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A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

THE EXPOSITOR.

EZEKIEL : AN IDEAL BIOGRAPHY.

I. THE YEARS OF PREPARATION.

IT may be said, I think, without rashness that for every ten readers of Isaiah, readers who think and love, there are seven readers of Jeremiah, and not more than two or three who turn to Ezekiel with a like spirit of reverential study. In the old lectionary of the English Church, the latter prophet was almost conspicuous by his absence, and there were but fifteen lessons taken from his writings.¹ It is one of the many gains from the new table of lessons that the balance is, in some measure, redressed, and that men are taught not to look on one of the great prophets of the Old Testament as too hard for them to understand or profit by. But it may be questioned how far that lesson has as yet been adequately learnt. The obscurities of Ezekiel's style, the strange animal symbolism of the vision with which his volume opens, the startling nakedness with which as in Chapters xvi. and xxiii. he denounces the sins of his people, all combine to repel rather than attract the reader.

It is with a view to overcoming this repulsion that I enter on a study of the prophet's life and work, after the manner of that of Isaiah, which appeared in a previous volume of the EXPOSITOR.² If we can find and appreciate the human element in his writings, picture to ourselves

¹ Nine lessons in the Daily Calendar, six on Sundays. In the present lectionary there are thirty-six in the Daily, and seven in the Sunday Tables.

² See EXPOSITOR (New Series), vol. vi.

what the man was in his home and among his people, in his youth, manhood, and old age, we shall be better prepared to take a true estimate of the mission with which he was entrusted to the men of his own generation, and of the eternal truths of which he was the chosen witness, not only to the Church of Israel, but to that of Christ.

I. The date of the prophet's birth may be fixed if, with Hengstenberg, we refer the "thirtieth year" of Chapter i. 1 to the chronology of his life, with almost absolute certainty. It was then the "fifth year" of the captivity which dated from the deportation of Jehoiachin by Nebuchadnezzar in 600 B.C., and this would therefore carry us back to 625 B.C., synchronising with what is known as the era of Nabopolassar, the founder of the late Babylonian monarchy. If, with Ewald, Keil, and Delitzsch, that reference be treated as not proven, it is yet probable that we may fix on this as at least an approximately correct date. There is no trace in Ezekiel's prophecies of his having been called to his prophetic work, like Jeremiah (Jer. i. 6), when he was exceptionally young; and as thirty was fixed by the law as the age at which a Levite entered on the full discharge of his functions (Num. iv. 3, 35), it is not probable that Ezekiel was called to his prophetic office at an earlier period.¹ His ministry as a prophet extends from the fifth year of the captivity (Chap. i. 1), according to the chronological headings of the sections of his volume, to the twenty-seventh, B.C. 573 (Chap. xxix. 17), when he would be, according to this hypothesis, fifty-two. We can hardly think it likely in the nature of things, apart from the reason just given, that a man of Ezekiel's strength and intensity of character would have remained silent during the period of life which is, with most men, that of their maximum of activity.

¹ That, it may be noted, was the age at which our Lord and probably the Baptist entered on their prophetic functions (Luke iii. 2, 23).

I start, then, with the assumption that the prophet's birth may be fixed at, or about, B.C. 625. Like Jeremiah (Jer. i. 1,) and probably Isaiah also (see EXPOSITOR for January, 1883), he was of a priestly house. If we might accept the Rabbinic tradition that when the name of a prophet's father is given, it is because the father also was a prophet, the very earliest years of Ezekiel may have familiarized him with the ideal of his future work. Of the father himself, however, we know nothing more than the name, but the name which he gave his son, Ezekiel (*God is strong*), suggests the thought that he too had known what it was to feel that "the hand of the Lord was strong upon him" (Ezek. iii. 14), the sense of a constraining power such as led Jeremiah to exclaim, "Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed" (Jer. xx. 7).¹

