

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE II.

THE INNER HISTORY OF THE CHALDEAN EXILE.

BY JOHN FRANKLIN GENUNG,
AMHERST, MASS.

A MAIN reason why the Chaldean Exile must be ranked as one of the most momentous epochs in the history of the world is the fact that it began with, and that its keynote was, surrender. That fact was the element which, while it made the course of the history cryptic, like the current of a submerged river, lifted its real meaning from ethnic to universal, from casual to eternal. When in the year 597 B.C. the young king Jehoiachin, after a three months' reign in a besieged capital, "went out" to the king of Babylon, and with him all his sterling citizenry from statesman to craftsman (2 Kings xxiv. 10-16), he unwittingly opened the way to the working of a new spiritual and historic force, which from that time to this has been increasingly potent to revolutionize the stubborn and stupid ways of men. To trace and combine some of the tokens of this hidden force, as they come to light between the lines of the contemporary Biblical literature, is the purpose of the present paper. I have named my subject, too ambitiously perhaps, "the inner history": it might be called, more specifically, *The Sequel of a Surrender.*

I.

Considered in itself, there is no more intrinsic virtue in surrender than in its opposite. To unreconstructed human nature, indeed, it is hardly dissociable from dishonor and

shame: men deem it incomparably less heroic than to defy your enemy's worst and die fighting. Its wisdom depends on the motive that underlies it, and on the place in a nation's history or in the evolution of the human spirit where it fits in. Surrender would have been no virtue a century before, when, in 701 B.C., Sennacherib the king of Assyria, having "shut up [Hezekiah] like a caged bird within Jerusalem his royal city,"¹ was minded in his insolent summons to detach the people by deceitful promises from their king: "Hearken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make your peace 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 grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive-trees and of honey, that ye may live and not die" (2 Kings xviii. 31, 32=Isa. xxxvi. 16, 17). It was the arrogant demand of what has been called "the most brutal empire which was ever suffered to roll its force across the world,"² and it was made on the assumption that Jehovah was virtually a vanquished God. But in 701 neither Jerusalem nor the world of pan-Assyrianism was ready for the gentle heroism of surrender. If Jerusalem had yielded then, and her people had submitted to deportation, they would have been scattered broadcast, like their northern brethren the ten tribes of twenty-one years before, over the plains and uplands east of the Tigris, and so would have missed Jehovah's purpose concerning them. But the Northern Kingdom, sown to Jehovah in the earth, as the prophets had figured it (Hos. ii. 23; Zech.

¹ From the Sennacherib Prism, Rogers, *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament*, p. 343.

² G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets*, vol. ii. p. 91.

x. 9), was already undergoing this same ordeal, fulfilling its share of the purpose; and it was enough. The mission of Judah and the Davidic dynasty was other, — a mission which in that epoch and environment required “quietness and confidence” in Jehovah and resolute refusal of the demands of brute force and militarism. So under Hezekiah and Isaiah the city was spared the shame of surrender, and by a gracious interposition of Jehovah the people reaped from it a century’s reprieve.

The reprieve was needed. The fact is, that in that earlier time the Judean nation was too raw and crude, its people were too little educated in the school of Jehovah, to yield its political independence. The people had not reached that self-directive stage of spiritual evolution where they could safely stoop to conquer. As Hezekiah wailed when the Assyrian demand came, “The children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth” (2 Kings xix. 3= Isa. xxxvii. 3). With another century of development, however, like a continued embryotic stage, — a century teeming with the ripened utterance of prophecy and poetry and history and wisdom and Deuteronomic law, — the virgin daughter of Zion, who through Isaiah had hurled scorn at the Assyrian (Isa. xxxvii. 22), could afford to surrender (cf. Mic. iv. 10). For the needs of this humaner era, and for the ordained mission of Judah in the world, surrender was the real heroism. It did not seem so to men — heroism of that kind was a new thing in the world, and human nature must be reconstructed to accept it; — but it was an authentic stage in that divine movement which as soon as the first shadow of exile fell had announced that Jehovah would rise up “to do his work, his strange work, and bring to pass his act, his strange act” (Isa. xxviii. 21; cf. Hab. i. 5).

II.

Let us in a few words note the situation of things brought about when, in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, King Jehoiachin, the last anointed king of Judah, "went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers" (2 Kings xxiv. 12). This was the fateful surrender, so new to the annals of human strife, which was destined to mean so much. And with the young king, whether in mere fidelity to his person or by a wholesome spiritual impulse, went a notable company of the nation's best. The king of Babylon "carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valor, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths; none remained save the poorest sort of the people of the land" (2 Kings xxiv. 14).

The first result of this deportation, sensed with dismay and yet with the larger insight by the prophet Jeremiah, was to separate the two elements of the nation so that one could feel the tissue and tendency of each; revealing the element that was on the up grade, embarked on its nobler destiny, and the element that was stagnant and decadent. Jeremiah describes these in his vision of the two baskets of figs. "One basket," he says, "had very good figs, like the figs that are first ripe; and the other basket had very bad figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad" (Jer. xxiv. 2). For the first element, the deported ones, he prophesied a new planting and a return as a renovated and sincere-hearted people; for the second element, dispersion and reproach from all the peoples of the earth. And it was with this latter element that the prophet's thankless duty lay, until his life fell a sacrifice to it in a foreign land.

