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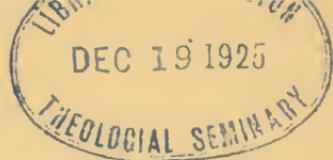
Section

A.M.17



DR. DRIVER ON THE AUTHORSHIP
OF
ISAIAH XIII-XIV.
BY
W. M. McPHEETERS.

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II. DR. DRIVER ON THE AUTHORSHIP OF ISAIAH XIII. AND XIV.

ON first reading Dr. Driver's argument for the non-Isaianic authorship of these chapters, one is apt to find himself saying, in the words of Agrippa, "Almost thou persuadest me." This is the more likely to be the case if he has read the preceding pages of Dr. Driver's able book; for then he will come to the consideration of the discussion of this particular question, impressed not only with the extent of Dr. Driver's learning and the accuracy of his scholarship, but, what is of much more importance, impressed also with his candor and evident intention to deal reverently with God's word. Further, he can scarcely fail to perceive that there is not a little justice in the views advanced in regard to the relation between a prophecy and its historical genesis, and that these views, judiciously applied, are capable of yielding the happiest results. This favorable impression, moreover, will remain and exert its powerful influence, notwithstanding the fact that the reader may have observed all along that Dr. Driver habitually overlooks or discards considerations which may seem to him to be of prime importance. If, under such circumstances, the "almost" fails to become an "altogether," the fault may lie in the prejudices or the unreasonable fears of the reader, but it is also at least possible that it may lie in some weak link in the argument that has been overlooked by Dr. Driver.

Now, the present writer, after patient and candid study, finds himself unable to accept Dr. Driver's conclusion as to the non-Isaianic authorship of these chapters. He at least persuades himself that his abiding conviction that Isaiah, and not some unknown writer of the time of the exile, is their author, is due not to prejudice. On the contrary, it seems to him that Dr. Driver's own principles and formal admissions demand a conclusion the very opposite of that at which that distinguished scholar has arrived. Let us see

The following extract¹ will put the reader in possession of Dr. Driver's statement of the case :

“The first of these prophecies is one on Babylon (xiii. 2–xiv. 23), which differs from all the other prophecies of Isaiah which have hitherto been reviewed, in the remarkable circumstance that it stands *unrelated to Isaiah's own age*. The Jews are not warned, as Isaiah might warn them (xxxix. 6), against the folly of concluding an alliance with Babylon, or reminded of the disastrous consequences which such an alliance might entail ; nor are they even represented, as in Jeremiah, as threatened with impending exile ; they are represented as *in exile*, and as about to be delivered from it (xiv. 1, 2). It is of the very essence of prophecy to address itself to the needs of the prophet's own age ; it was the prophet's office to preach to his own contemporaries, to announce to them the judgments, or the consolations, which arose out of the circumstances of their own time, to interpret for them their own history. As far as we have hitherto gone, this is what Isaiah has uniformly done. His prophecies have been replete with allusions to contemporary history—to Ephraim, Damascus, and the Assyrians. That history is the foundation upon which his grandest predictions rest. Here, on the other hand, the allusions are not to Assyria, but to *Babylon* ; not the Babylon of Merodach-Baladan, who sought Hezekiah's friendship, which was known to Isaiah (xxxix.), but the Babylon of the exile, which held the Jews in cruel bondage (xiv. 2, 3), and was shortly to be destroyed by the Medes (xiii. 17). To base a promise upon a condition of things *not yet existent*, and without any point of contact or association with those to whom it is addressed, is alien to the genius of prophecy. . . . With the long invective against Babylon contained in these chapters of Jeremiah (*i. e.*, chapters i., li.), the present prophecy is, indeed, in temper and spirit, remarkably akin ; whilst, on the other hand, it exhibits few or none of the accustomed marks of Isaiah's style.”

Again, in another place,² he says :

“The first of these prophecies consists of an announcement of the approaching fall of Babylon (xiii. 19), and of the subsequent

¹ *Isaiah : His Life and Times*. By Rev. S. A. Driver, D. D., p. 85 f. ² *Ibid.*, p. 126 f.