The religious and political condition of Judah at the time of the prophet's birth may be gathered from the history of 2 Kings xxii. and 2 Chronicles xxxiv. The previous year had been memorable for the discovery of the lost book of the Law, not necessarily in the form of the Pentateuch with which we are familiar, and which it assumed probably under Ezra's editorship; possibly, whatever views we take of the origin and date of that book, in that of the book which we now know as Deuteronomy; more probably, as I venture to think, in that of Leviticus, which during the idolatrous reigns of Manasseh and Amon had necessarily been disused and had naturally been forgotten, having perhaps been hidden, in the hope of a better time, by some of the priests or Levites whom it chiefly concerned, and who were its natural custodians. The threats of coming judgments in Leviticus xxvi. answer to the account given in 2 Kings xxii. quite as closely as do those of Deuteronomy

¹ I notice, only to reject, Hengstenberg's extraordinary and unproved assertion, that the names of all the canonical prophets were assumed by them when they entered on their new office, and not given them in their infancy (Hengstenberg, *Ezekiel*, on i. 1.)

xxviii., and the many references to the former in the earlier chapters of Ezekiel's writings justify the inference that it was the former and not the latter, that struck terror into the minds of the king and people when the book of the Law was read.¹

Ezekiel's boyhood to the age of thirteen was accordingly spent in all the stir and excitement of Josiah's reformation, characterized, as it necessarily was, by the priestly Levitical stamp which had been thus impressed upon it. Hilkiyah the priest and Huldah the prophetess must have been familiar names to him. The cleansing of the Temple from all that remained of the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove (the obscene symbol of the *Asherah*), and for the host of heaven (2 Kings xxiii. 4), the destruction of the local sanctuaries of the high places, and of the altar at Bethel, the keeping of the great Passover (2 Kings xxiii. 22), must have been among the earliest traditions of his childhood. The whole bent of his education must, in the nature of things, have been that of one who was to be a true priest according to the old ideal. A new prominence must have been given to the Levitical law in his training which it had not had in that of Isaiah or even of Jeremiah, issuing in a somewhat narrower range of thought and reading than that of the former, a somewhat more liturgical and ceremonial type of character than that of the latter. We cannot, by any effort of imagination, think of either of those prophets as planning the restoration of the ruined temple, with all the measurements and details which we find in the closing chapters (xl.-xlviii.) of Ezekiel. In the influence of that refound codex of Leviticus on the prophet's mind we have the key to all that is most characteristic in his writings.

¹ Compare—

Lev. xxvi. 19, and Ezek. vii. 24.	
" 22, " v. 17.	
" 25, " vi. 13.	
" 26, " iv. 16.	

Lev. xxvi. 28 and Ezek. v. 13.	
" 29, " v. 10.	
" 31, " vi. 6.	
and many other passages.	

We ask ourselves, as we trace the mental history of poets, thinkers, statesmen, What was their environment, who were they who, somewhat older it may be than themselves, were working round them, influencing them, directly or indirectly, by action or reaction? Among Ezekiel's contemporaries one name stands out with an illustrious pre-eminence. Jeremiah, the priest of Anathoth, ministering in the Temple, prophesying in the streets of Jerusalem, must have been known to the son of Buzi who was in training for the priesthood; and there, or at Anathoth, he may have listened eagerly to his teaching. Looking to the chronology of Jeremiah's life, we find that at an earlier age than was common, probably therefore between twenty and twenty-five, he was called to his work as a prophet in the thirteenth year of Josiah, four years before the discovery of the "book of the law of the Lord," and five years before the date which we have been led to fix for the birth of Ezekiel. During the whole of the younger prophet's earlier years, therefore, he must have lived as under the shadow of the elder. At the death of Josiah in B.C. 610, Jeremiah was circ. 38-43 years of age, while Ezekiel was only fifteen. The time of companionship which remained after that date was comparatively short. The reign of Jehoahaz the son of Josiah lasted but three months, that of his brother Jehoiakim for eleven years, that of Jehoiachin for three months and ten days. Then came the first capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and the first great deportation of the captives of official standing and social position. During that period of eleven years and a half accordingly Ezekiel must have been under Jeremiah's immediate influence, but as he was only twenty-five or twenty-six at its close, and had received no direct call to the office of a prophet, we cannot wonder that he abstained as yet from being more than a silent witness of his work. After the

deportation, *i.e.* during the whole reign of Zedekiah, his direct knowledge of Jeremiah's teaching ceased, and all that reached him must have been through such messengers as came from time to time from Jerusalem to the land of his exile, or through the epistle which the older prophet sent "to the priests and to the prophets and to all the people" whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried into captivity in Babylon (Jer. xxix. 1-32).