Over these leavings of the *'am ha'arets* Nebuchadnezzar

set up as regent Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah,—not an anointed king and not in the straight dynastic line,—binding him to an oath of loyalty and changing his name to Zedekiah, as if not only his personal good conduct but “the righteousness of [his God] Jehovah” were at stake before the tribunal of the world. It was so that the prophets viewed it (cf. Ezek. xvii. 18). Zedekiah, however, did not live up to his name. After a shilly-shally reign of eleven years, during which he toyed with Egyptian guile and intrigue, played fast and loose with his word, and treated the austere warnings of Jeremiah with alternate concern and indignity, he drew down upon himself the final wrath of Nebuchadnezzar, who this time seemed minded to crush him and his turbulent little state like so much vermin; and so occurred the tragedy of the destruction of Jerusalem, to which a whole book of Lamentations is devoted, and which is still memorialized at the Jews' Wailing Place. Zedekiah, trying to desert his desperately brave subjects, was caught in the plain of the Jordan, his sons killed before his eyes, his own eyes then put out, and he himself, with a second installment of deportation, taken to Babylon; and that is the last that we read of him. It was not with him, nor with the national element that he ruled and deserted, that the dynasty of the Davidic house ended.

In this eighth year of King Nebuchadnezzar's reign, when the first deportation was made, the splendid internal improvements for which this monarch was distinguished, his magnificent enterprises of husbandry and building, were doubtless well under way. It was for the sake of these internal improvements, and not for vulgar greed or glory of conquest, that he was minded to carry captives to his land. Chaldean civilization and culture, making Babylon the exactress of

the nations (cf. Isa. xiv. 4 margin), had succeeded to Assyrian brutality and militarism. So his object was not to people his land with unorganized hordes of broken-spirited serfs, as Sennacherib's had been. He desired men of talent and skill for his public works; of industry and steadiness for the care of his vast irrigated plains; of character and intelligence, for he himself was such a man and congenial with such. Accordingly, his deportation was one of only moderate size — a few thousand — and selected from the best elements, among which he valued not only the princes and men "strong and apt for war," but the craftsmen and the smiths. Nor does he seem to have subjected them to any indignities beyond what was involved in the long and toilsome journey across the desert. It was more like a transplantation than like a humiliating bondage. Arrived in Chaldea, the most of the captives were located in a district by the irrigating canal Chebar, near the present Nippur, about fifty miles east of Babylon, where they could keep up their family life and customs, and maintain some communal organization under their elders (cf. Ezek. viii. 1; xiv. 1; xx. 1). With them was a young man of priestly family named Ezekiel, who had been a disciple and still was a colleague of Jeremiah; and here in Chaldea, where the perpetuation of temple ritual was not feasible, he expanded his priestly functions to include the prophetic and the pastoral, dwelling as a neighbor in the Chebar community, and becoming, as he expressed it, "a watchman" (iii. 17) over his people. The Hebrew race — we can no longer say nation or state — was, as we know, to be reorganized not on monarchical but on hierarchical and rabbinical principles: and here by the Chebar we see the informal and unofficial nucleus of the new organization. For the craftsmen and smiths, numbering a thousand, and perhaps for "the men of might,

even seven thousand" (2 Kings xxiv. 16), Nebuchadnezzar doubtless found use in his splendid public enterprises in Babylon. King Jehoiachin became a state prisoner in the capital city, and as long as Nebuchadnezzar lived, thirty-seven years, remained in durance. What were his prison conditions and experiences, and what his relations with his people, are only conjecturable from hints in the prophetic writings. He must, however, have maintained family life, as through his eldest son, Shealtiel, he perpetuated the Davidic line (Matt. i. 12), and seven sons of his are named (1 Chron. iii. 17, 18). Whether his personality is a historic factor to be reckoned with remains to be seen.

Such, then, is the situation brought about by this historic surrender. The sterling nucleus of the Hebrew stock — Isaiah's saving "remnant" with a century's spiritual development — were transplanted first, apparently with a minimum of indignity and hardship, to a new home, and as it turned out, a unique opportunity, in the center of world empire. Then after eleven years, a period ended by a terrible disaster of fire and carnage, followed a second installment, the unreconstructed element, added to the other or dispersed through the lands. Thenceforth the two elements are swallowed up in one indiscriminate exile together; and out of it, dispersed though it is, shall come such a solidarity of race and religion as the world still witnesses with wonder.

III.

It takes time and grace for the meek spirit of surrender to soften the heart of a people and become a dominating idea and motive. As to its germinal principle, it is in fact the spirit of the cross; and we know what a struggle this has had, and still has; to get itself naturalized in humanity. The

monarch who commits himself and his nation to it has not only to accept the hard fortunes of war; that is the least of it. He must also encounter the bitterness, the scorn, the contempt, or at best the bewilderment of his own subjects; and this is worst of all to bear, it is as if he had veritably given his soul to death. This, as it turned out, was what befell Jehoiachin. Even his historian has no good word to say of him. "He did that which was evil," the historian writes, "in the sight of Jehovah, according to all that his father had done" (2 Kings xxiv. 9). When, however, we reflect that all the chance the eighteen-year-old boy had to do evil during a three months' reign in a besieged capital was just to resolve upon and negotiate this surrender, we realize how general was the verdict of condemnation upon him. Nay, the prophet Jeremiah, who a decade later was inclined to counsel the same course (Jer. xxi. 9; xxxviii. 2), is puzzled to know the meaning of this, and his premonition becomes confused. "Is this man Coniah," he wails, "a despised broken figure? is he a vessel wherein none delighteth? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into the land which they know not? . . . Thus saith Jehovah, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no more shall a man of his seed prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling in Judah" (Jer. xxii. 28, 30). In truth, it was a blind, desperate venture, a leap in the dark hardly yet formulated to an act of faith, when the king and his selected company committed themselves to the clemency of the king of Babylon and addressed themselves to the long journey across the desert. The only thing that made it endurable was their conviction, born of long prophetic training, that every event of life was in the hand of God, whose chosen people they were.