release of the Jews (xiv. 1, 2) from the land of their exile. The reasons which forbid our attributing it to Isaiah have been stated briefly already (p. 86). The prophet is, in the first instance, *the teacher of his own generation*; hence it is a fundamental principle of prophecy that the historical situation of the prophet should be the basis of his prediction. Isaiah lived during the Assyrian supremacy; and it is the failure of *a particular Assyrian king* to destroy or subjugate Judah which he uniformly foretells. In the present prophecy Babylon is represented as holding the empire of the world (xiii. 19; xiv. 6f.), which it exercises in particular (xiv. 1, 2) *by holding the Jews in exile*; and it is *the city and empire of Babylon* whose overthrow is announced in it. By analogy it will have been written during the period of the Babylonian supremacy; for it is arbitrary to suppose (as has been done) that Babylon may have been mentioned by Isaiah as the 'representative' of Assyria. Not only does Babylon appear here as the sole and supreme seat of the world empire, but Babylon, in Isaiah's day, so far from being the representative of Assyria, was its antagonist, ever struggling to win independence (pp. 45, 55, 96). Moreover, the two empires of Assyria and Babylon are quite distinct in the old Testament; the *rôle* which they play in history is very different; they are never confused, still less 'identified,' by the prophets. The embassy of Merodach-Baladan, the temporary king of Babylon, to Hezekiah, afforded Isaiah a substantial motive for announcing a future exile to Babylon. It could supply no motive for such a promise of subsequent return from exile as these chapters contain. The circumstances of the exile—while the Jews were still in bondage, and the power of Babylon seemed yet unshaken—constitute a suitable and sufficient occasion for the present prophecy, an occasion of exactly the nature which the analogy of prophecy demands. On the other hand, the circumstances of Isaiah's age supply no such occasion. It only remains to add (for the purpose of obviating misconception) that in assigning the prophecy to a date during the exile, we do not divest it of its *predictive* character; it becomes no *vaticinium ex eventu*. The language of chapter xiii. makes it certain that it was written *prior* to the capture of Babylon by the Medes in 538.

Written some few years before this event, it would be as fully and truly predictive as were Isaiah's prophecies of the failure of Sennacherib (chaps. xxix.—xxxii.), which, indeed, as we have seen, preceded the event by not more than a single year."

This is substantially Dr. Driver's latest word upon this subject. It is unmodified by anything that he has said in his recent work on *Old Testament Literature*. We have quoted thus at length in order that Dr. Driver might have the full benefit of his argument, and we, the full benefit of his admissions.

I. In considering the above extracts, we desire the reader's attention, first of all, to some things which *do not* constitute the grounds upon which Dr. Driver feels constrained to reject the Isaianic authorship of these chapters. Attention to this point is a matter of justice to Dr. Driver. It may also prove to be a matter of importance in justifying the conclusion at which we hope to arrive as against Dr. Driver.

(a.) Let it be carefully noted, then, that Dr. Driver does not deny the Isaianic authorship of the chapters in question, because the recognition of it would carry along with it the *recognition of the supernatural in history and revelation*. If we understand Dr. Driver, he admits not only that God may interpose in human affairs, but he distinctly affirms that God did interpose, and that, too, directly and immediately, in the affairs of Israel. He believes not only in the supernatural in general, but also in the supernatural in the form of miracles. If we do not misconceive him, he has no more difficulty about admitting a miracle in the sphere of mind than one in that of matter. What he insists upon, and this is scarcely a matter for censure, is that before a divine interposition be admitted it should be shown that there is "*dignus vindice nodus*." It is much to be regretted that Dr. Driver, and other of his fellow-workers, should so express themselves as to create the impression upon many minds that they either have already, or else are just about, to surrender their belief in the supernatural. Such, however, is not the case. Dr. Driver believes in the supernatural. He is entitled to credit for this fact as a matter of personal justice, and we are entitled to the benefit of it as a matter of argument. For proven the "*nodus*,"

then, Dr. Driver cannot, upon his own principle, refuse to admit the "*vindex*."

(b.) He does not deny it, because to admit it would be to admit that there is such a thing as predictive prophecy in the strict and proper sense. Dr. Driver himself believes in predictive prophecy, and that, too, in the strict and proper sense, namely, as involving the announcement of an event still future, the occurrence of which could only be foreseen by God, and the announcement of which, upon the part of the prophet, is only to be explained upon the ground that he has learned it by a direct revelation from God. We say that Dr. Driver believes in predictive prophecy *in this sense*. Our warrant for the statement is, that he himself says that he does.

(c.) He does not deny it, because to admit it would be to admit that a prophet might predict a *definite* event belonging to the distant future, that is, lying entirely beyond his own time's horizon—lying beyond it, we mean, in the sense that there was nothing in the political or moral situation, as it presented itself to the natural eye of the prophet or his contemporaries, to suggest, still less to justify, the prediction of the occurrence of the particular event predicted. Dr. Driver himself believes in the prediction of just such events by both Isaiah and Jeremiah. He admits, for instance, the Isaianic authorship of Isaiah xxxix. 5-7; but this passage contains a prediction of the deportation of the Jews to Babylon. Now, this event did not occur for more than one hundred years, and so belonged to the distant future. And let it be noticed further, that there was nothing either in the political or moral situation to suggest, still less to justify, the occurrence of a deportation to *this particular place*, though that was evidently of the very essence of the prediction. Again, Dr. Driver admits that Jeremiah xxv. 11-12, is from the hand of Jeremiah.¹ This contains a prediction of the return from the Babylonish captivity. It was uttered something like seventy years before that event, and so belongs to the distant future. And here again, as in the previous case, there was nothing in the political or moral situation, as it presented itself to the eyes of Jeremiah or his contem-

¹ *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, page 244.

poraries, to suggest, still less to justify, the expectation of the occurrence of such an event. The language is either a "*vaticinium ex eventu*," or a prediction of a definite event belonging to the distant future, and in the sense above defined, beyond the time's horizon of the prophet who uttered it. Dr. Driver holds it to be the latter.