A careful study of Ezekiel's prophecies will shew how largely he had profited by the teaching of the prophet, at whose feet he had thus sat. That symbolic eating of the roll of a book which was sweet as honey in his mouth (Ezek. iii. 2) was the acted rendering of Jeremiah's words, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and thy word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer. xv. 16). The great lesson of the personal responsibility of each man for his own sin, as distinct from the distorted view of a transmitted and inherited guilt, which embodied itself in the popular proverb that "the fathers had eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth were set on edge," which was expanded by the one prophet (Ezek. xviii. 2-29), was the distinct echo of the self-same teaching proclaimed more concisely by the other (Jer. xxxi. 29). It was no new thing for Ezekiel to find his chief opponents in the false prophets and diviners among the children of the captivity (Ezek. xiii. 2, 3), for they had been both in Jerusalem and in Babylon the hinderers and slanderers of the word of the Lord as it came from the lips of Jeremiah (Jer. xiv. 14, xxiii. 16). Of the personal home life of Ezekiel we know but little. He was married to one who was as the "desire of his eyes" (Ezek. xxiv. 16), but we have no mention, as in the case of Isaiah, of any children. Jeremiah, it will be remembered, was probably unmarried, so that in this respect the prophet of the Exile occupied, as it were, an intermediate position between the other two.

How the five years were spent that filled up the interval between the Exile and the vision which determined the vocation of Ezekiel's after-life we can only conjecture. Under the reign of Zedekiah things were going from bad to worse in Jerusalem. The king was occupied with abortive plans for an alliance with Egypt and other nations which might help him to cast off the yoke of the Chaldeans (Jer. xxvii. 3, xxxvii. 1-5);¹ halting between two opinions in his treatment of Jeremiah, now disposed to protect him against his persecutors, to seek his counsels and implore his intercession (Jer. xxi. 2), now listening to the false prophets who promised freedom and restoration within two full years (Jer. xxviii. 11). Jeremiah, on his side, had warned the exiles in Babylon that their captivity would run its appointed length of seventy years (Jer. xxix. 10), that their wisdom would be to seek the peace of the city to which they had been brought, to build houses and plant gardens, as if it were their home, and to refrain from all plots and schemes against their conquerors (Jer. xxix. 4-7). The remoter exiles in Tel-Abib, on the banks of Chebar, must be thought of as open to all these conflicting influences; now listening to the voice of warning, now hardening their hearts against it, in any case shewing no signs of real repentance and conversion. They too, like other exiles, may have sat down and wept by the waters of Babylon, hanging their harps upon the trees that were therein, comforting themselves with their prayers for vengeance upon their conquerors (Ps. cxxxvii.).

II. THE CALL TO A PROPHET'S WORK.

So far as the analogy of the work of other prophets helps to guide us, the mind of Ezekiel must have been filled with wild, sad, perplexing thoughts, as he brooded over the sins

¹ The name of Jehoiakim in Chapter xxvii. 1 is clearly an error of transcription.

and miseries of his people, before he found the solution of his doubts in the vision of the glory of the Lord, which called him, as a like vision had called Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, to the office of a prophet. That call did not break in, as it were, upon the quiet routine of an untroubled life, but was the crisis of a long preparation, a Divine intervention, at the moment when it was most needed to hinder the man to whom it came from sinking utterly in the depths of his sorrow and despair, adapted in all its circumstances and details to the antecedent conditions of his soul.