A vivid reminiscence of this journey, from an alleged eyewitness, is preserved to us in the Book of Job, — the patriarch himself speaking out of his own bewilderment, the fact but not the meaning:—

“ With Him are wisdom and might;
 To Him belong counsel and understanding.
 Behold, He teareth down, and it shall not be bullded;
 He shutteth up a man, and there shall be no opening. . . .
 With Him are strength and truth;
 The erring one and he that causeth to err are His.
 Who leadeth counselors away captive;
 And judges He maketh fools.
 The bond of kings He looseth,
 And bindeth a cord upon their loins.
 Who leadeth priests away captive;
 And the long established He overthroweth.
 Who removeth the speech of trusted ones;
 And the discernment of the aged He taketh away.
 Who poureth contempt on princes;
 And the girdle of the strong He looseth. . . .
 Who maketh nations great,—and destroyeth them;
 Who spreadeth nations out, and leadeth them away.
 Who dishearteneth the leaders of the people of the land,
 And maketh them wander in a pathless waste.
 They grope in darkness without light;
 And He maketh them wander like a drunken man.
 Behold, all this hath mine eye seen;
 Mine ear hath heard and understood it well.”¹

We cannot well miss the insistent reference here to captivity and its experiences. One at least there was in that company, it would seem, to whom that journey into exile was pregnant with meanings for kings and leaders, who from the outset was laying events to heart. Who this was, we can only conjecture; but we are not ready for that yet, we await more data.

¹ Job xii. 13–xiii. 1. I quote my own translation; see my *Epic of the Inner Life*, pp. 202 ff.

IV.

Naturally enough the exiles were homesick for a while and resentful against their captors, and against those who rejoiced in their humiliation. We have an echo of this in the one hundred and thirty-seventh psalm, the first part of which we like to read for its tender pathos, but leave the psalm unread aloud because of the savage imprecation at the end. During these few years of homesickness, too, numbers of prophets and diviners, both in Chaldea and Jerusalem, were loud and emphatic in their predictions of speedy return; and these for a while kept the people stirred up to a fanaticism of unmotivated credulity. In this stage of unrest two men stood out conspicuous for the magnificent team work they did for and with the two sections of the people: the veteran Jeremiah at home during Zedekiah's regency, and the young man Ezekiel in Chaldea. Both were working, each on the conditions and materials at his hand, to get the best avails from the surrender. On the one hand, they maintained an attitude of respectful submission to Nebuchadnezzar, an avoidance of anything that could be construed into *lèse majesté*; they could indeed recount in plain terms, as if it were a matter of course, what he did as world conqueror and its motives (see, e.g., in Ezekiel's riddle, especially Ezek. xvii. 11-14); but there was no bitterness and defiance, such as Isaiah launched against the Assyrians. On the other hand, they condemned the shiftiness of Zedekiah (Ezek. xvii. 15, 16), regarding his plots with Egypt as breaking his oath and giving Jehovah a bad name among the heathen. To Ezekiel man's word, even a foreign king's word, is God in man (xvii. 19); his fidelity or falsity to it to be reckoned with accordingly. Whole-souled acceptance of their lot, straight relations with their imperial authority, without conspiracies or

evasions or seditions,— such seems to have been the wholesome sentiment that these two prophets were solicitous to promote.

To attain this end each worker had his eye on the whole field, Jerusalem and Chaldea alike; one people, not divided at all, but only distributed in space. Jeremiah was concerned not merely with the “bad figs” at home; over across the desert, too, he saw the substantial element undergoing two generations’ time of needed discipline, and against the pernicious demagogy of the false prophets and diviners he sent his famous letter to the exiles in Babylon exhorting them to make homes and prepare for a long stay, “and seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto Jehovah for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace” (xxix. 4–14). This was in Zedekiah’s fourth year (xxviii. 1). Ezekiel’s work, which began a year later (Ezek. i. 2), seems to have been done in an environment of settledness and abiding; and indeed, so long as Jerusalem stood, his main concern was not so much with his neighbors by the Chebar as with his brethren still in the homeland, and, more broadly, with the mind of the Hebrew race. His central interest, as befitted a man of priestly stock, was religious; his insidious foe and seducer, idolatry.

