near, Hezekiah 'was exalted in the sight of all nations from thenceforth' (2 Chron. 32. 22, 23).

Not only did the king enjoy a rule unchallenged by foes, but he experienced a peace which was undisturbed for fifteen years. There was 'peace and truth'—fullness of peace on a firm and stable basis—and 'the wrath of the Lord' was withheld all the days of Hezekiah, because as king he had led the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem in acts of humiliation and penitence (2 Kings 20. 19; 2 Chron. 32. 26; Isa. 39. 8). In this matter the nation was blessed because of the king's piety: 'a man was an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest' (32. 2). If we would see reflections of these times of blessedness, we must look to the latter portion of the Book of Isaiah (chh. 60-62). There, although we find no historic records, we are given intimations of experiences that lay immediately ahead, and belonged to the years when the king 'sang his songs to the stringed instruments all the days of his life in the house of the Lord'. And of these exercises we have found a specific monument in the 'Songs of the Degrees'.

Without attempting to dwell on all the features of Hezekiah's character, as set out, on the one hand in the historical books, on the other hand in the writings of Isaiah (not to mention other prophets), we would urge the importance of consistency in dealing with the career of the king. On the strength of acts which

simply show that he was a man, Hezekiah has been adjudged weak and vacillating. Conclusions have been arrived at with haste, and without consultation of all the sources of information: while the historical writings may have been examined, the prophetic writings belonging to the king's age have, on various accounts, been ruled out of court in regard to the subject before us. Then, again, the method of study has been such as to render a true appreciation of the man impossible; for, while there has been a disposition to accept the *facts* of the Hebrew records, there has also been a tendency to criticize the *judgements* which accompany the said facts. Clearly we cannot, in regard to any ancient personage, proceed along such lines: if we receive the contemporary facts, so also must we receive the contemporary judgements. Applying this rule to the case of Hezekiah, we find it quite unreasonable to adjudge him weak and vacillating, for in the writings which hand down the story of his life, we read: 'He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among them that were before him' (2 Kings 18. 5).

To examine the acts of Hezekiah, qualifying here and approving there, is likely to lead us far astray, and assuredly will incapacitate us from realizing the measure of the man in the light of his own time. How were his acts viewed by those who looked on, by him who penned the sketch of his life—by the great prophet of Jerusalem, who counselled him? If it is said, with cold sympathy, that he gave much attention to the rites and externals of religion, it is on the strength of statements found in 2 Chron. chh. 29-31.

In connexion with the facts, however, a judgement is given. And what says the Chronicler? Just this: 'Hezekiah wrought that which was good and right and faithful before the Lord his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered' (2 Chron. 31. 20, 21).

The criticisms that have been passed upon the life and acts of Hezekiah have unfortunately, in many cases, been sadly out of sympathy with the Hebrew records. For instance, it has been said that he prayed for his life with an importunity which was wanting in resignation to the Divine will; and it has been added that, if he had died at the time of his sickness, there would have been no Manasseh—of shameful memory! We have seen that the prayer was in the interests of the kingdom, and inspired by a hope that through him the Lord would magnify His oath to David (Ps. 132. 10-12). Hence, the prayer was altogether becoming; and since its petition was GRANTED, it is not possible to criticize it without calling in question the gracious answer which was accorded by Almighty God.

Another incident in the king's career which has been interpreted with sinister consequences, and in a manner foreign to the records which supply the facts, is the self-gratulation with which Hezekiah received the ambassadors of Merodach-baladan after his sickness. For this folly he was severely rebuked by the prophet, and a sad entail of grief was the result. Assuredly the matter might be left there: it was an incident, and not characteristic of the man.

To regard this act as qualifying the nobility and greatness of Hezekiah is to look at it from a wrong point of view, to invest it with an emphasis which is unjust. A more reasonable view is to regard this incident as exceptional: and that is the historic estimate, for the Chronicler, when rehearsing the virtues of the king, said: 'Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, GOD LEFT HIM, TO TRY HIM, THAT HE MIGHT KNOW ALL THAT WAS IN HIS HEART' (2 Chron. 32. 31).

Beyond question this conduct of Hezekiah's was exceptional, not typical. That it involved tremendous consequences, is true; but it is also true that the experience brought out the greatness of the man and the goodness of God, for we read: 'Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah' (2 Chron. 32. 26). In other words, the man has not come down to us as a victim of pride,¹ any more than as an adept at intrigue and self-seeking, as some have insinuated in describing his policy towards Assyria; but with far nobler traits: 'Hezekiah did that which was pleasing to the Lord, and was strong in the ways of David his father, which Isaiah the prophet commanded, who was great and faithful in his vision' (Ecclus. 48. 22). Again, 'Except David and HEZEKIAH and Josiah, all committed trespass: for they forsook

¹ Note Ps. 131, 'Lord, my heart is not haughty,' &c. (vide p. 54 *ante*).

the law of the Most High; the kings of Judah failed' (ibid. 49. 4).

Only when we recognize these and related facts shall we have such conceptions of Hezekiah as will enable us to view him as he appeared in his own time and the generation which gave us his story in written form. Any other view of the man must be speculative; and assuredly will prove of no service whatever to those who would find allusions to the king in contemporaneous literature. Indeed, to appraise Hezekiah according to modern standards, and to bring his acts to the test of western ideals, must inevitably result in a characterization untrue to history, and place us out of sympathy with the documents which are the sources of our information on the subject. Everything depends upon realizing the historic Hezekiah. Anything in the nature of preconceptions and prejudices must be cast aside. This having been achieved, we shall be in a position to recognize 'the Servant of the Lord' as presented to view in the writings of Isaiah the prophet; and then, moreover, to read the visions and burdens of that prophet with a new zest, because in possession of clues which will enable us to understand his exalted periods. And no course will advance that understanding so securely as will an antecedent realization of the *historic* personage who, in his various characteristics, befits those exalted periods and explains their meaning.

At the same time, we must guard against a prejudicial 'harmonizing' of the story. A cursory glance at the material makes it clear that the outstanding events of the king's life are narrated with remarkable

regularity. True there are points peculiar to the statements—the Book of Kings has its peculiarities, and of the Book of Chronicles the same may be said; but nevertheless there is general harmony in regard to the progress of events. In both the Books named, as well as in the substantial reproduction of the former record in Isa. 36-39, the visit of the Babylonian envoys is represented as coming, not only after the sickness, but also after the smiting of the Assyrian host, which took place in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah. Yet harmonists have not hesitated to place this occurrence at an earlier period; and quite as readily have they taken 2 Kings 18. 14-16, which attributes to Hezekiah acts of submission to the king of Assyria, and made it come *after* the address whereby Hezekiah pledged his confidence in the Lord God, who would ‘help’ His people and ‘fight their battles’. The result is an unworthy picture—a picture which it is impossible to justify in the light of the high appreciation of the virtues of the king, as expressed by the sacred historians.

In this view of things, assuredly we are asked to believe too much—namely, that after his marvellous recovery from sickness, after being rebuked for receiving the Babylonian envoys, and while still looking forward to a lifetime of peace and prosperity, the king placed himself under Sennacherib, saying, ‘I have offended: go away, and I will discharge any demand you make.’ And then, in order to honour this rash promise, he stripped the Temple of the gold wherewith he had enriched it! This is chronological derangement. Such panic-stricken

acts might, possibly, have *preceded* the king's words to his captains of war: 'Be strong and of a good courage, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria: there is a greater with us than with him: with him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles' (2 Chron. 32. 7, 8). That they should have *followed* such words, is not, however, to be entertained for a moment; for in such a case the general picture of the king would, indeed, have been that of a weak and vacillating man: and that, assuredly, is not the picture of Hezekiah, as we have very plainly seen.

A survey of the several statements regarding Sennacherib's invasion should relieve us from any real difficulty arising from the passage before us—namely, 2 Kings 18. 14-16; and having regard to the importance of the point as bearing upon the character of the king, we look at these. If there was a time when Hezekiah said, 'That which thou puttest on me will I bear' (v. 14), so also there was a time when he changed his mind, for when Rabshakeh reached the walls of Jerusalem he charged the king with having 'rebelled'—'On whom dost thou trust, that thou hast rebelled against me?' (v. 20). Attributing to the king tendencies which found favour among his officers, the Assyrian insinuated that Egypt was the trust of Hezekiah, but to the people of Jerusalem, on the other hand, he expressed himself more truthfully: 'Let not Hezekiah make you trust in THE LORD, saying, THE LORD will surely deliver us' (vv. 21, 30). Thus we see that, when sending his message of submission to Sennacherib at Lachish, Hezekiah was not the 'rebel' which

he afterwards became, and in reference to which attitude the historian wrote: 'The Lord was with him; whithersoever he went forth he prospered: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not' (v. 7).

Without discussing whether Sennacherib made one or two campaigns in the west,¹ we suggest that the precise terms of the records afford a situation sufficient to accommodate all the facts before us and to place the character of Hezekiah in a consistent light. We find that it was when the Assyrian was at Lachish, after having taken the fenced cities of Judah, that Hezekiah sent to him the message of submission: 'I have offended,' &c. (2 Kings 18. 13-16). Apparently, at this time, the invader was disposed to negotiate, for he 'appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold' (v. 14). Realizing, however, that in spite of this, the Assyrian had determined to advance on the capital (2 Chron. 32. 2)—possibly, also, being advised that terms with the invader implied a distrust of Him who was the true Keeper of Israel—Hezekiah changed his mind, and from a disposition to serve the Assyrian he rose to a determination to rely on the God of Israel for protection. He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men, in preparation for a siege (v. 3). Now, indeed, the king of Judah was the 'rebel' which Rabshakeh found him to be when, arrived at the walls of Jerusalem, he demanded complete and unqualified surrender (2 Kings 18. 19, 20).

¹ See articles on this important subject in *The Expository Times*, vols. 12 and 13 (1901-2), by Prof. Dr. Prášek.

Having reviewed his earlier act, Hezekiah now called upon the leaders of his people to 'take courage and put their trust in the Lord'; and 'the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah' (2 Chron. 32. 8).

This setting of the facts shows a great change to have taken place, quite momentarily, in the attitude of the king. We find him no longer the victim of panic, but ready for war; not trusting Egypt—as was the case with his people (Isa. 30. 1, 2; 31. 1)—but relying upon the God of Jacob, whose protection was assured 'for His servant David's sake' (2 Kings 19. 34; 20. 6). The panic-stricken act was repented of; it belonged to days that were past. This is the suggestion of a survey of the record; it is the obvious drift of the passage in which the act itself is narrated. Not merely in point of *place*, however, does the act of submission come before the condition of rebellion in 2 Kings 18. When passing to the story of active opposition on the part of Hezekiah, the writer plainly refers to the compromising proceedings as belonging to days that are past, by saying, '*At that time* did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the Temple of the Lord,' &c. (v. 16). This emphatic formula marks with clearness the progress of events.

We observe that, at first, under influences contrary to his general attitude, Hezekiah sought to prevent the onward march of the Assyrian. Seeing the error of this course, he threw himself back upon the God of his fathers, and 'rebelled'. Some parts of the story stand out in the Book of Kings, other parts in the Book of Chronicles; but in both cases the great conflict with the Assyrian leads up to the crisis

of the king's life. On closer examination, however, another fact emerges. It was at the moment when the king resolved upon rebellion (after his antecedent submission), which meant implicit reliance upon the Lord, that he was struck with the mortal sickness that occupies so prominent a position in his story—and thus struck to his own confusion and the astonishment of onlookers. The enemy was at the gates; the king was in his chamber face to face with death (cp. 2 Kings 20. 1 with ch. 18. 17; 2 Chron. 32. 24 with *v.* 9). The expression 'in those days' associates the events. Note also the force of the two-fold statement in 2 Kings 20. 6: 'I will add unto thy days . . . and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria.'

It is in the 'rebellion' that the character of Hezekiah is seen. The act of submission was not according to his best judgement. It was an act of weakness, not consistent with the piety which led to the opening of the Temple; and it was diametrically in opposition to the attitude which he subsequently maintained. From what we have seen, we are compelled to conclude that the king had this course forced upon him by those who were not like-minded in their devotion to the God of Israel. Isaiah's denunciation of Shebna, the treasurer of the palace (ch. 22), shows that sinister and disloyal influences were exerted in high places at this time. Yet, the king cannot be excused altogether; and it would appear that the sickness with which he was immediately visited was a mark of the Divine displeasure. Were the people responsible for the act of folly? We can well believe that they were (cp. ch. 30. 1-17). In that case, in the sickness which seized

him, the king suffered a penalty which was in reality due to others, and bore sorrow and sickness on their behalf, in their stead (ch. 53).

The great prophet of the Court did not overlook this phase of the king's sickness. Though urged by impious counsellors, and himself seeing no other way of dealing with the invader, yet the king did wrong in impoverishing the Temple—not only taking therefrom money that had been devoted to the Lord, but also cutting off the gold from the doors of the sacred edifice. In any circumstances, this was an act of plunder, and could not go overlooked. Hence the shame of the sickness which came upon the king simultaneously with the investment of Jerusalem. Though others might be responsible as having instigated the wrong, the stroke fell on Hezekiah. There seems to be an allusion to this sad experience in ch. 57. 17, 18: 'For the iniquity of his plunder' (act of spoliation) 'was I wroth, and smote him. I hid me, and was wroth; and he went on, turning back into the way of his heart' (i. e. changing his mind, returning to his former course). 'His ways have I seen, and I will heal him. I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him and to those who mourn for him.' To this passage we shall recur immediately, considering it in the light of its context.

Thus it would appear that, in the matter of his submission to the Assyrian, Hezekiah was overborne by others. Then came judgement in the form of a terrible sickness, of which, however, there were two aspects, the personal and the representative. The king, accepting full responsibility for his acts, regarded the judgement as a visitation for his own

sin (ch. 38. 17); the prophet laid blame upon those who had exerted an evil influence, and insisted upon a policy which was dishonouring to the God of Israel (ch. 53. 4-6). With healing, there came upon the king, in greater measure, 'the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord' (ch. 11. 2). Ever afterwards, excepting in the matter of the Babylonian envoys, he put the will of God first.

All in all, Hezekiah was a righteous man. For his compliance with evil policy before the siege, 'God smote him.' For his weakness of purpose in presence of Merodach-baladan, he was given a sad fore-glimpse of the captivity whereby, three generations afterwards, his own offspring became eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. These things notwithstanding, 'peace and truth' were assured in his time, as we have already had occasion to see in the historical records of the kingdom. Not only, however, was this categorically set forth by the prose writer: it was also the burden of the later visions of Isaiah, Micah, and Hosea. Having been 'guided on every side', and become 'exalted in the sight of all nations', the king was the object of honour, and the people of Judaea excited the admiration of their neighbours. The filling-in of this outline is supplied by the prophet Isaiah in chapters 60-62 of the book bearing his name. Here are some lines of the glorious vision:—

I will make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, desolation nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. 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 unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory (60. 17-21).

In another vision, occupying an early place in the book, following on the preface (or first chapter), which was written last, we have another such picture. The prophet says:—

Many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob ; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths : for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall reprove many peoples : and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks : nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more (ch. 2. 3, 4. See also Mic. 4. 2-3).

If it is said that there is no record of this blessedness having been realized in human surroundings, we answer that in the things recorded of Hezekiah, though expressed in few words, as we have seen, there was at least a pledge and foretaste. How widespread and deep that blessedness cannot, of course, be said ; for there is no detailed history of the reign of Hezekiah during the period of fifteen years added after the mortal sickness. Had things been of the ordinary nature—characterized by war and conflict—there would doubtless have been some record. The silence of the historian is, at least, significant ; and therefrom we are permitted to gather that in the latter part of Hezekiah's reign there were 'days of heaven upon earth'. Here, in fact, we find some justification for the well-known saying of the ancient Rabbi (Hillel), to the effect that the Messiah was manifested IN THE TIME OF HEZEKIAH, KING OF JUDAH.

CHAPTER XIV

KING HEZEKIAH IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

5. PROPHETICAL PORTRAITURE

WE have already shown that Isa. 53, belonging to the latter part of the book, and almost universally adjudged in recent times to point to the Exile, relates, in reality, to king Hezekiah, the events of whose life are reflected in every line. A like portraiture is presented in other parts of Isaiah; and although, in such a work as this, we cannot pretend to deal with the subject exhaustively, yet we cannot forgo the opportunity of calling attention to some outlines of the picture. Whether examining the early or the later part of the book we find one great personage, a man who stood for God while his subordinates were untrue and his subjects plunged in apostasy. We must content ourselves with observations upon one passage in the former part of the prophecy, and a short series of passages in the latter part.

ISA. 33.

Opening with a denunciation of the Assyrian invader, and a declaration of the power and purpose of the Lord to deal with the situation (*vv.* 1-10), the prophet proceeds to consider things that are near at hand. The 'peoples', or invaders, shall be as 'the burnings of lime: as thorns cut down, that are burned in the fire' (*v.* 12). So much as to the enemy. What of the citizens,

'the sinners in Zion,' more disposed to listen to the appeals of Rabshakeh to 'come out' and accompany him to Assyria, than to sympathize with their king in his loyalty to the God of Israel, and his utter contempt of the heathen invader? Referred to in terms which properly described the uncircumcised nations—'the godless', the 'impious'—they are spoken of as afraid, seized with trembling; and it is shown that if they are to be delivered in the impending crisis they must speedily turn to the Lord and associate themselves with their king, who is righteous, truth-speaking, despising the gain of oppressions, refusing bribes, and keeping himself from evil by the subjecting of his eyes and ears to ways and purposes that are good (*vv.* 14, 15).

This would seem to be the meaning of the passage. As against the plural, 'the sinners,' &c., there is proposed the singular 'he', or 'such a one'. As we have seen again and again, the king represented the ideal; and we shall immediately find this made evident here. Already, however, we observe that the citizens are assured that a resolute control of their moral faculties is necessary if they would be saved. The language reminds us of a description of the king in another place, when, in admiring tones, the prophet said: 'Who is blind except my servant, or deaf like the messenger that I send? Who is blind like him that is at peace with me' (or, made perfect), 'and blind like the servant of the Lord? Thou seest many things but observest not: his ears are open, but he hears not.' And then, in order to place it beyond question that these are references to a virtue which knows no ways of sin or dishonesty, the prophet added: 'The Lord is well pleased with his righteousness: he will magnify the law, and make it honourable' (ch. 42. 19-21). In other words, when corruption was rampant in high places, the king realized that which was predicted in regard to himself as 'the shoot out of the stock of Jesse': 'He shall be of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the land' (ch. 11. 1-4).

To such a one 'the sinners in Zion' were pointed. If they

would survive the hour of national judgement, they must turn to their king; and of all such the prophet went on to say: 'Such a one shall dwell on high; rock fortresses shall be his place of refuge; his bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure' (*v.* 16). In other words, he would be preserved in safety through the days of stress and ruin—even as the righteous king would be. More than that, his eyes should yet have the joy of seeing the king, whose piety was so well-pleasing to the God of Israel; and though the country was for the present overrun with alien hordes, those who had inherited it from ancient days should yet look upon its smiling hills and valleys freed from all trace of the invader and his work of desolation. 'Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold a far stretching land' (*v.* 17). 'The king in his beauty': that implied recovery from sickness; it also meant that the land should be free from enemies, through whose presence sackcloth had taken the place of all that was bright and splendid.

The king and his state-officers, as the historical record tells us, had covered themselves with sackcloth in these days of visitation; and the country, instead of being dotted with pleasant homesteads, was a camping-ground of enemies, and a prospective battle-field (*v.* 8; *ch.* 36. 2; 37. 1-3). In days just ahead, however, redeemed from evil, the nation would enter upon an entirely new experience. The 'terror' would be simply a recollection; and the fierce people of strange tongue would be no longer seen. Where then would be the scribes and receivers who, representing a hostile power, presented impudent letters and demanded ruinous tribute of the chosen people? (*vv.* 18, 19).

Indeed, a mighty change was imminent. As, in a previous message, the prophet said: 'My people shall abide in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places' (*ch.* 32. 18); so now the word is: 'Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tent that shall not be removed, the stakes whereof shall never be plucked up, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken' (*v.* 20). This means security and permanence, such as the piety of Hezekiah seemed likely to bring into immediate realization. The prophet goes on to show, in terms

of figure, how, and how alone, this blessed condition could be brought about. The security of the Assyrian lay in the fact that his land was a place of broad rivers and streams—mighty rivers with ships and boats in large numbers.¹ What these features and provisions were to Assyria, the tyrant power, that would the Lord God of Jacob be to His people. 'The stakes shall not be plucked up, the cords shall not be broken.' Why? 'BECAUSE there the might of the LORD will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein, however, will go no vessel of war, neither will any mighty ship pass through' (*v.* 21). In other words, the Lord will be to His people, for security and strength, all that certain great natural features were to Assyria, the enemy of the chosen people, with this difference—there would be no military or naval manifestations. And how and why? The next verse shows: 'FOR the Lord is our Judge' (to avenge as well as govern), 'the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; HE WILL SAVE US.'

The prophet says two things more. First, in the language of figure, he shows that the enemy of Judah has attempted more than he is able to carry through; and where he thought to find helplessness (i. e. with the God of Israel) he will find his conqueror: 'the lame shall take the prey' (*v.* 23). Second, in two clauses, he makes a statement which forcibly recalls the language of ch. 53, and fitly concludes his message. With the suffering king in mind, he says: 'And the inhabitant' (i. e. occupant of the throne) 'shall no more say, I am sick'; and then, with the citizens occupying his thoughts, he says: 'The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.'² All

¹ Part of the empire of Assyria was called Aram-naharaim—'the Highland of the Two Rivers,' also known as Syria and Mesopotamia (the country 'between the rivers', i. e. the Tigris and Euphrates). From Isa. 43. 14 we learn that the Chaldeans, who were subject to Assyria at this time, were men 'whose glory was in their ships'—i. e. their ships were their object of boasting and praise.

² The 'inhabitant' here is not to be confused with 'inhabitantress', which is used of the people as distinguished from the ruler. We recur to this passage on p. 269 ff.

along, the prophet anticipates events that were about to come to pass. Surely in these words, we find a striking reference to the king who suffered for the iniquities of his people. The characteristics of the suffering for others, more fully described in ch. 53, are thus, by succinct allusion, summed up here; and these two passages, like others, bind the two portions of Isaiah into one book belonging to one age.

ISAIAH 54-57.

We proceed to examine some passages which immediately follow the prophecy regarding the Suffering Servant, contenting ourselves with the briefest outline consistent with showing the place of Hezekiah in the latter portion of the book.

Ch. 54.—In this chapter we have a message of hope. Deliverance from the enemy of the nation is foretold; the people that have had shame and sorrow, shall yet have honour and joy (*vv. 1-4*). The judgement that has come upon Jerusalem and Judah is not to effect complete destruction: it is 'for a small moment'. Because 'thy Maker is thy husband', and 'the Holy One of Israel is thy Redeemer', purposes of mercy are about to dawn, and a great future is about to open for the afflicted and tried community (*vv. 5-13*). 'In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression'—these involving security and comfort. 'No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper', for the Lord commands the cause of His people, wayward though they may have been (*vv. 14-17*). The chapter is occupied with the time when the Assyrian was at the gates: and its words could not but be full of hope and promise when the outlook seemed to be black with despair.

Ch. 55.—The opening section of this chapter recalls a familiar incident. When before Jerusalem, Rabshakeh cried to the men on the walls in these terms: 'Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make your peace with me' (or, come to terms with me), 'and come out to me; and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern: until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine,

a land of bread and vineyards' (Isa. 36. 16, 17). What is the prophet's answer to this appeal, which in the stress of the hour must have proved a mighty temptation to those who were without faith in the God of Israel and indifferent to true patriotic sentiment? Seeing deliverance was at hand, Isaiah dissuades the people in the most practical terms. Why should they spend their money to such a fruitless purpose as the one proposed? Rabshakeh could assure to them nothing which they did not already possess. Suppose they should go out to him—what then? they might never reach 'the land like their own'. So the prophet cries, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat: yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour' (or, earnings) 'for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness' (*vv.* 1, 2). How? By staying in the city; by believing the words of Hezekiah that the Lord would deliver His people; and by being content with the ample water-supply provided by the king (2 Kings 20. 20; 2 Chron. 32. 3, 4). The prophet adds: 'Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David' (*v.* 3).

