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

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

- Jeffcock (J. T.), Sermons in Town and Country, 127.
 Kingsley (C.), National Sermons, 230.
 Krause (W. H.), Sermons preached in Bethesda Chapel,
 Dublin, ii. 332.
 Lightfoot (J. B.), Cambridge Sermons, 143.
 M'Cheyne (R. M.), Additional Remains, 34.
 Macleod (D.), Sunday Home Service, 143.
 Matheson (G.), Moments on the Mount, 85.
 Maurice (F. D.), Lincoln's Inn Sermons, 2nd Series,
 i. 223.
 Milligan (W.), Resurrection of our Lord, 304.
 Morison (J.), Sheaves of Ministry, 316.
 Price (A. C.), Fifty Sermons, i. 129, ix. 209.
 Robertson (F. W.), Sermons, iii. 90.
 " " Lectures on Corinthians, 329.
 Rothe (F.), Christian Year, 230.
 Row (C. A.), Bampton Lectures, 1877, 106.
 Smythe (Newman), Reality of Faith, 197.
 Spurgeon (C.), Morning by Morning.
 " " Sermons, vol. xxiv. No. 1411.
 Symington (A.), The Atonement, 303.
 Vaux (J. E.), Sermon Notes, iii. 64.
 Watson (J.), Preparing for Home, 152.
 Wilson (J. M.), Sermons preached in Clifton College
 Chapel, i. 253.
Christian Treasury, xx.
Christian World Pulpit, xvii.
Churchman's Magazine, 1891, 355 (Tucker).
Church of England Magazine, xxxv. 245.
 " " " xliii. 284.
Clerical Library: Three Hundred Outlines, 165, 166.
Contemporary Pulpit, ix., x.
Expositor, 3rd Series, vi.
 " 4th Series, i.
Freeman, xxxvi. 682 (Maclaren).
Hannan's Pulpit Assistant, iii.
Homiletic Review, xvi.
 " " " xx. 521
Inheritance of the Saints, 83.
National Preacher, i.
Pulpit Analyst, v.
Scotch Sermons, 1880, 50.
Sermon Year-Book, ii. 64.
Sunday Magazine, xlv. 323.
Thursday Penny Pulpit, xvi.
Treasury (New York), ix.

Hebrew Prophecy and Modern Criticism.

BY THE REV. F. H. WOODS, B.D., LATE FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD.

V.

(SECOND HALF.)

THE last two features in the Messianic hope which we shall notice refer to the future relations of the redeemed nation (1) to the northern kingdom of Samaria; (2) to foreign nations generally. On the first point we must not be misled by the term Israel. The word is not used by the prophets exclusively, or even generally, of the northern kingdom only, but often either of the whole nation, or, after the captivity of the north, of the southern kingdom alone, as the remaining representative of the whole nation. Thus the 'house of Israel' is Ezekiel's favourite expression for the Jews, and in Mal. ii. 11 we actually find Judah and Israel used as synonymous terms. 'Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem.' Had this been always realised, we might have been spared a good deal of the modern literature about the lost tribes.

But in many passages there can be no doubt of the application of the word Israel to the northern kingdom. The prophets never countenanced the jealousy which so frequently existed between the

north and the south, and was one of the chief causes of national weakness. The southern prophets, though they dwell mostly on the glories of the future Jerusalem, its monarchy and its worship, yet for the most part show that they included the northern kingdom in the promises of future blessedness. Thus Amos, the missionary prophet to the north, pointed to the day when the breaches in the tabernacle of David were to be closed up.¹ Isaiah, in the great prophecy of the Branch, foretells that the outcasts of Israel are to be assembled as well as the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth, and then goes on to say, 'The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and they that vex Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.'² Again, Jeremiah, in a passage already quoted, speaks of the virgin daughter of Israel as once more about to plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria, where the whole context shows that the northern tribes are intended.

¹ Amos ix. 11.

² Isa. xi. 12, 13.

The writer of the middle portion of the Book of Zechariah, who wrote before the captivity of Judah, which he does not appear to have contemplated, speaks still more explicitly of the Restoration of Israel, and evidently implies that Judah would be thus strengthened by the help of her natural allies: 'And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off; for I am Jahweh their God, and I will hear them.' And this was to be brought about by the humiliation of the two great enemies of the people, the Assyrians on the east, and the Egyptians on the south. 'And he shall pass through the sea of affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the depths of the Nile shall dry up; and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away.'¹ Similarly the future union of the two kingdoms under one shepherd, God's servant David, is prefigured by Ezekiel under the symbol of the two sticks bound together (xxxvii. 15-28).