In the light of that postulate, accordingly, (one might almost call it an axiom in dealing with the life of any prophet of Jehovah), we have now to enter on an examination of those circumstances. We must think of Ezekiel as having left the town or village in which he dwelt, and going forth alone to the banks of the river Chebar, as it flowed on through the wide plains of the Upper Euphrates.¹ There came upon him that strange ineffable thrill through nerve and brain, for which the prophets of Israel could find no other expression than that "the hand of the Lord was on them," the ecstasy of one who "falls into a trance, having his eyes open" (Num. xxiv. 4); and to him, in that ecstasy, as afterwards to Stephen (Acts vii. 56), and to the Christ (Luke iii. 21), the "heavens were opened," and he saw "visions of God." The theophany seemed to him, as Jeremiah's vision had done to him (Jer. i. 13, 14), to come from the North, partly perhaps, because the expectations of men turned to that region as pregnant with the new peoples, Scythians, Medes, Persians, and the like, and the new events, which were to determine the coming history of his people (Jer. iv. 6, vi. 1); partly also,

¹ The river Chebar, the Chaboras of the Greek geographers, flows into the Euphrates near Kirkesion. The site of Tel-Abib is unknown. The name = "the mound or heap of corn," indicates a region of more than average fertility.

because it was associated, as in Job xxxvii. 22, with the idea of clearness and of brightness, and so with that of the "terrible majesty" of God.¹ And there he beheld a vision of unutterable glory, the nearest approximation to which, as a help to our powers of imagining the unimaginable, may be found in the marvellous and mysterious brightness, incandescent and irradiant, of a northern aurora. And in the luminous clouds, reminding him of what he had heard or read of the glory of the God of Israel who dwelleth between the cherubim of the mercy-seat, such as had filled the Temple on the day of its dedication (1 Kings viii. 10, 11), such as had been manifested to the eyes of Isaiah (Isa. vi. 1-4), bright as amber, and as flashing from a central fire, he beheld four mysterious forms, like, and yet unlike, to those cherubim, like in their outstretched wings and in their human features, unlike in the union with those features of the three animal forms, the presence of which seems to have hindered him from identifying the "living creatures" with the cherubim, till he saw them once again, in the Temple, as he had seen them on the banks of Chebar (Ezek. x. 20). These forms were, so to speak, a mystical and elaborate development of the figures with which he had been familiar in the old days when he had ministered in the Temple, and had seen them embroidered in the veil of the Temple (Exod. xxxvi. 8), or heard of them as bending over the mercy-seat (Exod. xxv. 15-20, xxxvii. 1-9). It may be noted that in the land of his exile Ezekiel's eyes must have become familiar with sculptured shapes which presented many points of analogy both to his earlier and later conceptions of the cherubim. The bulls with eagle's wings and human heads, the four or six wings, of which two are opened out for flight, while two cover the

¹ The analogy of the Eastern belief in a sacred Northern mountain, the Meru, which like the Olympus of the Greeks was thought of as the abode of gods, is perhaps too remote to be pressed, except as having possibly originated in the same phenomena.

body down to the feet, were, in Assyrian art, the symbols of strength and majesty, of the power of earthly kings, of deities like Nisroch or Nebo. It lies in the nature of all such symbols that they presuppose an existing alphabet. There must be a key to the mysterious cypher. And so, we cannot doubt, it was here. The lion was then, as it has been ever since in poetry, in fables and in heraldry, the recognized king of beasts, as the eagle is of birds. The ox was pre-eminent among the creatures that man had tamed and brought under his yoke. The human face could, of course, be symbolic of nothing but its own humanity, of thought, reason, will. Taken together, the fourfold forms, each of the four living creatures having this quadripartite face, represented the Divine attributes of Might, Wisdom, Will, as manifested in the elemental forces and life-phenomena of Nature, their movements, guided as by the promptings of a living spirit to their destined goal without error or deviation.

But this was not all. Below the living creatures, standing upon the earth, were two wheels, one within the other, intersecting each other at right angles, bright and translucent as the beryl.¹ What did they symbolize? To what antecedent ideas in the prophet's mind was that vision presented so that it might not seem wholly as a cypher without a key? In answering these questions let us remember that Ezekiel was in the land of the Chaldeans, and that these Chaldeans were pre-eminent for their knowledge of astronomy. As such they were much occupied, if not with cycles and epicycles like those of the Ptolemaic system of the Greek astronomers, yet at least with circles and with spheres. As they approximated to the idea of a law governing the stars in their courses, the form of a sphere, of which the intersection of two circles at right

¹ In the Hebrew "Tarshish" stone, which the LXX. reproduces. The Vulgate gives "*visio maris*," suggesting a colour like that of the precious stone known as the aquamarine; Luther renders it by "turquoise," De Wette and others by "chrysolite."