We are assuredly permitted to distinguish between the 'peace', or 'terms', or 'wager', proposed by Rabshakeh, and the 'covenant', perpetual and unchanging, proposed by the prophet on the basis of David's favour with God. And we cannot but recall that, in an earlier prophecy, Isaiah anticipated some such a situation, when he wrote: 'The poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst; I the Lord will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water' (41. 17, 18). In addition, therefore, to the king's provision, there was a Divine promise on which to rely.

Knowing full well the faithlessness of the people, the prophet reassures them of the coming glory (*v.* 5). Hence the time has arrived for amendment of life, no longer doubting God because

unable to reconcile His condescension with their own unworthiness (*vv.* 6, 7). God's ways and thoughts are higher than those of man: hence, His every word of promise shall be performed (*vv.* 8-11). Though for the present like prisoners bound in dungeons (*ch.* 24. 22; 42. 7, 22; 45. 13; 51. 14;¹ 61. 1, 2), yet they should go out of the city with joy, and be led forth with peace, and see their country in its natural glory and beauty (*v.* 12, 13).

Ch. 56.—This is a prophecy declaring salvation (or deliverance) to be near at hand, and announcing blessing as in store for those who honour the sabbath and keep themselves from the surrounding evil. Looking forward, quite reasonably, to the promised days of blessing—when 'the mountain of the Lord's house should be established in the top of the mountains, . . . and all nations should flow unto it' (*ch.* 2. 2), apprehension filled the breasts of certain sections of the community. The stranger who had thrown in his lot with Israel feared exclusion from the Temple worship; and the eunuch, conscious that he could contribute nothing to the strength of the nation, looked forward to a like treatment. Both, however, were assured otherwise. When the day should come for 'the law to go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem'—when the nation would realize the blessing assured to Hezekiah, at length recovered from sickness, and 'the pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hand'—these objects of contempt, tolerated in the midst of Israel but not welcomed as of the true and honourable seed of Abraham, would have Divine consideration. The eunuchs that keep God's sabbaths, choose the things that please Him, and hold fast by His covenant; and the strangers that join themselves to the Lord, to love His name and be His servants, keeping the sabbath from polluting it, and holding fast by His covenant—these will not be overlooked. To the eunuchs the Lord would give in His house and within His walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters—an everlasting

¹ In this passage, *ch.* 51. 14, there is in reality no reference to 'captivity' or 'exile' as correctly understood. The Hebrew words mean 'the bound down one hastens to be loosed'. (See *R. V. marg.* 'he that is bent down'.)

name, that shall not be cut off. As for the strangers, they should be brought to His holy mountain, and made joyful in His house of prayer; and their burnt-offerings and sacrifices should be accepted upon the altar. The house of which the promise spoke was to be a house of prayer for all peoples; and when, at length, the outcasts of Israel—from Syria, Egypt, Assyria, and elsewhere—were gathered together, others would also be brought with them (*vv.* 3-8).

If there were ungodly foreigners in the city at this time, as unquestionably there were, so we find there were strangers of another sort, those 'joined to the Lord' and fearing the God of Israel. For the classes named to be singled out for blessing, cannot but be regarded as a serious reflection upon the apostate character of the population in general, as we have seen again and again.

The chapter concludes with a prediction of coming slaughter, the beasts of the forest being called to feed upon the carnage (*cp.* Isa. 34. 6, 7; Rev. 19. 17, 18). The reference is to the Assyrian army; contempt for the enemy leaves him not only unnamed, but even undescribed. His watchmen are denounced as without intelligence and helpless—actually given over to slumber. As to the host, they are greedy dogs, never satisfied. The kings of Assyria may call themselves shepherds;¹ but all the same they are without understanding, and bent upon plunder from first to last. Day by day they feast, thinking that all is well. That, however, is their folly: the slaughter is determined, and the beasts of the field are coming to do their work. In other words, the end of the Assyrian was near; and the historical records tell us what an end it was.

Ch. 57.—In the earlier part of this chapter we have a stern rebuke of the nation. The period is the same as we have found in the chapters already examined. The king is sick unto death,

¹ As was, in fact, the case. 'Shepherd' was a favourite designation of the Assyrian kings, as may be gathered from the various documents given in *Records of the Past* (Second Series): e. g. the Inscription of Tiglath-Pileser I, col. 1, lines 19, 30, 34; the Inscription of Assur-natsir-pal, col. 1, lines 13, 21; col. 3, line 115; the Inscription of Sennacherib, line 3 of first col.

and we are shown how the crisis appealed to the apostate nation. 'The righteous man perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; godly men¹ are taken away, none considering that it is because of evil² that the righteous one is taken away.' The sickness and suffering of the king were because of the wickedness of the nation. Though still overlooked by the people, this fact had been brought to their notice in solemn terms (see ch. 53. 4-6). Proceeding to expose the corrupt condition of things, Isaiah declares that, having departed from the God of their fathers, the nation was an adulterous seed (*vv.* 3). Consequently, their movements are such as agree with the abominations of the heathen. They have become habituated to evil deeds, and now in a time of perplexity they make vows after the manner of the uncircumcised nations, slaying children in the valleys under the clefts of the rocks, pouring out a drink-offering, and presenting an oblation. They hope by these means to avert the impending evil of the king's death. None of these measures, however, could turn aside the anger of the Lord (*vv.* 5, 6).³

¹ The second clause expands the first. One person is definitely in mind; but other such may be presumed. A similar feature is exhibited in ch. 32. 1, 'a king . . . princes,' also ch. 44. 26, 'servant . . . messengers' (cp. ch. 42. 19). Note also, in ch. 30. 20, 'teachers,' with the apparent meaning of 'great teacher', wherein the king is viewed as the exemplar of the nation. See article (by Ember) on 'The Pluralis Intensivus in Hebrew' in *The American Journal of Semitic Languages* for July, 1905.

² That is, 'by reason of evil,' or wickedness: to render the clause 'evil to come' much reduces the rebuke implied in the passage. The attitude of the people is set forth in ch. 53. 1-3. The formula *בְּעוֹן אֲבוֹתָיו* is often found in the sense given in the text. Note apposite cases, Deut. 28. 20; Jer. 4. 4—'because of the wickedness of thy (your) doings'; Jer. 7. 12—'for the wickedness of my people Israel'; Hos. 10. 15—'because of your great wickedness'!

³ It is impossible not to see in the language of *vv.* 4-8 the description of a situation calling for the repudiation and profession expressed in Ps. 16. 4, 5. The passage in Isaiah presents to view just such movements of the debased people as those

In connexion with the same vows also, sacrifice is offered on the high mountain, but from first to last after the manner of the heathen (*vv.* 7, 8). The God of Israel was in none of these things: they were the acts of an unfaithful people, who failed to 'lay to heart' the true cause of the king's illness—failed to see that it was because of the wickedness of the people (*cp. v.* 1). That is not all. Medicinal measures are prescribed: 'And thou didst repair to the king with ointment,'¹ or oil, for the wound; and, whether for use in fumigating the chamber of sickness or for enriching the ointment, 'thou didst increase thy perfumes.' No prayer to the God of Israel, no appeal to the prophet who spoke in the name of the Lord! Further, in desperation, the advice and assistance of those not belonging to the elect nation are sought: 'Thou didst send thine ambassadors far off' and by thus despising the Holy One of Israel 'thou didst debase thyself even to Sheol'—i.e. to the lowest depth (*v.* 9). It only remains for the prophet to add that all these means would prove of no avail. Though at its wits' end owing to the greatness of the crisis, the nation would not yield and turn to the Lord (*v.* 10). Hence the Divine expostulation: 'Of whom hast thou been afraid and in fear, that thou shouldst prove false, and hast not remembered Me, nor laid the matter to heart? Have I not even held My peace for a long time, and thou fearest Me not?' In other words, 'Has not My long-

contemplated by the psalmist: we see them 'hasting after' gods other than Jehovah; having a 'portion' and 'lot' utterly distinct from that which was the joy of their king and the righteous remnant; and then, also, we see the 'drink-offering' which, in the light of the 'slaying of children in the valleys', becomes a thing of 'blood'. (See *Isa.* 65. 2-4, 7, 11, 12; also *Mic.* 5. 10-15; 6. 16.) See note on the psalm in the Appendix.

¹ The suggested rendering, 'Thou didst repair to (the god) Melek with (thine) oil,' i.e. make an offering to a false god, while proposing nothing improbable in the practices of the time, originates in a failure to see the reference to Hezekiah and his distinctive experiences in this remarkable portion of Isaiah's prophecy. Here, and elsewhere, Hezekiah's life explains the book.

suffering been coincident with growing indifference on thy part?' (*v.* 11). There had been no fear of judgement.

Proceeding, the prophet shows that the agitations and performances to which he has referred would bring no result in blessing from God. 'When thou criest, let them which thou hast gathered (i.e. the gods which thou hast taken into thy bosom) deliver thee; but the wind shall take them, a breath shall carry them all away: but he that putteth his trust in Me (the Lord) shall possess the land, and shall inherit My holy mountain' (*v.* 13). Here we have at least a reference to the king, whose trust in the Lord was unshaken—and possibly to others like-minded. The prophet goes on to show that the God of Israel has purposes of good for the righteous and godly, even although lying on beds of mortal sickness, as shown in the first verse. 'Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble (ones), and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for in that case the spirit would languish from My presence, even the breathing creatures that I have made.' Here we have, not merely a statement of the Divine purpose, but a general reason for the Divine clemency and forbearance (*vv.* 15, 16).

What follows, to the end of the chapter, throws important light upon the sufferings of the king, and the wonderful recovery that was given. We read: 'For the iniquity of his plunder¹

¹ Not 'covetousness', but plunder, spoliation. Of this, as we have pointed out, Hezekiah was guilty, when, in compliance with counsels that were not according to 'the ways of his heart', he sent to Sennacherib at Lachish, 'all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord,' and 'cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the Lord' (2 Kings 18. 15, 16). Hezekiah repented immediately, and accordingly 'rebelled' against the king of Assyria, who at once sent an army toward Jerusalem. In punishment for the 'plunder', God smote him with sickness, as the prophet points out. This passage fills in a hiatus in the narrative of the historian.

was I wroth and smote him: I hid my face, and was wroth: and he turned back into the way of his heart.¹ His ways I have seen, and I will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comfort to him and to his mourners' (*vv.* 17, 18). The last clause gives us a glimpse of the pious Jews at the time. There were some who 'laid to heart' the case of the sick king: they and he were comforted when healing came and leading was given.² The entire chapter shows that the king's case was beyond the reach of apostate measures. Restoration could only come along lines which brought glory to the God of Israel. Hence the next verse: 'I create the fruit of the lips (or, I originate true praise): Peace, peace, to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord: and I will heal him'! (*v.* 19). Significant repetition, followed also by a remarkable reflection upon 'the wicked'—whether the heathen, or those of Israel who had adopted heathen ways of living. 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked' (*vv.* 20, 21).

So we see that this wonderful book is not merely a statement of moral and religious principles in mystical language, but a series of prophecies, having a definite relation to the life and times of Hezekiah. As we scan the chapters that follow, to the end of the book, we find 'improvements' of various aspects of the history. Now the prophet deals with judgment, now with deliverance; and in the last resort it is the Lord alone that brings relief: when 'He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was none to interpose (and strike the enemy), then His own arm brought salvation unto Him, and His

¹ 'Turned back.' More correctly, 'And he went, turning back,' &c. The clause does not describe recusancy, to the king's dishonour, but rather recovery from a step which, being false, provoked the Divine wrath.

² On the entire situation of this passage read Ps. 73. Those who mourned in Zion are referred to in Isa. 60. 21; 61. 1-3; 66. 10. See 'comfort' and 'mourning' combined in Job 29. 25.

righteousness it upheld Him'—repaying fury to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies (ch. 59. 15-18). In the time of trial the city is called 'Forsaken' and the land 'Desolate': when the hour of redemption dawns, the people are called 'Holy', and the city 'Sought out'. Looking forward to this, as the outcome of the king's recovery, with the social and domestic consequences which have frequently been presented to our view, the prophet says of the city: 'Thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah'—thus naming her whom the king was to take to wife (2 Kings 21. 1), 'and thy land Beulah'—thus pointing the arrival of an event which could not but have a mighty significance in the politics of the Judæan Kingdom (ch. 62. 4).

By a singular fate, the experience of Hezekiah's lifetime—that he was despised and rejected of men—has also been the experience of the king in the literary judgement of millenniums. When living, men 'esteemed him not'; in the progress of ages, he has been similarly treated without justifying cause. His acts have been criticized with an unbecoming candour; and the sins of his people have been attributed to him, not in the way that, by an inscrutable providence, they were visited upon him in judgement, but rather as the consequence of a faulty reading of the Old Testament books. Hence there has been created a character untrue to history, and sustaining no effective and real correspondence with the Servant of the Lord of whom Isaiah the prophet wrote. Hence, also, the writings in question have, for two thousand years and more, remained deprived of a well-defined historical foundation, or background of events, personal and political, such as their origina-

tion in the Judæan kingdom could not but furnish ; while, as a further consequence, their most eloquent passages have been treated as convenient material for every kind of ' private interpretation '.

We should be the last to suggest that the historical basis of the Old Testament writings is everything ; but we do not hesitate to maintain that *it is the basis* ; and only when such a basis is ascertained can we hope to secure a sound exegesis and a safe application. Studied with the life of Hezekiah continually in mind, the Psalter, as we have seen, stands out as a work whose foundation goes deep into the history of Israel, and whose first relation is with the Kingdom of God in that nation. Likewise, in regard to the Book of Isaiah, in its second part in particular, about which so much has been written that neither commands acceptance nor challenges serious refutation, we have found that work to consist, not so much of a series of oracles for spiritual application as of a collection of prophecies according to the precise and biblical definition of the term, and these from first to last instinct with human life and historic reality.

So we find the portraiture furnished by the prophet to correspond with that given by the historian. How great a man was Hezekiah ! Where the prophet intended us to see him, however, expositors have only found ' the Ideal '. Suggestive discovery ! The complement of David in work upon the Psalter ; and a type of the Messiah in the tender aspect of the Sin-bearer suffering for others, the king who is engaging our study and reflection was, as we shall further show, the Ideal Man in the Old Testament history.

CHAPTER XV

KING HEZEKIAH IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

6. EXILIC TERMS AND THEIR APPLICATION

LEAVING for the present the consideration of the name 'Cyrus' in Isaiah, we address ourselves, in few words, to certain common terms in the book that have been regarded as 'exilic'. That there are terms implying exile in Isaiah is beyond question; but what are we to understand by 'exile'? In general, the word is assumed to mean the carrying away of the Jews to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, as recorded in 2 Kings 25. 1-21 and parallel passages; and Isaianic allusions to captivity have been associated more or less exclusively with that great event. After what we have found to be the substantive message of the book, we do not hesitate to contend that the prophet was concerned with occurrences anterior to the time mentioned, and that the exilic terms relate to deportations and other national trials belonging for the most part to the reign of Hezekiah. In other words, we find in Isaiah just what we have seen in the Psalter (e. g. in Pss. 51. 18, 19; 69. 35, 36; 126. 1 ff.; 137. 1 ff.)—situations which, in the historic sense of the term, are 'pre-exilic', and uniformly so.

As we have shown, there was a great carrying away of Jews in the reign of Hezekiah. Not only did the Assyrian take forty-six of the fenced cities of Judah, but he carried captive over two hundred thousand of the people. The story is told in the Taylor Cylinder, and it receives plain support in its tragic details in the second division of Isaiah's prophecies.¹ We have seen reason to believe that the captives were planted in those cities of Babylon from which people were transported into the cities of Samaria; and we have also shown that the Assyrian power might well be spoken of as 'Babylon' in Isaiah's time, seeing that it had effectually asserted dominance over the more ancient city—in fact over the province of Babylon.² It was in view of the reversal of just such a captivity as this, in the reign of Hezekiah, that the prophet wrote: 'Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans; 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' (Isa. 48. 20: cp. 49. 9^a; 51. 11).

This, however, does not exhaust the language which has been called 'exilic' in Isaiah. In cases where, in the Hebrew idiom, the word 'captivity' has implied nothing more than social distress and political perplexity, some have found allusions to the Exile, meaning the seventy years' captivity in Babylon. Yet, as it is hardly necessary to say, the Hebrew idea of captivity is by no means limited to deportation:

¹ See quotation from the Inscription on p. 134 *ante*.

² Even as, in a later time, Babylonia was sometimes styled 'Assyria' (2 Kings 23. 29; cp. 2 Chron. 35. 20-4; Jer. 42. 2); and the Persian ruler was called 'King of Assyria' (Ezra 6. 22).

the word may equally well stand for national misfortune, and may be applied to a siege or down-treading with as much propriety as to a carrying away of prisoners of war. This fact not having been borne in mind, it has become customary to read into passages such as those that deal with the Assyrian investment of Jerusalem the notion of a deportation of the inhabitants of the city.

For instance, Isa. 40, which strictly relates to a state of desperation in Jerusalem itself (*vv.* 1, 9), has been applied to the experiences of the Jewish people in exile. Not only does this treatment read into the text ideas which are not expressed, but it sadly confuses the language of the book as a whole. For here, as elsewhere, the sacred writer is not dealing with people being emancipated from bondage in a strange land, but rather with the inhabitants of a city being liberated by reason of the surrounding country being cleared of invading enemies. Hence, he says, 'Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing' (ch. 52. 11). That is, the exit of the city is to be made freely, and not with such coercion as Rabshakeh would have delighted to exercise: the people were not to 'go out' to be slaves of the Assyrians, or even their vassal protégés, but rather to be the free servants of Jehovah. Again, in another passage, pointing to the same time, we read: 'Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands' (ch. 55. 12).¹

¹ The situation in this chapter has already been noted. See p. 223. Cp. the message of Isaiah to Hezekiah, as given in

As a result of misapprehension in regard to 'exilic' terms, even by those who hold the unity of the book, Isaiah has been regarded as dealing with the end of the Babylonian empire. From the tenor of the first part, we rather look for something about the end of the Assyrian power; but this seems to be withheld. It is only so in appearance, however. Again and again, the downfall of Assyria is spoken of by the prophet; but because, in some instances, the designation 'Babylon' is employed (on grounds already explained), expositors have mistaken the allusion, and concluded a reference to the New Babylon, to which Nebuchadnezzar took the Jews after destroying Jerusalem. The next step in criticism was, of course, inevitable. For a prophet to deal with the Babylonian captivity (as commonly understood) implies that he ministered in that period. Hence those portions of the book which manifestly related to 'captivity' have been placed to the account of an unknown writer, the 'Second Isaiah', who flourished in a day subsequent to Jeremiah, whose duty it was to denounce judgement upon the great Babylonian power!

In this connexion we recall that Jeremiah, when looking forward to the end of Babylon, wrote: 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, *as I have punished the king of Assyria*' (Jer. 50. 18). Yet, apart from a few passages (in the first part of Isaiah), including the record of the smiting of Sennacherib, there is no detailed pronouncement upon the

2 Kings 19. 31, and Isa. 37. 32, in which similar language is used regarding those who should survive the siege; and note the terms of Isa. 10. 20-3.

Assyrian, 'the rod of Jehovah's anger.'¹ Clearly we must look for this in the complete Book of Isaiah; and, as we have already seen, allusions under various aspects are to be found in the later prophecies of the collection. Taken as a whole, the book names Assyria forty-three times, and Babylon thirteen times. The historic situation is obviously one; and in the references to Babylon there is nothing whatever to distinguish this as the New Babylon, which owed its downfall to the Persians. On the contrary, of the Babylon of the early portion of Isaiah, the end is attributed to barbarities on the part of the Medes—as foretold by the prophet in ch. 13. 17.

The inference is clear. In these passages of Isaiah, we are *not* to understand the New Babylon, founded in 625 B. C. by Nabopolassar and his son Nebuchadnezzar II, but rather the empire of Assyria, as inheriting the prestige and glory of ancient Babylon. And it is assuredly significant that, in the very generation to which the prophecies before us profess to belong, Babylonia was for the first time in history brought directly under the sway of the Assyrian sceptre by Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B. C.), who, after subjugating various tribes, got himself crowned 'King of Babylon' in 728 B. C.² This designation was maintained by his successors, who also arrogated to themselves the title of 'King of the World—King of the Four Regions'. According to our reading of Isaiah, the words spoken in chh. 13 and 14 belong to this very period—the reign of Ahaz, king of Judah,

¹ The outstanding allusions are—Isa. 10. 12-14, 24; 14. 24-7; 30. 31; 31. 8; 37. 36.

² Hommel, Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible*, art. 'Assyrian.'

who sought the assistance of this same Tiglath-Pileser in his conflict with surrounding enemies (see ch. 14. 28; and cp. 2 Kings 16. 7 ff.; 2 Chron. 28. 20, 21). The judgement threatened came in due time. This, however, is clear, that, when we read of 'Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride', being overthrown, we are to think of the empire of Assyria, whose capital, Nineveh, was, for the moment, in prophetic denunciation, overshadowed by the city of greater antiquity, with whose people, in the next reign, that of Hezekiah, the Judæan captives were brought into sorrowful relations through the deportation effected by Sennacherib.

In harmony with this view, we go on to read of the degradation and downfall of the empire. Still the arrogated name is used: the ruler is 'The King of Babylon' (ch. 14. 4), and the end is expressed in the words: 'I will rise up, saith the Lord of Hosts, and cut off from Babylon name and remnant, son and son's son' (*v.* 22). And then, in language indicating the predicted event as near at hand, and looking away from high-sounding imperial claims, the prophecy speaks of the tyrant under the plain historic designation: 'I will break the ASSYRIAN in My land, and upon My mountains tread him under foot' (*v.* 25). This is not spoken of the empire, but of the invading host, and the scene of vengeance is specified. So the Medes will do their part, and Jehovah will do His. The outlook is—destruction for the state, and annihilation for the military host.¹ The prophecy is

¹ It matters little for our present purpose upon whom the 'burden' looks, for the various successors of Tiglath-Pileser were after his own heart—claiming universal kingship and

one: it begins with ch. 13. 1, and ends with ch. 14. 27, as the 'burden' formula plainly shows. Therefore the last four verses, *naming the Assyrian*, are of the nature of a climax, and cannot be dealt with as a distinct prophecy, as some expositors have supposed. That *v. 28* begins a new prophecy is placed beyond question by the use of the expression 'this burden'.

These various forms of allusion in Isaiah are, in fact, a recognition of something that is made very plain in the inscriptions, namely, that Babylon was intimately associated with Assyria at this time. Accordingly, we read that, after the second Israelite captivity, the king of Assyria placed in the cities of Samaria people whom *he brought from Babylon* (2 Kings 17. 24, 30). The other references to Babylon in Isaiah are all agreeable to the view suggested—that the term is used as it was arrogantly claimed by the kings of Assyria, and not in allusion to the empire of a subsequent century. Babylon was subject to Nineveh: hence the king of Assyria could, if he so desired, bring people thence to Samaria, or convey Jews thither from the Southern Kingdom. In harmony with the theory that he did this, we read in Isa. 43. 14: 'For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and I will bring down all of them as fugitives, even the Chaldeans, in the ships of their rejoicing'; the meaning of which is, probably, that

much besides (cp. ch. 14. 12-14). From *vv. 19-21* we should have reason to expect a violent death, in circumstances of special barbarism; and the case of Sennacherib, who was murdered by his two sons (2 Kings 19. 37), seems to supply features in correspondence. And, moreover, the antecedent destruction of his army meets the condition described in *v. 25*.