(*d.*) He does not deny it upon the ground that the prophetic writings "supply no analogy for such a sustained transference to the future as would be implied if these chapters were by Isaiah, or for the detailed and definite description of the circumstances of a distant age." He urges this as an objection against the Isaianic authorship of Isaiah xl.-lxvi., but not against that of these chapters. Doubtless he had a reason for this, and certainly the most obvious reason is that he himself perceived that, if laid, the objection could not be sustained.

(*e.*) He does not deny it because his scholarship has led him to the discovery of any deficiency, defects, or conflicts in the *external* evidence for the genuineness of these chapters. He admits that the external evidence, such as it is, is wholly in favor of the Isaianic authorship of these chapters. He admits that in this respect, at least, they stand upon exactly the same footing as that of the first twelve chapters, the Isaianic authorship of which he himself allows. Hence, his rejection of the genuineness of chapters xiii. and xiv. is confessedly in the face of the external evidence.

These points are negative in form, but, unless we are greatly mistaken, they will be found to be full of positive significance. We bespeak for them the careful consideration of every reader. We have been at the pains to state them—*First*: merely as a matter of justice to Dr. Driver. If any merit attaches to retaining one's belief in the supernatural and in predictive prophecy; if any merit attaches to the bold avowal of such a belief in the face of the oppositions of this naturalistic age, then this distinguished scholar should have the credit for it. Conservative writers who for any reason misconceive or misrepresent his position here only injure their cause and themselves, as well as do a gross injustice to Dr. Driver. It matters not that Dr. Driver is not always self-consistent. Few of us are. It matters not that he holds views and

adopts methods upon other points that are dangerous. Upon the particular point now under consideration he has, in his latest book, put himself upon record in utterances of unmistakable plainness, which commit him to the position we have indicated above. He is unquestionably entitled to the credit of his position, and we to the benefit of it. *Second*: In order to emphasize a point which seems to us of prime importance, and yet one which is only too frequently overlooked, and that, too, by those who can least afford to do so. It is a sad fact, and yet one that cannot be denied, that many eminent Old Testament scholars have lost, or are fast losing, their faith in the supernatural, properly so called, and along with it their faith in the existence of any such thing as predictive prophecy. Many of the younger and less discriminating minds among the so-called progressives and radicals are apt to attribute this loss of faith in the supernatural upon the part of their leaders to the vast oriental learning, the superior methods of historical criticism, together with the greater intellectual acumen, freedom, and boldness of these trusted leaders, and to attribute their own loss of faith in the supernatural to the fact that they are, at least relatively to their youth and opportunities, far in advance of the conservative herd in these same respects. But as regards the leaders, such a case as that of Dr. Driver, even standing by itself, would suggest that there is some mistake somewhere in this conclusion. Few will be disposed to challenge the extent and accuracy of his learning in the Old Testament field, or his intellectual acumen and discipline. He follows, too, the most approved methods of criticism, and yet he retains his faith in the supernatural. As regards the flattering view which these neophytes take of their own attainments, it will be enough, at present, to say that it is more soothing to their vanity than indicative of their self-knowledge or their discrimination. This above all others is a time for every honest-minded, brave-hearted lover of truth among our younger scholars to distrust himself and to search into his motives. When the announcement, "*Le roi est mort!*" has gone forth, it is easy enough to shout, "*Vive le roi!*" This, however, is not the shout of freemen, but of those who exchange one master for another. For ourselves, we see no advan-

tage that the new traditionalism has over the old. The essential characteristics of each are the same. They are indolence, cowardice, and a cringing subservience to authority. Better to follow the counsel of the fearless old apostle, "Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good." But, *third*: we have been at the pains to call attention to these points in order, if possible, to eliminate certain irrelevant issues from this discussion. If we are to judge intelligently of the soundness of Dr. Driver's conclusion, we must be willing to take whatever pains are necessary in order to get clearly before us the ground, the only ground, upon which that conclusion rests, or can rest. Let it be constantly borne in mind, then, that—When Dr. Driver admits that God did from time to time reveal the future to his servants the prophets, he virtually admits that, looking merely at the abstract possibilities of the case, apart from the evidence as it relates to this particular case, God might have put these chapters in the mouth of Isaiah. This is not all. Dr. Driver's admissions here would seem to compel him to go further, and to admit that, proven a need for such a message as the one contained in these chapters, upon the part of the contemporaries of Isaiah, then, in connection with the external evidence, we would have strong, or, rather, unimpeachable, grounds for admitting their Isaianic authorship. At least, that is the way in which he himself seeks to establish the Isaianic authorship of chapters i.–xii. What he denies is not the *possibility*, but the *propriety*, of God's putting such a message as that contained in these chapters in the mouth of Isaiah. This, as we shall see, constitutes the very core of his objection to the view that they proceeded from Isaiah. Some may think that this raises a question of no less difficulty than delicacy. Certainly, in view of the fact that so many of God's ways are absolutely inscrutable to finite minds, it becomes us to be slow and cautious in asserting that the impropriety of such a message as this in the mouth of Isaiah is so great that God could not have put it there. Much in such a case depends upon one's standpoint, and it is not always easy for us to ascertain, or even duly to appreciate, the divine standpoint. True, Dr. Driver might say that the question, after all, is not of any great difficulty or delicacy, but resolves itself