The general impression left us by the prophets who wrote before the return of the Jewish captives is, that they believed that there would be a simultaneous restoration of all the tribes of Israel and Judah, from wherever they might happen to be in exile. This, at any rate, was the expectation of Isaiah, as we see from the prophecy already referred to on this subject (xi. 11): 'And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jahweh shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall remain from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.' Similarly, the prophet of the Captivity speaks of ships of Tarshish as bringing the sons of the Jewish people from far, which cannot of course refer to the Babylonian captives.²

There is, however, a somewhat obscure passage in Ezek. iv., where a different belief seems to be expressed. According to the reading of the Hebrew text of vers. 5, 6, and 9, the captivity of

¹ Zech. x. 6-12. In ver. 6 the R.V. reads הושיבתיים (הושיבתיים) 'I will make them return,' for the Massoretic הושיבתיים 'I will settle them,' cf. LXX. κατοικίω αὐτοὺς. But in any case the return of the exiles is obviously implied.

² Isa. lx. 9.

Israel is to last 390 years, from its commencement presumably, whereas the captivity of Judah, calculated it would appear from the final siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, is to last forty. This makes the restoration of Israel at least 200 years later than that of Judah. If, however, we adopt the reading of the LXX., the restoration of Judah and Israel becomes simultaneous. In ver. 4, LXX. adds πενήτην καὶ ἑκατὸν; in vers. 5 and 9 they read ἐνετήκοντα καὶ ἑκατὸν in place of Hebrew, שלש מאות וחשים; that is to say, 150 in ver. 4, 190 in vers. 5 and 9 instead of 390. According to this reading, the 150 years would refer to the time which intervened between the commencement of the Exile and the time when that of Judah commenced, the remaining forty years to the time that both Israel and Judah would still remain in captivity, 190 to the whole predicted duration of the captivity of Israel. The 150 years is probably to be reckoned from the first captivity of those in the north and north-easterly districts of Israel by Tiglath-pileser after the death of Pekah, in 734, to the final destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 588. The exact number would thus be, according to Jewish reckoning, 147, so that 150 regarded as a round number is practically accurate. On the other hand, starting from the point reached by the 150 years, namely, the destruction of Jerusalem to the actual Restoration, we get, according to Jewish reckoning, fifty-one years instead of forty, the time assigned to the Captivity even more explicitly in xxix. 12. This difference between the anticipated and actual duration of the Captivity, while it cannot cause any serious difficulty to one who studies the prophets without preconceived opinions as to the extent of their foreknowledge, is of considerable critical value. It shows that the LXX. translators do not appear to have altered the numbers to make them square with history, and their readings here, therefore, should have great weight as according with the general tenor of Hebrew prophecy on this subject.

The simultaneous restoration of Israel and Judah is predicted most unequivocally by Ezekiel's contemporary Jeremiah: 'In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I gave for an inheritance unto your fathers.'¹ It has sometimes been objected that the prophecies of the restora-

¹ Jer. iii. 18.

tion of Israel, in the narrower sense of the word, have never been fulfilled, and that therefore either the prophecies await some still future fulfilment, or, as is more often supposed, that they must be understood in a spiritual and not the literal sense; but what right have we, for the sake of any such *à priori* view about the nature of prophetic foreknowledge, to wrest the obvious meaning of the prophets' language?

The attitude in which the Jews were to be placed to foreign nations in the Great Future is more difficult to summarise, because it is treated in a somewhat different spirit by different prophets.

1. Sometimes the thought is merely that the Jews, and Jerusalem especially, will, under the protection of Jahweh, be safe from the attacks of foreign powers. This thought is expressed by Isaiah (xxxiii. 20, 21) in two figures, of which the last was suggested, it has been thought, by the situation of the Egyptian No, surrounded by canals.¹ 'Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities; thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tent that shall not be removed, the stakes whereof shall never be plucked up, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there, Jahweh shall be with us in majesty, a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.' So, too; when in Ezekiel (xxxviii., xxxix.) the countless hordes of Gog come up against the mountains of Israel, they are to be slain by Jahweh with 'an overflowing shower, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.'²

2. Sometimes, with some brighter promise for foreign nations generally, the thought of the destruction of a special enemy is painfully mingled. Thus the writer of Isa. xxiv.—xxvii., after speaking in xxv. 8 of the destruction 'in this mountain of the face of the covering that is cast over all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations,' turns to speak of the utter annihilation of Moab, trodden down like straw in the water of the dunghill. There are few passages in the Old Testament of greater dramatic grandeur than the vision with which Isa. lxiii. opens, 'Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious

¹ The reason for this view is the use of the word מִיָּרֵד (the plural of the word regularly used of the river Nile), which might be used of canals connected with the river. See Delitzsch, *in loco*.