angles is the simplest representation, must have been frequent in their diagrams and their books. To an outsider, like the prophet, such a representation might naturally become the symbol of the thought of Law, moving in its ordered course, underlying the vital phenomena of the universe, and regulating their developments. And as contrasted with what even in modern speech we sometimes speak of as a "*blind*" chance, or with a law which though working uniformly, seemed as reckless and blind as chance itself in regard to consequences, the wheels were "full of eyes," as seeing all contingencies and contemplating all results, bright and lucent to the eye that looked on them, yet "dreadful" and awe-inspiring in their transcendent height, animated by the same spirit of life that was in the living creatures, and moving as they moved. And overarching both there was the infinite azure of the "terrible crystal" of the firmament, like "the body of heaven in its clearness" (comp. Exod. xxiv. 10), and through that crystalline vault there echoed what the poetry of later Greek thought described as "the music of the spheres," but which to the ear of Ezekiel, was as the "noise of great waters, the voice of the Almighty, the voice of words," as yet inarticulate as a guide to action, yet bringing to the inward ear the thought of the great Hallelujahs of Nature, the everlasting anthem, such as Isaiah had heard from the lips of the burning seraphim,¹ "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. vi. 3.)

But the vision, with all its transcendent and pregnant symbolism was not yet complete. Above the firmament and over the heads of the living creatures was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone (comp.

¹ The adjective gives the literal meaning of the Hebrew noun, which we find used with that meaning for the "fiery serpents" of Numbers xxi. 6. They would seem to have been thought of as transfigured and incandescent cherubim.

Exod. xxiv. 10 again), more intense in its pure azure than the vault of heaven itself, and upon the throne was the likeness of the appearance of a man above it, radiant as with the ineffable brightness of amber and of fire. Yes, in spite of the second commandment, prohibiting as it did the materializing of the thought of God in the likeness of man or beast, in metal or marble, the thoughts of the prophet could not escape from the inevitable anthropomorphism which embodies an eternal truth. Only through our thoughts of what man is in his ideal perfection can we pass to the conception of what God is. In the fullest apocalypse of the Divine Glory there must be, in the language of Browning's "Saul," "a face, like our face, that receives us," a "hand, like our hand," stretched out to guide and direct us. Our thoughts of the wisdom and the righteousness, of the sovereignty and fatherhood of God, are but transfigured analogues of our ideas of a like wisdom and sovereignty, a like righteousness and fatherhood as manifested in man. If we find that thought fully realized in the Incarnation which, as we are told, in the most metaphysical of our creeds, was not "the conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but the taking of the manhood into God," not for a time only but for eternity, we may recognize in Ezekiel's anthropomorphism what was, at least, a foreshadowing of that ultimate theophany.

Nor was this all. The vision of the glory of the throne, of the sapphire, and the amber, and the fire, might have been simply overwhelming, but the appearance of the brightness round about was as "that of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain." We have read, some of us, of the thoughts which have flashed into a poet's mind as he stood by the rushing torrent of the waters of Niagara and the dark abyss into which they fell, spanned by the rainbow in its sevenfold harmony of colours, emblem, to his soul, of the eternal hope which hovers over the rush of the

world's history, and the unsolved problems in which it seems to issue. Some such thoughts that vision of the rainbow, in the midst of the fiery glory of the throne, must have brought to Ezekiel's mind. The traditions of his creed had associated it inseparably with the thought of the permanence of an order working for good, underlying all changes, however apparently catastrophic (Gen. ix. 13). At a time when the history of his own life and that of his people was so dark and gloomy, when its accumulated transgressions had brought desolation and exile as their punishment, when its life and its faith seemed wrecked for ever in the destruction of the Temple, a day of storms and gloom, of clouds and darkness, it was an unspeakable consolation to see in that "bow in the cloud as in the day of rain" the token that all was not over, that there was still, in Jeremiah's language, "a future and a hope" in store for him and for his people (Jer. xxix. 11).¹