into striking the balance between two probabilities, a task to which even ordinary minds are equal. Is it more probable that the fallible human tradition which assigns these chapters to Isaiah is in error, or that the indications in the body of the prophecy itself, which seem to make it only suitable to a later age, are misleading? It will be observed, however, that, even when the question is stated thus, it resolves itself into one as to the suitability or propriety of such a message as this in the mouth of Isaiah. Let the reader bear this in mind as we proceed.

Let him also bear in mind the fact that Dr. Driver does not allege the length of time which elapsed between the utterance of the prophecy contained in these chapters and its fulfilment as an objection against their Isaianic authorship. If at times Dr. Driver seems a little confused and vacillating in dealing with this point, it need not disturb us. For even if he were disposed to base an objection upon the matter of time, he is, by his own admissions, debarred from doing so. As we have seen, he admits that Jeremiah predicted the return from captivity seventy years before its occurrence. He also admits that Isaiah predicted the exile more than one hundred years before it took place. How, then, could he reasonably maintain that Isaiah could not have predicted the return from exile, when that event lay only seventy years farther in the future. Seventy years—why, what are they among so many? The time factor can only enter into our problem as it bears upon the question of *timeliness*. Let it be remembered, then, that Dr. Driver's objection to the Isaianic authorship of these chapters hinges not upon the question of time, but simply and solely upon that of *timeliness*. He maintains that in the mouth of Isaiah these chapters would have been "born out of due time"; and, so, would have served no useful purpose.

While many would urge the definiteness and detail of description of these chapters as against their Isaianic authorship, let it be remembered that Dr. Driver does not, and, we may add, cannot. True, the objection, if urged, would be utterly destitute of weight. The prophecy does not contain a definite and detailed description of the things predicted. On the contrary, while the picture presented is vivid, the terms employed in painting it are of the most

general kind. Granted that the event of a return from exile had been revealed to Isaiah in its naked simplicity; granted that he had poetic genius at all commensurate with his reputation, and the picture here drawn of the downfall of Babylon might easily have proceeded from him. The reference to the Medes as the instruments in executing the divine vengeance (xii. 17) is the only thing approaching definiteness of detail in either chapter. But, if any one think that it is inappropriate for God to descend to such definiteness of detail in revealing the future, if any regard such definiteness of detail as doing violence to the "analogy of prophecy," we should not forget that there lies ready to our hand that ever-easy to be invoked hypothesis of an interpolation. We confess that we do not admire the haste with which many resort to this suspiciously subservient hypothesis. To us it looks too much like quack criticism. Still, it is the vogue just at present, the panacea of those who have foregone conclusions to establish in the face of stubborn facts. Why then, if need there be, should it not be applied to this single verse rather than to the prophecy as a whole? What surgeon in his senses would think of cutting off a healthy arm in order, forsooth, to get rid of a small wart upon the extremity of the little finger? Whatever may be thought of such a procedure in criticism, in surgery it would be pronounced wanton butchery. But, we say again, that whatever objection others might urge upon this score, Dr. Driver can offer none. For, has he not admitted that a prediction of the distant future may be definite as to the event predicted, definite as to the place where the event is to occur, definite as to the time within which it is to occur? How, then, can he deny that it may also be definite as to the persons through whose instrumentality it is to be effected? No, Dr. Driver's objection might be summed up in two words—*cui bono?* Why should Isaiah reveal to the men of his generation an event that was not to occur until after they and their children and their children's children had all gone to their long home? What profit is there in such prophecies for those to whom they are primarily addressed? The event predicted is too remote, and the persons mentioned by name too utterly unknown even to

awaken the curiosity of Isaiah's contemporaries. The historical situation being what it was in Isaiah's day, Dr. Driver holds that the terms of this prophecy would have been meaningless, and hence necessarily useless, had it been uttered in the ears of Isaiah's contemporaries.

In order that we may have the real issue, the single issue, involved in Dr. Driver's objection clearly before our minds, it will be useful for us to press our analysis one step further. Let it be understood, then, that Dr. Driver's position as to the non-Isaianic authorship of these chapters is not to be referred to *any light* which he, more than another, has upon this special point, such as might be supposed to belong to him in view of his admitted pre-eminence in Semitic studies, and his acquaintance with the results of modern archæological research. It cannot be traced to any new translation of the Hebrew. No more can it be traced to anything new in his statement of the historical environment. We should not, then, permit our judgment to be blinded by the halo which Dr. Driver's eminent ability and learning are apt to throw around any opinion to which he may lend the sanction of his name. It should be understood that we have to do mainly, if not merely, with certain preconceptions of Dr. Driver as to *the propriety, the timeliness, the utility*, of such a prediction as this, if attributed to Isaiah.

