

**THE IDEALS OF THE  
PROPHETS.  
SERMONS**

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The ideals of the prophets. Sermons by S. R. Driver

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**S. R. DRIVER**

**THE IDEALS OF THE  
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# THE IDEALS OF THE PROPHETS

SERMONS

BY THE LATE

S. R. DRIVER, D.D.

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF HEBREW AND  
CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD

TOGETHER WITH

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF HIS PUBLISHED  
WRITINGS

EDINBURGH: T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET

1915

## PREFACE

**B**EFORE his death on the 26th of February 1914, Dr. Driver left instructions that a volume of his sermons should be published, and even chose a certain number for the purpose. Four of these, Nos. ix., xi., xix., xx., have appeared in print already; they are reprinted here by the courtesy of the Editors and Publishers of *The Expository Times* and of *The Interpreter*. Dr. Driver's own selection has been considerably enlarged with a view to forming a group, both representative of his ordinary teaching and connected together by a certain unity of subject and treatment. It is evident that he took a special delight in preaching about the ideals of the Old Testament prophets; accordingly most of these sermons will be found to bear upon this topic. All of them were delivered in Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, of which he was a Canon in virtue of his office as Regius Professor of Hebrew; he was never connected with any other church; so that the present volume will serve, in some degree, as a memorial of his thirty-two years' ministry there, from 1882 to 1914.

In his preaching, Dr. Driver's aim was to help people to understand the Bible, and especially the Old Testa-

ment ; his sermons, therefore, were mainly exegetical, packed with careful information, and noteworthy for an unerring perception of the essential things. What he taught in the lecture-room and in his published writings, he taught also in the pulpit. It has been largely owing to his extraordinary industry and knowledge that English readers have had an opportunity of learning what the Old Testament contains and means ; he was anxious that the Cathedral congregation should learn this too. Hence his constant effort to remove traditional misunderstandings, and to show how the Bible may become intelligible, and speak with a living voice to the men and women of to-day.

One point in particular Dr. Driver frequently discusses in these sermons—the fulfilment of prophecy. He would lead us to take a larger, less mechanical, view of the subject than is still widely held ; he would have us see that, in this larger sense, the ideals of the prophets were adopted by Christ, and demand Christian conditions for their full accomplishment. How deep was his conviction of the ultimate goal of prophecy, how unflinching his faith in the great Christian verities, appears in every sermon of this collection. He has shown throughout his ministry that a modern Biblical scholar, one of the foremost champions of the new learning, a master in the science of language and criticism, could at the same time handle the sacred text with the reverence traditional among English people, and with his whole heart remain true to the Christian Faith, and fulfil his service as a loyal son of the Church.

Perhaps Dr. Driver's sermons will appeal more to the reader than they did to the listener. Owing to his rapid delivery and a certain indistinctness of utterance it was not always easy to follow him. Moreover, he never held any pastoral charge; he lived all his life in college, with the unworldliness and simplicity of a true scholar; and it was his lot to preach to an educated audience in a University city. He recognized what he could do and what he could not do; he made no attempt to speak about matters that lay outside his experience. But what he had to give he gave, and always of his best. He took great pains with his sermons, as with everything he did; never an exaggerated phrase, nor an ill-considered, shallow judgment is to be found in his work anywhere. Those who wish to understand something of what the prophets of Israel taught and hoped for will find what they want in these sermons, conveyed in the clear, straightforward style which was characteristic of the preacher.

A bibliography of Dr. Driver's publications, compiled by his son Mr. Godfrey R. Driver, scholar of New College, has been added in the belief that it will be found serviceable to students. It is a fine record of a life's work. As we scan the familiar titles, many of us will realize afresh how much we owe to one whom we have long regarded as master and guide, a debt which we can only hope to repay by following his example of industry, of single-minded devotion to the truth, of loyalty to the Christian Faith.

G. A. C.

CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD,  
*July 1914*



## CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. THE CALL TO CONVERSION . . . . .	1
Isaiah i. 16, 17	
II. VISION AND CRISIS . . . . .	9
Isaiah xxxii. 1, 2	
III. CRISIS AND DELIVERANCE . . . . .	20
Isaiah xxxvii. 31	
IV. A PROBLEM OF FAITH . . . . .	34
Habakkuk ii. 4	
V. THE NEW COVENANT . . . . .	44
Jeremiah xxxi. 33	
VI. JUDÆA CAPTA . . . . .	50
Lamentations i. 12	
VII. THE WORTH OF THE INDIVIDUAL . . . . .	62
Ezekiel xviii. 2-4	
VIII. THE BLESSEDNESS OF ZION . . . . .	73
Isaiah xxv. 6	
IX. THE IDEALS OF THE PROPHETS . . . . .	81
Isaiah xxxiv. 1	
X. THE FALL OF LUCIFER . . . . .	93
Isaiah xlv. 12	
XI. A LIGHT TO THE GENTILES . . . . .	103
Isaiah xlix. 6	

	PAGE
XII. THE GLORY OF THIS HOUSE . . . . .	113
Haggai ii. 6, 7	
XIII. COMPARATIVE RELIGION . . . . .	122
Malachi i. 11	
XIV. A CREED CORRECTED . . . . .	135
Jonah iv. 10 f.	
XV. CIVITAS DEI . . . . .	144
Psalm lxxxvii. 3	
XVI. VEXILLA REGIS . . . . .	152
Zechariah ix. 9 f.	
XVII. THE KINGDOM OF THE SAINTS . . . . .	164
Daniel vii. 21 f.	
XVIII. GOD'S THOUGHTS . . . . .	176
Psalm cxxxix. 17, 18	
XIX. A MIRROR FOR PRINCES . . . . .	185
Psalm lxxii. 1	
XX. THE AUTHORIZED VERSION . . . . .	195
Isaiah xi. 9	

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 APPENDICES

APPENDIX A . . . . .	213
"    B . . . . .	235
"    C . . . . .	238

## I

### THE CALL TO CONVERSION

“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil: learn to do well.”—ISAIAH i. 16, 17.

IN the opening chapter of the Book of Isaiah we listen to the great arraignment, as it has been called, in which the prophet reproaches the nation with its unworthy discharge of the claims due from it, with its declension from the high ideal set before it, with its ostentatious observance of the ceremonial of religion by which it sought to excuse itself for the sins of selfishness and violence so rife within; we hear the earnest invitation to repentance addressed to it, the gracious terms of pardon, if the offer is responded to, the judgment in store, if it maintains its present course unchecked.

Isaiah's endeavour is to awaken in his nation its slumbering spiritual susceptibilities, to arouse it by the offer of pardon, and to bring it back to simpleness and sincerity of life. His aim is to produce what would now be called a great social and religious reform—a reform, however, consisting not merely in the removal of palpable