Jehovah would create such a stir through the empire, that the navigators of the southern province would gladly co-operate in sending home the captives of Judah.

It remains to be noted that, as the religion of Babylon was shared by Assyria, the language of Isa. 46. 1 presents no difficulty. Bel, 'the king of the gods,' had a place in the pantheon of both peoples, and Nebo was the interpreter of his will. In the passage referred to, these divinities stand for Babylon as a city (see ch. 47. 1), and are a fitting designation of the Power which realized old Babylonian ideals in the times of Assyrian ascendancy. The prophet's purpose was to announce the end of the great enemy of the people of God (ch. 47. 1 ff.). The Lord will do His pleasure upon Babylon, and redeem the house of Jacob for His own sake (ch. 48. 9-15). There may be a vast distance between the land of captivity and the ancestral home, but the Power that brought from Egypt in the days of old will prove equal to the new undertaking (*vv.* 20, 21). In words found earlier in the book: 'With His scorching wind shall He shake His hand over the River, and shall smite it at the Seven Streams, and cause men to march over dryshod. And there shall be an high way from Assyria for the remnant of His people that shall be left, like as there was for Israel in the day when he came up out of the land of Egypt' (ch. 11. 15, 16).¹

¹ The entire passage shows that there were captives in Egypt and other places, as well as in Assyria (*v.* 11). The greatest interest gathers round the two countries named; and they alone are mentioned in the promise quoted in the text. As to Egypt: 'The Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the

The story of the visit of the envoys of Merodach-baladan to King Hezekiah, as set forth in Isa. 39, presents 'Babylon' under a more circumscribed aspect. An hereditary prince of the Chaldeans, the personage named possessed himself of Babylonia, and was crowned king, in 721 B.C. Sargon reasserted Assyrian domination, and Sennacherib afterwards placed a vassal-ruler on the throne. The reference here is, of course, to Babylonia in the simple geographical sense. We deal with a plain prose narrative, which gives no opportunity for the use of such figures as abound in the prophetic messages of the book, in which, as we have seen, the word 'Babylon' is again and again employed in a larger sense and with a deeper implication. Hezekiah had no quarrel with Merodach-baladan; but rather with the power against which that prince rebelled, and which in turn wrested the throne of Babylon from him.

We conclude that, while there are 'exilic' sentiments in Isaiah, they have no relation to the Babylonian Exile as commonly understood. The book is concerned with captivity in a twofold sense: therefore to read into it, or out of it, only one sense, or aspect, must result in exegetical confusion. On the one hand, there is the 'captive daughter of Zion', with the Assyrian at the walls (Isa. 52. 1-6); on the other hand, there are the people in far-off Babylon (ch. 48. 20). The *city* is comforted in view of a Divine intervention for its deliverance; the *exiles* are called

Egyptian Sea.' As to Assyria: a marvel shall be wrought at the River (cp. Gen. 15. 18; Ex. 23. 31; Deut. 11. 24; Ps. 72. 8)—the Euphrates—at some well-known spot styled 'The Seven Streams'.

home by another act of redemption on the part of the God of Jacob. To the passages illustrating this, we may add Isa. 35. The prophet has a message of consolation; and he says to the distracted citizens of Jerusalem: 'Your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence: He will come and save you' (*v.* 4); while, with regard to those in the lands of the enemy, he says: 'The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads' (*v.* 10). In the former promise we have the counterpart of many other passages on the certainty and imminence of relief (e. g. chh. 37. 35; 46. 13; 51. 5; 56. 1). In the latter, with its ransomed exiles returning to Zion, we have the same glad assurance as in ch. 51. 11. Both sections of the book exhibit the same picture.

So, with the terrible issues of national wasting and woe before him, Isaiah had vital topics on which to seek the counsel of Heaven, and on which to give direction from time to time to the rulers of the nation. His language is such as becomes the prophet—rich and exalted. It is of the essence of prophetic utterance to speak intensely: there is a magniloquence which, in the mouth of any one but a seer, might be classed as exaggeration. A failure to see this has resulted in a too ready association of distinctive passages of Isaiah with historic events which have been great only when judged by lower standards.

In view of the supreme importance of the age of Hezekiah, there need be no hesitation in placing the majestic words of the prophet alongside the events of the time. A mighty significance inhered in the occurrences, and these the prophet would see and

'improve'. Unlike the annalist or scribe, the prophet was a man who perceived the essential relation of things. Realizing the inwardness as well as the outward form, his point of view was spiritual, his emphasis according to the mind of God. In proportion as we give due weight to these considerations, we shall be in a position to interpret Isaiah's writings with true appreciation and consistent results.

CHAPTER XVI

KING HEZEKIAH IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

7. THE NAME OF CYRUS IN ISAIAH 44 AND 45

HAVING maintained that Hezekiah is the historic personage in the foreground of the second part of Isaiah, we note that, studied in this light, the book as a whole appears to treat of comparatively few topics, and these from various points of view. The book is not so much a panorama giving glimpses of a long period in history as it is a telescopic view of a few great scenes. And as the entire literature is read with this thought in mind, and apart from preconceptions as to a relation to the times of the Babylonish exile (606-534 B. C.), its substantial unity becomes obvious, and its historical cogency striking in a remarkable degree. In addition to the enlarged views thus gained regarding Hezekiah and his reign (*circa* 727-697 B. C.), we are enabled to gather criteria for the solution of important textual problems.

One of these problems is represented by the occurrence of the name 'Cyrus' in chh. 44 and 45. The mere presence of that name has decided many to conclude that the second part of the book belongs to the Persian period, and accordingly that the subject-matter of the component prophecies relates to the

Return of the Jews from Babylon under Cyrus. In order to reduce the material to a relation with that period, it has been necessary to interpret it in a manner which, it must be admitted, invests it with the qualities of a riddle rather than those of a consistent work of literature. In fewest words we deal with this subject.

In the first place, we remark that a study of the passages specified cannot but bring the references to Cyrus under grave suspicion. A comparison of the language with the facts which archaeological research has disclosed respecting the Persian king, makes it evident that error has found its way into the text. At the outset, we find an extraordinary incongruity: Cyrus is spoken of as 'the anointed of the Lord', 'His shepherd,' the one 'whose right hand Jehovah hath holden', and one 'who should perform all His pleasure' (ch. 44. 28; 45. 1). Yet all the while, he is a heathen king, seeking his own ends, pursuing his own policy!

Let it be noted that the difficulty before us is not raised by any question as to the possibility or otherwise of a particular prediction. The passage is not in the form of a prediction: it represents the king as being addressed, as one then living and present to the prophet, just as plainly as 'Jacob my servant' is employed with reference to the chosen people, in ch. 44. 1-6, 21-3. In other words, 'the Lord's anointed' here, is not the designation of a person standing in a future time, but of a person actually spoken to by the prophet. We read:

Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and I will

loose the loins of kings ; to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut ; I will go before thee, and make the rugged places plain : I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron : and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I am the LORD, which call thee by thy name, even the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I have called thee by thy name : I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me (ch. 45. 1-5).

Not looking forward to some great one yet to come, but assigning a position of privilege and power to one near at hand, the passage is made up of terms that were eminently suitable to a king reigning for Jehovah in Jerusalem, but altogether unsuitable to an idolater or devotee of Bel-merodach at any time or in any circumstances. What sort of an Israelite, not to say prophet, could that be—that supposititious Unknown of the time of the Return, who spoke of Cyrus as the one 'whose right hand Jehovah held', when already (in ch. 41. 13) he had employed precisely similar language in reference to the chosen people—'Israel my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen the seed of Abraham my friend'?

A recognition of the fact that the king is addressed as present, has, of course, influenced in some degree the conclusion that the writer was not Isaiah of Jerusalem, but some one standing in the so-called 'Exilic' period. Had due weight been given to other facts, however, especially those in regard to the descriptive epithets employed, and the bold references, in quite similar terms, in other parts of the book, to Hezekiah of Judah, there would have been greater hesitation in the adoption of such a theory. The identification of passages of great critical im-

portance in this very section of Isaiah with the life and times of Hezekiah suggests a simple solution of the problem immediately before us. Meantime, it is necessary to observe that no such language as is found in Isa. 44. 28, 45. 1-4 is used in any other of the Hebrew writings in regard to Cyrus. We meet with the name in 2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Daniel, and the style is sometimes 'the king of Persia', at another time 'the king of Babylon', yet again, baldly, 'Cyrus the Persian,' or 'the king'.¹ On the other hand, every one of the wonderful epithets found in Isa. 45 belongs, with a true Israelitish propriety, to Hezekiah. Being in the Davidic succession, he might well be called 'the Lord's anointed', also 'His shepherd', while to say that Jehovah 'upheld him' was simply to enunciate the meaning of his name.²

A few decades ago the appropriation of these designations to Cyrus might perhaps have passed unchallenged, because then the notion prevailed that the faith of his land and time was monotheistic and pure, also that Cyrus was moved by feelings of compassion for the exiles of Judah. The recovery, however, of the proclamation which he issued shortly after the conquest of Babylon, places the facts in an entirely different light. Cyrus claimed to be a successor of the Babylonian kings, and acknowledged the supremacy of Bel-merodach, the Babylonian god. Hence, the restoration of the Jewish exiles was not due to any sympathy with monotheism,

¹ 2 Chron. 36. 22, 23; Ezra 1. 1-8; 3. 7; 4. 3-5; 5. 13-17; 6. 3-14; Dan 1. 21; 6. 28; 10. 1.

² In a word, by paronomasia, the name of Hezekiah is woven into the text. Cp. note on p. 124 *ante*.

but rather was part of a general policy on the part of the monarch¹. Could it be that of such an one Jehovah would say: 'For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My chosen, I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me?' i. e. 'from thy birth' (ch. 45. 4: cp. the expression 'from the womb' in ch. 44. 2, 24).

Of Hezekiah, however, these words were true to the letter—if we accept them in their idiomatic intention, and read the writings of Isaiah as a whole according to their most obvious drift. 'I have called thee by thy name' comes with eminent fitness in a passage in which the very name is the subject of verbal allusion in the significant words 'whose right hand I have holden'.² As to the other phrase, 'I gave thee a title of honour ere thou didst know Me,' implying that the person in question had been the subject of prophetic annunciation—surely it was the emphatic heritage of King Hezekiah. According to the chronological scheme of Isaiah's prophecies, it was during the reign of Ahaz,³ the father of Hezekiah, that the most sublime of all the promises ever made to the chosen people were enunciated. Then it was that the prophet announced Immanuel (ch. 7. 12-16); the 'Wonderful Counsellor' who should be the 'Prince of Peace' (9. 6, 7); and the Branch out of the roots of Jesse, upon whom the Spirit of the Lord should rest (11. 1-5). So far as these applied to the times in which they were spoken—and the

¹ Sayce, in Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible*, art. 'Cyrus'.

² The word הַיְחִיָּהוּ is from the root which forms the basis of the name Hezekiah.

³ The section begins at ch. 7. 1, and ends at 14. 32 (see *v.* 28).

context makes some application certain beyond dispute—the life and character of Hezekiah afford a striking anticipation of Messianic ideals.¹

Now, it is safe to say that the passage, Isa. 44. 28—45. 1, has undergone no substantial change *since* the time of Cyrus; but that it underwent a modification in that particular generation must, we think, be regarded as beyond question. A tradition associated with the Return, and handed on by Josephus, shows that the Jews read 'Cyrus' in this place, and moreover that the Persian monarch himself was satisfied that Isaiah had written with special reference to himself in the work of promoting the Return. Josephus tells us that Cyrus found his name written in 'the prophecies which Isaiah left behind him two hundred and twenty years before'. He proceeds:

That prophet had said that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision: 'My will is that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be king over many and great nations, shall send back my people to their own land, and build my temple.' This was foretold by Isaiah one hundred and forty years before the temple was demolished. Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the Divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfil what was written.²

¹ The New Testament application of these great words is by no means called in question by the immediate (or initial) interpretation. Holy Scripture continually shows its distinctive vitality and inspiration in the fact that its statements are capable of applications that are far-reaching beyond anything suggested by their primary purpose. All the same, it is important to observe the immediate reference, even in forms which are of the deepest significance when viewed in their relation to the larger unfoldings of the Divine plan.

² Josephus, *Antiquities*, Bk. xi, ch. i, secs. 1, 2.

The words 'My will is, &c.' are a free summary of Isa. 44. 28; 45. 1, as read and construed by the Jews with Cyrus on the scene. Previously to that, as we shall show by examination of the passage as a whole, a common appellative stood in the text, designed to recall the great King of Judah, Hezekiah. When, however, that appellative was transformed to a proper name, certain other changes were made to support the misreading. These bring in the clauses 'building Jerusalem', and 'laying the foundation of the temple', concerning which Isaiah could assuredly have no message, as his ministry looked upon no actual destruction of the city, no demolition of the Temple. We proceed to examine the text, in order to a discovery of the figure under which, as we maintain, Hezekiah was spoken of in this important passage.

Eighty years ago J. U. Möller suggested that instead of the word כּוֹרֶשׁ (*Kôresh*=Cyrus) we should read כּוֹשֵׁר (*Kôsher*=the Upright), and he suggested reasons for the metathesis exhibited in the form. This would not be disagreeable to a reference to Hezekiah; but we doubt the metathesis, and cannot but regard the suggestion as arbitrary. A careful study of the prophecy points another solution, one which is at once justified by the context, and makes its contribution to the force and cogency of the passage as a whole.

Let it be noted that, as in psalms of this period, so also in the prophecy before us, Isa. 44 and 45, the

¹ Möller's *De Authentiâ Oraculorum Esaiæ* (Havniæ, 1825). Cp. Strachey's *Jewish History and Politics in the Times of Sargon and Sennacherib* (London, 1874).

people of Judah are being rallied to loyalty to Jehovah by teaching in which the idolatry of the Assyrians is held up to denunciation and scorn.¹ Partly poetry, and partly prose, there is here a sustained argument, and of this we must not lose sight. To begin with, the chapters before us have the common feature of opening with terms of address. Whether the first 'O Jacob, My servant' (ch. 44. 1) is directed to the king as representing the people may be open to dispute. The second 'Thus saith the Lord to His anointed' (ch. 45. 1) is undoubtedly personal. It is important to notice that what is said of 'Jacob, My servant' is virtually repeated in regard to the Lord's 'anointed'. In the former case, the Lord is said to have 'formed from the womb' (44. 2); in the latter to have surnamed from the beginning of life—'when thou knewest Me not'² (45. 4, 5). In the earlier chapter, we read of one 'calling himself by the name of Jacob—surnaming himself by the name of Israel' (*v.* 5); in the other, we also find a 'calling by name and surnaming, for the sake of Jacob My servant and Israel My chosen' (*vv.* 4, 5). The language is uniform; and assuredly there never was a time when, in whole or in part, the terms were becoming and proper in the description of a heathen monarch, from the pen, or mouth, of a Hebrew prophet.

To proceed. In the chapters before us, Jehovah,

¹ Ps. 115. 2-8; 135. 15-18; Isa. 40. 18-20; 46. 6, 7: cp. Isa. 37. 19; 42. 17.

² It is not a moral ignorance that is implied. Rather, the intention is to indicate the idea—'before thou hadst a conscious being'. See similar language in Isa. 43. 1; 44. 24; Jer. 1. 5; Ps. 71. 6.

the King and Redeemer of Israel, the first and the last, the only God, asserts His claim to the adoration and confidence of His people (44. 6). National experience in the past is alluded to as proof that in Israel no other God can be recognized; yet by countenancing heathen alliances the leaders of the people had participated in the vanity and shame of idolatry. The making of objects of worship, after the manner of the Assyrians, is described in terms which cover the entire process with contempt (*vv.* 9-20). This description brings on the scene the smith and the carpenter—the artificer in iron and the artificer in wood—each using his tools to produce an object before which men might bow, saying ‘Deliver me; for thou art my god’ (*v.* 17). This situation is the heart of the prophet’s argument. Israel is invited to consider the case of such as are blind and without understanding, men that all ‘feeding on ashes’, being ‘turned aside by a deceived heart’ (*v.* 20). These things Jacob is called upon to remember, and to return unto the Lord his Redeemer (*vv.* 21-3).

The Hebrew terms for ‘smith’ and ‘carpenter’ suggest the solution of the difficulty. The reasoning of the passage is close, and we look for the recurrence of a common word at the beginning of ch. 45; but instead thereof we find the proper name ‘Cyrus’. Now, ‘the smith’ is **חָרַשׁ בַּתָּזֶלֶת** (*hârâsh bârzel*) the ‘artificer of iron’; the ‘carpenter’ is **חָרַשׁ עֵצִים** (*hârâsh ‘êtzim*) the ‘artificer of wood’.¹ Only the consonants are primitive, and it is quite possible that **חָרַשׁ**, as here found, was originally sounded as in Gen 4. 22, where the points give **חֹרֶשׁ** (*hôrêsh*). The word means ‘artificer’ or

¹ Isa. 44. 12, 13.

'workman'; and whereas the second and third radicals are the same as in the name 'Cyrus' (כּוּרֶשׁ), the first (ח *heth*) is a letter similar in sound to that met with in Cyrus, and, indeed, is a letter which is occasionally found to have been used interchangeably with the less harsh guttural כּ (*caph*). Given, then, a particular set of circumstances, it is easy to understand how חֶרֶשׁ could be changed to כּוּרֶשׁ; and when it is remembered that the quiescent letter וּ (*vav*) is not primitive in such a word as כּוּרֶשׁ, we are within reach of a reasonable account of the word 'Cyrus' as it now stands in the text of Isaiah 45. 1.

In a word, our contention is that, writing with reference to Hezekiah, the breaker of images, and the strenuous servant of Jehovah, the prophet said: 'Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to the workman (or artificer) whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him,' &c. (ch. 45. 1). This implies a repetition of the word חֶרֶשׁ, as we found it in the previous chapter, and as it appears further on in this chapter (*v.* 16, 'makers of idols'); and in a continued argument what is more reasonable? There is cohesion and cogency in the prophecy as a whole, as comprising the two chapters. There is, however, not only allusion, but contrast as well. The 'workman' who makes idols has 'a lie in his right hand' (44. 20); the one whom the Lord addressed through the prophet is subject to another influence—the Lord 'holds his right hand' (45. 1). The passage goes on to describe the steps of victory which the king will pursue, also to pledge many and varied blessings to him. All this is in logical contrast to the make-believe of foolishness represented by the construction

of objects of shame—graven images ‘that cannot save’ (45. 20).¹

It may be asked—If Isaiah wrote חרש, how came כורש in the text? We reply, that the tradition received through Josephus accounts for all we find. Let it be borne in mind that the accommodation of Scripture statements to times and circumstances subsequent to those to which they properly belonged has ever been a common practice in Jewish exposition; and it is not unknown in Christian exposition. Hence it would come about, in the days of Cyrus, that exiles looking toward home, and remembering the promise of Jeremiah that after seventy years the Lord would visit His people and cause them to return to their own place, would see in the passage before us a word of hope for their time. In a prophecy dealing with merciful intervention for the redemption of the nation from its distress, these would read of ‘a workman’ (חרש *hârâsh*, or *hôrêsh*), and would see therein a mystic reference to the king (even כורש *kôrêsh*) in whose power they actually were.

The process of reasoning would be something like this: *First*, the passage would be *applied* to Cyrus, who, in presence of the people, realized parts which in some measure corresponded with those set forth in the passage about the Lord’s anointed. *Second*, Cyrus

¹ Other places in this part of Isaiah in which חרש occurs in connexion with the making of idols are: ch. 40. 19, 20 (‘workman’); 41. 7 (‘carpenter’). See also 44. 11 (‘workmen’). This same word has also been impressed into significant service by translators of the New Testament into Hebrew (including Franz Delitzsch and Isaac Salkinson), by being made to stand for τέκτων in Mark 6. 3—‘Is not this the Carpenter?’ (see also Matt. 13. 55).

was hopefully regarded as the workman, or artificer (חרש) whom Jehovah had empowered to do great things in the interests of the Jews. *Third*, seeing that the word חרש thus implied, or stood for Cyrus, it would seem right and desirable to conform the letters to a more correct representation in Hebrew of the Persian word—hence ברש, afterwards בורש, and then by pointing בורש. By these measures and mutations the word came to speak of King Cyrus, and of him only. There was no intention to introduce disorder into the text—only a purpose to reduce the spelling to a form which was believed to be right. In the judgement of some leader, or leaders, of the people, חרש was intended to indicate ברש, and effect was given to this belief by the alteration of the initial letter. Thus a common appellation was made into a proper name, and a seed of misunderstanding sown in the prophecies of Isaiah.

From the tradition already referred to, as handed down by Josephus, it would appear that this conclusion had been reached in the days of Cyrus himself. An old document was explained to the king in this light: a document which impressed him by reason of its venerable age. It was not some contemporary writing—some *Second* Isaiah, of which we have heard so much in recent times—but the Book of Isaiah in substance as we have it to-day. And the king was moved to help the Jews by seeing in the passage now before us a forecast of the offices which he could discharge, and these associated with his very name! In fact, he read in these words a mysterious destiny, and in the providence of God he was led to render a timely service to the Jewish people.

That the Jews should have sought a political favour

by calling the attention of Gentile authorities to the things written by the prophets of their nation, need not surprise us. The victorious advance of Alexander the Great affords another instance of the ends of freedom being served in this way. As will be remembered, when the king reached Jerusalem, he was met by Jaddua, the high-priest, who encouraged him in his onward march by showing him the Book of Daniel, 'wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians.' Supposing himself to be the person intended, the king was very glad, and bade the Jews ask of him whatsoever favours they pleased! And we read that requests were made, and the king 'granted all they desired'.¹ The passages shown to Alexander were probably Dan. 7. 6; 8. 3-8, 20-2; II. 3, which would make upon the monarch an impression very similar to that which Isa. 45, as explained by the Jews, made upon Cyrus nearly two centuries earlier.

In like manner Onias IV, the high-priest, some two centuries later (*circa* 150 B. C.), seeking permission of King Ptolemy (Philometor) and Queen Cleopatra, to build at Leontopolis, in Egypt, a temple like to that in Jerusalem, relied in his efforts upon the fact that 'the prophet Isaiah, who lived more than six hundred years before', had foretold such an event; and in a letter to the royal pair he quoted the words of Isaiah that 'there should be an altar in Egypt to the Lord God', and added that he prophesied 'many other such things regarding that place'. The permission seems, moreover, to have been granted with specific reference to the words quoted by Onias from Isa. 19. 19;

¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, Bk. xi, ch. viii, secs. 4, 5.

for the king and queen in their letter say: 'Since thou sayest that Isaiah the prophet foretold this long ago, we give thee leave to do it.'¹

So much for instances in which political ends were served by the quotation of prophetic writings—quotations showing a very limited appreciation of the mighty words thus dealt with. We suggest that the application of Isa. 45. 1-7 to Cyrus the Persian was the outcome of an interpretation equally crude; and that, simultaneously with the stamping of his name upon the text, verses 27, 28 of ch. 44 were inserted as a gloss. The statement of *v.* 26: 'That saith of Jerusalem, She shall be inhabited; and of the cities of Judah, They shall be built and I will raise up the waste places thereof,' represents an expectation which unquestionably sustained the faithful in the time of Hezekiah, when, with the Assyrian in the land, Jerusalem was a prison-house rather than a place of habitation; and, as a result of Sennacherib's campaign, many of the cities of Judah were in ruins and were places of desolation (cp. ch. 65. 9). The two following verses, however, came in as a gloss at the time of the Return: 'That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built; and to the Temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.'