I must not dwell on the beauty of the situation that his visions create. It begins with his assurance of Jehovah’s presence and glory here in far-away Chaldea; but as soon as this and its connected duties are known, the scene shifts to Jerusalem and the desecrated temple, where the prophet has a clairvoyant sense of the foul idolatries that have invaded the sanctuary. “Son of man, hast thou seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in his chambers of imagery? for they say, Jehovah seeth us not; Jehovah

hath forsaken the land" (Ezek. viii. 12). And all the while the glory that he saw by Chebar is in act to leave his outraged fane; pausing first in the court, then at the east gate, then finally taking his stand on the Mount of Olives (x. 5, 19; xi. 23), banished but still on guard. Here the vision "went up" from him for a season, for years, while he continued his struggle with a rebellious people. But it left him with the spirit of constructiveness in his heart. The sanctuary must be made fit again for Jehovah's return. Accordingly, in the twenty-fifth year of the exile (xl. 1), when the temple has lain fourteen years in ruins, we find him again in clairvoyant vision on the ground, taking measurements and making plans; and when all is rebuilt and ready, the glory that he had last seen on the Mount of Olives returns from that station and resumes his residence in the secret place (xliii. 1-5), the renovated sanctuary from underneath which flow living and life-giving waters (xlvi. 1-12). Meanwhile he is heartened to find, from the disclosures of the same vision, that Jehovah, to make up for their banishment of him from the temple, "will be to them a sanctuary for a little while in the countries where they are come" (xi. 16).

So, with Israel's elders in Chaldea, surrounded as they are with the fascinations of idolatry in its native home, he labors strenuously lest they "take the idols into their hearts" (xiv. 1-11). It is a vital, an inexorable issue in the ordained mission and destiny of Israel. For with their enticement to or reaction against the subtle lure of this land of splendid idolatry was inevitably implicated their relation to its moral rottenness, its spiritual deadness. They could not take the idols into their hearts and keep their conscience alive. In his intuitive sense of this, Ezekiel touches on his people's most priceless asset of life. It was as a people with a conscience,

as a people with a spiritual sense living and educated, that this exiled Hebrew race was to be a saving power among the sterile cultures and civilizations of the world.

v.

Conscience is primarily a matter not of states and communities, not of priests and dictators, but of the individual. It is personal and inalienable; the one thing that it is ruinous to surrender. Ezekiel felt this in his struggle with the idolatrous tendencies of his people in Jerusalem and Chaldea. His labors, therefore, as long as Jerusalem stood, were with the individual soul of man; individual guilt and merit, without benefit of sponsor or excuse of heredity, was, as we see from his eighteenth and thirty-third chapters, his distinctive and invaluable contribution to Biblical doctrine. He would tolerate no thought of vicarious merit or aid. Every soul must stand or fall by itself. As he put it to the elders whom he was trying to wean from idolatrous leanings, if Jehovah brought distress and disaster upon a land, though these three men Noah and Daniel and Job were therein they could save neither son nor daughter, only themselves. From the emphasis he lays on these personages as types of redeeming virtue, it would seem that he was attacking an evil tendency: that the leaders of his race were lying back supine and passive, trusting to the power or pull of some persons higher up, and letting their own manhood evaporate in ignominious ease or indifference. This prophet-priest would none of this. The spirit of ethical monotheism which he had inherited from Deuteronomic days would countenance no proxy manhood, no vicarious conscience. This was in the middle of Zedekiah's regency, when, with his Chaldean neighbors too comfortably settled, he knew that Jerusalem was doomed and

before many years fresh hordes of homeless ones would be added to their numbers or scattered through the lands. It would not do for these prosperous exiles to surrender too much. So from this time on, until the messenger brought him word that the city was smitten (xxxiii. 21), he kept pounding away at their sins, and reminding them of their accusing history, and bringing home to them their individual perils and duties; defining, so to say, their racial and religious terms. It was a thankless and arduous task; perhaps too austere carried out; and he could see little if any net result. They coolly discounted his invectives; so that after his most impassioned ones he was fain to cry out, "Ah Lord Jehovah! they say of me, Is he not a speaker of parables?" (xx. 49). Or else they treated him as if he were furnishing them entertainment; and this left him cast down and uncertain. "And as for thee, son of man, the children of thy people talk of thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from Jehovah. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but do them not; for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their gain. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not" (xxxiii. 30-32). Poor overstrained prophet: he is paying the penalty of ringing the calamity bell too insistently. His people are learning, here in their community home by the Chebar, that if things have not turned out so brilliantly as they had hoped, neither are they so desperate as they had feared. The message of the prophet that the people are disposed to treat as a vaudeville performance is

just the news of disaster in which his whole prophecy thus far has focussed: the destruction of Jerusalem and the awful exposure to idolatry and its attendant immorality to which the hapless inheritors of the homeland are subjected (cf. ver. 23-29). And even in this break-up of the government and dispersion of the people they evidently find alleviations and compensations; they are not so paralyzed by it as Ezekiel would have them.

VI.

As a watchman over his people Ezekiel takes himself very strenuously. He does not spare himself from his doctrine of individual accountability; without knowing it, in fact, he is disproving his denial of vicariousness by making himself a vicarious surrogate for his people. He feels as if the whole burden of Israel's integrity rested on his shoulders, and no soul must be lost for his lack of watch care (cf. xxxiii. 6-8). He is essentially a priest, with the legalized conscience of a priest; and it is hard for such a conscience to limber up, so to say, from the austerity of law to the sweet reasonableness of grace.