The real centre and core of his objection to the Isaianic authorship of these chapters is, that "no intelligible purpose would be subserved by Isaiah's announcing to the generation of Hezekiah an occurrence lying like this in the distant future, and having no bearing upon contemporary interests." It is true that he appeals to the analogy of prophecy, and to the internal evidence which the prophecy is supposed to furnish of its exilic date. It is true, also, that he undertakes to show that the Babylon of these chapters is not the Babylon of Isaiah's day, and further, that Isaiah had no motive for such a prediction as they contain. But all of these points are, after all, merely subordinate and ancillary to the position noted above. They derive their significance from the support which they are supposed to lend and the weight they are supposed to give to that position. We shall, as we proceed, notice

these points, but we wish the reader to understand in advance that, though Dr. Driver spends his main strength upon them, they do not constitute the cutting edge of his contention against the genuineness of the chapters. Dr. Driver, we will not say artfully, but unfortunately, gives such prominence to these subordinate points that the reader is apt to overlook the fact that Dr. Driver's real difficulty lies not in the external evidence, nor in any specific tangible feature of the internal evidence, but rather in this, that it is contrary to his own internal sense of the fitness of things that Isaiah should bother himself or his contemporaries with events that were not to occur until they and their children had been long dead, events, accordingly (let the reader mark the *non-sequitur*), which could have no bearing upon contemporary interest.

II. We proceed next to notice certain propositions which Dr. Driver lays down, and upon which he seems to lay great stress, propositions which, while they are in the main correct in themselves, yet lend no support to his view as to the non-Isaianic authorship of these particular chapters, because of the fact that they are irrelevant, or, at least, are not shown to be relevant, to that issue.

These propositions will be found, we think, to furnish Dr. Driver with the major premise of his argument. If our analysis of his discussion is correct, that premise is: *every genuine prophecy must bear directly upon the interests of the contemporaries of the prophet from whom it purports to come.* We comment upon the propositions about to be given, for two reasons: *First*, because while all of them are true in a general sense, some, if not all, will need more or less modification before they will express the whole or the exact truth. *Second*, because Dr. Driver seems to intimate that they are either denied, ignored, or overlooked by those who accept the Isaianic authorship of these chapters. Such, however, is by no means the case. We impeach the correctness not of his major, but of his minor premise. The latter, as already intimated, is: the prophecy of these chapters has no intelligible relation to or bearing upon the interests of those who were contemporary with Isaiah.

First: then, Dr. Driver says¹: "The prophet is, in the first instance, *the teacher of his own generation.*" Put the emphasis upon the words, "*in the first instance,*" where it clearly belongs by right, and this becomes a simple elementary truth which no one denies. The only conceivable reason for referring to it here is to produce, if possible, the impression that, had Isaiah uttered these words, he would not have been fulfilling his function as a teacher of his own age. This impression, however, would only be correct, provided this prophecy contained no profitable lessons for the people of Isaiah's own time. This is a proposition which Dr. Driver did not seem to think it worth his while to trouble himself with proving. He does not prove it, though he sometimes asserts it, and then again, as here, suggests it. He does not even try to prove it. While, then, we may admit the correctness of the statement, we deny its relevancy, until it has been proved that these chapters in the mouth of Isaiah would have been without instruction for his contemporaries.

Second: In the same connection Dr. Driver adds: "Hence it is a fundamental principle of prophecy that the historical situation of the prophet should be the basis of his prediction." Here, again, there can be no exception to what is said, provided only that the emphasis be placed upon the proper word, and that word is clearly "*basis,*" though we submit that "*occasion*" would be preferable, because less ambiguous. All, we suppose, are prepared to admit that the prophet's historical environment must furnish, so to speak, the starting point of all his predictions, otherwise his utterances would have been meaningless riddles to the men of his own day, riddles that would scarcely have awakened sufficient curiosity to have insured their preservation and perpetuation for the benefit of those whom they more particularly concerned. It is one thing to say this, however, and quite a different thing to assert, as Dr. Driver seems, inconsistently, to imply, that prophecy must have its goal as well as its starting point in the prophet's own present. If this were true, where would be the room for, or what the use of predictive prophecy? Predictive prophecy, while it ever takes its rise in the present,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

also ever projects itself, and aims to carry the thoughts of its contemporaries forward with it into the future. It is like a bird of passage, whose tuneful notes first strike the ears and cheer the hearts of those from among whom it takes its flight, but, in so doing, only remind them that the full sweetness of that liquid melody is not for themselves, but for those in other, happier climes, where the swift-winged songster is to find its final home. We are persuaded that the underlying fallacy of Dr. Driver's thinking here and elsewhere is, that it is only the *past* and the *present* which are competent to teach the present. We hope to show that the future, where her voice can be heard, even though it be but indistinctly, is no less potent a teacher of the present than is the past.