In the time of Isaiah, these verses could have no meaning; but the work undertaken by Cyrus, a century and a half later, suggested them most naturally. The interpolation is, indeed, transparent. We have already read that Jerusalem shall be 'inhabited',

¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, Bk. xiii, ch. iii, secs. 1, 2.

that the cities of Judah shall be 'built'. Now, however, and obviously with reference to Cyrus, whose name is anticipated from the following chapter, we read something different—namely, that Jerusalem 'shall be built'; while to the Temple it shall be said, 'Thy foundation shall be laid.' The statements of the last verse do not agree with those of *v.* 26. But the Persian having been introduced in *ch.* 45. 1, we might well look for some such a leading recital of facts pertinent to his day—the time of the Return.

A similar interpolation is found in *Isa.* 64. 11. The cities of Judah having been destroyed, and the Assyrian being at the walls of Jerusalem, Isaiah might well use the intense language of *v.* 10: 'Thy holy cities are become a wilderness, Zion is become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.' Also he might conclude his prayer with *v.* 12: 'Wilt Thou refrain Thyself for these things, O Lord? wilt Thou hold Thy peace, and afflict us very sore?' Not so as to *v.* 11: 'Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee, is burned with fire; and all our pleasant things are laid waste.' This obviously belongs to a later age. And we can easily understand, as the time for the Return approached, that such a chapter as this would be used as a prayer by mourning exiles; and *then* the terms of *v.* 11 would be quite seasonable. The verse cannot, however, be by Isaiah. It bears evidence of some such 'adaptation' as we have found in the Psalter, but not so easily to be justified.

All the same, these words are in a chapter that is as surely by Isaiah as is *ch.* 45. The proof is found in the subject dealt with by the prophet. In a time of unparalleled political trouble, the king is

brought to death's door. Isaiah explains the tragic occurrence, even as in ch. 53 of his book—the king is suffering for others. He says in effect:—

From old time men have never heard, never perceived by the ear—eye has never seen—a God beside Thee to do (as we have seen and heard Thee to do) toward one that waiteth on Thee in loyal service. Thou hast stricken¹ him that worketh righteousness with joy! In these ways of Thine will men remember Thee! Behold, Thou art wroth, because we have sinned. Equally with them of old time have we transgressed, and all of us are as an unclean thing, &c.² (64. 4, 5).

The context demands some such reconstruction as we have here suggested. The passage expresses surprise at the treatment of the righteous man. 'Was ever such a thing heard, or seen before?' The inquiry is in the spirit of the other to which we have often called attention—'Who would believe such a report as that which we bring?' (ch. 53. 1.) The contrast is bold. 'Thou smitest *him*': '*we* have sinned.' The passage as a whole, going back to *v.* 7 of ch. 63, presents a comparison of old times with those then present (*vv.* 9, 11). 'Terrible things which we looked not for' were done; but no one ever experienced, or conceived possible, such a thing as is alluded to in

¹ The word נָגַף (*pāgā'*) speaks of violence, not tenderness; and is to be understood as in ch. 53. 6: 'The LORD hath *caused to fall* on him the iniquity of us all,' i.e. its penalty. The meaning is primarily to fall upon, assail, hence to slay. In both places the prophet deals with vicarious suffering. Note the same word in ch. 47. 3: 'I will take vengeance (on Babylon = Assyria): I will not STRIKE a man merely'; also the participle in ch. 59. 16: 'He wondered that there was no one to STRIKE (the enemy): therefore His arm brought salvation,' &c.

² Following the Septuagint, we read the concluding word of *v.* 5, נִפְשָׁע, instead of וְנִשְׁע, as in the Massoretic text. The context as a whole favours this reading.

regard to the righteous man whom Jehovah made to bear the sins of others (64. 3-5).

Not to pursue this further, we take up once more the interpolation of Isa. 44. 27, 28; and, in order to make the situation plain, present in parallel columns the entire passage Isa. 44. 24-45. 6. On the one side we give a new version (with idioms resolved) of what we deem to have been the primitive text; and on the other side the text as it has come down to us through the Massorettes and their predecessors and is set forth in the Revised Version:—

SUGGESTED PRIMITIVE FORM.

Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb (i. e. raised thee up for a specific purpose): I am the LORD, the maker of all things, that stretched forth the heavens alone, and spread abroad the earth by myself. He that frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh the diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish (i. e. upsets their plans, and shows the ignorance on which they are based); that confirmeth the word of his servant and performeth the counsel of his messengers—the same saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of

THE MASSORETIC TEXT.

Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb: I am the LORD, that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth; who is with me?¹ that frustrateth the tokens of the liars², and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish: that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith of Jerusalem, She shall be inhabited; and of the cities of Judah, They shall be built, and I will raise up the waste places thereof: that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: that

¹ Another reading is, *by myself*.

² Or, *boasters*.

Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the waste places thereof.

Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to the workman whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him while I loose the loins of kings (i. e. reduce kings to impotence), to open doors before him so that gates shall not be shut: I will go before thee, and make the rugged places plain: I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places: that thou mayest know that I am the LORD, who called thee by thy name, even the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I called thee by thy name: I surnamed thee when as yet thou knewest me not (i. e. 'gave thee a title of honour ere ever thou knewest me', or 'before thou wast born'). I am the LORD, and there is none else; beside me there is no God. I girded thee when as yet thou knewest me

saith of Cyrus¹, *He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built;² and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.*

Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings; to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the rugged places plain: I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I am the LORD, which call thee by thy name, even the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the LORD, and there is none else; beside me there is no God: I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me: that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me: I am

¹ Heb. *Coresh*.

² Or, *and the foundation of the Temple shall be laid.*

not (i.e. before thou wast born, I endowed thee with power for the work described), that men might know, from the rising of the sun and from the west (i.e. throughout the world) that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.

Far from being exilic, or post-exilic, in the accepted sense of those terms, the second part of Isaiah brings us, as we have seen, into close association with the Temple and its worship, by delineating the sufferings of that king whose one concern was to 'go up to the house of the Lord', and 'sing his songs to the stringed instruments all the days of his life in the house of the Lord.'¹ The sacrifices, solemn assemblies, and set feasts, were all provided for by him; but none the less is it true that the presence of the name 'Cyrus' challenges the entire situation. Hence, from coming under suspicion on superficial grounds, the name is, at length, exhibited as an obvious intruder in the text. The book having been shown to belong to the days of the Judæan kingdom, there is only one course open to the student who would appreciate its situation and understand its contents—and that is to find Hezekiah and his Divinely provided part in the passage where hitherto the name of the Persian king has stood.

As regards the reading thus suggested, *Hârâsh* (or *Hôrêsh*), 'Workman,' where hitherto the name *Kôrêsh* (Cyrus) has been found, this may be said—it frees the

¹ Among the allusions to Temple worship in the second part of Isaiah may be specified ch. 43. 23; 58. 3 sqq.

text from a perplexing confusion, and is in itself responsive to a reasonable construction of the passage as a whole. The context furnishes grounds whereon we expect in the paragraph before us some reference to the means whereby Jehovah would 'frustrate the tokens of the liars'. Accordingly, we look for the Workman who is after Jehovah's mind, in contradistinction to such as are mentioned in the description of the Assyrian idol-makers. How strong and true must that one be 'whose *right hand* Jehovah upholds'! how weak and faithless must be that one who has 'a lie in his *right hand*'! (ch. 44. 20 ; 45. 1).¹

The extent to which paronomasia and such-like figures of speech, were cultivated by Hebrew writers, throws some light upon our subject, as indicating the ease with which *חַרֵּשׁ* might suggest *בְּרֵשׁ*, and, at length, might give place thereto. It is well also to remember that cipher-writing was reduced to a system in Israel: cp. the cases of what is known as *Athbash*, as appearing in Jer. 25. 26; 51. 1, and note the R. V. *margin* thereon. By permutative gematria and other devices the letters of the alphabet came to be viewed as something more than the natural materials for word-building: they might be employed to conceal as well as to reveal—a fact which the reader as well as the writer would learn to appreciate. Moreover, that words should suggest other words, simply on the basis of sound, and independently of considerations of a deeper kind: this was the essential feature of

¹ Later on in the prophecy, the word for 'workman' occurs again: the 'makers of idols' being spoken of in contrast with Israel, whom the Lord will 'save with an everlasting salvation' (45. 16, 17).

paronomasia. The passage before us illustrates the possible issue of such a 'play upon words'.

When the name of Cyrus found its way into Isaiah, under such circumstances as we have endeavoured to indicate, a series of expressions of great significance came under qualification; among them that of 'the Servant of the Lord'. As a result, this term, which should hardly be a puzzle in the Old Testament literature, has been variously applied, by some to the King of Persia, by others to the ideal Israel, and so forth. Thus Hezekiah of Judah, for whom we claim the designation in the so-called Second Isaiah, was hidden from view, and a subsequent age was desiderated for prophetic writings which, on their face, and according to their general substance, purport to have come into being in the days of the Kingdom.

Not only, however, did the presence of the name of Cyrus involve and call for an exilic or post-exilic situation, and moreover bring in many exegetical difficulties; it also brought disorder into the work, by presenting a breach of all the proprieties of Hebrew speech, whereby, from that day till now, there have been applied to a heathen monarch terms of address and description which bear an exclusive relation to the privileged standing of the house of Jacob, and are the peculiar right of a ruler in the Davidic succession. All the distinctive terms in the opening verses of Isa. 45 are, indeed, hedged about with considerations which make them impossible of application to such a one as Cyrus the Persian. Hence consistent interpretation no less than sound criticism excludes the name of Cyrus from the purview of the prophet Isaiah.

CHAPTER XVII

KING HEZEKIAH IN THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

8. MESSIANIC TYPOLOGY

WHEN we find Hezekiah and not Cyrus in Isaiah 44 and 45 we establish a position which enables us to view Messianic conceptions in a light purely Israelitish, and apart from the suggestion of Gentile associations—at least, so far as the writings of Isaiah are concerned. Scholars have searched in many directions for sources or traces of the Messianic idea; and in some cases they have been attracted by conceptions which are in no real sense germane to the subject. An examination of the life of Hezekiah of Jerusalem has something for us in relation to this fascinating theme.

We look in vain to the Greek period for impressions such as crowd upon our attention when the experiences of Hezekiah are under consideration. Following Jewish tradition, we meet with Messiah ben-Joseph and Messiah ben-David, the one a sufferer, the other a conqueror. Going further into antiquity, however, in the person of Hezekiah we find one who embodied both these phases of Messianic dignity. We have, in fact, the man of God, the righteous one: we have also the man of sickness and sorrow.

Having been brought low in pain and suffering, he was raised up in honour and power. In such a manner as no predecessor on the throne of David knew, Hezekiah was given an extension of life with an altogether changed experience.

To trace the Messianic idea in the Apocalyptic literature of the Jews is to follow the stream while looking away from its source. Though it is possible that ethnic influences may from time to time have entered the stream of thought, assuredly no such elements are traceable in the earliest outlines of the doctrine, as found in the Old Testament—not, indeed, found there in systematic formulation, but rather in the lives of kings who, in their day and generation, adumbrated the One who, in the fullness of time, was to come in the name of the Lord. In David, some aspects were present, in Solomon others, in Hezekiah yet others, and these distinctive in a high degree. David depicted the conquering king; Solomon the peaceful ruler; Hezekiah, the one whom Jehovah was pledged to uphold, and whom He actually sustained throughout an experience of singular variety—one who, in a time of severe trial, was trustful and faithful, and who, moreover, in recognition of his piety, was given a new life, of undisturbed peace as a ruler, and of incessant worship as a servant of the Lord.

The Messianic wealth of Isaiah grows when the book is interpreted on the lines which have so far been followed. In the reign of Ahaz, the prophet foretold the coming of Immanuel (ch. 7. 10-17). Then, in the same reign, the Prince of Peace, of several names, all of them pointing forward to Another, was announced, great things being predicted

concerning him (ch. 9. 6, 7). The former of these predictions is repeated in varying terms in ch. 11. 1-10, where the Shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and the Branch out of his roots, is foretold, with the Spirit of the Lord resting upon him. In each instance the house of David is before us, and the Assyrian is near at hand.¹ Whatever might be the distant Object, we are compelled to discern the primary application of these passages to the son of King Ahaz, that is, Hezekiah, of whom, as concerning no one else in Old Testament story, it may be said that there rested upon him 'the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord'.

Of this king there was predicted a reign of exceptional blessedness, in which justice and equity should prevail. 'He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth' (ch. 11. 3, 4). In the latter part of the book, which we have shown to relate to Hezekiah, we read, to the great

¹ Note the corresponding prophecy in Micah, the work of another prophet of the same period (ch. 5. 2, 3); and observe the following comparisons: In both prophecies we read of the Assyrian (Isa. 7. 17; Mic. 5. 5). In Isaiah we read of 'the house of David', 'the throne of David,' 'the stock of Jesse'; in Micah of 'Bethlehem-Ephrathah, little among the families of Judah'. In Isaiah the ruler is to be called 'Immanuel', &c. and we read that 'the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him'; in Micah the ruler is one 'whose goings forth are from of old', &c., and we read that 'he shall rule in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God'. The terms describe one picture; and the life of Hezekiah realized its first outlines.

honour of the Servant of the Lord: 'Who is blind, except my servant? or deaf, like the messenger that I send? who is blind as he that is perfect, even blind as the LORD's servant? Thou seest many things, but thou observest not; his ears are open, but he heareth not. The LORD is well pleased with his righteousness; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable' (ch. 42. 18-21). This agrees with the historic picture of Hezekiah—a man of tender conscience, and in this, as other features, a striking example of the Messianic ideal.¹

In those chapters of Isaiah which immediately precede the historical section there are allusions to the king such as present in outline the very characteristics which it is the object of the latter portion of the book to emphasize and expand. The judgements upon the city and the land, through the Assyrian invasion, set in contrast with the blessings which follow, form the subject of chapters 24-31. The righteousness of the king is extolled: the sinfulness of the nation is ever to the front—the people are 'rebellious children', that trust in chariots and horsemen, but 'look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD' (ch. 30. 1; 31. 1). The vicarious nature of the king's sufferings, so fully set out subsequently, is anticipated: 'A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgement. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as

¹ Well might Asaph the seer, on behalf of the king, promulgate among the rulers the sentiment of Ps. 82, which, as we have shown in dealing with the formation of the Psalter, belongs to this reign. See also on this psalm in the Appendix.

rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land' (ch. 32. 1-2). In other words, the time of national blessing is assured because of the saving action of an individual—'A MAN'.

Again, while the fires of judgement were raging in the city, and when, according to the story as outlined in the narrative that follows (chh. 36-39), the king was suffering in solitude from the disease which all regarded as the stroke of God, another word of encouragement was spoken to the few who walked righteously and spoke uprightly in Zion: 'Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold a far stretching land' (ch. 33. 17). In other words, as we have already seen, the king would recover from his loathsome disease, and the country would be cleared of the Assyrian hosts with which it was overrun, also of the many and nameless abominations which the invaders had brought.

The prophet proceeds to depict a Zion of peace and glory—Jerusalem a quiet habitation. He concludes with the significant statement: 'The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity' (v. 24). These words must detain us a moment. There is here nothing commonplace; rather a concrete reality. The clauses are distinct, the terms striking. We have before us 'the inhabitant' and 'the people'. In the one case sickness has prevailed; in the other case there has been sin. Obviously the terms are in apposition; yet they sustain an additional relation: 'the inhabitant' has apparently been sick on account of the iniquity of 'the people'. The prophet announces the sickness at an end, and the iniquity forgiven. In the latter

part of the book these words find their counterpart in the fully developed description of one who bore sicknesses that were due to his people; while on the other hand the people were forgiven their sin by virtue of his sufferings (ch. 53. 3-5).

That the king, having been spoken of in ch. 32. 1 as 'a man', should at length, as we thus observe, be styled 'the inhabitant', is hardly surprising. In fact, the argument of the prophecy suggests the figure; for in ch. 33. 14-16, when contemplating the iniquity of his land and time, the prophet speaks, on the one hand, of 'sinners in Zion . . . the godless', and on the other hand, of 'him that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly'; and of the latter it is said, 'He shall dwell on high,' i.e. occupy a position of safety, as the context goes on to make clear.¹ In each case the root word is שָׁכַן (*shākān*), to abide, or dwell, an expression which, when used of a king, means to 'occupy' a throne, in much the same sense as the more common term יָשָׁב (*yāshāv*) was sometimes applied, in reference to God in heaven and monarchs upon earth.² King Hezekiah was, indeed, the righteous one, also the one who was sick. Moreover, he was brought through the season of judgement, 'the devouring fire' (v. 14), and he was recovered of his mortal sickness, as the story of his life so plainly shows. That 'the inhabitant' refers to the people is not at all likely; for it was the custom, especially in prophetic language, to speak of people in the femi-

¹ Note also that in v. 5 of the same chapter it is said that the LORD 'dwelleth on high'.

² e. g. Isa. 10. 13; 14. 13; Ps. 9. 7 (8); 29. 10; 55. 20 (19); 61. 7 (8); Zech. 6. 13.

nine—as the daughter, the virgin, the inhabitress.¹ The familiar passage Zech. 9. 9 is a virtual parallel of Isa. 33. 24. There we read: ‘Rejoice greatly, *O daughter of Zion . . . behold, thy King cometh unto thee,*’ &c. In the passage under consideration the form of words is ‘*The inhabitant shall not say (i.e. shall no longer say) I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity*’.

Leaving other cases in which a righteous individual is exhibited in bold contrast with a people given over to apostasy, we observe once more that the central section of the latter part of the Book of Isaiah is mainly concerned with precisely such a condition of things. Though the sinful people were passing under judgement, the Lord comforted them with assurances of ultimate deliverance (ch. 51. 12–16); and as the day of blessing dawned (ch. 52. 7–12) the prophet turned his gaze from the wayward nation to the righteous king, in whose sufferings he found, not only an explanation of the returning mercy of God, but also a justification of the ways of God with the nation (ch. 52. 13 to end of ch. 53). The object of this great prophecy was, not to explain the meaning of his sufferings to the king himself, but rather to show to the people how deep was their obligation to the righteous man who ruled over them in the fear of God. They had looked upon him as of no account: all the while he was

¹ e. g. ‘Daughter’—Isa. 1. 8; 47. 1; Jer. 51. 33; Lam. 4. 22; Zech. 2. 10; and cp. the redundant form ‘daughter of my people’—Isa. 22. 4; ‘Virgin’—Jer. 18. 13; 31. 21; Amos 5. 2; and cp. the fuller form ‘Virgin Daughter’—Isa. 23. 12; 37. 22; 47. 1; Jer. 14. 17; Lam. 1. 15; ‘Inhabitress’—Isa. 12. 6; Jer. 21. 13; 48. 19; 51. 35.

bearing with resignation the penal stroke which was their due. His sickness was followed by renewed health: their alienation from God was followed by an experience of special favour.

At length, they knew their king as one who shielded them from the storm of Divine judgement, one who was 'an hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest'. Their eyes saw the king 'in his beauty'—no longer 'despised and rejected', no longer clothed in sackcloth. Having been restored to health, Hezekiah was delivered from saying 'I am sick', and the people of Jerusalem were 'forgiven their iniquity'.¹ So the former and latter sections of Isaiah are shown to depict one personage. And every outstanding aspect of that personage, that king of the house of David, was rich in Messianic grace and glory. Thus much by way of barest allusion to Isaiah's estimate of the greatness of Hezekiah, and the typical importance of his life and times.

However complex we may consider the Messianic idea to be, we shall find light on its every feature in the story of Hezekiah. Does sin and its expiation come in? Then the story of the Suffering Servant tells its own tale, to be understood in outline in regard to the good king of Judah, although the larger meaning may only be read in the interpretation put upon the prophet's words in the life-story of Christ and the writings of the Apostles. Does eschatology come in? Again we find, in the experiences of Hezekiah,

¹ Even as in another passage the prophet leads the people to say, in prayer and confession: 'Thou *strikest him that worketh righteousness with joy*: behold thou art wroth, for *we have sinned*' (Isa. 64. 5. See p. 259 *ante*).

aspects of truth which are unmatched in the later literature of the Jewish nation. In the old-time utterance of Hannah we read: 'The Lord killeth and maketh alive: He bringeth down to Sheol, and bringeth up' (1 Sam. 2. 6). In the case of Hezekiah, another element appears: Jehovah demanded the life of the man who served Him; and when, at length, the suffering one, in submission of heart, had 'poured out his soul unto death', the life that had been demanded was restored in answer to fervent prayer.

It is important to observe that Messianic conceptions have come down to us more through the experiences of typical personages than as a result of definite prophetic teaching. Abstract oracles are rarely to be found in Holy Scripture: rather, we are taught by types and parallels, contrasts and comparisons. And after being established on the experiences of kings of Israel, who successively pointed forward to Another greater than all, we should not look for Messianic conceptions to be unfolded or supported by the experiences of a people, or, indeed, of the idealized counterpart of a people, however faithful to the God of Israel. In other words, *royalty* is an essential element of the Messianic expectation: every good king of the house of David, in some measure or degree, was a type of Him who was yet to come. Hence, the nation could not be this: the spiritual ideal of the nation could not express this. Need it be added that no Cyrus, however good and generous, could contribute anything to the Messianic idea? Scripture and tradition combine to associate the Hope of Israel with the seed of Abraham, and the house of David. So the Messiah

must have ROYAL qualities; and that being so, only kings could foreshadow him. Herein is shown an evident weakness in the modern interpretation of the Isaianic teaching as to the significance of the Servant of the Lord—a term of definite relation in regard to our subject.

In a previous chapter we traced allusions to Hezekiah as appearing in prophecies immediately following that of the Suffering Servant. We might have extended our investigations, so as to cover earlier and still later portions of the book. For instance, in ch. 50. 7-9 we find a profession of righteousness on the part of the Lord's Servant, and in *v.* 10 is a commendation of the same as an example to all who fear the Lord. Again, later in the book, in ch. 59. 7-14, we have a picture of the rebellious nation, followed by an intimation that the one that had no fellowship with evil, the righteous one, who had 'made himself a prey', was as it were receiving the judgement due to others—to recall the sentiment of ch. 53. 10. The issue however, was Divinely controlled; for, in the interest of justice, the Lord interposed, striking the blow which brought relief—recompensing the enemies of Israel, to the praise of His Name and the deliverance of His people (59. 15-19). And so, to the end of the book, we read of Divine measures whereby, in the days of Assyrian aggression, the citizens of Jerusalem were enlarged into a glorious liberty and peace, with here and there words of mysterious import designed to show that, while prepared to strike the foes of His elect, the Lord was also, when He might see fit, prepared to visit judgement upon the righteous—as is set forth in

ch. 64. 4-6.¹ This, however, was a line of action which, at the time, was with difficulty harmonized with His gracious character. Hence the 'who would believe?' of ch. 53. 1, and the 'men have never heard' of ch. 64. 4.