But Ezekiel's influence, though perhaps the most overt and exacting, is not solitary. There are other personal forces working for the welfare of Israel; and Israel feels the thrill and pulsation of their quiet consecration, little aware what a spiritually adjusting and steadying power it is. Here we come, I think, upon some of the cryptic elements of the exile experience which have not been adequately explored. I can introduce them best, perhaps, by reference to the assertion of Ezekiel's already cited,—for he is not unaware though not fully appreciative of their significance,—that assertion of his about Noah, Daniel, and Job. When we come to think of it, that is a strange combination of names for the prophet

to make in the sixth year after the surrender (viii. 1). Noah and Daniel and Job: not these three men together, he says, could have any vicarious virtue to redeem a doomed land (xiv. 14, 16, 18, 20). Noah, the "righteous man, perfect in his generations" (Gen. vi. 9), was of course a traditional personage, the type for Hebrews and Chaldeans alike — for his name is adduced in the very land where his story originated — of righteousness availing to save a race from extermination. But what of the other two? You know what higher criticism is saying about Daniel, — things that make my mention of him here an impertinence. Professor Jastrow, for instance, in his latest book, thus disposes of him: "Noah . . . is a type. As such he is regarded by the prophet Ezekiel by the side of Daniel and Job who are likewise merely types and not real personages."¹ All he adduces, however, to prove this negative is just his assertion; and that is all the proof I can find anywhere.² The theory that the Book of Daniel was not written till the time of the Maccabees has had the practical effect, at least with those whose way is to jump at negative conclusions, to banish him from history and from real existence. Think how little Daniel is made to count in the epoch where his narrator puts him. If, however, he was a real personage, answering to the dates and circumstances given in the book, he was a contemporary of Ezekiel, a young man when the latter mentions him, of perhaps thirty or more years of age. His distinction of wisdom, with which Ezekiel credits him (xxviii. 3), began young; and the fact of his prominence at court, of which we may be sure his whole nation knew though they could only make

¹ Jastrow, *Hebrew and Babylonian Traditions*, p. 363.

² He seems to employ a process the like of which modern criticism has made quite familiar, — the process of guessing at the first and multiplying by three.

folk tales of its incidents, would be sufficient to nourish the pride and self-respect of an exiled race. They would feel that they themselves were not so mean and despicable if one of their royal family could so measure his gifts with the greatest. But, as Ezekiel wisely warned them, it would not do to bank overmuch on having a representative at court; they must be individual masters of their own character. It was sound advice; it did not hinder them, however, from having in their minds a positive type of racial and religious integrity far mightier in upbuilding influence than the prophet's vehement diatribes against taking the idols into their hearts.

And Job? — was he a type, or a tradition, like Noah, or a real personage, like Daniel? Evidently he was as familiar to their minds and as strong a point for a moral as the other two. We will recall the passage I quoted from the Book of Job, in which the patriarch is made to describe, as if by an eyewitness, the dispersion of the nation's best elements into exile. The passage seems, as far as it goes, to indicate that the composition of the Book of Job fell somewhere within this period, and that its author was a contemporary. Along with this we put Ezekiel's grouping of the name with those of Noah and Daniel. What are we to make of this? I may as well state at once my theory of the matter. I am disposed to think that the name was used cryptically to designate a personage well known to all the Hebrews, and high in their thoughts, but whom it would not be politic to mention by his real name, and who must be practically dead to them. Why the name "Job" was used will appear later; and indeed the most obvious connotation of the name, if adopted from a known tradition, would give it a peculiar fitness.

I need hardly tell you whom I mean. It will be remem-

bered that for thirty-seven years of their exile—a whole generation—the children of Israel had still an anointed king, a king in whom were concentrated all the hopes of the house of David, all the ancient promises of perpetuity. True, he was a king in prison, without court or revenues, who could not claim but only crave from his subjects pity and loyalty; a king who had not fought but surrendered, and of whom Jeremiah had spoken as of a vessel wherein none delighted. It is hard to picture to ourselves what must have been the bitterness of that long prison experience, or to imagine how its irksome hours were spent. That they were not spent in vain, that there was something distinctive in the disposal of those years, would seem to be indicated by the outcome. At the end of the thirty-seven years, in the year after Nebuchadnezzar died, Jehoiachin was brought up out of prison, set above all the others who were in like case with him, and maintained at the king's table and at the king's charges all the rest of his life (2 Kings xxv. 27–30=Jer. lii. 31–34). How long this was we do not know, for there is no record of his death. At the time of his release from prison he was fifty-five years old; and “if after this event he lived until Cyrus set foot on Babylonian soil and the Hebrews began to see deliverance ahead, he would still be only seventy years old.”¹

It will not do, of course, to bear weight on a conjecture, and there is no occasion for it. Whether Ezekiel's employment of the name “Job” meant merely the legendary patriarch or his present analogue a king like Job, the fact remained that in the people's mind, so common that a mere allusion would rouse it, a type of suffering patience was taken for

¹ See my article “This Man Coniah,” *Biblical World*, vol. xxxvii. (1911), p. 93.

granted as a type of redeeming righteousness. Ezekiel's plea for individual worth and accountability could supplement this, but not override it. The idea remained, a subduing, softening influence; it lets us also a little way into the healthier mind of the time.

The effects of it are already apparent before Ezekiel's career is over. By the time the fall of Jerusalem is reported, his impassioned struggles against the false prophets of peace (Ezek. xiii. 8 ff.), and against the many allurements of idolatry (xiv. 4, 5; xxxiii. 23-29), have virtually subsided; his words being no longer treated as a vital issue, but as a literary entertainment (xx. 49; xxxiii. 30-33). Soon thereafter his more constructive work begins: he prophesies the Messianic shepherd in place of the unfaithful shepherds of Israel (xxxiv. 23, 24); he sees the era nearer when the heart of stone shall become a heart of flesh, born of water and the spirit (xxxvi. 25-27); he sees in vision the dry bones of the charnel valley coming together and taking on new life (xxxvii. 1-14); he uses the symbolism of the two sticks to represent the reunion of the two long alienated houses of Israel (xxxvii. 15-23). Finally, in the twenty-fifth year of the exile, he sets definitely to work, planning a rebuilt temple, a reorganized cultus, and a reapportioned land of Palestine (chaps. xl.-xlviii.).