I have endeavoured to interpret the symbols of Ezekiel's vision as I believe he must himself have interpreted them. When they re-appeared, in part, and with significant variations, in the visions of St. John (Rev. iv. 8) there may have been other thoughts mingled with those which I have learnt to read in them as they appear in those of the earlier prophet. It was, perhaps, natural that a devout, but not historical, imagination should, at a later date, see in their fourfold forms the emblems of the four Evangelists, and that this association, once accepted in the traditions of Christian art, should overshadow all others, even though those traditions varied in their agreement of the several symbols, the Lion and the Man, for example, being identified, now as corresponding with St. Matthew and St. Mark, and now with St. Mark and St. Matthew respectively. With these developments, however, the interpreter of Ezekiel has

¹ I take this rendering, adopted now by nearly all critics, instead of the "expected end" of our Authorized Version.

simply nothing to do. It is wholly inconceivable that they could have been in his thoughts at all.

The vision, however, was not yet over. Ezekiel had been prostrate on the ground, as in adoring awe before the marvellous theophany. He is raised from that prostration partly by a voice that speaks to him, partly by the consciousness of a new spiritual power and presence within him. And the voice calls him by a name which, one might almost say, was identified with Ezekiel till it was identified yet more closely with the Christ. For him, the chief thought conveyed by that name of "the Son of Man" was as in Psalms viii. 4, cxliv. 3, the thought of the littleness of his human nature. That thought was, it is true, associated even in those very psalms with that of man's greatness as supreme, in the natural constitution and order of the world, over the creation, animate and inanimate, in the midst of which he finds himself; but as yet it had not been connected, as it was a few years afterwards, in Daniel's vision, with the exaltation of One who, though "like unto a Son of Man," was brought with clouds of glory to sit on the right hand of the Ancient of days (Dan. vii. 13). For Ezekiel the name "Son of Man" simply bore its witness that he stood on the same level with the weakest and meanest of those to whom he spoke, that it was a marvel and a mystery that such an one as he should be called to the office of a prophet of Jehovah. As with other prophets, the mission to which he was thus called was no light or easy task. He was sent to a rebellious house, "impudent children and stiff-hearted." His life among them was to be as that of one who "dwells among scorpions," and with whom are "briers and thorns." There was but little prospect of their listening to him, but he was to do his work regardless of praise or blame, whether they "would hear, or forbear" hearing. And as in the symbolic language of his contemporary Jeremiah, he was to make

the message which it was given him to utter his own, by incorporating it with his very life of life; he was "to eat that which was given him," and a hand was sent unto him and in the hand there was as the roll of a book—not perhaps without a reminiscence of the volume that had been found in the Temple in the days of Josiah (2 Chron. xxxiv. 14), or Jeremiah's roll under Jehoiakim (Jer. xxxvi. 4, 32). A glance at it shewed its nature. It was written on both sides, within and without, and from first to last it seemed as if there were no word of hope or promise, nothing but "lamentations, and mourning, and woe." But it does not lie with a true prophet to choose his message. His work is to "eat what he finds," and so in simple obedience Ezekiel does as he was told to do. And then there came, as in an acted parable, one of the strange paradoxes of a prophet's work. The book so full of woe that it might have been expected to find its analogue in the bitterness of gall and wormwood, was found to be in his mouth "as honey for sweetness." In part, as we have already seen, he was echoing the language, and repeating the experience of Jeremiah (Jer. xv. 16). In part he was reproducing what had been said by the writer of the nineteenth Psalm of the judgments of Jehovah, "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." Underlying all three utterances, there was the truth to which the spiritual experience of the ages adds an ever-clearer testimony, that there is an ineffable sweetness and joy in that sense of being in communion and fellowship with God which is the groundwork of a prophet's calling. That sweetness may, as in the parallel symbolism of the Apocalypse, pass into bitterness (Rev. x. 9), as the seer encounters the inevitable pain of being a minister of condemnation as well as deliverance, of death as well as life; or, as in the case of Ezekiel, it may follow on the mourning and the