In this connexion it is interesting to note that the New Testament citations from the Psalms and Isaiah are taken, in nearly equal proportions, from passages whose primary references were to David and Hezekiah. The experience of the former king was complemented by that of the latter; and between them the two men furnished the main outlines of Messianic typology as recognized by the New Testament writers. A selection of passages thus cited yields the following result:—

SOURCES OF CERTAIN MESSIANIC QUOTATIONS.

| CHRIST'S— | <i>Originally with reference to David.</i> | <i>Originally with reference to Hezekiah.</i> |
|--------------------|---|--|
| <i>Divinity—</i> | | Ps. 2. 7 (in Acts 13. 33; Heb. 1. 5; 5. 5). Ps. 45. 6, 7 (in Heb. 1. 8, 9). |
| | Ps. 110. 1 (in Matt. 22. 44; Mark 12. 36; Luke 20. 42, 43; Acts 2. 34, 35; Heb. 1. 13). | |
| <i>Birth—</i> | | Isa. 7. 14 (in Matt. 1. 23). |
| <i>Redeeming</i> | | Isa. 59. 20, 21 (in Rom. 11. 26, 27). |
| <i>Work—</i> | | |
| <i>Priesthood—</i> | Ps. 110. 4 (in Heb. 5. 6; 7. 17, 21). | |

¹ Already dealt with in Ch. xvi (p. 259).

| CHRIST'S— | <i>Originally with reference to David.</i> | <i>Originally with reference to Hezekiah.</i> |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Rejection by Men—</i> | Ps. 22. 8 (in Matt. 27. 43). | Ps. 2. 1, 2 (in Acts 4. 25, 26). Ps. 118. 22, 23 (in Matt. 21. 42; Mark 12. 10, 11; Luke 20. 17; Acts 4. 11; 1 Pet. 2. 7). |
| <i>Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem—</i> | Ps. 8. 2 (in Matt. 21. 16). | Ps. 118. 26 (in Matt. 21. 9; 23. 39; Mark 11. 9; Luke 13. 35; 19. 38). |
| <i>Betrayal—</i> | Ps. 41. 9 (in John 13. 18). | |
| <i>Patience under Accusation—</i> | | Isa. 53. 7-9 (in Acts 8. 32, 33). |
| <i>Vicarious Suffering—</i> | | Isa. 53. 4-6 (in 1 Pet. 2. 24, 25). Isa. 53. 12 (in Luke 22. 37). |
| <i>Circumstances of Death—</i> | Ps. 22. 16-18 (in Matt. 27. 35; John 19. 24, 37). | |
| <i>Resurrection and Ascension—</i> | Ps. 16. 8-10 (in Acts 2. 25-8; 13. 35). Ps. 68. 18 (in Eph. 4. 8). | |
| <i>Dominion—</i> | Ps. 110. 1-3 (in 1 Cor. 15. 25; Heb. 1. 13). | Isa. 9. 7 (in Luke 1. 32, 33). |

New Testament quotations from other prophets who wrote in the reign of Hezekiah support the conclusion at which we arrive. We must content ourselves, however, with simply showing that Messianic ideals were foreshadowed in the life of Hezekiah: and such we have done. In this connexion the name of David has been hallowed both in the Talmud and the New Testament: the 'Son of David' is in both literatures a familiar designation of the Messiah. Now, however, when we see Hezekiah and his experiences occupying the attention of the writer of

Isa. 53, and other chapters in the Evangelical Prophet, we are compelled to broaden our horizon in regard to Messianic conceptions.¹ On this subject, the famous Talmudical discussion (San. 96 b-99 a) has an interesting allusion. The question proposed was 'What is His name?'—that is, the name of the Messiah. We read: 'Our Rabbis say, THE LEPROUS ONE of the House of Rabbi is His Name, as it is written in Isa. 53. 4.' . . . Rabbi Hillel said: 'Israel shall have no more Messiah: for they have had him in the days of Hezekiah.'²

Though not himself the Messiah, yet Hezekiah was the most eloquent type of that glorious Personage. In more senses than any king of the Jews, he was endowed with qualities that pointed to the Lord's Anointed, and led along ways that enacted beforehand the parts of the Saviour of mankind. That he should have been overlooked in interpretations of the great prophecy of the Servant of the Lord, is not surprising. The One who afterwards fulfilled the prophetic description to consummate completeness, rendered faint beyond ready recognition the antecedent tracing upon the historic record; and except for the help now afforded by an accumulation of

¹ Attention may be directed to the language of Hos. 6. 1-3, based on the experience of Hezekiah. Addressing the people, the prophet seems to imply that, as he that was smitten had been healed, and on the third day had been raised up, so also acceptance would be extended to the wayward and broken citizens, even although, at the time of speaking, a leprous taint might be upon them—as had been the case with the king. (Cp. 2 Kings 20. 5-8.)

² See the discussion in Edersheim's *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. ii, App. ix.

textual observations and exegetical facts, whereby Hezekiah is placed in a new and more noble light, that recognition might still continue to elude detection.

Like John the Baptist, the great king of whom we speak was ever prepared for self-effacement. And hence, for long centuries, we have read in these Scriptures premonitions of the life and the work of the Saviour of the world, leaving entirely out of view the reference to the man who, in an earlier age, in the higher traits of his character and the outstanding features of his service, was a 'speaking likeness' of the Messiah, the once suffering and afterwards triumphant Servant of the Lord.

Some marvellous contrasts converge in the Servant as portrayed in Isaiah. On the one hand, 'He shall not cry nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street' (ch. 42. 1-4). On the other hand, however, in the power of the Lord, He will cry aloud, and do mighty deeds against His enemies (*vv.* 13-15). Again, in the delineation presented in a later prophecy, we meet with Him who was 'oppressed and afflicted' going forward to 'divide the spoil with the strong'; one who 'was led as a lamb to the slaughter', having the altered experience of 'seeing of the travail of his soul and being satisfied'; one 'whose visage was marred more than any man's' became, in due time, 'exalted, and lifted up, and very high.' And the initial exemplification of all these is presented in the life of Hezekiah, which at first combined piety with sorrows of an altogether peculiar nature, and afterwards exhibited the same piety in association with phenomenal prosperity, and

that to the end of a life that was miraculously extended, and made glorious above any that preceded or succeeded that good king upon the throne of David.

It has often been remarked by critics and expositors that Messianic teaching of a definite order begins in the Old Testament with the Deutero-Isaiah; and from this, on the assumption that the latter part of the book is Exilic, it has been argued that the Messianic idea was developed during the Babylonish captivity. Neither of these is a necessary and exact statement of fact; but our studies certainly go far to show that the former is a near approach to a sound critical inference. It is, indeed, true that Messianic teaching assumes a specially definite form in the latter part of the Book of Isaiah; not, however, because of any relation of the literature to Babylonish experiences or influences, but rather because it was written by the great prophet of the time of Hezekiah, whose life-story gives actuality to statements which, from generation to generation, have been regarded either as unconnected oracles concerning the Messiah, or as abstract idealizations of that Personage.

If, then, it is asked why Messianic teaching is less definite in the earlier writings of the Old Testament, the answer is that Hezekiah had not then appeared. The man of sorrows who realized a glorious afterward of experience had not come on the scene. In other words, the Old Testament doctrine of the Messiah assumed its most distinctive characteristics from the experiences of the king whom Isaiah describes as the Servant of the Lord. Hence the 'Deutero-Isaiah' of the critics is ISAIAH HIMSELF; and the fact that the latter portion of the prophet's

book is full of Messianic glory is due to the fact that the great type of the Messiah is there—even HEZEKIAH OF JUDAH.

Hezekiah requires no eulogy to-day. As a man, he was righteous; as a king, one in authority, 'the Spirit of the Lord rested upon him.' He was the saviour of his people. Through his vicarious sufferings, Divine mercy was extended to the nation: he bore their iniquities, and by his knowledge (or experience) many sinners were justified. At length, he was held in honour, not only by his own people, but also by the surrounding nations, as the one chosen of God to 'bring forth judgement to the Gentiles'—a Messianic part of eminent distinction. Before ever that day arrived, however, and while as yet the judgements of God were being poured out upon the sinful nation, the great prophet of Judah had monitions of the coming glory, and he has told us (in Isa. 24. 16) of mysterious sounds that reached his ears. He was considering the afflicted one, then in imminent danger—'rejected of men,' and apparently suffering the vengeance of Heaven—when he heard songs from far-off regions, and the point and substance of their message was—

'GLORY TO THE RIGHTEOUS ONE!'

EPILOGUE

STARTING with psalm inscriptions, we have arrived at far-reaching conclusions affecting the Psalter as a whole and the prophecies of Isaiah in the fullest sense of that designation. In our examination of the Songs of Degrees we found reflections of the life and times of Hezekiah King of Judah, and were driven to the conclusion that as a man and a servant of Jehovah that notable king had not yet received his just due. We saw behind the name a large heart and a powerful mind—a man who early determined upon a course of life that was true to the highest ideals of the religion of Israel, and who, later on, passed from an experience of deep sorrow and trial to a contrasted experience of signal joy and prosperity. We proceeded to find the times of Hezekiah reflected in the Psalms as a whole: there, in fact, we discerned his personal thoughts and the inmost intentions of his soul. From this we made our way to a theory of the formation of the Psalter, based on an appreciation of the conditions of old-time writing and editorial method, and in harmony with indications afforded by the succession of the Psalms considered as groups.

These things having been exhibited, we looked to the writings of Isaiah for other details concerning the king whose enlarged portrait we had seen in the Book of Psalms. We found that many of the pro-

phet's allusions to the good king had been applied to others, and that, in one passage, as in a palimpsest, another name had been inscribed where that of Hezekiah should have been understood. Due regard for the prophetic style and the analogy of things Israelitish led us to a virtual unifying of the teaching of the prophet as regards 'The Servant of the Lord'; and that expression of love and beauty was seen to stand, in passages of deep import, for Hezekiah of Judah—the one 'whom Jehovah upholds'—and never for a heathen monarch, or an ideal abstraction.

With regard to the head-lines of the Psalms, it will be recalled that we saw that, antedating any textual variations, they are found as a systematic and stable feature. There is no Psalter without them, and the aberrations of early versions represent no competing tradition, stand for no distinctive recension.¹ Having, then, accorded to the head-lines a place of due importance, we found them to indicate the stages by

¹ That the Septuagint Version shows irregularities in the ascription of psalms to David may be accounted for in more ways than one, and does not necessarily indicate instability or lack of integrity in the HEBREW Text. If, as it has been said, 'the tendency to ascribe an ever-increasing number of psalms to David' (W. Robertson Smith) operated both with copyists of the original and with those who made the old Greek Version, then it is not easy to account for the actual resultant phenomena—on the one hand, that the Hebrew Text should persist in exhibiting a large number of *anonymous* psalms; and, on the other hand, that the Septuagint, when introducing variations, should, in several instances, bring in as authors men whom Israel never knew as psalmists—namely, Haggai and Zechariah! Clearly the 'tendency' suggested is one which did not in reality approve itself in ancient times—and the theory regarding it must, therefore, be pronounced unproven.

which the book reached its present dimensions as a compilation—to stand for periods as well as authors. In other words, we recognized at a glance a Davidic section which formed an original basis ; and saw that, into succeeding sections, originating in a later time, other series of Davidic pieces were introduced, as if then selected from accumulations in the royal library, and approved for use in the Praises of Israel. Thus the book was seen to have been compiled by the very simple process of psalms being laid together in series, some before, some after, what may be regarded as the nuclei or basal collections of the various sections. The system was the placing together—affixing and suffixing—of documents already for the most part made up in budgets.¹

In our subsequent studies we found the Psalter deeply embedded in the history of the kingdom—not dealing with the Babylonish Exile, nor with the Return, certainly not with a still later period. And research along this line was not discouraged by preconceived theories arising out of linguistic peculiarities observed in the various psalms. Indeed, it was shown that, having regard to the history of the text, it is not possible, on the mere grounds of verbal features, to distinguish different ages and various writers. The work of the Massorettes and their predecessors tended to reduce the Hebrew of the Old Testament to one common style. Hence, we may examine psalms as to their essential substance and message without regard to their accidental characteristics ; and we may do this with a prospect of results

¹ See Ch. viii for illustrations of the principle of prefixing and affixing, as observed in individual psalms.

making for a good understanding of their meaning and a sound opinion as to their historical relation.

It is no longer necessary to argue the point of literary activity extending far backward in the history of Israel. It is necessary, however, to recognize that some reigns were more conducive than others to the exercise of Temple Psalmody. According to the historical records, the reigns of David and Hezekiah were those in which the worship of Jehovah was under the most definite royal patronage. There was the Tabernacle of David, also the Temple of Solomon, built in execution of David's design; then, later on, Hezekiah in his piety reopened the Temple, and led the people back to 'the God of their fathers', to worship according to the law of Moses, and in the manner ordained by David King of Israel. Other reigns were comparatively barren in a religious sense; and when at length the Temple was closed, there would be no psalmody, no Chief Musician—no occasion either for making or singing the Songs of Zion.

Not only by implication of the more general history of the period does the reign of Hezekiah furnish occasion for the production of psalms, but the records of the time expressly associate the life of the king before us with conditions of religious worship such as no predecessor on the throne of Judah (or Israel) had realized. Taken together, the explicit statements present an unanswerable reason on which to base an argument for the great activity of psalmody in the reign of Hezekiah. The king who organized the priesthood, in whose ranks were the Sons of Korah, and who had at his command Asaph the Seer (who

without sufficient reason has been confused with 'the Sons of Asaph', who were singers), was one in whose reign great things might well be expected. With the story in mind, we read without difficulty, in various parts of the Psalter, the experiences of the king and of the Theocratic nation in a specially eventful time.

Coming to the portrait of Hezekiah, as still further enlarged by a re-reading of the prophecies of Isaiah, we note many features of extraordinary interest. We readily admit that our treatment has been neither comprehensive nor exhaustive. In the nature of things, this could not be. This volume has a definite purpose, and that could not be combined with a detailed exposition of Isaiah as a book. Nevertheless, it is maintained that reasons at once cogent and convincing have been advanced for the contention that Hezekiah's place in the Old Testament history was much larger than has hitherto been recognized. If the life of Hezekiah illumines the Songs of Degrees, so also it explains the Book of the Prophet Isaiah; and when this has been done, the writings of the Chronicler assume a place of enhanced importance in the Old Testament literature—for they are alone in contributing to the story certain phases and aspects which prove of essential value in forming a correct estimate of Hezekiah as a man and a reformer.

As we have seen, tradition, in its broadest aspects, associates much of Holy Scripture with the reigns of David and Hezekiah. It is our contention that these two names practically account for the Psalter as we have it. The personal poems—those which record an individual experience, with authorship avowed or imputed—are for the most part by David, or those

who wrote for him.¹ The other large body of compositions, those dealing with national trials and victories, belong, in general, to the time of Hezekiah: some of these bear the name of Asaph, some are by the Sons of Korah, others are by earlier writers or unnamed penmen of Hezekiah. The topics are few, and they are treated from various points of view. The language is essentially prophetic—intense, exalted, poetic. And we likewise see that the work of the former king was virtually revised in the reign of the latter—so that the whole collection might have a spiritual relation to the nation and its needs three centuries after the Davidic portion of the Psalter was written.

As explained in these pages, the Psalter is obviously invested with a new significance. There is royal authority behind the book, both as to its origination and its completion. Whether written by (or for) David, or by (or for) Hezekiah, the psalms had as their authors, actual or virtual, men who served Jehovah as kings, ruling among men for Him. Moreover, the experiences of these men enter largely into the subject-matter of the Psalms. If, therefore, these men sustained the typical relation known as Messianic, it is only

¹ For instance, it is clear, from the manner of address, that Pss. 20, 21, 110 were David's, because written *for him and about him*. If Asaph the Seer could write for Hezekiah, as the language of Ps. 73 implies, so also could such a one as Gad the Seer write for David (see 1 Chron. 21. 9). The resultant document might in such circumstances be described indifferently as by the king or the seer. The expression 'king's seer' seems to have designated a prophet in the *personal* service of the king—a service more exclusive than was the case with the ordinary prophet.

reasonable to expect in the Psalter as a whole expressions whose affinity with the great hope of the nation secured for them a special recognition as descriptive of the Messiah. The influences of Babylon and Greece could do nothing towards producing such a sentiment, so vital in its national relations, so peculiar to Israel as the chosen people. In the actual circumstances, however, it is by no means difficult to understand the Messianic forms of expression. They belong in their essence to the Theocratic Kingdom, and were inspired by the lives and experiences of rulers who sustained the relation of TYPES of Him that was to come.

How could it be otherwise? If David and Hezekiah foreshadowed the Messiah—as we have seen them to foreshadow Him—then their acts were instructive in a typical sense. David, the first King of Israel ‘after God’s own heart’—i.e. His definite choice for the throne: Hezekiah, the great and pious King of Judah, to which tribe the royal sceptre belonged, by Patriarchal covenant and Divine ordinance—these were the men of whom, in their primary application, the Messianic psalms spoke, with whose experiences they dealt. Moreover, as we have seen, by a process of ‘adaptation’, some psalms were made expressive of a twofold experience—so that in the service of praise the two kings become one in the memorials contributed by them to Temple worship¹.

¹ In the Appendix to this volume the principle of ‘adaptation’ is seen to be illustrated in many psalms—never, however, in those of Asaph or the Sons of Korah, *which belong to the reign of Hezekiah*. It is in the old psalms that ‘adaptation’ is more or less systematic—as has been discerned by expositors in

There is, assuredly, a fitness in all this. David is not alone: Hezekiah is not alone: the two stand in a complementary relation, and their songs have come down to us as Praises—'the Songs of Zion'. Moreover, while uttering their own personal thoughts, they supply words which befit the life and suit the actions and sufferings of Another. Hence it is not by accident that Messianic conceptions are found in the Psalter. The book as a whole is concerned with the lives of men who were typical in themselves and their ways, each of them, in his own special aspect or experience, foreshadowing that One of the House of David and the tribe of Judah 'of whose Kingdom there shall be no end'.

Then, also, as to the prophecies of Isaiah. This book gathers cogency when its latter chapters are placed alongside the life and experiences of Hezekiah. A new point of view being furnished, it is no longer requisite to impute to the Hebrew writer the authorship of merely abstract conceptions, or to find the

general, although no consistent theory has so far been proposed. Hence, the Massoretes and their predecessors divided off Ps. 33 from 32, and Ps. 91 from 90; and followed a like course in other cases. A similar judgement also led the Revisers to introduce line-spaces in Ps. 22 (before *v.* 22), 24 (7), 27 (7), 28 (6); 51 (18), and in many other psalms. Needless to say, 'adaptation' brings in no disparagement. We do not think less of the Law, or qualify its Divine origin, because of the modifications of view introduced by the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5. 17-48); nor should we think less of David's work as psalmist because Hezekiah and his 'men' put a new complexion upon many of the compositions. In the wise providence of God, it was ordained that experience should overlay experience in the glorious hymns of Old Israel. This seems to be indicated by the facts as a whole.

pages of the book replete with pictures of the ideal, more or less unconnected in themselves, and, judged by the Old Testament literature as a whole, singularly un-Hebraic in character. There is—leaving Isaiah out of account for the moment—no evidence of this kind of writing—the apotheosis of the ideal—having been cultivated in Israel in any period that, by comparison, will serve the purposes of a practical exposition of Isaiah. Hence we conclude that the ideal must make way for the actual and concrete, for the personal and the political, that we may first of all arrive at the simple meaning of the documents. Accordingly, before we read, in Isa. 52. 7, of ‘good tidings’ in the sense of the Gospel, we must understand the fact that *welcome intelligence* was brought to Jerusalem in a time of great political stress and anxiety; before we read of ‘peace’ in its spiritual bearings, we must realize a condition of glad *freedom* assured in the fatherland of Judah, with an invading army destroyed; and before we read of ‘salvation’ in its deeper significance, we must appreciate a promise of *deliverance* from a powerful and hateful foe, as announced to the people of God. When the messenger, coming over the mountains, cried, ‘Thy God reigneth’—has stirred Himself up to stand by His people, to defend and deliver them—he spoke words of infinite comfort to the distracted city, words that had in the first place a political and concrete application.

And so with the remainder of what has been called, all too readily, ‘the Second Isaiah.’ Cyrus must, as we have seen on critical grounds, go forth from the book¹; and with Hezekiah given his rightful place as

¹ The mere presence of the name Cyrus in Isaiah has been

the personality who engages the prophet's attention, we are brought face to face with a character of commanding influence. In the sufferings of this righteous man, the story of Job is rehearsed in miniature, and the sorrows and griefs of the Messiah are anticipated in detail. At length, we find the victorious king realizing in forecast somewhat of the peace and blessing of that time of glory toward which it may still be said 'the whole creation moves'.

Reverting to remarks already made on some literary features of the books under study, we note, as regards the headlines of the Psalms, that these are integral parts of the various compositions. That David, on writing a psalm, should prefix the words 'Of David', may seem incongruous. But we are not required to believe that this occurred. Rather, we must conclude that the scribe who reduced the poem to a form suited for the royal library placed the inscription where it has remained ever since. It would be his duty to do this: indeed, it was often his business to write in the king's name. Does any one believe that Tiglath-Pileser and Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar or Nabopolassar, with their own hands produced the monuments in which they speak in the first person of the pronoun? No, indeed; these things were done by agents: and throughout the Psalter the agent's hand is seen, now

a factor responsible for incalculable misunderstanding. As a controlling fact in criticism, it has put the entire book, and particularly the second part, out of harmony with sound Theocratic conceptions; and, being accepted without examination, it has seemed to compel the existence of the 'Unknown' of Exilic times. With Cyrus gone—as we have shown in Ch. xvi he must go—the entire situation is changed.

addressing the king, at other times speaking about him; but all the time such poems are, of course, regarded as by the king at whose command they were written.

Hence the literary inscriptions are not so obviously impossible as some critics have hastily concluded. If it was easy for a seer or scribe to write a prayer or psalm for the king, so it could not be difficult for such a one to complete the document, by prefixing a headline, e.g. 'A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came,' &c.; or, 'Of David, when Doeg the Edomite came,' &c. Then, in the nature of things, the document would be placed in the royal library. Thus, the very simplicities of Oriental custom and procedure, as they stand revealed in the monuments recovered in recent decades, go far to explain knotty problems of the Old Testament. And if there was a place for psalms, so also was there one for prophecies; and the latter, equally with the former, were provided, in many instances, with descriptive headlines.

The Book of the Prophet Isaiah would have a like experience. Isaiah delivered a prophecy against Babylon: the title prefixed, to render the document intelligible and complete for storage in the library, was: 'The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see' (Isa. 13. 1). Other prophecies from the same writer were placed alongside: 'In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden' (*ib.* 14. 28); 'The burden of Moab' (*ib.* 15. 1); 'The burden of Damascus' (*ib.* 17. 1); and so forth. It is reasonable to assume that the prophecies of Isaiah would be placed by themselves in the library—as it were 'pigeon-holed'. When, at length, they were com-

pacted into a book, the relative position of the documents would, in substance, follow the order of their being deposited with the royal scribe. It seems obvious that some docket mark or endorsement was regarded as necessary for the completing of the document.¹

This subject of old-time literary conditions is one of great importance, and one upon which research will yet throw light that will prove of service in Old Testament exposition. Much that has passed under the name of Criticism intended to illumine the Hebrew writings, would never have been penned if a passing consideration had been given to this subject, especially as it bears upon the customs which governed the keeping of state and other records in the libraries of the East. To assume that books came into existence by the operation of influences such as bring them into being nowadays, and in Western lands, is to perpetrate an anachronism which cannot but prove sadly misleading. If the unearthing of the great libraries of Assyria and Babylonia teaches us anything, assuredly it makes it plain beyond cavil that the kings were the patrons of literature, and that the royal libraries were places of safest custody for all kinds of documents—historical statements and scientific treatises, administrative records and religious texts.

The Old Testament has many allusions to 'the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel', or

¹ And it is of the utmost importance, for the purposes of sound exposition to note that these were delivered *at the court of Judah*, for the information, encouragement, warning, or otherwise, of the king of Judah. Herein the point of view of the prophet is made plain.

Judah, as the case may be. In addition to the general work, there were special chronicles regarding different reigns—e.g. ‘the chronicles of King David’ (1 Chron. 27. 24); and as with Israel, so also with Media and Persia (Esther 10. 2). Among other things that stand out boldly in this connexion, is the fact that the records were kept in the palace precincts and were continually being brought up to date: items were not stored for some distant doomsday entry, but were placed in position without delay. Proof is afforded of this by the story of Mordecai, as given in the Book of Esther. There we read that, in the seventh year of the reign of King Ahasuerus, information was given by Mordecai which led to the discovery of a plot against the king, wherein two of the royal chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh by name, were implicated. The conspirators were hanged; ‘and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king’ (Esther 2. 16–23).

The story goes on to show that, five years afterwards, on a night when he could not sleep, the king ‘commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles, and they were read before the king’. Were they simply antiquated stories of heroic days? No, indeed. ‘It was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthan and Teresh,’ and so forth (ch. 6. 1, 2; cp. *v.* 3 ff.). In other words, the records were up to date; from which fact we rightly infer that the libraries of those times were places of business movement and activity. Documents found their way thither with dispatch; and when received, they were in safe keeping, ready for the royal command whether it should be made by night or by day.