All this, when we get its inner meaning, betokens as much for the spiritual development of the people as for the more hopeful and tolerant mood of the prophet. A great progress has been made in the quarter century since the surrender; a nation's conscience and character has risen resilient against the mightiest powers and subtlest allurements of the world. It has been a time of the opening of eyes and of the strengthening of convictions.

VII.

Years and decades pass from which we get no echo. Nebuchadnezzar's magnificence and splendor have made Babylon the arbitress of the earth; and in his huge dominions the little nation of Israel is swallowed up as in the maw of a monster (Jer. li. 34); but he has in his court a man of that race whose wisdom and integrity have made his name a household word, and in his state prison he has a king whose royal worth is yet to be brought to light. It is time for us to return to this king and see if we can learn more of him. His release from prison in the year after Nebuchadnezzar's death, and the special distinction accorded him thenceforth, provoke the question what there was in him, or his subjects, or the solidarity of king and subjects, to call forth such clemency and honor. The answer, I think, is to be found in a careful consideration of the Second Isaiah, the composition of which falls within this exile period.

The magnificent opening of the Second Isaiah recognizes a spiritual battle fought and won, a stage of inner development reached, which is accepted by Jehovah as the redemption of his people. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins" (xl. 1, 2). Then comes the cry to prepare the way of Jehovah; then the setting of the scene for a tremendous world drama. This scene is shifted from that of the First Isaiah, and from that of Ezekiel; it is not confined to Chaldea and Jerusalem, it is the whole world, above which Jehovah sits guiding the destinies of nations, and on which the inhabitants are in his sight as grasshoppers. It is as if henceforth the universal doors were thrown open

and the Hebrew's Jerusalem were everywhere. The great purpose and action correspond. Not merely the return across the wilderness to Jerusalem and the reestablishment of temple and cultus; Ezekiel had prepared for that, and the nation eventually got what Ezekiel planned for and more. But the way of Jehovah, and the wilderness through which it leads, are broader; the action purposed for Israel more far-reaching. "It is too light a thing," Jehovah says to his servant, "that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isa. xlix. 6).

Such is the mission for which Israel has been redeemed and educated; how is it to be carried out? I must not enlarge on the situation. The uprolling scene in the fortieth chapter reveals a people so long sequestered that they deem their way hid from Jehovah, but they are heartened by the assurance that they are remembered by Him who names the stars, and that He has been unwearied in girding them for their mission. Then the nations are solemnly called to council, to hear what events are impending and what this mission is. Jehovah has called one from the east, a conqueror, before whom the gates of a new civilization will be opened; twice his might and mission are described before his name is given, Cyrus, whose career is of Jehovah's appointment and girding. Before him as he advances all is dismay and confusion, because none can read the meaning of things, and none can meet him except with the intelligence engendered by idols and empty divination. But Israel has no cause for fear; he has, in fact, a mission of his own, greater than that of Cyrus. He is to be a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: going forth to thresh and winnow until the grain is separated

from the chaff. It is not difficult to interpret this metaphor. Among the nations besotted by idolatry and magic, this great Babylon with the rest, Israel is the one nation to see things as they are and to approach them with the sharp solvent of an enlightened conscience. So in the confusion that is coming, Israel may be confident and ready.

VIII.

In specifying the agency for this transcendent mission of Israel, the Second Isaiah deals with the most puzzling character, perhaps, and yet most evocative of love, loyalty, and pity, in the Old Testament. The character is taken up by the writers of the New Testament and so intimately identified with Christ, especially as described in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, that the Old Testament original, if indeed there was a personal original, has almost vanished. The critics, keen to find personal and concrete sources for most things, incontinently turn this character into a communal abstraction. The Servant of Jehovah, they say, who figures so prominently in Second Isaiah, is nothing but the Hebrew people; and all the things about him that sound so sharply individualized are just communal traits conceived in an unusually realistic manner.

The critics are partly right, as sincere critics are apt to be. The traits of the Servant of Jehovah *are* traits that the prophet is laboring to impress on his people, is aiming to make their spiritual outfit and weapon in their tremendous world mission; but they have an individual original, an actual personage, to set the copy. Their business as an enlightened nation, as a people who still have a king, is to make that person's method and purpose their own. That personage, I feel sure, is King Jehoiachin, who after a long prison experience

is bringing the fruits of that experience to bear upon the duty and destiny of his people. This is done not directly but as it were cryptically: through the medium of the prophet himself, who is so inspired and withal awed by it that words almost fail him. Whether the king is already dead, or still at the king of Babylon's table and maintenance, is uncertain; I am inclined on the whole to favor the latter alternative.

