

**ISAIAH: HIS LIFE AND
TIMES AND THE WRITINGS
WHICH BEAR HIS NAME**

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Isaiah: his life and times and the writings which bear his name by S. R. Driver

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BY

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PREFACE.

THE present volume almost speaks for itself. It is an endeavour to exhibit the character and position of the greatest of the prophets, and to exemplify, by means of the brilliant illustrations which the Book of Isaiah supplies, the historical significance of prophecy. Prophecy is intimately connected with history; and recent discoveries have added greatly to our knowledge of the position and political relations of both Israel and Judah in Isaiah's day. The writer has endeavoured to utilize this knowledge as far as possible. He has sought to interpret the writings which bear Isaiah's name in the light of history, to show how they are correlated throughout with the needs and circumstances of the times which gave them birth, while at the same time they embody elements of permanent validity, and speak to all future generations. The writings of the prophets—as indeed the Biblical writings generally—when studied attentively, are seen to possess definite and distinctive features, reflecting the individuality of their authors, which are apt to escape the notice of ordinary readers: these the writer has made it his aim, so far as possible, to note and estimate. He has also noticed incidentally some of the difficulties connected with the “fulfilment” of prophecy, which are likewise not apparent to many readers. To the critical questions which arise out of the Book of Isaiah, he has devoted much independent attention; and his conclusions respecting the style and character of its different portions have been tested and confirmed by repeated study of the text, both in itself, and as compared with other writings of the Old Testament. The justification, if justification be needed, of the results to which he has been led, is to be found in the fact that the Old Testament is not a systematic treatise of theology, but the record of a historical revelation, which, just because it was historical, passed through many successive phases, and was completed gradually. The grounds for his conclusions are stated, as fully as the limits and scope of the work permitted, in Chapter V. of Part II.

Naturally, the writer is indebted to many predecessors. Gesenius (1821), Hitzig (1833), Ewald (ed. 2, 1867-8), Delitzsch (ed. 3, 1879), Cheyne (ed. 3, 1884), must be named as standing out pre-eminently among the scholars who in modern times have contributed to the elucidation of the Book of

Isaiah, and as those who have earned most emphatically the gratitude of subsequent labourers in the same field. Two other writers also deserve mention in the same connection, on account, especially, of the attention bestowed by them on the historical side of Isaiah's work, viz., Sir Edward Strachey, in his "Jewish History and Politics in the times of Sargon and Sennacherib" (ed. 2, 1874), and Dr. W. Robertson Smith, in his "Prophets of Israel" (1882). The scope of the present volume was obviously such as to forbid a constant citation of authorities, or discussion of competing views; but references have usually been added in all important cases.

The Inscriptions, wherever possible, have been quoted from the standard work of Eberhard Schrader, "The Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament" (ed. 2, Giessen, 1883?), in which the passages illustrative of the Old Testament are excerpted, translated, and annotated with a thoroughness and sobriety of judgment, which leave nothing to be desired. Reference has also been made to the series of Inscriptions translated under the title, "Records of the Past" (Bagsters), where the passages quoted can be read in their original connection. The translations are not mere reproductions of Schrader's German versions: with the view of exhibiting as closely as possible the sense and rhythm of the original, they have usually been compared throughout with his transliterations of the Assyrian text. The Authorized Version of the Book of Isaiah often, unfortunately, misses the sense of the Hebrew; in quotations, therefore, the writer has generally availed himself of either the Revised Version, or the translation of Prof. Cheyne. Except in a few extreme cases he has accommodated his renderings to the traditional Hebrew text,² without, however, desiring thereby to be understood to pronounce an opinion on its integrity in individual passages. The notes occasionally appended will, it is hoped, be found useful in the elucidation and illustration of the text.

S. R. D.

* In citations the letters *a* and *b* denote respectively the first and second halves of the versè cited.

¹ The citations are according to the German pagination, which is repeated on the *margin* of the English translation (vol. i., 1885). In 1883 Schrader wrote (p. 331), "Respecting the assassination of Sennacherib (2 Kings xix. 37), the Assyrian Inscriptions are silent;" but since Chapter VII. Part I. of the present work was in type, Mr. Pinches has published the text of an Inscription acquired by the British Museum in 1884, and containing the following notice of it:—"On the 20th day of Tebet Sennacherib, king of Assyria, | his son in a revolt killed him. For . . . years Sennacherib | had ruled the kingdom of Assyria. From the 20th day of Tebet to | the end day of Adar the revolt in Assyria continued. | On the 18th day of Adar, Esarhaddon, his son, sat on the throne in Assyria. | &c." ("Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society," Oct., 1887, p. 678). The Inscription is a Babylonian Chronicle, and throws no additional light on the relations existing between Judah and Assyria in Isaiah's lifetime.

² On the nature of this text the reader will find much information in an article in "The Church Quarterly Review" for April, 1887.

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 ERRATA.

- Page 91, line 21, *for 75, read 38.*
 „ 189, last line, *for own, read coming.*