There is in the Old Testament a narrative which throws welcome light upon library customs as they obtained in the kingdom of Judah. It is found in Jer. 36, where we read of 'the scribe's chamber' of 'the king's house', or royal palace. The time was that of Jehoiakim, and the occasion was the public appearance of Baruch, the son of Neriah, with 'a roll of a book' on which he had written, from dictation, the words of Jeremiah. The roll denounced judgements against the people of Jerusalem; and repairing to 'the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe' in the Temple, Baruch read the document in the ears of all the people (*v.* 10). Forthwith, Micaiah, the son of Gemariah, 'went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber,' and there he found Elishama the scribe, with all the princes, and certain officials. To these he rehearsed what he had heard, with the result that Baruch was sent for (*v.* 14). In due course the amanuensis of the prophet arrived, bringing with him the roll, which he read in the presence of the assembly. The other pertinent detail is expressed in these words: 'The princes . . . went in to the king into the court; but the roll they laid up in the chamber of Elishama the scribe' (*v.* 20). From here, subsequently, the roll was fetched, by order of the king, with results that are well known (*vv.* 21-5).

The point of importance to be noticed here is that the scribe's chamber, in the royal palace, served the purposes of a library. Hither documents were brought; here they were laid up; thence they might be fetched at the king's command. Thus we find, in the history of Israel, traces of just such an agency as the literary activity of the times of Hezekiah demands. We see

a scribe's chamber in the Temple precincts, as well as one in the palace (*vv.* 10, 12). If the psalms and prayers of men of past times were among the treasures in the library, it would be for just such a person as the Chief Musician of the Temple worship, whom we have continually met with in the course of our studies, to have them transferred from one scribe's chamber to another. The movements described in Jer. 36 show with what precision such a transference could be made.

The phenomena point to some such communications between the royal library and the Temple in the reign of Hezekiah.¹ In the former edifice were psalms classed as 'By David'; it was in the latter edifice that they were required. The songs of Asaph, the Sons of Korah, and others, were available; but those which David left could not but be regarded as precious on more accounts than one. In search of these, we find the Chief Musician at the king's library, and what would never be handed out into the care of others is readily given to him for use in the service of the Temple. And as the literary headlines repre-

¹ The facts of the royal library and the relation of the Temple thereto, place in an instructive light the incident recorded in 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chron. 34. It was *the Temple copy* of the Law that had been lost through neglect, and now, at length, was found. It was not a *discovery* so much as a *recovery* that excited the religious enthusiasm of King Josiah. There is no reason to suppose that such books were *produced* in the Temple. Being part of the constitutional history of Israel, the Law would in any case be jealously preserved among the national archives in the royal library. Thus the lost book could at any time have been reproduced from texts in the precincts of the palace (cp. Deut. 17. 14, 18-20; 2 Kings 11. 12).

sented the finishing-touch when psalms were deposited in the library—a measure which was necessary for any system of classification—so now we find, as these documents pass from the palace to the Temple, a subscript line was placed upon them. This was ‘To the Chief Musician’—*committed to him, therefore belonging to him*. And sometimes words were added to indicate the occasion for which the psalms thus handed out were to be used.

A virtual title at the end of a psalm, as well as a superscript line as to authorship—such a thing was inconceivable to the Greek translators. They found the inscriptions in a confused state, and thus, all unconsciously, they passed them on. Oh, that they had known that, while a psalm might have a heading, as in 2 Sam. 22. 1; 23. 1, so also it might have a liturgical subscript line, as is set forth with clearness in Hab. 3. 19^b! Apparently, however, the Jews of Alexandria knew nothing of pre-exilic literary methods in Palestine; and the captives who returned under Cyrus were without information as to the form and shape of penitential psalms and prayers as they have since been found in the cuneiform tablets of Babylon. The results of excavation place us in a position of advantage in this respect; for we may observe in any collection of translations from Assyrian and Babylonian prayer tablets, that the titles, often including a catchword reference, occur *at the end*, in the colophon of the copy made from an older original. From some of these it also appears that the copy for the Temple was made by the palace official, i. e. by royal order, colophons ending with some such a formula as this: ‘Like the original, copied and revised. Palace of

Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria.' This recalls the fact that, when bringing the Ark to Zion, David *gave*, or delivered, certain psalms for use by Asaph and his brethren (1 Chron. 16. 7). Of course, it is possible that some pieces passed into the hands of the Temple precentor without the mark 'To the Chief Musician'. In any case, we are permitted, by what we actually observe, to catch more than a glimpse of the important functionary upon whom devolved the duty of taking such documents in charge for use in the service of praise.

That our studies have a bearing upon the formation of the Canon of the Old Testament, is obvious. Taken as a whole, the books embody the constitutional history of Israel; this is particularly and essentially the case in regard to the first two divisions—The Law and The Prophets.¹ The beginnings of the nation and the kingdom are here. Acts and monuments: laws, commentaries, decisions: all are here included in records of the nation's development. The other books, The Hagiographa, were from their very nature excluded from these divisions: their relation to the constitutional history of Israel was accidental, not essential. First, in this category, comes the Book of Praises (compiled by Hezekiah); second, the Book of Proverbs (edited by the men of Hezekiah); third, the Book of Job (which we have found to arise as literature in the life-experience of Hezekiah). The Five Rolls follow: the place

¹ On the basis of the common arrangements these divisions may be thus explained: THE LAW: Gen. to Deut. THE PROPHETS: Joshua, Judges, Samuel to Kings (former); Isa., Jer., Ezek., Hos. to Mal. (later).

assigned them in the Synagogue service suggests that Ezra originally edited this division.¹

The remaining books tell their own tale: Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah are post-exilic; and they were placed here, not simply because latest in time, but because wanting in an *essential* relation to the constitutional history of Israel. At the end comes the Book of Chronicles, a sort of supernumerary work—hence included in this division—in which we have a rehearsal of the story of the nation, with an emphasis distinct from that which prevailed when the books of Samuel and Kings were compiled. Among other peculiarities of the Chronicles is this: it combines genealogy and history. The latter feature ends where the Book of Ezra begins—with the proclamation of Cyrus for the rebuilding of the Temple; the former feature, that of the genealogy, has been brought down to a more recent period (see 1 Chron. 3. 17-24, where the names of the descendants of Zerubbabel are given down to the sixth generation).²

¹ Canticles from the remains of Solomon; Ruth from the Book of Judges; Lamentations from the remains of Jeremiah; Ecclesiastes from the works of Solomon; and Esther by Ezra or a contemporary.

² Doubtless, as a work, the Chronicles was built. From 2 Chron. 5. 9 (cp. 1 Kings 8. 8) it would appear that the early part was written when the Temple was standing—for we read of the staves of the Ark, if not of the Ark itself, 'there it is unto this day.' As there was no Ark in the Second Temple, these words must take us to an earlier time. Doubtless the book as a whole ended with *v.* 21 of the last chapter, i. e. with the beginning of the captivity, as is the case with the Book of Kings: the added verses, from Ezra 1, represent an attempt to continue the record. The genealogy (chh. 1-9) is a distinct section, and was brought down afterwards: not so the

The presence of the book in this division, however, implies nothing in qualification of its canonicity: rather, we are to recognize that, though Israelitish literature, and dealing with glorious national records, the book is *additional* to that literature which supplies the constitutional history of the Theocratic nation. As for the hymns, proverbs, and so forth, they may have religio-political relations with Israel, but they do not constitute the history of the people. This was evidently recognized in the classification of the books of the Old Testament.

A survey of these with other facts impresses one with the force of the old theory that, as to its later constituents, the Canon of the Old Testament was settled by Ezra. He had the wisdom and strength to do this; and as we read the books, even the latest, there is not one that he could not bring in. For, as we have observed, possible additions to the genealogies of Chronicles do not affect the antiquity and integrity of the HISTORICAL portion, which is the substance of the work. As for the genealogies, they were treated as we should expect: such lists invite addition, and they are never preserved with more care than when additions are being made to them. As however, apart from Esther, Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, no contributions were made to the Old Testament literature in post-exilic times, we cannot but associate the name of Ezra with the formation of the Canon.

This word 'Canon' is invested with a singular sanctity, almost a sacramental significance. How can it be that books owe their inclusion or exclusion to history, beyond the attempt to which reference has just been made.

a mere chance or the force of worldly circumstances? To the Synagogue and the Church alike, the canonical speaks of that which is old, going back, so far as the Hebrew Scriptures are concerned, to the times when kings ruled, prophets spoke, and priests served in the name of the Lord. To decide which books should bear this honour, or carry this weight of influence for all time, God gave to Israel a divinely inspired leader, to whom all were ready to bow. Since the time of Ezra no personage has met with such universal acceptance among his people. Of him we read: 'He set his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgements' (Ezra 7. 10).

Related to canonicity is the subject of inspiration, and on this we must confine ourselves to a remark or two in regard to the books which have engaged our special attention. As to the psalms, by whomsoever written, whether by David and his men, or by Hezekiah and his men, or further whether selected under the patronage of one king or the other, there is this to be said: they were produced with reference to, at the order of, such as, being kings, stood forth in the Theocratic kingdom as 'the Lord's anointed'. Of David and Hezekiah we may assuredly say that the Spirit of the Lord was upon them: the former king manifested the grace of this endowment in his provision for the Temple; the latter king showed it in the energy and devotion with which he carried through the great reformation which was signalized by the opening of the Temple which his faithless predecessors had closed.¹ With all their failings,

¹ It is suggested that the influence of Hezekiah as a patron

these two were men of God; and a Divine unction also rested upon the priests and prophets who served them. Whether writers, editors, or patrons, these were men set apart, holy, servants of the Lord in distinctive spheres. Receiving the Book of Psalms from such, we are assuredly in a position to describe the agents in the words of the New Testament writer: 'Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost' (2 Pet. 1. 21).

As for the Book of Isaiah, it not only comes to us from the pen of a man whose consecration for a very difficult ministry is described in words which are unmatched in literature (ch. 6), but it deals in particular

of sacred literature finds attestation in the formula שמע , which appears at the conclusion of most of the books of the Old Testament. Such writings as were edited by command of the king would, in the nature of things, be sealed with his seal; and in due course other books, on being included in the collection, might be furnished (though with less reason) with a like authenticating mark. It is not surprising that the syllable which expressed the Divine name should not appear—the name of the king's mother is called both Abi and Abijah (2 Kings 18. 2; 2 Chron. 29. 1). Neither is it surprising that, when in due course the connexion of the word with the royal reformer was lost, a vowel-pointing should have been adopted which represents the formula as meaning—with what object no one can tell—'Be strong!' The omission of the word from books known as Megilloth, or Rolls (Cant., Ruth, Lam., Eccles., Esther), presents no difficulty; while the extension of the formula in four cases (after Kings, Isa., Jer., Chron.), to invest the ascribed meaning with emphasis, is not unnatural. The suggestion here made, however, is simply that the word occupied its present position in relation to the books *long before the Massoretic period*, and that it originated in the seal-mark of Hezekiah, who was prosperous in all that he did, 'in the service of the house of God, and in the law and in the commandment.'

with that king who above all others furnished for future generations the portrait of the Messiah in His sorrows and triumphs. No speculation as to the royal affinity of the author could add to the weight of his words, which, strange as it may seem, have lost nothing of their marvellous vitality through the attempts of expositors to find the ideal nation where the author saw 'the Servant of the Lord', first in the person of Hezekiah, and afterwards in the form of Another, in whom the most mysterious phrases of prophecy found a rich and complete and consummating fulfilment. In fine, if the book was in reality written by the man whose consecration is described in the record of what took place 'in the year that king Uzziah died', then no one needs to ask proof either of inspiration or canonicity, for the author writes as one divinely purged from iniquity, and then sent forth on a mighty commission by the Lord of Hosts.

With these thoughts in mind, it is convenient, on the general question of Old Testament prophecy, to (1) make an observation and (2) draw an inference.

(1) It is maintained that the Hebrew prophet is one who, in the name of God, speaks to his own age, for the information and guidance, warning or encouragement, of his contemporaries. This is his primary purpose :

To base a promise upon a condition of things not yet existent, and without any point of contact with the circumstances or situation of those to whom it is addressed, is alien to the genius of prophecy.¹

This is undoubtedly a sound judgement: our

¹ Driver : *Literature of the Old Testament*. Seventh edition, p. 212.

studies have justified it, by showing that, in a sense not hitherto realized, Isaiah (author of the complete book) was a prophet of Judah, and that the most important period of his ministry was during the reign of Hezekiah. To whatever distance in the future his vision carried him, the prophet rarely, if ever, overlooked the situation in which he passed his time. Accordingly, when speaking of national deliverance and consequent blessings for his people, his Messianic outlook began with Hezekiah, the king before whom he stood. In a word, like other prophets, he spoke in the first place to his own particular age.

Those who find deliverance from Babylon—meaning thereby the New Babylon, in which the Jews passed seventy years of captivity—as the substance and message of chapters 40-66, say: 'The situation presupposed is not that of Isaiah's age';¹ and they cast about to find an author for prophecies which, through misunderstanding, they have placed in Exilic times. No known prophet being found, they desiderate a Second Isaiah, or 'an author living towards the close of the Exile, and holding out to his contemporaries the prospect of release from Babylon'.² Thus conjecture follows upon conjecture; and the book becomes more and more certainly a riddle for which every expositor proposes his own convenient solution. That the Exilic view is a mistaken one, has, we think, been shown in what has been found of correspondence between the second part of Isaiah and the life and times of King Hezekiah. Moreover, another result of our researches has been to invest the writings of the prophet in their entirety with a concrete character

¹ Driver, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

² Driver: *loc. cit.*

and a cogent relation to great events in the political and religious history of the kingdom of Judah. In a word, we find the prophet 'addressing himself to the needs of his own age, announcing to his contemporaries the judgements, or consolations, which arose out of the circumstances of their own time, interpreting for them their own history'.¹

Whereas the view which we have presented, finds the prophet in his age, and speaking of things intelligible to his contemporaries, what shall be said of that view which assumes a Second Isaiah? Nothing whatever that is consistent with a sound definition of Israelitish prophecy can be found in the circumstances suggested. As a fact, if we are to judge by the expositions which find greatest favour in our time, the writer lived in a region of mystery and spoke in transcendental terms. His subject was the ideal—a figure or a nation, sometimes the one, sometimes the other; and as we read his writings we seem to be in presence of an oracle rather than a prophet. As thus expounded, the work is abstract and unsubstantial, and presupposes an author having little if anything in common with a prophet whose part it was to 'address himself to the needs of his age'.

Hence our inference (2) that, given the soundness of the definition of prophecy with which these remarks were introduced, then it follows that the interpretation which we have criticized cannot be a true one. If, on the other hand, we recognize a concrete relation in the prophetic teaching—that there was before Isaiah a personage whose experience he explained, then we are occupying firm ground,

¹ Driver : *loc. cit.*

and are in a position of advantage when proceeding to read the prophecies in detail. So our position recognizes the true genius of Old Testament prophecy, and thereby places the entire Book of Isaiah on a sound historical basis. To suppose that 'the Servant of the Lord' had reference to an ideal nation, of which the people knew nothing—that the figure was unreal and wanting in actuality—is, to all intents and purposes, to neutralize the prophet's ministry, and to plead that, after all, prophecy might be such even though it had no intelligible reference to the age in which the prophet lived.

In the nature of the case, one aspect of things has mainly concerned us in these pages—the historical aspect of the writings which have occupied our attention. That there are other aspects of Scripture, we have no doubt whatever; but these have, of necessity, been left for the expositor. We have been content to indicate, as far as we could, the historical setting or origination of the writings, and accordingly to deal with the first intention rather than remoter meanings. Others, even while admitting all that we have seen, will yet go on to treat of these same portions of the Old Testament in later applications, as they relate to the ways of God in general. Such may see in our identifications mere patterns of things that were yet to come, and find in regard to prophecy what is a commonplace in regard to history, that it has a way of 'repeating itself'. This is doubtless true: many of the great words of the Old Testament seem to be so full of vitality, so deep in meaning, that in the process of ages they are ever and anon being 'fulfilled', every

such fulfilment, moreover, looking forward to some particular consummating event in the progress of the Kingdom of God.

Hence while, in these studies, the primary interpretation has continually been kept in view, there has been no intention to claim an exclusive place for this. That the majestic writings of Isaiah, for instance, exhausted their force, discharged all their wealth of meaning, in one generation, assuredly is no part of the thesis of this volume. On the contrary, the careful adjustment of historical foundations upon which we have been engaged has ever been controlled by a consciousness, not only that great things may impinge upon some of the most commonplace utterances of the prophets, but also that, like the outstanding events in Israelitish story, so also the words of Divine inspiration, may have a far-reaching typical significance, either as bearing upon the future of the Jewish people, or, by accommodation of language, upon Christ who came forth from their midst. Our studies preclude none of these views. On the contrary, it is allowed that the expositor may legitimately pass from such initial fulfilments as we have examined, and find others, which, in due course, have become (or will become) eclipsed by an accomplishment that shall give final and complete expression to the purpose and will of God, whether in regard to Israel, the Church, or the nations of the world.¹

¹ Thus 'history repeats itself' in the re-enactment of prophetic situations. Accordingly, the outlook of blessing was to be 'as in the days of old' (Amos 9. 11; cp. Hos. 2. 15; Lam. 5. 21; Mal. 3. 4). Among other familiar illustrations of the same principle in prophetic language, note: 'There shall be . . . like

There is no need to rehearse in further detail the things which we have seen. Clearly the Psalter in its present collected form dates from the time of Hezekiah. It would appear, as the result of our investigations, that day by day in the great crisis of the king's reign Asaph the seer brought a psalm; the Sons of Korah brought a song; the Chief Musician adapted a poem handed down from an earlier age. Moreover, Isaiah the prophet brought a message of comfort, or some 'vision' in explanation of the ways of God. Micah and Nahum also ministered at this time, and their writings both link on with the prophecies of their more distinguished contemporary, the former quoting Isa. 2. 2-4 in ch. 4. 1-3; and the latter Isa. 52. 7 in ch. 1. 15. The proud Assyrian is ever to the fore; and there is frequent mention of the king's plague or stroke, also of his renewal of life—terms which, though employed down the ages with a *spiritual* significance, demand and require, as found in the Old Testament, a basis in concrete facts, a personal experience and a thrilling situation. Thus in the Psalter we get more than a glimpse of Hezekiah carrying into execution his vow to 'sing his songs with stringed instruments all the days of his life in the house of the Lord'. We see the Psalter to be the king's song-book. The man of praise made the book of Praises, using the writings of predecessors, and influencing contemporaries to give expression to the desires of his own heart in prayer and thanksgiving. Hence, by adoption, adaptation, addition, the book became Hezekiah's in an emphatic sense, for he was compiler as well as patron. as there was' (Isa. 11. 16); 'As in the days . . . I will show' Mic. 7. 15).

As to Isaiah: if that book had been studied, not so much as a series of chapters, passages, and verses, but rather as a whole—as a work of literature, in fact—the place of Hezekiah as the main subject of its second part must have been discerned and allowed long ago. Now, however, when the Psalter becomes a new book with Hezekiah's place therein duly recognized, so also the Book of Isaiah becomes new when a like course is adopted. Those who, in any age, use the Psalter, come after kings, prophets, and priests, who in a special sense were men of God. In like manner, those who study Isaiah as a whole, with Hezekiah accorded his proper place, enjoy a mighty companionship: they find a historical base for the most marvellous figures and parables, a near object no less than a remote Ideal throughout the book.

The Psalms and Isaiah demand study along lines which have not so far been pursued. And particularly do they demand study in the light of (1) The Taylor Cylinder, with its details of a captivity of which the Old Testament furnishes no connected account; of (2) the exclusion, on critical and literary grounds, of the name 'Cyrus' from Isa. 44 and 45; and of (3) those outstanding experiences of Hezekiah to which frequent reference has been made in this work—(a) the visitation of the king in Divine judgement on account of the waywardness of the people; and (b) the miraculous renewal of life which was granted in answer to prayer even after sentence of death had been announced by the prophet. In connexion with these last points, alike in the Psalms (either adopted, adapted, or belonging to the period) and the Book of Isaiah (the complete collection of prophecies), we

meet with allusions to the *stroke* or *plague*; the *hiding of face*, both of God and man; and the *prolongation of the life* of a godly suppliant.¹

Studied in this light, both the books before us speak of one great character, Hezekiah of Judah. Each is compacted by allusions to the experiences of this noble man, but for whom neither book could have been written. And inasmuch as both carry us back to pre-exilic times, we are able, by their means, to appreciate political and religious conditions which otherwise might elude all efforts to investigate and describe. As we study these glorious old writings in the light of the epoch thus proposed—ever remembering that Oriental thought moves along lines that are concrete rather than abstract, and that in the literature of such times and peoples as the Old Testament brings before us we should expect simplicity rather than complexity—we shall find them to live again, and to make their most explicit contribution to the history of Israel.

More than that, thus studied, the Hebrew Scriptures will assuredly deliver their most impressive message

¹ Among other passages, reference may be made to the following: *The stroke* (or *plague*)—Ps. 38. 11 (12); 39. 10 (11); Isa. 53. 4, 8. *The hiding of face*—Ps. 10. 11; 13. 1; 22. 24 (25); 27. 9; 30. 7 (8); 44. 24 (25); 51. 9 (11); 69. 17 (18); 88. 14 (15); 89. 46 (47); 102. 2 (3); 104. 29; 143. 7; Isa. 45. 15; 53. 3; 54. 8; 57. 17; 59. 2; 64. 7 (6) (cp. also 'cast away'—Ps. 51. 11 (13); 'turn away'—Ps. 132. 10; 'forget'—Ps. 10. 11; 13. 1; and the converse terms, 'repent thee,' 'turn again,' 'look upon'). *The prolongation of life*—Ps. 21. 4 (5); 61. 6 (7); 102. 23, 24, 28 (24, 25, 29); Isa. 53. 10 (cp. 38. 5). Similar expressions may be traced in the Book of Job, always signifying an actual experience.

to the Christian student : for, as he will easily recognize, the state of things in the Southern Kingdom in the reign of Hezekiah was distinctly typical of events which developed on the stage of the world at large seven centuries later. In each case, and along differing planes, a time of crisis was reached ; and in each case deliverance was effected by a Divine intervention which excited the astonishment of men. God's ways with Judah became at length His ways with the race. His dealings with Hezekiah pointed the manner of His dealings with Jesus Christ. He who was willing to save the Cities of the Plain if five righteous men could be found, in due course saved Judah and Jerusalem because of the uprightness of one man—Hezekiah : ' A man was an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest ' of Divine judgement (Isa. I. 9 ; 32. 2 ; 53. 11, 12).

On the broader plane of world-action, the Man Christ Jesus was this, and more. He suffered to redeem mankind, and, in a deeper sense than any that went before, He ' bare our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows '. His life was not simply demanded, as was the case with Hezekiah, but was actually yielded ; and at length, after having passed under the power of death, He was raised up from among the dead, to die no more, thus, in majestic triumph, ' bringing life and immortality to light.' Hence, in the experiences of the king ' whom Jehovah upholds ', we are enabled to see a remarkable foreshadowing of the progress of the Messiah—despised and honoured ; rejected and received ; cut off, indeed, through sin, but, at length, raised again to a victorious life by the power of God.