woe which he sees to be inseparable from his task; but for the time there is a new consciousness of a higher life, the sense of a supreme rest and calm, underlying the world's endless agitation, and of a Divine compassion working through the sternest judgments. With Ezekiel, as we have seen, the sweetness came as an unlooked-for joy. But it came also to strengthen him for the trials that were inseparable from his work, and to prepare him for his mission to that house of Israel which was as the very incarnation of the spirit of rebellion, "impudent and hard-hearted." He was to look for conflict and antagonism. His forehead was to be "strong against their foreheads," strong as "an adamant," harder than flint. To preach to those who had received the truth, and who knew the law of their God, while they resisted and disobeyed it, was a harder task than if he had been sent to the heathen "of a strange speech and a hard language." In words which remind us of the Gospel-woes upon Chorazin and Bethsaida (Matt. xi. 21), he is told that had he been sent to them they would have hearkened unto him (Ezek. iii. 6), but that the house of Israel would be deaf to his teaching, as they had been deaf to that of God. In spite of that knowledge, however, he was bidden to do his work as before, "whether they would hear, or whether they would forbear." That was to be, as it were, his motto and his watchword, as it has been that of every true prophet before and after him.

And now the wondrous vision which then called him to his office as a prophet was all but over. But before it closed there came another moment as of intensest ecstasy. Whether "in the body or out of the body" he could not tell, but it was as though the Spirit took him up, and once more there was "the noise of the wings of the living creatures, and the noise of the wheels and a noise of a great rushing." The "rush," so to speak, of the forces

and the laws that were working in Nature and in history went on as before in their mighty and complex course. But behind them he now heard what he had not heard before, a doxology like that which Isaiah had heard from the seraphim of his Temple-vision (Isa. vi. 3), "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place" (Ezek. iii. 12). The noise, it is emphatically noted, is heard *behind* him. Either, that is, he had already turned his face from the glory of the vision in the North, as preparing to go upon the mission to which he had been sent, or still gazing northward, he heard from the South, for him the region of Jerusalem, the witness that the glory of the Lord had not yet departed from the sanctuary, the "place" which Jehovah had chosen, and in which the prophet had so often worshipped Him. Each view has its supporters among interpreters of the first order, Keil and Delitzsch and Hengstenberg maintaining the former, Ewald the latter. On the whole I incline to side with Ewald. What the prophet needed was the assurance, like that which came to Jacob in his wanderings (Gen. xxviii. 17), that the glory of the Lord, though the Temple was the chosen and central seat of its manifestation, was yet not limited to the Temple; that everywhere, by the waters of Chebar as in the sanctuary of Jerusalem, there might be granted to the inward eye that which made the spot where it was given as "the house of God and as the gate of Heaven." The cherubim of that sanctuary blended, as it were, the voice of benediction and of praise with the noise of the wings and of the wheels, and so bore their witness to the prophet's soul, as a like doxology did to St. John in Patmos (Rev. iv. 8), that the glory of Jehovah was bounded by no place-limits, but could manifest itself to the vision of the seer everywhere throughout the world, when and how it would.

And so the prophet turned from the river-bank which was thus made for ever memorable in his own life, and

in the history of the Church of God, to enter on his task, and bent his footsteps to his own home. What befell him there, in what respect his mode of teaching was like or unlike to that of his great contemporary and his yet greater predecessor, will be the subject of my next paper.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

BIOGENESIS AND DEGENERATION.

A VERY clever and well written book has recently appeared which has rapidly won a wide reputation.¹ No doubt it owes much of its success to a generous review in *The Spectator*—which is always generous when it praises; but no one can well read it without admitting that it thoroughly deserves the success which, but for that generous aid, it might have only more slowly commanded. Its author Mr. Henry Drummond, is at once a Professor of Natural Science and a Preacher of the Gospel; and in an ingenuous Preface he tells us how, to his great surprise, he found the two main spheres of thought through which he moves overlapping and interpenetrating each other. From the days of Bishop Butler downwards, many English divines have traced the most striking and instructive analogies between the natural and the spiritual worlds; but Mr. Drummond, not content with indicating analogies and resemblances, has been moved to essay the much bolder adventure of proving the identity of these worlds, by shewing that the same laws run and hold in both. And if he has not altogether succeeded in this bold adventure—and a complete success was hardly to be expected by the first that sailed into that unknown sea, he has at least done something to prepare the way for those who will come after him.

Natural Law in the Spiritual World. By Henry Drummond, F.R.S.E., F.G.S. London: Hodder and Stoughton.