² Ezek. xxxviii. 22.

in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength?' 'I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.' 'Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?' 'I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was no man with me: yea, I trod them in mine anger, and trampled them in my fury; and their lifeblood is sprinkled upon my garments, and I have stained all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.' And yet these thoughts of vengeance are in dark contrast to the bright promises made to the nations in ch. lx. There was one foe whose conduct Jacob never could forgive, that elder brother who, in the day of Jerusalem, had said, 'Down with it, down with it even to the ground.' And both prophet and psalmist were only too ready to join in the un-Christian wish: 'Happy shall he be that taketh thy children and dasheth them against the stones.'

3. Often the thought is the brighter one, that the nations will be led by some single act of God's primitive justice to recognise His sovereignty. To take one striking example out of many. In Isa. xviii. the result of the slaughter of the Assyrian army was to be that the Ethiopians would offer themselves as a present to Jahweh of hosts.

4. Again, the Messianic era is described as one of international peace. 'In the latter days,' according to a very early prophecy quoted by Isaiah and Micah, 'Jahweh shall judge between the nations, and reprove many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.'³ In Isa. ix. 1-7, this peace is the direct consequence of their deliverance from their oppressor, probably Assyria,⁴ after which the very recollection of war would be distasteful, and the soldiers would burn their clothes. 'For every boot of the booted warrior, and the garments rolled in blood, shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire.' This is also the case in Zech.

³ Isa. ii. 2-4; Micah iv. 1-3. The context makes it impossible to suppose that it is original in Isaiah. It might be so in Micah, except that Jeremiah (xxvi. 18) refers to the context in Micah as uttered in the days of Hezekiah, whereas the prophecy seems in Isaiah to belong to the reign of Jotham or Ahaz at latest.

⁴ Cf. x. 24-27.

ix. 9-17, where the promise of peace is strangely blended with the notes of war.

5. Most frequently the attitude of the nations is that of ready and willing submission. They are described as bringing back the captive Israelites to their homes, as in Isa. xiv. 2, and in xlix. 22 the prophet of the Captivity expands the promise of Isa. xi. 12, 'Thus saith the Lord Jahweh, Behold, I will lift up Mine hand to the nations, and set up Mine ensign to the peoples: and they shall bring thy sons in their bosom, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders.' In the next verse they are described as doing homage to the Israelites: 'They shall bow down to thee with their faces to the earth, and lick the dust of thy feet.' Often the nations are represented as bringing gifts as a token of submission. Thus in Ps. lxxii. 10, the kings of Tarshish and of the isles are to bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba to offer gifts to the king. The nations even become the slaves of the Israelites, as in Isa. xiv. 2, 'And the peoples shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of Jahweh for servants and for handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors.' Many of these thoughts are combined in Isa. lx. The light which is to arise upon Israel is a signal for all nations to come and bring their offerings, and those who will not come are to be destroyed. It is true, of course, that here, as in many other similar passages, the act of homage is not to Israel merely, but to Jahweh; yet still it is to Him as the God or King of Israel that the

homage is rendered. This is very clearly brought out, for example, in the concluding verses of Zechariah.¹

And so we reach the double thought (1) of a world-wide religion of which the temple is at Jerusalem, and (2) a world-wide empire of which Jerusalem is the capital.² It is but seldom, if at all, that the prophets rise to the higher thought that all nations have equal religious and political rights in the sight of God. But at least the way is prepared for this conception by Amos ix. 7: 'Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?' We find also the converse of the same thought in the bitter sarcasm of Jeremiah: 'Behold, the days come, saith Jahweh, that I will punish all them that are circumcised in their uncircumcision; Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon and Moab . . . for all the nations are uncircumcised, and the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart.'³ And Isaiah foretells the time when at any rate the two great enemies of Israel shall have equal religious privileges: 'In that day there shall be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall worship with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth; for that Jahweh of hosts hath blessed them, saying, Blessed be Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel Mine inheritance.'⁴

¹ Zech. xiv. 16-21.

² See especially Ps. lxxxvii.

³ Jer. ix. 25, 26.

⁴ Isa. xix. 23-25.

Notes on Select Passages of the New Testament.

BY PRINCIPAL THE REV. DAVID BROWN, D.D., ABERDEEN.

ROM. iii. 25, 26.

A.V. 'Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.'

R.V. 'Whom God set forth to be a propitia-

tion, through faith, by His blood, to show His righteousness, because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of His righteousness at this present season: that He might Himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus.'

Of all the changes for the better of the Revised Version, I hold this to be one of the best. For the