APPENDIX

BRIEF NOTES ON THE PSALMS

DESIGNED TO SHOW THAT, BY WHOMSOEVER WRITTEN, THE PSALMS
WERE BROUGHT INTO TEMPLE USE WITH REFERENCE TO THE
LIFE AND EXPERIENCES OF HEZEKIAH, KING OF JUDAH¹

Pss. 1, 2. Prefixed to the oldest Davidic collection in the reign of Hezekiah. The division known as Ps. 1 was addressed to the people of Jerusalem while the Assyrians were at the city walls, and Rabshakeh the scorner was tempting the unwary to make peace with him (2 Kings 18. 31, 32). The first part of Ps. 2 (*vv.* 1-6) applies to the invaders; the second part (*vv.* 7-9) is the king's rehearsal of the Divine decree in raising him from mortal sickness to a life of prosperity and victory; the third (*vv.* 10-12) is an appeal to the rulers of the city and the land to leave their evil ways (Isa. 28. 14, 15; and see treatment of both psalms, pp. 140-5 *ante*).

Ps. 3. The first psalm of David. The substance justifies the heading. Zion was already the centre of the kingdom, and the shrine of the nation (*v.* 4). Every verse shows reason for the psalm being adopted for Temple use in the time of Hezekiah, whose personal experience was capable of a like description.

Pss. 4, 5. Prayers which were in every way suited to express the sentiments of Hezekiah. In the latter, note terms that would well describe the feelings of the king when the Assyrian was destroyed (*vv.* 5, 6); and he himself was able to go up to the house of the Lord according to promise (*v.* 7), as related in 2 Kings 20. 5, 8.

Ps. 6. A cry for deliverance when life was in peril. Hence

¹ For statement of principles and illustrative facts, see Chapters vi-ix of this work.

the significance of *vv.* 4, 5. Cp. Hezekiah's words in Isa. 38. 18, 19. Suited for varied experiences, it could not be excluded from Hezekiah's compilation.

Ps. 7. A prayer in circumstances similar to those which the preceding psalm required.¹

Ps. 8. The motive prompting this psalm is expressed in *v.* 2^b. In the marvellous condescension of God, a deliverance was wrought which 'stilled the enemy and the avenger'. Simultaneously one who was a helpless 'son of man' was 'visited' in an altogether unparalleled manner, and 'crowned with glory and honour'. The story is rehearsed in 2 Kings, chh. 18-20; and when this psalm was selected for the due celebration of the event in Temple praise, a liturgical title was affixed to associate it with the king's recovery from mortal sickness—the 'white death' = *Maveth labben* (standing as *Muth labben* over Ps. 9 in the ordinary editions).²

Pss. 9, 10. In these psalms there are signs of the alphabetic

¹ As in ancient Hebrew there was nothing in the *form* of writing to indicate poetry to be such—the custom of setting out verse in lines not prevailing then—it was necessary to express the character of such compositions by the headlines: hence the descriptive formulae, 'A Psalm,' 'A Song,' &c. In Ps. 7 these familiar designations find a substitute in the unusual *Shiggaion*. The class of composition thus described was intended for *singing*: this we learn from the inscription of the psalm before us, and also from the subscript line of Hab. 3, a psalm which bears the headline *Shigionoth*, which is the plural form of *Shiggaion*. The word is found nowhere else. Derived from the root *shâgâh*, 'to wander,' it implies a writing that is enthusiastic or soul-stirring—that is, a hymn, an ode. The latter is, in fact, the Septuagint rendering of the word in the psalm of Habakkuk. See notes on *Michtam* (Ps. 16) and *Maschil* (Ps. 32).

² The grounds on which leprosy was styled the 'white death' (or 'white plague') may be gathered from Lev. 13. 10 ff.; cp. Num. 12. 10, 12; 2 Kings 5. 27 ('as snow'). See also note on p. 95 *ante*.

acrostic; the first part being the more complete. Ps. 9, 1-16 is Davidic—doubtless with adaptation; the remainder, to the end of Ps. 10, is of the time of Hezekiah. The terminology is similar throughout, but the notes are distinct. The 'wicked' are the heathen invaders; the 'poor' is the righteous king. As in the historical record, and in other psalms, the heathen are such as say 'there is no God' (2 Kings 18. 35; 19. 16-19; Ps. 14. 1; 42. 3; 115. 2). Ps. 9. 13 (14) serves as an allusion to the king's sickness; and 10. 11 refers to the Divine 'hiding of face' from the sufferer. See on pp. 107, 108 *ante*.

Ps. 11. The persecuted one seeks safety in the presence of God. In his sickness Hezekiah said: 'I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living' (Isa. 38. 11). The words of this psalm represent a restored confidence: 'The upright one shall behold his face' (v. 7).

Pss. 12, 13. Both timely for Hezekiah. In the latter, note the hiding of the Divine face (v. 1), and the apprehension of death (v. 3), both of them expressive of the king's experience.

Ps. 14. Whatever the direct reference when written, this psalm was eminently fitting in the days of Hezekiah, by whom the concluding verse was added (*vide p. 112 ante*).

Ps. 15. Even though inspired by some such incident as that of Uzza and the Ark (2 Sam. 6. 6-8; 1 Chron. 13. 9-13), this psalm was timely in all circumstances (cp. Isa. 33. 14-16).

Ps. 16. The original situation is provided in 1 Sam. 26. For 'hasten after another' (4), see v. 19; for 'maintainest my lot' (5), see v. 25; for 'heritage' (6), see vv. 19, 25; for 'the Lord before him' (8), see vv. 16, 19, 20, 24; for 'deliverance' (1, 10, 11), see v. 24. On verse 11, cp. 1 Sam. 26. 10. The whole was also remarkably appropriate for the reign of Hezekiah, and doubtless the psalm was adopted on that account. The delineation is found in Isa. 57 (*vide pp. 226-30 ante*), wherein 'whoredom' (vv. 3, 4, 8) expresses the 'hastening after another'. In the words of this psalm, in vv. 4, 5, the pious of Judah were enabled to dissociate themselves from abominations specifically described by the prophet. The 'drink offerings' of the depraved people are repudiated; and over against their 'portion' and 'lot', another is made the subject of boasting (cp. Isa. 57. 6). As for vv. 8-11 of the psalm, they are remarkably appropriate for the man

who was brought to the gates of death and then raised to newness of life (Isa. 38. 18-20; cp. Ps. 17. 15; 140. 13).¹

Ps. 17. Hezekiah was familiar with persecution. Verse 5 reads like Ps. 73. 2; *v.* 14 like 73. 3-9, a psalm of the time of Hezekiah. The concluding verse looks forward to recovery from sickness.

Ps. 18. The great deliverance accorded to Hezekiah gave point to the prayers and praises of David as presented in this song (*vide pp. 122-4 ante*).

Ps. 19. The king whose delight it was to speak of 'the Maker of heaven and earth' (Isa. 37. 16; Ps. 121. 2); and who encouraged the priests and Levites in their devotion to the Law of the Lord (2 Chron. 31. 4), would readily adopt this poem of David's.

Ps. 20. This was apparently David's prayer for Solomon (see 1 Kings 2. 1-4; 1 Chron. 22. 11-19). The words were a timely prayer for Hezekiah, in whose reign *vv.* 7-9 were added (note the plural number predominating in the pronouns here). In a time of crisis there was reason to pray (as in R. V. *margin.*), 'O Lord, save the king; and answer us when we call.'

Ps. 21. David rejoices at the assurance of blessing to his royal house (see 2 Sam. 7. 18-29). When, in after-times, the

¹ This psalm is the first of those bearing the headline *Michtam*: the others are—Pss. 56-60—six in all. Each is 'by David'; and the designation dispenses with the more usual 'A Psalm,' 'A Song,' &c. The word comes from *kāthām*, 'to engrave' (cp. Jer. 2. 22: 'thine iniquity is ENGRAVED before me,' i.e. written plainly and permanently; also recall the derived form *kēthēm*, 'chased gold,' therefore such as was specially brilliant). Hence *Michtam* stands for 'an engraved writing,' 'a tablet,' as the Septuagint translators rightly inferred by giving us *stelographia* in their version. Like *Shiggaion* (Ps. 7) and *Maschil* (Ps. 32) the term before us implies no literary discrimination in regard to styles of poetry. While in most instances the Davidic documents were copied as 'psalms' and so forth (for such they were in *character*), in six cases they were copied as 'tablets' (for such they were in *form*)—a term as colourless as *Michtav* ('writing': cp. Isa. 38. 9) with which some critics have been disposed to confuse *Michtam*.

prosperity of Hezekiah was celebrated in Temple worship, this psalm was singularly appropriate. Whether by adaptation or not, *v.* 4 had a special meaning when spoken of him; and *vv.* 11, 12 tell of the Assyrian army and its destruction.

Ps. 22. This psalm is in two parts—*vv.* 1–21 by David; the remainder dating from the time of Hezekiah. The situation of the former may be found in the spoiling of Ziklag by the Amalekites (1 Sam. 30. 1–6); though the words go beyond the experiences of the king, and provide expressions which describe a greater persecution and deeper woe to which his promised Seed would be subjected (*vv.* 16–18). Coming into use in the time of Hezekiah, the psalm was extended in remarkable terms, and possibly adapted in other ways. On *vv.* 13, 14 ('lion . . . bones'), cp. Isa. 38. 13; on *v.* 24, cp. Isa. 53. 3; and on *v.* 30, cp. Isa. 53. 8, 10. The experiences of the subject of this hymn shall be celebrated in the great congregation (*vv.* 22, 25; cp. Ps. 35. 18; 144. 9), and on his account men shall turn unto the Lord in penitent devotion (*v.* 27). 'Such as he brings to subjection shall bow before him, although he was not able to keep his own soul alive! A seed shall serve him: it shall be accounted by the Lord for a generation (or declared successor to the throne: cp. Isa. 38. 12; 53. 8). Men shall come and talk of his righteousness to a people yet to be born—because this hath been done' (*vv.* 29–31). The story is that of the Servant of the Lord; the Psalter and prophetic writings alike being concerned with Hezekiah as the great Messianic type.

Ps. 23. With beautiful figures the Lord's care of His people is celebrated. When used in Hezekiah's time, *v.* 4 had a marvellous significance, as also had the concluding line in regard to 'dwelling in the house of the Lord for length of days' (cp. Isa. 38. 20).

Ps. 24. Written on the bringing of the Ark to Zion, this psalm recalls in its first portion (*vv.* 1–5) the note of Ps. 15. The second portion (*vv.* 6–10) was probably added when Hezekiah opened the doors of the Temple which had been closed in the reign of Ahaz (2 Chron. 29. 3, 7; cp. 28. 24).

Ps. 25. On this alphabetic psalm, to which *v.* 22 was added in the time of Hezekiah, see pp. 107, 108 *ante*.

Ps. 26. Words in every sense suited to the times of either

king. Verse 8 recalls Hezekiah's love for the Temple, and *v.* 9 expresses his revulsion at the thought of dying the death of a sinner, which was his interpretation of the mortal sickness with which God had smitten him (see p. 164 *ante*).

Ps. 27. Apparently prompted by David's desire to build the Temple (*vv.* 1-6). The second part (*vv.* 7-14) seems to have been added by Hezekiah, when consumed with a desire to go up to the house of the Lord (Isa. 38. 22). The nature of the king's sickness may be detected in *vv.* 9, 10—the hiding of God's face, and the being forsaken of friends (cp. Isa. 53, and recall the story of Job, on which see Ch. xii *ante*). Hence we are not to find in *v.* 10 a biographical note, or an allusion to personal bereavement, but rather an expression of implicit confidence in God—as if to say, 'Though my sickness is such that even father and mother may forsake me, yet for all that the Lord will receive me,' or *recover* me, as the verb *āsaph* implies in a context relating to the treatment of leprosy (cp. 2 Kings 5. 3, 6, 11). In other words, 'Though nearest and dearest prove false, the Lord will be faithful to me.' On *v.* 13, cp. Isa. 38. 11.

Ps. 28. A prayer of David in a time of distress. At *v.* 6 Hezekiah adds his experience (cp. Isa. 38. 10-20).

Ps. 29. Terms of praise, as welcome to Hezekiah as to other worshippers of the Lord.

Ps. 30. The sufferings of Hezekiah furnished a new application of the language of this psalm. Note *vv.* 1-3 on deliverance from death, and *v.* 7 on the hiding of God's face. On *vv.* 9-12, cp. Isa. 38. 18-20.

Ps. 31. There may be truth in the ancient opinion that this psalm refers to the events related in 1 Sam. 23. The last four verses (21-4) seem to reflect the time of Hezekiah. On *v.* 22, cp. Isa. 38. 10-13.

Pss. 32, 33. One psalm in two parts; the former by David, possibly based on the experience of forgiveness spoken of in 2 Sam. 12. 13; the latter, by Hezekiah, or one of his 'men', celebrating a deliverance from heathen invaders. The second bears to the former a relation similar to that of 91 to 90—suggesting the *Higgaion* (or Meditation=Epilogue) of 9. 16. Note that in 33. 10, 11, the counsel of the nations is contrasted with that of Jehovah (cp. Ps. 1. 1); also that in 33. 16, 17, military

power is spoken of with a contempt agreeable to the actions and words of Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18. 36; 2 Chron. 32. 7, 8.¹

Ps. 34. On the addition (*v.* 22) made to this psalm by Hezekiah, see pp. 107, 108 *ante*.

Ps. 35. Like Ps. 22, this is in two parts: the former (*vv.* 1-17) by David; the remainder by Hezekiah. The 'great congregation' of *v.* 18 recalls Ps. 22. 22, 25; the expression occurs again in 40. 9, 10; 144. 9. David's writing may have been suggested by the incidents recorded in 1 Sam. 24. 1-15; that of Hezekiah when he was surrounded by enemies, and brought to fear a discomfiture which would bring reproach upon the name of the Lord (2 Kings 19. 3, 4. On *v.* 20, cp. Ps. 120. 2, 3, 6, 7).

Pss. 36, 37. Suitable for either reign. In his time of trial, however, Hezekiah must have been greatly comforted on the latter being read to him: especially by the assurance (*vv.* 34-40) that he should yet be raised up to a dominion unbroken by heathen disturbance. There is a 'latter end of peace' for the 'perfect and upright man': as was made clear to the king when he was told the wonderful story of Job, 'a perfect and upright man' of whom the Lord 'blessed the latter end more than his beginning' (Job 1. 1; 42. 12. See pp. 189-203 *ante*).

Ps. 38. In the first part (*vv.* 1-8) David loathes his sin and suffering. In the second (9-22) the physical and political

¹ Ps. 32 is the first *Maschil*, the others are: Pss. 42, 44, 45, 52, 53, 54, 55, 74, 78, 88, 89, 142—thirteen in all. The word may describe 'a Song' and deal with love (Ps. 45), or it may express a prayer to God (Ps. 142). Again, it may relate with artistic plainness the great events of national history (Ps. 78). Coming from *sākāl*, 'to have understanding,' the Hiphil or causative form of which implies 'to show skill', it is a designation which, like *Shiggaion* (Ps. 7) and *Michtam* (Ps. 16), describes writings in their simplicity. In a word, it was not used to distinguish one class of poems from another, but rather to affirm a certain quality or character to inhere in the *writings* over which it stood—that they are 'skilful'; that is, they are 'poems'. Compare the classic *poiëma*, something which shows *workmanship*, something that has been *made*.

afflictions of Hezekiah are reflected. Verse 11 recalls the language of Job (19. 13-20); *v.* 13 that of Isa. 53. 7.

Ps. 39. A prayer of David. Though speechless on account of sin, the Psalmist looks to the end with concern. Hezekiah adopts *vv.* 1-7, and adds the remainder, speaking of his terrible stroke (*v.* 10), and asking for renewal of life (*v.* 13). As in other cases, the language of the addition is well chosen to follow that with which the psalm began.

Ps. 40. David's words; but also true to the experience of Hezekiah, who could present every petition of the psalm.

Ps. 41. In the case of David the situation is that described in 2 Sam. 15. Hezekiah also had an evil disease (*v.* 8); and the part of Ahithophel (*v.* 9) in the former time was played by Shebna in the latter (Isa. 22. 15).

Pss. 42, 43. All the psalms of the Sons of Korah relate to Hezekiah's reign (see pp. 90, 91 *ante*). The poet supplies words for the king, who, in his sore sickness, pants for God and the worship of the Temple (cp. Isa. 38. 11, 20, 22).

Ps. 44. The crisis in the reign of Hezekiah is ever to the fore. In the time of the wayward king Ahaz, the land had known reverses; but now, though righteousness swayed the throne (*vv.* 17, 18), the very existence of the kingdom was threatened (*vv.* 12-15). The people being thus helpless, the Assyrian invader is confident. Hence the urgent appeal to the Lord to intervene and save the nation (*vv.* 23-6).

Ps. 45. A song in honour of the king's marriage, assigned to *Alamoth* (= 'Maidens'—see liturgical title standing over Ps. 46 in ordinary editions). As in the Song of Songs, the maidens celebrate love (see headline, 'A Song of loves,' and *vv.* 8-17; also cp. Cant. 1. 3). The majestic statements of *vv.* 3-7 have a peculiar significance in view of Hezekiah's life as we have found it, not only in the historical records and the Psalms as a collection, but also in the writings of Isaiah the prophet. A comparison of the language of the verses under notice with that of Ps. 2. 4-7 (also belonging to this reign) suggests important aspects of Messianic doctrine. The fact that Hezekiah married Hephzibah, whom Jewish tradition makes out to have been the daughter of Isaiah (Ber. 10^a), is by no means called in question by *v.* 13, the object of which may have been

to intimate that the bride was not one whit behind those of royal blood. The verse should be rendered: 'All her glory is as that of a king's daughter: in the palace her clothing is of wrought gold.' See note on Ps. 87.

Ps. 46. God is praised for the destruction of the Assyrian army. Regarding 'the river' of *v.* 4, see 2 Chron. 32. 30; 2 Kings 20. 20; Isa. 22. 11; and Ps. 110. 7. (Also see pp. 114-21 *ante*.)

Pss. 47, 48. Further celebration of the great deliverance dealt with in the preceding psalm. God will establish the city which He has delivered. On the last verse of Ps. 48, see pp. 94-6 *ante*.

Ps. 49. Hezekiah's experience as set forth in Isa. 53, contrasted with that of the rich and wicked (*vv.* 5-12). Though appointed to death, the king lived again. Confident of recovery from mortal sickness, he said: 'God will redeem my soul from the hand of Sheol: for he will receive me' (*v.* 15; see note on Ps. 27).

Ps. 50. The first of the psalms of Asaph, a seer of Hezekiah's time (2 Chron. 29. 30; see p. 90 *ante*). The object here is—(1) to reprove such religion as was without heart-loyalty to Jehovah (*vv.* 7-15); and (2) to repudiate the counsels of some wicked person who had been guilty of misrepresenting the Divine will and purpose (*vv.* 16-21), such as Rabshakeh had shown himself to be (2 Kings 18. 25); or those citizens who, untrue to God and king, were in favour of making terms with the Assyrian (*ibid.* 31. 32). On *vv.* 17, 22, 23, see Ps. 2. 9-12.

Ps. 51. The first of 'the prayers of David the son of Jesse', (Ps. 72. 20). Suited in terms for all who are conscious of sin, it was, with those following, accepted and adapted by Hezekiah for Temple use. Taking full blame for his momentary submission to the Assyrian, as we must judge him to have done from Isa. 38. 17, the king might well offer his fervent plea for Divine mercy. The language accords in several passages with that of Job and the Book of Isaiah. The terrible 'hiding of face' is referred to in *vv.* 9-11, and the desire is expressed that this may not be from the king, but rather from his sins. Equally true of Hezekiah were the verses (16, 17) which pronounce the situation to be one which called, not for vows or sacrifices merely, but rather for a broken and contrite heart:

and this was Hezekiah's in deed and in truth, as we have found in Isa. 57. 15, 16. In order to give expression to an urgent political need and desire, the king added verses 18, 19; on which see pp. 110-12 *ante*, and cp. 2 Chron. 32. 5.

Ps. 52. The inscription, 'when Doeg the Edomite came,' &c., indicates the time of the composition; and the subject of the 'Dancings' mentioned in the liturgical title (standing over Ps. 53) is to hand in 1 Sam. 18. 6; 21. 11; 29. 5. The times of Hezekiah furnished a like occasion for jubilation, when the Assyrian was destroyed by an act of God. Rabshakeh was a true successor of Goliath: like him, he 'loved all devouring words', and was 'a deceitful tongue' (2 Kings 18. 29, 35; cp. Ps. 120. 2, 3). Was he not likewise 'rooted out of the land of the living' (2 Kings 19, 35); and was not Hezekiah, on the other hand, 'like a green olive tree in the house of God,' waiting on His name in the presence of His saints? (2 Kings 20. 6, 19; Isa. 38. 20). As to the liturgical title, see note on Ps. 87.

Ps. 53. This is Ps. 14 with verbal variations. See note thereunder.

Ps. 54. A prayer for deliverance from oppression, with assurance of relief. It was timely in both reigns.

Ps. 55. In the case of David, refer to 2 Sam. 15, where the rebellion of Absalom and the treason of Ahithophel are described. The situation was in substance repeated in the experience of Hezekiah. See note on Ps. 41.

Pss. 56-58. The reign of Hezekiah called for just such prayers as these. The very existence of the kingdom was threatened: hence the liturgical title, *Al-tashheth* = 'Destroy not!' (standing over Pss. 57-59).

Pss. 59-61. Prayers for deliverance from enemies. The concluding verses of the third, asking for prolongation of life, in order to unceasing service of praise, is after the mind of Hezekiah, as we have seen in many places.

Pss. 62-65. Prayers and praises which well befitted the circumstances of Hezekiah. The last is an acknowledgement of special mercies: the king 'performs' vows which he previously made when imploring Divine intervention (*v.* 1). The tumult of the peoples—the Assyrian hosts—has been stilled by acts which have struck the surrounding nations with fear

(*vv.* 7, 8); and now comes a time of harvest-plenty. The psalm as a whole recalls Ps. 126, where the 'turning again of the captivity of Zion' is followed with an assurance that 'they that sow in tears shall reap in joy' (see pp. 44-7 *ante*).

Ps. 66. In the first section God is praised for the wonders of former days (*vv.* 1-7). The remainder of the psalm is probably of the time of Hezekiah, whose trials are described in *vv.* 8-12, in the plural number of the pronoun, while his thanksgiving is expressed (in the first person singular) in *vv.* 13-20.

Ps. 67. The language is well suited for the time of Hezekiah.

Ps. 68. A celebration of the entrance of the land of promise, with a description of the solemn procession of the tribes to the central sanctuary. Suggested by the bringing of the Ark to Zion, the substance of the psalm was evidently written before the division of the kingdom (see *v.* 27; and cp. 2 Sam. 6 and 1 Chron. chh. 15 and 16). The concluding portion, *v.* 28 to the end, was apparently added in the days of Hezekiah. On *v.* 29, cp. 2 Chron. 32. 23, and Ps. 45. 12; on *v.* 31, cp. Isa. 45. 14; on *v.* 35, cp. Isa. 40. 29.

Ps. 69. This is a rehearsal of sorrows and afflictions, such as Hezekiah shared in goodly measure with his great ancestor. Note the 'hiding of face' (*v.* 17); and the allusion to the king's sickness—'smitten', in *v.* 26 (cp. Isa. 53. 4, 5). On the last two verses, illustrating 'adaptation', 'God will save Zion,' &c., see pp. 113, 114 *ante*.

Pss. 70, 71. This is one psalm. Whether or not he added anything to the original, Hezekiah could not but find the words, as they have come to us, suited to the needs of his heart when praying for deliverance from enemies.

Ps. 72. Whether by Solomon on his own behalf, or by David for Solomon, the words of this psalm, so rich in the expression of Messianic ideals, might well be offered in the Temple for Hezekiah, who in deed and truth 'judged the people with righteousness and the poor with judgement' (*v.* 2).

Ps. 73. Asaph writes the experiences of Hezekiah. The 'wicked' are the Assyrians—arrogant, proud, and opulent (*vv.* 3, 8, 9, 12; cp. Ps. 49. 6). Verse 5 should be rendered: 'In the travail of a man' (*enôsh*) 'they have no share; nor as a man' (*âdâm*) 'are they plagued' (cp. Isa. 53. 4, 11). The 'man' was

the good king, who, still alluding to his sickness, goes on to say 'All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning' (*v.* 14). When at length Hezekiah went into the sanctuary of God (*v.* 17), he understood as never before the meaning of his own suffering and the folly of the Assyrian boasting.