Third: On page 86 it is said: "It is the very essence of prophecy to address itself to the needs of the prophet's own age." This is true. Hence Dr. Driver should have been at more pains to give us a clear view of his conceptions of the needs of Isaiah's day, as related, or rather as unrelated, to the contents of this prophecy. He has done nothing of the kind, but goes off in a somewhat inconsequent manner to show that Isaiah's other utterances stand related to the needs of his own day, leaving the impression upon the reader's mind that such is not the case with the contents of these chapters. This, however, is manifestly the very point at issue, and ought to have been proved rather than introduced into the reader's mind by implication. It by no means follows, as the day the night, that because the events predicted in these chapters were not to occur for something like two hundred years, therefore the prediction of them could not have been called for that length of time before their occurrence. It must be admitted that Dr. Driver's argument, if it can be called such, limps painfully, if it proceeds, as it seems to proceed, upon the assumption that because the prophecy in these chapters would meet a felt want of those living about the close of the Babylonian exile, therefore it could not have met a felt need of those living one hundred and fifty or more years before that event. If any such impression has found a temporary lodgment in his mind, he has deceived himself.

Fourth: Again, in the same connection he adds: "It was the prophet's office to preach to his own contemporaries, to announce to them the judgments or the consolations, which arose out of the circumstances of their time, to interpret for them their own history." Was there, then, no consolation in the prediction of these chapters for those living in the time of Isaiah? It seems to be implied that there was not. Is the implication a fair one, however? It may be, but Dr. Driver has furnished no evidence of the fact. Then, again, it may not be, and in that event Dr. Driver's profound remark is not only irrelevant, but positively misleading. But, again, was it not the prophet's office to interpret for his contemporaries their past and their future, as well as their present history? Dr. Driver, as we have seen, believes in predictive prophecy, but what other office has such prophecy except to interpret for them their future history? And if this be true, how does it happen that Dr. Driver feels himself at liberty to assume that the prediction of deliverance from Babylonian exile would be without interest, significance or profit for the contemporaries of Isaiah? A little proof upon this point would go much further with thinking men than any amount of scholarly assertion or assumption.

Fifth: Again, on page 86 it is said: "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." We would tremble before the presence of "the genius of prophecy" here invoked to bolster up a weak cause, but we cannot repress a smile at the imposition which her learned conjurer has practiced upon himself in her name. Let us ask, is it the non-existence of the condition of things, or is it the lack of contact between it and the prophet's circumstances and situation which presents the difficulty to Dr. Driver's mind in the present case? If the latter, then we must insist that Dr. Driver's mere assertion, while exceedingly weighty, is not of the nature of proof. We venture to think that, Dr. Driver himself being judge, there is a most important point of contact between this prediction of deliverance and the situation in Isaiah's own time. But, if it be the non-existence of the con-

dition which is the bug-bear, then we confess to a feeling of surprise that Dr. Driver should take this position. Let it be remembered that he admits that Jeremiah predicted a return from exile. Was not this conditioned upon the going into exile, and remaining there until there were sentiments of repentance awakened in the hearts of the people? Was it not conditioned, also, upon the rise and victorious career of the Medo-Persian empire? Here, then, is at least one case in which a promise was based upon a condition of things not yet existent, viz., the captivity, and a state of repentance upon the part of the Jews, and the breaking of the power of Babylon by the Medes and Persians. Ezekiel does the same thing, and so do all the prophets, beginning with Samuel and those who follow after. Evidently what Dr. Driver had in mind was something like this: "To base a promise upon a condition of things not yet conceived, contemplated, or announced as going to exist, is alien to the genius of prophecy." But, if he had thought it worth his while to say this, who would have thought it worth while to notice it? Should it be said, however, that the Babylon of this prophecy was not conceived, contemplated, or announced as going to exist, at the time it is alleged to have been promulgated, then we will have somewhat to say in reply later on. We will only add here that we regard Dr. Driver as right in saying that "it is arbitrary to suppose (as has been done) that Babylon may have been mentioned by Isaiah as the representative of Assyria."

III. We come, now, to examine Dr. Driver's proof of his minor premise. That premise, as will be remembered, was: *the prophecy of these chapters has no intelligible relation to, or bearing upon, the interests of those who were contemporary with Isaiah.*

1. The first proposition which Dr. Driver lays down, presumably in support of this position, is that the contents of these chapters are "*unrelated to Isaiah's own age.*" As the italics are Dr. Driver's, we presume that he regards this proposition as one of importance.