In setting forth this Servant-of-Jehovah idea and duty as it is, the prophet had an exceedingly delicate literary task, the masterly management of which excites wonder. Consider the situation. In announcing to his people the approach of Cyrus, who is destined to break up the empire, and in rejoicing at the prospect; in giving them a mission of threshing and winnowing, as Micah had prophesied (iv. 13; cf. Jer. li. 33), the prophet is, from a political point of view, putting his people in the position of conspirators and traitors. But he does not mean that; the Servant of Jehovah, imbued with the spirit of Jehovah's methods, must not mean that. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him: he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry, nor lift up his voice, nor cause it to be heard in the street. A bruised reed will he not break, and a dimly burning wick will he not quench: he will bring forth justice in truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set justice in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law" (Isa. xlii. 1-4). Here is the whole Servant program; and this, though the mightiest solvent that has ever been applied to human aims and affairs, is no treason. It is hard to read it as if it were an abstract description of an ideal, designed to make the communal Servant use gentle and sympathetic methods; there must be a real person, one would think, who is an embodi-

ment of this character. But if this is their king, of necessity he must not be named; it will not do to identify him personally; he must be described cryptically, and in such terms that no suspicion of treason can attach to him. His means of setting justice in the earth have nothing to do with political plots and schemes; they are rather the patient personal influences which alone can nourish the inner life of man and bide their time. Hence the source of such beneficent power and purpose is described not as a king but as a servant,—the servant whom Jehovah upholds. Such an idealized figure it is, a personage understood but not named, whom the Second Isaiah sets before his people as the focus of their meditations and the candidate for their corporate allegiance.

Jeremiah, as we have seen, was puzzled by Coniah's surrender; he could not, in his time, guess at the meaning of an act which would for all time make the king a vessel wherein none delighted. But the thirty-seven years' imprisonment, with the silent use made of it, has wrought a change in the later prophet's ideas; it has brought him enlightenment, a new insight into the meaning of that seemingly unnoted capitulation, and, what is of still greater moment, a new conception of the solidarity of king and people. The moment of that access of insight we can recognize by the vividness and realism he has imparted to his account. It is the moment of the king's release from prison. That event, in particular, seems to have been burned into his mind and memory. He applies it first to his people, who, as well as the mysterious individual, are called the servant of Jehovah; using it to enforce that moment of spiritual awakening when a people long blind and deaf to their duty and destiny are summoned forth to the light and intercourse of the world's life and to the assumption of a great mission. "Hear, ye deaf," he says,

“and look, ye blind, that ye may see. Who is blind but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I send? who is blind as the surrendered one,¹ and blind as Jehovah’s servant?” (Isa. xlii. 18, 19). Then he goes on to describe a peculiar sort of blindness and deafness, not at all like the smeared eyes and dull ears with which the First Isaiah contended all his life (cf. vi. 10; xxix. 10). “Thou seest many things, but thou observest not; his ears are open, but he heareth not” (xlii. 20). It is as if he were making use of a real phenomenon described later by Macaulay: “When a prisoner first leaves his cell he cannot bear the light of day: he is unable to discriminate colors or recognize faces.”² Browning, in his “Saul,” has described in a similar concept the slow recovery of normal consciousness from an imprisonment of spirit:—

“Awhile his right hand
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forthwith
to remand
To their place what new object should enter.”

From this realistic description the prophet goes on in much the same terms as before; and after saying of his people, “They are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses” (xlii. 22)—as if they were like their king—and then adding encouraging words, he exclaims, “Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears” (xliii. 8), and goes on to lay upon them their corporate mission as witnesses of Jehovah. A skillful way this, it seems to me, of making king and people one mind in a great destiny and purpose.

This vividly realized moment of release, however, does not

¹ כְּמַשְׁלֵם. Cheyne’s translation, in the first edition of his *Isalah*.

² From his essay on Milton, quoted in *This Man Coniah*, p. 96.

yield all its suggestion in the prophet's application of it to the long-sequestered people. His most poignant recollection is of the royal prisoner's appearance as he first came forth, — "His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men" (lii. 14). That seems to have brought up, as in a flood of sudden insight, and not without a pang of self-reproach, the meaning of it all; the view of a suffering and sacrifice so patient and uncomplaining, yet withal so purposeful and kingly, that kings who came to realize it would shut their mouths at him. Here follows the fifty-third chapter, which I need not enlarge upon. The prophet blames himself with the rest for having held this man in despite and rejection. While the heedless nation, like silly sheep, had gone their own self-seeking way, this man was led like a lamb to the slaughter, like a sheep dumb before its shearers. And all for their sakes, wounded for their transgression. Here was vicarious suffering brought to light in a form that none could gainsay. We will note that it was the release that opened the sudden light into the depth and motive of that long surrender; otherwise it might have gone unrevealed and forgotten. "He was brought forth," the prophet says, "from prison and judgment, and who shall declare his generation?" (liii. 8, A.V.). Who indeed? that silent, patient thirty-seven years shut away from the world's affairs, yet somehow effectual to promote the welfare of his people and to win the respect of kings. A monarch bearing the ignominy of surrender, yet bearing also the sin of many, and making intercession for the transgressors, — such is the revelation opened to the prophet by this release. And not in vain. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by the knowledge of himself

shall my righteous servant justify many: and he shall bear their iniquities" (ver. 11).

Of a prison period so fruitful in spiritual consecration and intercession one is moved to ask of what sort were its occupations and activities. Here, I think, we may fairly interrogate what the Servant is made to say of himself,—for here and there through the Second Isaiah, in the most strongly individualized passages, he speaks in the first person. That he was engaged in some marvelous occupation would seem certain from the words he quotes from Jehovah's address to him in the midst of one of the first-person passages: "Thus saith Jehovah, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers: Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall worship; because of Jehovah that is faithful, even the Holy One of Israel, who hath chosen thee" (xlix. 7). We can hardly miss the identity of the man who says such words. Nor can we well mistake his condition as a disgraced and imprisoned man when he says: "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" (l. 6). But there is another side of the case. In all this we are introduced not to the torpor and despair of surrender, but to the resilient faith of a resolute personality. "For the Lord Jehovah will help me; therefore have I not been confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame" (l. 7). Then follows a challenge that might have been uttered by Job, when he had fought his way to faith; a challenge that affirms his conviction that he is laying hold of the permanent and eternal, and therefore is not disturbed by the ephemeral things that "wax old as a garment" (ver. 8, 9).

