

The prompt mention in our list of "Books of the Week" will be considered by us an equivalent to their publishers for all volumes received. The interests of our readers will guide us in the selection of works for further notice.

## BRIGGS'S MESSIANIC PROPHECY.\*

THE name Messianic Prophecy, as the author recognizes, does not altogether adequately describe the subject of this volume, which includes in its wide scope the hope of Israel in all its forms; the ideal of well-being, individual and national, and all the widely different ways in which men of God from age to age looked for its realization. Of this larger hope Messianic Prophecy, strictly speaking, is but a branch, and in the Old Testament itself by no means the most important. The name has, however, acquired a conventional meaning and use in Christian Theology, and as the proposed substitutes for it—for example: Prophecy of the Consummation of the Kingdom of God (von Orelli), are hardly more satisfactory, it is as well to abide by the word. The sub-title: "The Prediction of the Fulfillment of Redemption through the Messiah" (cf. p. 61), on the other hand, seems to exclude from the plan of the work that large class of prophecies the characteristic of which is, that in them the Salvation of Jehovah appears is no way mediated by human agency, but as the result of an immediate divine interposition. It does not really do so; but this is only because Professor Briggs shifts his standpoint from that of the predictions themselves to the New Testament fulfillment, in the light of which we see that redemption is actually accomplished only through Christ.

But we may do full justice to the fulfillment without forcing upon the predictions themselves a meaning which they will not bear. It seems to us that the author has been here influenced, more than he perhaps is aware of, by those dogmatic conceptions from which he rightly wishes to see Biblical theology completely and permanently set free. This point of view is reflected in the treatment of the whole class of prophecies to which we have referred. They fall in his scheme under the category of predictions of the Divine Advent, a term to which there are in our mind very serious objections. On the one hand, it does not adequately describe the content of the prophecies in question; on the other, it carries with it, by inevitable implication, ideas which are entirely foreign to them.

It is, however, a great merit of the book, as compared with its predecessors, especially in English, that it is not ruled by a dogmatic or an apologetic purpose; it is not a Christology of the Old Testament, nor a *Demonstratio Evangelica*; it is not "a sword with which to smite the Jew or the infidel, or a crutch for a feeble faith in Christ and Christianity" (Pref. vii). It has its end in itself, in the juster knowledge of one of the most interesting, and taken in all its consequences, one of the most momentous phenomena in the history of religions. The question of fulfillment has been reserved for its proper place, in a future volume on the Messianic idea of the New Testament, in which the author proposes to show how far the ideal of the Old Testament

"has been fulfilled by the first advent of the Messiah, and how far it remained unfulfilled and was taken up into New Testament Prophecy and carried on to a higher stage of development." (Pref. p. viii.)

This disposition of the matter has two advantages. It leaves the student of the Old Testament free to apply himself with a single eye, to his proper task, that of finding out what these prophecies meant to those to whom they were delivered; on the other hand, it puts the New Testament use of them in the light of contemporary Jewish opinion and expectation concerning the Messianic deliverance. The author has not cared to be wholly consistent in this matter. Nor has he in his references to Christian fulfillment always escaped the perils

which are strewn so thick along the path of what Cheyne has somewhere proposed to call the Higher Exegesis—see page 180 for example—but in the main he has adhered to his plan.

The Messianic Prophecies of the Old Testament exhibit to us the unfolding through a period of several centuries, of an idea, or a group of ideas. To be understood they must be studied historically, not only in their relation to the times which gave them birth, but to the development of the idea of redemption.

Such a study presupposes, therefore, the results of literary and historical criticism, by which we seek to fix the age of the—with few exceptions anonymous and undated—books of the Old Testament, or in the case of composite books, of the elements of which they are composed. Professor Briggs is well known as a stout defender of the right and duty of his so-called "Higher Criticism." The conclusions to which his own studies in this field have led him are applied in the present volume to a specific problem, and in the application put to their severest test.

In regard to the Pentateuch, he accepts the analysis, "into four distinct narratives, with their distinct codes of legislation, the result of a century of study by the most famous critics of the age," as an accomplished fact (p. 67).

"The differences of opinion among practical critics, and the difficulties in the analysis, are where they ought to be from the very nature of the case. Instead of disproving the work of criticism, they are, therefore, an indirect evidence of its correctness."

These four narratives are not from the same hand.

"We have, by careful induction, gathered the theology of each of the documents by itself, and then compared them, and have found such a thorough-going difference, that it is simply impossible that they should have come from the same original author" (p. 68).

On the other hand, the several codes, though they have passed through a series of later editings, which have enlarged and modified them in some respects,

"give us essentially the divine instruction through the mediator Moses, in varied modes of representation and forms of codification" (p. 109 f.).

This law, in some form, underlies all the subsequent history of religion in Israel.

"The prophetic ministry was fulfilled, as a rule, through the instructions, written or unwritten, in the hands of the people. It was only when these needed unfolding that Jahveh summoned a prophet to reveal his will, to increase and enlarge the material of the divine revelation. And, hence, no official prophet appeared in Israel until Samuel . . ." (p. 113).