Ps. 74. While the Assyrian was still in the land, this was a prayer expressing the feelings and desires of the king of Judah. It is to be noted that the evils referred to in *vv.* 3-7 were not complete and irreparable, as when, in a later time, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city: in that case, there would have been no Temple in which to offer this prayer, with its 'Destroy not!' appeal (standing over Ps. 75 in ordinary editions), to the Lord to 'arise and plead His own cause' (*vv.* 22, 23). All the same, terrible things were threatened; and already the 'places of assembly', holy places, the homes of the tribes, had been destroyed in various parts of the land (*v.* 8; *cp.* 2 Kings 18. 13; 2 Chron. 32. 1).

Pss. 75, 76. Celebrations of the destruction of the Assyrian host. In the inscription over the latter, the Septuagint translation says, 'With reference to the Assyrian'—so obvious is the allusion to the great event of Hezekiah's reign.

Ps. 77. Written for Hezekiah in a time of trouble (Ps. 120. 1), and when he was disquieted and his spirit overwhelmed (*v.* 3; *cp.* inscription over Ps. 102). Searchings of heart as to the past did not at first bring assurance in regard to present distress (*vv.* 5-9). A second review, however, showed that the marvels of days gone by had led up to the existing situation (*vv.* 10-20). As God is still the same (*v.* 13), all must be well—as the absence of further expostulation implies.

Ps. 78. A sketch of the history of Israel. As in the days of Asaph (and Hezekiah), so in times long antecedent, the people apostatized from God (*vv.* 8-10, 36, 37). The division of the kingdom is apparently recognized (*vv.* 67, 68), and placed in the light of the Divine choice of David (*vv.* 70-2).

Ps. 79. Once again the blasphemous boasting of Rabshakeh is interpreted to imply, 'Where is their God?' Though the Assyrian threatens the land and the city, there is still a Temple in which to pray in the words of the psalm, as entrusted to the

care of the Chief Musician. This was the case throughout the reign of Hezekiah.

Ps. 80. In a time when the heathen are pressing in, God is besought to restore His people to their former state of security. This was the supreme prayer of Hezekiah when he came to the throne (2 Chron. 29. 5-10). As with Ps. 76, so with this, the Septuagint translators rightly judged the allusion, and embodied in the headline the words, 'With reference to Assyrian.'

Ps. 81. A hymn of praise. The reforming spirit of Hezekiah is detected in *vv.* 9, 13.

Ps. 82. The Godward relations of justice and truth, maintained in the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 19. 5-8), were urged with equal emphasis in the time of Hezekiah (Isa. 1. 23; 3. 13-15; Mic. 3. 11; 7. 3). On *v.* 8^b, cp. Ps. 2. 8.

Ps. 83. A prayer to God to intervene for the deliverance of His people, and thus to save them from the heathen. In the past, Edom, Moab, Philistia, Tyre and others had conspired against Israel (*vv.* 6, 7). Now Assyria has joined the confederacy, and is helping the children of Lot (*v.* 8; cp. Gen. 19. 36-8; and Judges, chh. 4-8). The time was manifestly that of Hezekiah.

Ps. 84. The Sons of Korah wrote for Hezekiah, as their psalms plainly show. The great desire of the king while in his mortal sickness, is expressed in *vv.* 1, 2 (cp. Isa. 38. 22). A day in the courts of God was to be esteemed above a thousand elsewhere. He would rather wait on the threshold of the house of God, than make his home with the wicked (*v.* 10; cp. Ps. 120. 5). On *v.* 4, cp. Isa. 38. 11, 19, 20; on *v.* 12, cp. Ps. 2. 12.

Ps. 85. In praise of a great deliverance. The enemy has been destroyed (cp. Pss. 46-48; 126. 1-4). The discomfiture of the Assyrian is here described.

Ps. 86. A prayer of David, which Hezekiah could well make his own from beginning to end.

Ps. 87. A son has been born in the royal house. Hence great rejoicings, as indicated in the liturgical title, 'Dancings to responsive songs' (standing over Ps. 88).¹ By such an event the

¹ For *Mahalath* read *M'hólóth*. See *Titles of the Psalms*, p. 76 f.

Lord showed His peculiar love for the gates of Zion (*v.* 1); and by other such blessings would He, in due time, establish the city (*v.* 5). Thus, while Ps. 45 relates to the marriage, this tells by implication of the birth of the royal heir. The historical record gives the name of son and wife (2 Kings 21. 1). While in any circumstances there would be jubilation at a royal marriage and birth, in the case of Hezekiah these events would be invested with peculiar interest, as arising in the period which followed upon the king's sickness and his restoration to health with an assurance of life extending over fifteen years.

Ps. 88. The first of a series of single psalms, coming from an earlier age. The writer, Heman the Ezrahite, was a wise man of the time of Solomon (1 Kings 4. 31). The psalm is the wail of a man nigh unto death; and it expressed with great force and precision the personal experience of King Hezekiah. Cp. *v.* 10 with Isa. 38. 18; also *v.* 14 with Isa. 53. 3. The sufferings of Job are echoed in the language as a whole. For the significance of this, see pp. 189-203 *ante*.

Ps. 89. By Ethan the Ezrahite (see 1 Kings 4. 31). The situation is found in the threat concerning the division of the kingdom, as set forth in 1 Kings 11. 11-13. The trials of state which Hezekiah was called upon to bear, rendered this psalm, with its bold appeal for Divine mercy, both timely and appropriate.

Pss. 90, 91. In a group of psalms from past times, it is hardly surprising to find one bearing the name of Moses. The language is majestic; the thoughts are sublime. In the time of his deep affliction, Hezekiah would find consolation in its words; and he had the psalm extended in harmonious language: hence Ps. 91, which has a relation to Ps. 90 similar to that expressed by *Higgaion* (Meditation=Epilogue) in the midst of Pss. 9 and 10. The former of these psalms (90) lays down the ground of confidence in God; the latter (91) outlines individual experience; and its note is true to the life of Hezekiah, whom Jehovah upheld in such manner that all danger, including plague and death, were for a specific period put away from him (*vv.* 3-12; cp. Ps. 121. 3-8). Note the significant word 'plague' in *v.* 10, and mark *vv.* 15, 16, the terms of which are especially applicable to the king of Judah: 'With

length of days will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.' Cp. this with the well-known words: 'I will add unto thy days . . . I will deliver thee and this city' . . . 'He shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand' (Isa. 38. 5, 6; 53. 10). The changes of pronouns in Ps. 91 suggest an antiphonal use such as we found to be required by the 'Songs of the Degrees', which to a remarkable extent exhibit this same feature (see pp. 11, 12 *ante*).

Pss. 92-97. 'For the Sabbath Day.' Hence its unusual length. The language was generally suited to the reign of Hezekiah, whose reforming work seems to be reflected in 94. 8-13; 95. 6-11; 96. 4-9; 97. 6-9, with intimations of blessing to follow upon righteousness: 92. 12-15; 97. 10-12. Occasionally one may detect allusions to the more personal experiences of the king: e.g. 94. 17-23 (see p. 80 *ante*).

Pss. 98, 99. The Song for the Sabbath Day in shortened form—embodying passages from Ps. 96.

Ps. 100. A Psalm of Thanksgiving. 'All the land' of Israel (not 'all lands') is called upon to 'make a joyful noise'. Hezekiah's heart would assuredly go out in this, for he endeavoured to bring it about. See 2 Chron. 30 throughout, and cp. Ps. 133 (pp. 59-61 *ante*).

Ps. 101. Though a psalm of David, this expresses the mind of Hezekiah, by whom, in all probability, the last two verses were added; the expressions there found suggesting passages in the king's story. On *v.* 7, cp. Isa. 22. 15-18; Ps. 120. 2, 3. On *v.* 8, cp. Ps. 75. 10; 94. 4.

Ps. 102. 'The Afflicted' (*Ani*, a term frequently employed with reference to Hezekiah, e.g. Ps. 10. 2, 9, 'poor'; and 22. 24, 'afflicted'). Distracted and desolate, the sorrowing one uses the language of Job, and distinctive terms met with in Isaiah's account of the sufferings of the Servant of the Lord. On this see pp. 193 ff. *ante*. In this psalm, 'the afflicted' is likened to a pelican, an owl, a sparrow: in the Writing of Hezekiah, the corresponding figures are a swallow, a crane, a dove (Isa. 38. 14). In *v.* 23 there is an echo of the prophet's intimation that the king must die and not live; in *v.* 24 of the prayer for recovery (cp. Isa. 38. 10); and in *v.* 28 of the intimation that the king's desire had been granted (cp. Isa. 38. 19). This salm and

the Writing are two of the many prayers offered by Hezekiah at the time when he was 'overwhelmed' (cp. Ps. 77. 3).

Pss. 103, 104. These hymns were both suited for the time of Hezekiah. Verses 3-5 of the former would have a specific application to the king's recovery from sickness; and *vv.* 33, 34 of the latter would accord with his avowed purpose to praise the Lord 'all the days of his life' (cp. Isa. 38. 4, 19, 20).

Pss. 105-107. The first group of 'Hallelujah' psalms, obscured as to their distinctive feature, as occasionally is the case elsewhere, by the word which should have served the purpose of a headline being regarded as the concluding line of the preceding psalms. In each case 'Hallelujah' should *introduce* the song.¹ In substance these were agreeable for the time of Hezekiah. The concluding verses of 106 (47, 48) were in point, by reason of the carrying away of captives from the southern as well as the northern kingdom to Assyria and other lands (cp. 107. 3 and 2 Chron. 29. 9). Verses 33-43 of the third psalm (107) seem to be of Hezekiah's time, in the language of the prophecies of Isaiah. Cp. *v.* 33 with Isa. 50. 2; *v.* 35 with Isa. 41. 18; 43. 20; *vv.* 36, 37 with Isa. 37. 30, 31.

Ps. 108. 'Of David.' A timely prayer in either reign.

Ps. 109. A prayer for Divine intervention, that deliverance may be granted from the persecutions of a deceiver who had requited love with hate, and rewarded evil for good (*vv.* 1-5). With an experience like that of David, Hezekiah could use the same words—if not with regard to the unfaithful Shebna (cp. *vv.* 8-15 with Isa. 22. 15-19), yet assuredly with respect to the reproachful Rabshakeh. As in Ps. 129. 5-8, he could ask that the Assyrian should be treated with the vengeance which he sought to bring upon the people of Judah (Isa. 37. 27). A prayer follows (*vv.* 21-31), apparently by Hezekiah, who is 'poor and needy' like his ancestor (cp. *v.* 16 with *v.* 22); and in the time of his trial, his days were indeed 'like the shadow when it declineth' (*v.* 23, cp. Ps. 102. 11). In praying 'O save me', he says, 'Thou, Lord, hast done it' (*vv.* 26, 27); which recalls that

¹ In fact, the presence of the formula 'Hallelujah' proved that the writing which followed was a Temple song.

in his Writing he said, 'Himself hath done it,' and 'The Lord will save' (Isa. 38. 15, 20).

Ps. 110. On this psalm, see pp. 114-21 *ante*.

Pss. 111-118. Another series of 'Hallelujah' psalms; the word which should stand at the beginning, however, has in some instances been made to stand at the close of preceding psalms. Pss. 114 and 115 form one psalm. While all are such as could be sung in the time of Hezekiah, the note is specially clear in Pss. 115 and 116. In the former there are denunciations of heathenism in language similar to that used in Isa. 44. 10-20; on *vv.* 17, 18, cp. Isa. 38. 18, 20. In the latter (116) the experiences of the king are indicated with precision. Verse 3 issues in *v.* 16; and *v.* 8 explains *v.* 15. The verse last specified thus implies that the Lord may make death 'precious' to His saints by *sparing them from it*, as in the case of Hezekiah (cp. Isa. 43. 4). Hence, 'Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears' (*v.* 8). Cp. the psalm as a whole with Isa. 38. Ps. 117 is a call to the nations to praise God for His goodness to Israel, and is in harmony with the words of Isaiah, with reference (in the first instance) to Hezekiah: 'Nations shall come to thy light; and kings to the brightness of thy rising' (Isa. 60. 3; cp. 42. 6; 49. 6). In Ps. 118 the king rehearses his trials from political enemies (*vv.* 10-16); and proceeds to praise God for raising him to a new life after sore chastening at the verge of death (*vv.* 17, 18). He concludes with words of self-consecration to God (*vv.* 19-28). On *v.* 22, cp. Isa. 28. 16; and on *vv.* 28, 29, cp. Isa. 38. 19, 20.

Ps. 119. This psalm might well have been written in the time of that king who 'commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion to the priests and Levites, that they might give themselves to the law of the Lord', and who 'in every work that he began, in the law and in the commandments, sought his God' (2 Chron. 31. 4, 21; cp. Ps. 1. 2). The whole forms one psalm, with eight lines to each letter of the alphabet, as some others have one, two, or more. As showing how the Massorettes might look at such matters in individual cases, it may be mentioned that in one manuscript (*circa* A.D. 1300) this psalm was divided into twenty-two, each group being regarded as a separate psalm (Ginsburg's *Introduction to Heb. Bible*, p. 725 f.).

Pss. 120-134. The 'Songs of the Degrees'. Alike as to designation and content these are explained in Chapters i-v of this volume; and shown to have a topical relation to the most critical period of Hezekiah's life.

Pss. 135, 136. Two more 'Hallelujah' psalms. In the former, verses 15-19 recall Ps. 115. 4-11. The emphasis on Zion and Jerusalem in *v.* 21 is in contrast with the abominations of the heathen. In the latter psalm, verses 23, 24 recognize deliverance from a low estate with adversaries present, such as was experienced by Hezekiah before Sennacherib's army was destroyed.

Ps. 137. Though without a formal headline, this psalm would be adequately recalled by its opening words. The writer relates how he and others, while in captivity, wept 'by the rivers of Babylon'. See explanation, with reference to the time of Hezekiah, in pp. 130-40 *ante*.

Ps. 138. The first of a series of eight Davidic psalms, brought into Temple use in the reign of Hezekiah, for whose times they had an appropriate message.

Ps. 139. See under Ps. 138.

Ps. 140. See under Ps. 138. The last two verses are specially pertinent to the case of the good king Hezekiah ('the afflicted'; cp. headline of Ps. 102) and those who sympathized with him in the ways of God.

Ps. 141. See under Ps. 138. He who could pray in the words of Ps. 121, would particularly appreciate the last three verses of this psalm. Cp. also Ps. 124. 7.

Ps. 142. See under Ps. 138. Verses 5-7 are in terms of Hezekiah's prayers and psalms, and assert an obvious relation to his experiences.

Ps. 143. From beginning to end a psalm which Hezekiah could use; from *v.* 7 to the end we seem to read of him with special clearness.

Ps. 144. Verses 9-15 are plainly the addition of a later time—the days of Hezekiah's prosperity. The addition opens like those to Pss. 22 and 35 (on which see notes). Free from invasion, and having no schemes of conquest, the people are indeed happy with Jehovah as their God. See further explanation, p. 121 *f. ante*.

Ps. 145. An alphabetic psalm, in which the acrostic is complete with the exception of the verse beginning with the letter *nun*. That verse was not 'lost', but rather excluded in the work of adapting the psalm for the times of Hezekiah (see p. 108 f. *ante*).

Pss. 146-150. The last 'Hallelujah' series, each psalm closing as well as opening with the liturgical formula. The language well becomes the reign of Hezekiah, whose familiar expression, 'made heaven and earth,' is found in 146. 6 (cp. Isa. 37. 16; Ps. 121. 2); as well as his avowed contempt for 'the arm of flesh' (147. 10; cp. 2 Chron. 32. 8). The 'building of Jerusalem', and 'gathering the outcasts of Israel', of 147. 2, belong to the same period, and imply that the Sennacherib captivity was speedily restored, and the injuries sustained by the city quickly repaired. Verses 12-14 of this very psalm exhibit a strengthened city, and Temple praise in progress on an elaborate scale—suggesting the prosperous period of Hezekiah's reign. With this situation the entire group admirably agrees, showing why they were included in the repertory of the king who undertook to 'sing his songs to the stringed instruments all the days of his life in the house of the Lord' (Isa. 38. 20).

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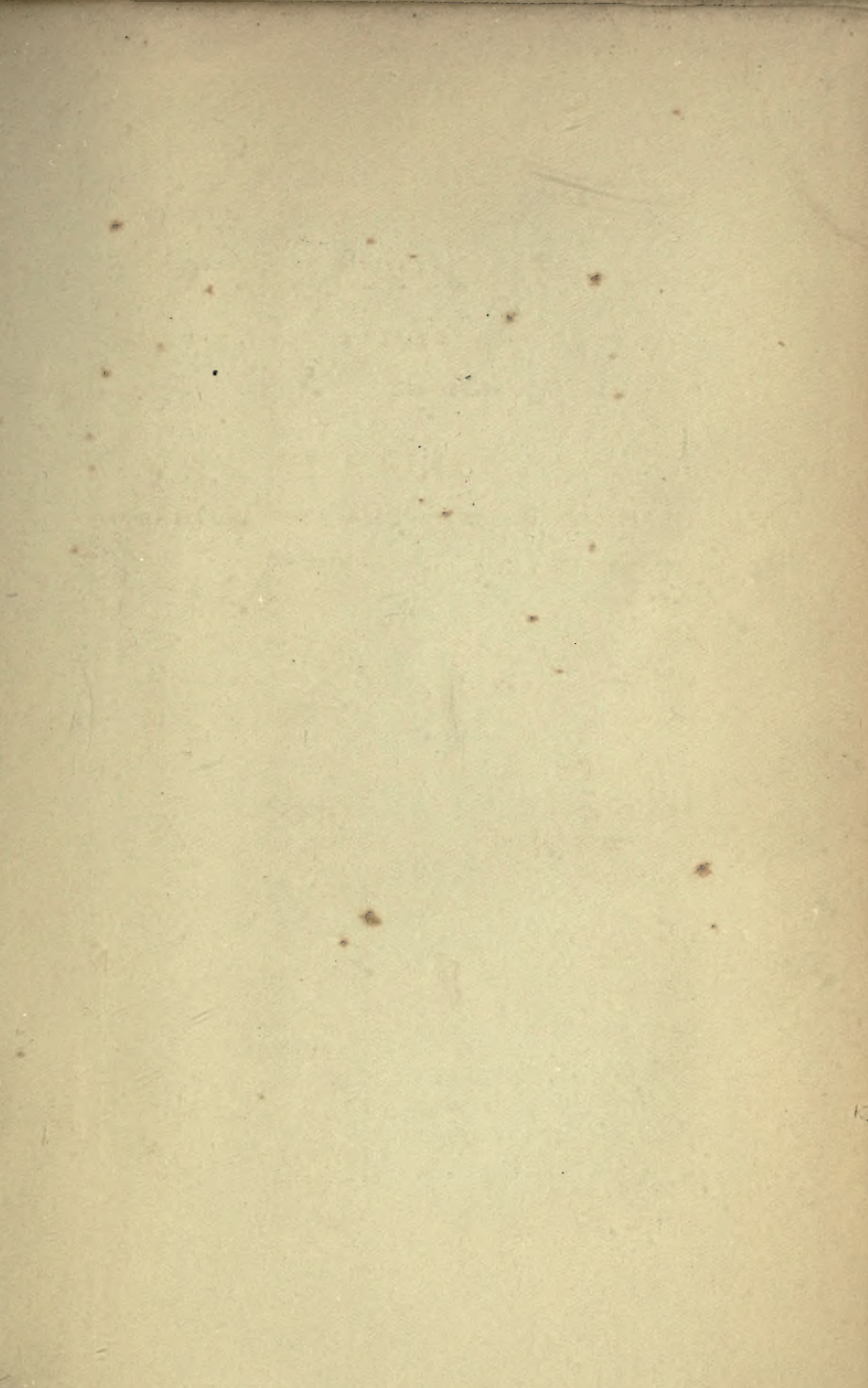
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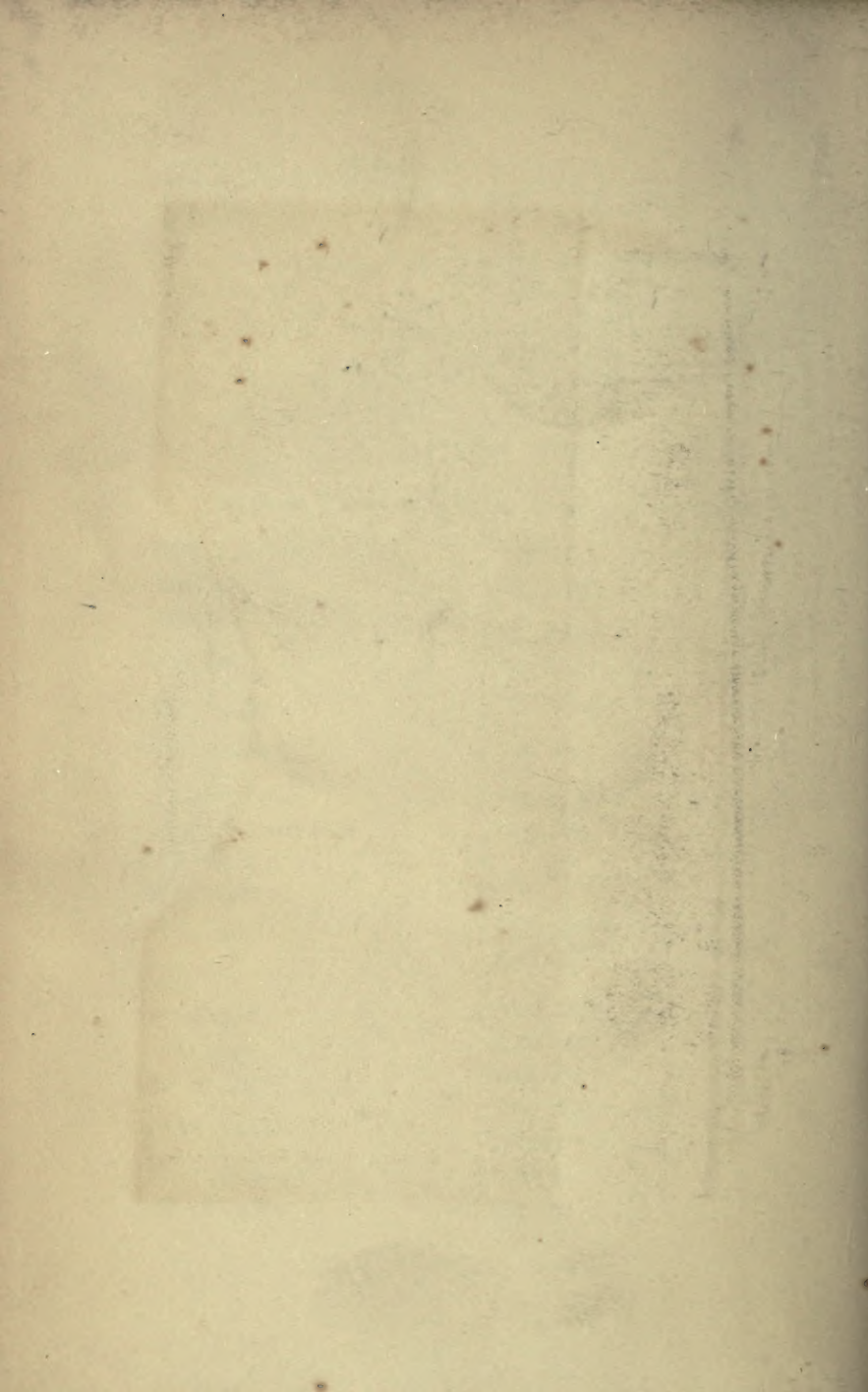
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