(1.) The first comment that we have to offer here is, that Dr. Driver's language lacks clearness. Worse, it is characterized by a vicious ambiguity. It may mean any one of several things. It

may mean, for instance, that our prophecy is unrelated to the *needs* of the men of Isaiah's time. If so, it is merely an emphatic assertion of what ought to be proved. For, if this be his meaning, it is surely lame proof to say that "the Jews are not warned, as Isaiah might warn them (xxxix. 6) against the folly of concluding an alliance with Babylon, or reminded of the disastrous consequences which such an alliance might entail; nor are they even represented, as in Jeremiah, as threatened with impending exile; they are represented as *in exile* and as about to be delivered from it." All this may be true, and still, as we hope to show, the prophecy might have had direct and important bearings upon the personal needs of those who lived in Isaiah's day. We conceive, however, that the more probable meaning of Dr. Driver, when he says that this prophecy stands unrelated to Isaiah's own age, is that it is unrelated to the historical environment of Isaiah and his contemporaries, that it reflects a totally different historical situation, one in which the actual and relative positions of the several actors, as portrayed in our prophecy, differ entirely from those which obtained in the time of Isaiah. We infer that this is his meaning, because in this connection, and apparently as bearing upon this proposition, we are told that "his" (*i. e.*, Isaiah's) "prophecies" (*i. e.*, those found in the first twelve chapters of the book) "are replete with allusions to contemporary history, to Ephraim, Damascus, and the Assyrians; that history is the foundation upon which his grandest predictions rest. Here, on the other hand, all the allusions are not to Assyria, but to *Babylon*, not the Babylon of Merodach-Baladan, who sought Hezekiah's friendship, which was known to Isaiah (xxxix.), but the Babylon of the exile, which held the Jews in cruel bondage (xiv. 2, 3), and was shortly to be destroyed by the Medes (xiii. 17)." Assuming, then, that we have correctly divined Dr. Driver's meaning, our next remark is—

(2.) In the light of his explanation, and more especially of his italics, the objection we are now considering seems singularly, and (we mean no disrespect) even ludicrously, irrelevant. The prophecy, be it remembered, relates, *no matter who wrote it*, to the deliverance of the Jews from their exile in Babylon. And

yet Dr. Driver tells us, not only with gravity, but with emphasis, that in these chapters the Jews "are represented as *in exile*"; and, more astonishing still, that "the allusions are not to Assyria, but to *Babylon*." This may be true, but it can scarcely be considered at all remarkable. The remarkable thing, it strikes us, would have been for Isaiah or any one else to predict a deliverance from exile without representing those whose deliverance was predicted as being in exile, or to predict a deliverance from exile in Babylon without alluding to Babylon. To require such a feat of Isaiah or of any other prophet would be worse than to require bricks to be made without straw. Dr. Driver, it seems to us, might, with a far greater show of reason, have laid the emphasis upon the words "*not the Babylon of Merodach-Baladan*." Had he done so, he would have conveyed some such idea as this: The relative and actual positions of the several parties concerned are so different, as set forth in these chapters, from what they were in the time of Isaiah, that such a picture as is here given would have been meaningless, and so, useless, to his contemporaries. The Babylon of Merodach-Baladan was upon terms of friendship with Judah. The two kingdoms stood upon very much the same footing as respects political importance and available resources. If anything, Judah had the advantage in all these particulars. Not only so, but the actual position of Babylon in the days of Isaiah was that of an Assyrian dependency. It was Assyria, and not Babylon, that filled the political horizon, and absorbed the universal attention of thinking men. Not for one hundred years after the time of Merodach-Baladan did Babylon rise to the position of what we would call a first-class power. During the whole of Isaiah's lifetime it continued to be relatively, if not absolutely, insignificant. But all this is reversed in our prophecy. Here "Babylon is represented as owning the empire of the world (xiii. 19; xiv. 6f.), which it exercises in particular (xiv. 1, 2) by holding the Jews in exile." Now, this is true, and the difficulty which it presents to the Isaianic authorship of chapters xiii. and xiv., if not insurmountable, is, at least, plausible. Assuming, then, that we have at last discovered the real point of Dr. Driver's objection, and reserving for the present some things we will have to

say as to its inherent irrelevancy to the issues before us, our next remark is that—

(3.) For those who, with Dr. Driver, admit the Isaianic authorship of Isaiah xxxix., the objection which we are now considering is robbed even of plausibility. There is a single fact which has evidently escaped the distinguished Oxonian, or he would have seen the futility of raising this objection here after recognizing the genuineness of Isaiah xxxix.

We refer to the fact that the Babylon of Isa. xxxix. 6-9 is not and cannot be the Babylon of Merodach-Baladan, but it is and can be none other than the *Babylon of these chapters in miniature*. It cannot be the Babylon of Merodach-Baladan, because, as we have seen, the Babylon of Merodach-Baladan was friendly to Judah, but the Babylon of Isaiah xxxix. is hostile, and holds the Jews in exile. It cannot be the Babylon of Merodach-Baladan, for that Babylon was upon a footing of equality with Judah, but this equality no longer exists between Judah and the Babylon of Isaiah xxxix. It cannot be the Babylon of Merodach-Baladan, for that Babylon was a dependency of Assyria, but the Babylon of Isaiah xxxix. is no dependency of Assyria, unless, indeed, the maid-servant is there represented as playing the rôle of mistress, and that, too, under the very nose of the mistress herself, and she a jealous one. None of the descendants of Hezekiah were going to be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon as long as Assyria held the reins of a world empire. The rise of the Babylon of Merodach-Baladan to the position of a world empire might have seemed incredible to the men of Isaiah's day, but Jewish eunuchs of royal blood standing in the palaces of the Babylon of Merodach-Baladan's day would have seemed simply ludicrous. The Babylon of Isaiah xxxix. cannot be the Babylon of Merodach-Baladan, because the terms of the prophecy in Isaiah xxxix. indicated clearly enough to Hezekiah that the prophet had his eye upon a Babylon yet to come. We can still almost hear the sigh of relief with which the good Hezekiah said, "There shall be peace and truth in my days." Evidently Dr. Driver has not duly considered the fact that Isaiah, in chapter xxxix., points out Babylon, not only as the place where Judah is to be carried into captivity, *but also as*