But in many particulars the law remained a dead letter.

"It had been impossible to observe any of the Mosaic codes during the wandering in the wilderness. It was also impossible to realize the Mosaic ideal during the period of the Judges," and "little progress was made beyond the simplest requirements of the code of the covenant" (Exod. xx-xxiii, p. 121).

But the fullest and most elaborate of these impracticable Mosaic codes is throughout a law of and for the desert, and applicable to the conditions of settled life only by the exercise of a good deal of ingenuity on the part of the Jewish lawyers of later times. This is one of the most palpable difficulties of Professor Briggs's position.

Of the prophets, Professor Briggs thinks that Isaiah xlii, xiv; xxxiv, xxxv; xl-lxvi date from the exile, the situation which they everywhere reflect. He is inclined to think that all these chapters are from the hand of the same prophet. From the early days of the exile is also the apocalypse contained in Is. xxiv-xxvii.

Zachariah ix-xi belongs to the age of Hezekiah; xii-xiv, however, is with Stade, regarded as post-exilic.

Daniel consists of "a compilation of stories by a late hand, in which Daniel and his associates are the heroes of the exile," to which is joined a collection of visions and dreams of Daniel. The book makes no claim to be the production of Daniel himself; it was edited probably in the Maccabean age. This is not to deny the historical reality of its miracles and predictions. "The internal character of the book is such as to prove its divine inspiration" (p. 411 f.). The author recognizes the affinity of He

\* MESSIANIC PROPHECY, THE PREDICTION OF THE FULFILLMENT OF REDEMPTION THROUGH THE MESSIAH. A critical study of the Messianic Passages of the Old Testament in the order of their development. By CHARLES AUGUSTUS BRIGGS, D.D., Davenport Professor of Hebrew and the Cognate Languages in the Union Theological Seminary, New York City. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922. (Pp. xx., 519. 5vo.)

brow prophecy to analogous phenomena in other religions, as well as the characteristic differences. He rejects the naturalistic and the ultra-supernaturalistic explanations as alike untrue to the facts. The revelation which comes in it

"is not external, mechanical or magical, but internal, spiritual and intelligent . . . through the enlightenment of the mind of the prophet, the stimulation of his moral nature, the constraining of his will under the most sublime motives, the assurance of his soul that he is in possession of divine truth, and that he is commissioned to declare it" (p. 14).

This assurance may be illustrated by the witness of the Holy Spirit giving the Christian assurance of salvation, the assurance of sonship to God, etc., "which is imparted by a supernatural energy to the believer's soul" (21). Prophecy has everywhere a historical basis in the prophet's own situation, which alone makes the prediction useful to his contemporaries (p. 204). Thus it has a fixed starting-point. It has also very definite limitations. The divine ideas which the prophets unfold "cannot transcend the psychological and physical features of human nature" (p. 55). There is an uncertain element in all prediction arising from the varying relations of God and man (p. 58). For God is the living God, and man is a free man. "Hebrew Prophecy is not ashamed of occasional recalling of circumstantial threatenings and promises." The prediction does not draw the fulfillment after it by a mechanical or by a metaphysical necessity. These chapters contain much sound and helpful teaching by which all readers of the Old Testament may profit. There are some things, however, in which the author seems to us to go too far, or to have expressed himself incautiously. First, in the prominence given throughout the work to the theophanies as an element of prophecy. Hebrew prophecy originates in theophany. Theophanies are the source of every fresh advance; theophanies the divine seal on every page of the roll (see pp. 20 ff.).

It does not seem to us that the prophets themselves attach any such importance to this sort of visions. So, also, in the author's representation of the symbolical character of Hebrew prophecy. Prophecy, whether in object-lessons or in word-lessons, is, as every effort to set forth the religious ideal must be, highly figurative. The prosaic interpretation is sure to be wrong; but the allegorical interpretation is wrong beforehand. And to an allegorical interpretation, Professor Briggs's theory seems to us to lead. If direct prophecy, for example, does not mean what it seems to mean, but is only "a more subtle use of symbolical language," so that a "secret clue must be discovered as the only safe guide to interpretation," then the allegorist's gift of second sight is the most necessary qualification of the interpreter. We confess to having as strong a dislike as Professor Briggs himself to the whole tribe of prophetic arithmeticians; but we greatly fear that his theory that all prophetic numbers are symbolical, will prove to be water to their mill. Nor are we satisfied with the author's application of this principle to those prophecies in which certain events are declared to be *near* or *at hand*. These terms indicate, according to him, only the certainty of the events, or, at most, that they are as ardently desired or anxiously dreaded as the events of to-morrow (p. 54). Shall we say, then, for example, that when, in Is. xii, 22, the prophet says of Babylon, whose utter and final destruction he had just described: "And her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged," he did not really believe that the doom of the city was near, but only ardently desired it? That *near* and *at hand* are not terms of mathematical precision, that they are, especially after they become established formulas in prediction, used with even less definiteness than they have in common speech, we readily believe, but Professor Briggs's position is very different from this; and the principle of interpretation he avows seems to us unjustifiable.