All this sounds not so much like an anchorite in prayer as like a sage or counselor in thought and instruction. In this same first-person passage, too, the Servant says another noteworthy thing: "The Lord Jehovah hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I may know how to sustain with words him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are taught" (ver. 4). This sounds as if he were minded to be helpful to his kind, and especially to those who are hard pressed, through the power of words, of literature; it is quite in keeping with the gentle and sympathetic method already ascribed to the Servant of Jehovah, in his work of setting judgment in the earth, so that the isles shall wait for his law. Nor does it all seem to be of the gentle and comforting order. There is something in the effect of his words which recalls the "shoot out of the stock of Jesse" described by the First Isaiah, who "shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth" (xi. 4); only here there seems connoted greater literary skill and fineness: "He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me; and he hath made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he kept me close; and he said unto me, Thou art my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified" (xlix. 2). Here, in addition to that strange identification of person and people which is so characteristic of the Second Isaiah, we note a remarkable literary self-consciousness, as if the royal prisoner would have us know he is contributing to the spiritual enlightenment of men. Can it be, then, that we may reasonably number this "surrendered one" among the authors of Scripture?

Here, of course, we can only resort to conjecture, or perhaps to impressions which some would stigmatize as vague and subjective. But if we waited for everything until we

could muster documents or apply an exhaustive induction, we should not get very far.

I see nothing violent in the assumption that when the prophet puts certain words of the Servant in the first person, he is quoting actual words of this royal prisoner. He writes his prophecy, as I have conjectured, some time after the release of Jehoiachin, but before his death; that is to say, while he is at the king's table and in favor above the other prisoners of state. There may have been, it seems likely that there was, some freedom of intercourse between king and prophet. The prophet may have become to an extent the king's spokesman; putting before the exiled people the king's counsels, and thus in a way collaborating with the king in maintaining a government real and actual, if also informal and cryptic. Such is the impression that haunts me as I read that enigmatic section of Isaiah from the fifty-sixth to the sixty-sixth chapter, — what the critics are disposed to split off from the rest and call the Trito-Isaiah. In this section I seem to read not merely the prophet's ideal of the mission in the earth, common to king and people, of the enlightened Servant of Jehovah, but also of the king's ideal of sterling citizens, citizens of the world as Israel must henceforth be, faithful to the principles of their religion, hospitable and tolerant, living so in the light of the Spirit of Jehovah that nations shall come to their light and kings to the brightness of their rising (lx. 3). It is a kind of educative manual for a nation whose temple is still in ruins, whose simple religion seems to express itself in Sabbath observance and fasting and prayer, who still have to be warned against the hardness of a people immersed in worldly activities, and against the fashionable worship of Fortune and Destiny. In addition to this the section rounds off the Book of Isaiah,

making it a magnificent unity, with end answering to its beginning. We cannot say the personal Servant was its author; but he seems to have been to a large degree its inspiring source; and toward the end he states his mission in the first person in words wherein a prominent purpose is "liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (lxi. 1). That far-away surrender, followed out in good faith and good will, has survived reproach and shame, and become a new historic force in the world.

I may have become a fool in conjecturing; but one more conjecture I may be permitted. In Ezekiel's time, early in the exile, we noted how the patriarch Job was mentioned as a very significant personage set in the company of Noah and Daniel; and how it was conjectured that a cryptic reference to the king lurked in the mention. We cited also a passage from the Book of Job, wherein the exile of nations and nobles and princes was described as by an eyewitness. In running casually through the Book of Job, too, one comes upon such a passage as this:—

"The prisoners are at ease together:
They hear not the voice of the taskmaster" (iii. 18);

and at the end, "The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends" (xlii. 10). One hears Job in the depth of his affliction saying,—

"Behold, now have I set in order my cause;
I know that I shall be justified,
Who is he that will contend with me?"

(xiii. 18, 19) and the Servant in his prison-house using almost identical words of challenging confidence (Isa. l. 7, 8). Not from such random passages, however, but from the whole

attitude and atmosphere of the book, I find myself questioning if the Book of Job may not be, like "The Pilgrim's Progress" and "Don Quixote," a prison-made book. The similarity, in tone and teaching, of the Book of Job to the Second Isaiah has many times been noted, and elaborate parallels have been drawn. If the Book of Job was written in such circumstances, and by the author we have conjectured, there certainly was a rich fund of experience to give vigor and depth to it; and that something deeply personal and not merely literary underlay the book is a truth that we cannot well deny.

Thus I have tried to trace in some details of inner history the sequel of a surrender. The divine guidance of the whole history is so evident that to assert it would be a banality. It is the divine demonstration that war and tyranny, such as the savage old tribes and empires resorted to, are not the real means of gaining the victory of manhood: there is a better way, the power of the spirit which in the long run replaces fear and fighting by love and trust, and which will not fail nor be discouraged till it has set justice in the earth.