the power by which she is to be carried captive. Or else he has not duly considered what is involved in such a prediction. The fact is, that while Dr. Driver has made a noble fight for important truths, and upon certain vital points has held manfully to his moorings in the face of a well-nigh overwhelming flood of naturalism in high places—the fact, we say, is that to be perfectly consistent he ought to surrender his belief in the Isaianic authorship of chapter xxxix., or admit the Isaianic authorship of chapters xiii., xiv. His warm friend and admirer, Professor Cheyne, has quite recently twitted him in terms of painful plainness with being timid and vacillating, and, unkindest cut of all, with being out of harmony with the consensus of modern scholarship in reference to his views of predictive prophecy in general, and Isaiah xxxix. in particular.

(4.) But we go further, and are prepared to maintain that, even if the Babylon of chapters xiii., xiv. was not that of Merodach-Baladan, and the Babylon of chapter xxxix. was that of Merodach-Baladan, still Dr. Driver is no farther towards proving the non-Isaianic authorship of the former than he was before. As we have seen, he is unequivocally committed to the position that it is possible for a prophet to predict an event belonging even to the distant future. Where is the relevancy, then, in telling his readers that the Babylon of chapters xiii., xiv. is not the Babylon of Merodach-Baladan? Granted that it is not, granted that it is the Babylon of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar, and Evil-Merodach, personages of whom neither Isaiah nor any of his contemporaries ever dreamed, still less ever heard, how does this prove that these chapters are not from Isaiah? Clearly it is not because God is incompetent to reveal to his servant the course of events during the times of these kings. Dr. Driver is as far removed from giving credence to such drivel as is any one. But doubtless he would remind us that the possible, in such a case, is not to be taken as the measure of the probable, certainly not of the proper. He would remind us that a prophet is not a fortune-teller, but a teacher sent from God, and that the *raison d'être* for each message must be sought in some lesson it would convey, some need that it would meet, and the only effect of such a prophecy as this from

the lips of Isaiah would have been to produce a vacant stare upon the faces of his countrymen and lead them to ask, What is he talking about? Has the poor fellow lost his wits?

As already pointed out, it is apparently with a view to establishing this last proposition that Dr. Driver informs us that the Babylon of these chapters was not the Babylon of Merodach-Baladan. But the careful reader will have observed that Dr. Driver nowhere takes the pains to prove that, if the Babylon of our prophecy is not that of Merodach-Baladan, then it could meet no want of the contemporaries of Isaiah. He seems to think that this is so clear that it may safely be taken for granted. But is he right? To answer this, permit us to ask another question: What was the *raison d'être* for the prediction of the exile, which, according to Dr. Driver, is made in chapter xxxix.? Was it uttered merely to wring with anguish the hearts of the godless, incorrigible, doomed multitude? Scarcely. Their hearts were not of the kind that could be so easily wrung. They were ever ready to say, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Was it not rather mainly for the benefit of the godly, believing, indestructible, but still imperfect, remnant, that their hearts might be chastened, and so sanctified? Doubtless for their sakes. But if this remnant could be chastened by the prospect of an exile to come upon their posterity after they themselves were dead and in their graves, why might not they be cheered by the prospect that their posterity would be delivered from exile? Had there been a prediction of exile, without one of return from exile, might they not have fallen into blank, irremediable despair? Exile without return would have meant a perpetual casting out from the divine favor and a final dissolution of that covenant with God which was "all their hope and all their desire." If there was to be a remnant, godly and indestructible, then, having uttered his prediction of exile, Isaiah was, as it were, under necessity to predict a return, even though it should involve a reference more or less distinct to a Babylon different from that of Merodach-Baladan, for the vital element, the necessary aliment, of holiness, is hope; deprived of this, it must die. And let it be remembered that, according to Dr. Driver, if Isaiah has not predicted the return

from exile *in these chapters*, he has not predicted it anywhere. In the needs of the godly remnant, then, we find our "*nodus vindice dignus*." Upon his own principles, therefore, what right has Dr. Driver to deny the interposition of the "vindex"? If God may put into the mouth of his prophet a threat based upon "a condition of things not yet existent" (Isaiah xxxix. 6 f.), why should it be thought a thing impossible with God to base a promise upon a condition of things not yet existent? We think that we may fairly claim to have disposed of Dr. Driver's objection, so far as it rests upon this proposition. The further consideration of Dr. Driver's minor premise must be deferred for the present.

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