Professor Briggs stoutly denies that the predictions in the Old Testament have a double sense. "The prediction has but one sense" (p. 65). But in practice he sometimes distinguishes the *implicit* con-

tent of the prophecy from the *explicit*, the specific from the generic in such a way as to get out a double sense after all. Illustrations may be found on pages 99, 103 f., 111, 130, etc.

The larger part of the volume (pp. 67-475) is occupied by the examination of the Messianic prophecies in detail. They are, with few exceptions, given in full in a new translation, with brief critical and exegetical observations, in the form of foot-notes. Each passage is introduced by such historical or other explanation as is necessary to give it its proper setting, and followed by a short comment in which the leading ideas of the text are developed. Numbered paragraph headings in a different type give a running summary of the contents. The passages are arranged as far as possible in a historical order.

The translations are faithful and vigorous, and if they are sometimes pretty strongly tinged with Hebrew idiom, that is no great harm. Here and there they are not quite easy to understand, as, e. g., p. 108, l. 8; p. 358, l. 21 f. Rarely they miss the point of the original, as p. 168, last line, comp. 171, end. ("Her children are exhorted to plead with her to forsake her adulteries.")

The prophecies in poetical form are reproduced so that this appears in the translation. Professor Briggs has also divided the longer passages in accordance with what he conceives to have been the original strophical division. These strophes sometimes make sad work with the sense, as when in Ps. xlv, 8, their inexorable arithmetic compels the translator to divide the verse in the middle and have the second hemistich as an apostrophe to the king in these extraordinary terms:

"O, all of joy above thy fellows" (p. 142), compare also page 147. Still more frequently rhythmical reasons have led not merely to a departure from the accents—to which no one would object—but from the most natural sense and construction; take for a single illustration the last verse of Ps. xciii, p. 449, compared with the Revised Version.

We are far from being at a point where our knowledge of the forms of Hebrew poetry can be of much help to us in the emendation of the text; and many, who are by no means blind to the faults of the Hebrew text, will wish that in that particular Professor Briggs had been more conservative. Otherwise, in text-critical matters he generally shows excellent judgment. On page 459, however, the LXX cannot be quoted in support of the conjectural צַיִן; *κατάπτωμα φραγμού* (read so, not *φραγμόν*) is a mere doublet, cf. *φραγμός*—פֶּרֶץ 1 Ki. xi. 27, Is. lvii, 12; page 142, *זֶה הוּא הַפֶּרֶאנָה* could hardly be מַשְׁלָחוֹ in any dialect or period of Hebrew; page 358 note; the Keil and the Ketib are equally intolerable, G and S read neither; the most probable emendation is הָאֶלֶל; construction and arrangement as in v. 6<sup>a</sup>.

The development of the Messianic idea is traced from the first promises, Gen. i, 26-30; iii, 14 f. In the pre-Mosaic age, Professor Briggs finds already two distinct lines of Messianic prophecy, "the human and the divine; the human, the culminating head of the woman's seed, who gains the victory over the serpent; the divine, the descent of Jahveh to dwell in the tents of Shem." The exegesis of both the passages primarily referred to is, however, unusually precarious. These two lines of prediction the author traces through the subsequent periods, the Mosaic age; the Davidic period (under which fall Pss. cx, ii, lxxi, xlv,—brides of the Messiah with the nations—xxiv, viii, xvi); the pre-exilic prophets beginning with Joel; Prophetic Voices out of the exile, including Pss. xxii, xl, lxi, lxx, and with especial fullness the Prophecy of the Servant of Jahveh, and of the Restoration of Zion in Isaiah xl-lxvi; Daniel; finally, the Messianic idea in the times of the Restoration.

The last chapter, under the title of the Messianic Ideal gathers up the results of the investigation in a brief summary. The subdivisions of this chapter show in a striking way the great diversity of form in which Israel's faith in God's deliverance found expression—the Ideal of Mankind, the Conflict with Evil, the Divine Advent, the Holy Land, Jahveh the Father and

Husband, the Kingdom of God, the Day of Jahveh, the Holy Priesthood, the Faithful Prophet, the Messianic King, the New Covenant—the *πολυμερὴς καὶ πολυτρόπως* of the Epistle to the Hebrews surely applies to no part of the Prophetic Word, more emphatically than to this. But the faith itself is one; and the manifoldness and incompleteness of the forms in which it uttered itself leaves room for the realization of the substance of the hope in a form different from them all, and surpassing anything that the prophets had dreamed. And this is really one of the most important lessons to learn from prophecy.

The work of Professor Briggs glows with enthusiasm for the prophets; it breathes their spirit; it is full of reverence for the Word of God through them. It is rich with the fruits of years of zealous and unweary study, and of an ample learning. In it we have, as a distinguished English critic has lately said, the first English work on Messianic Prophecy which stands on the level of modern Biblical studies. It is one of the most important and valuable contributions of American scholarship to those studies. It is always more than instructive; it is spiritually helpful. We commend it most warmly not only to ministers, but to intelligent laymen—and we hope there are many of them—who want to know more of this great subject.