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CHAPTER I

CRITICISM UP TO A.D. 1900

There are two ways in which we may approach this Book. We may approach it from the divine side. From that point of view, we see it as a Holy Scripture, the essential purpose of which is to bring its readers face to face with God. As such, we use it in the inner prayer-room and in the pulpit, and no other Book gives us a more sublime vision of the Majesty of God.

But the Book has also a human side. If we approach it from that side, we see it as a literary work and, as such, it demands from us the same careful scholarly study of its phenomena that we should give to any worthy production of human workmanship. To use an analogy from Architecture, the study of the stones of a Cathedral may shew the student either that it has all been erected at one time by one generation of builders, as is the case at Salisbury, or that its present form is due to six different generations, as is the case at Ripon. In the latter case Saxon, early and late Norman, early, middle and late English men have all left outward and visible signs of the share that they took in the evolution of the Cathedral as it stands to-day. The value of the Sacred Building is in no way affected, except for good, by the reverent study of its architectural history. As with the Cathedral, so with the Book. The spiritual value of the Book, as a Holy Scripture, is in no wise affected, except for good, by the reverent study of its structure from what we may call its architectural side. To that we must now address ourselves. Its spiritual value will be dealt with in a final chapter.

We notice first the fact that the stones of which it is built,

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i.e. the Text or actual wording of it, is in certain parts exceptionally worn or dilapidated. The Masorites, the Jewish Editors of the Hebrew Text in the early Middle Ages, noted 166 variations in the margin of their MSS., but these only represent a small proportion, and these the least important, of the probable corruptions. A discriminating use of the Greek version provides us with many emendations, and the Syriac and Latin versions also lend their aid, but even then there remain a number of passages where conjectural emendation must be resorted to, if we are to arrive at an intelligible Text. Some of these passages we shall return to consider at a later stage.

But, dilapidated as its Text may be in parts, the main structure stands firm. If we may continue to use the analogy of a Cathedral, we must be struck on our first approach by the grandeur of its entrance portal. 'We find', writes Prof. Rudolf Otto of Marburg, 'the power of the Numinous, in its phase of the mysterious, to excite and intensify the imagination, displayed with particular vividness in Ezekiel.' The vision of the Almighty in the first chapter fills our mind, as we enter, with a profound sense of the Majesty of Him, who seeks to reveal His mind and will in this Book. And similar visions meet us in chapters viii to x and xl to xlii.

As we proceed up the nave of this literary Cathedral and take a rapid survey of the Building as it now stands, our next impression is that of symmetry. The Book falls naturally into two equal halves of twenty-four chapters each. The first half records (chapters i to iii) the call and commission of the prophet and (iv to xxiv) the prophecies of ruin, which were uttered before the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. In the second half we find, first, a collection of prophecies against foreign powers (xxv to xxxii) and of the destruction of Gog, Israel's final enemy (xxxviii-xxxix) and, between these, prophecies of the restoration and renewal of Israel (xxxiii-xxxvii), and finally

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we enter what we may call the chancel, nine chapters (xl–xlviii) which picture the worship and life of the restored community, partly in vision, partly in Temple laws.

Comparing the two halves, we are struck by the way in which the two answer to one another. Twice the prophet is brought in the power of the Spirit to Jerusalem and to the Temple. At his first visit (chapters viii–xi) he sees horrible idolatries carried on within the sacred enclosure of the first Temple and to his infinite sorrow he sees the glory of Jehovah leave the doomed Building and pass away to the East. At his second visit (xl–xliii) he sees a new Temple, which is separated from persons and things unholy, which is guarded by successive zones of ever greater holiness and which is built in perfect symmetry. In that Temple he sees, returning from the East, the glory of Jehovah. It fills the house, and he hears a voice, saying: ‘I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever.’

We notice further that certain characteristic phrases run through the whole Book:

(1) 92 times the prophet is addressed as ‘Son of man’, a title which, as addressed to a prophet, only occurs once again in the Old Testament, viz. in Daniel (viii. 17);

(2) The divine title ‘Lord Jehovah’* occurs 121 times in the introductory phrase: ‘Thus saith Lord Jehovah’, and

* Wherever in our English versions we find LORD or GOD printed in capitals, there in the Hebrew text we have the consonants of the sacred name JHVH. The word Jehovah is a hybrid word, the consonants of JHVH being read, not as originally pronounced, but with the vowels of Adonai, the Hebrew word for ‘Lord’. For the last 2000 years ‘Adonai’ has been pronounced by the Jews in synagogue worship, wherever the sacred name occurs, to avoid possible profanation. The word ‘Jehovah’ is, however, a majestic word and it is familiar to us, not only by its use in our English Bible, but by its use in some of the finest hymns in our language. We do well therefore

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(3) 81 times in the concluding formula: 'saith (lit. utterance of) Lord Jehovah', and in fifteen other passages, 217 times in all.

In the whole of the rest of the Old Testament the phrase 'Lord Jehovah' only occurs 78 times. In Jeremiah, for example, it occurs only 13 times, whereas 'saith Jehovah' without Lord occurs 158 times. The three phrases so far mentioned occur throughout the whole Book and may well be Editorial in character. But a very large number of other phrases occur over and over again in the body of the prophecies in the first thirty-nine chapters but are absent from the last nine:

(4) One very notable phrase, 'Ye shall know that I am Jehovah' (with occasional variations and additions) is used 74 times;

(5) 'the word of Jehovah came to me' occurs 49 times;

(6) 'I have spoken it' (with or without 'and I will do it') 49 times;

(7) 'as I live, saith Jehovah' 15 times (only 5 times elsewhere in the O.T.);

(8) 'I will scatter you among the nations and disperse you in the lands' 16 times;

(9) 'I will gather you from the peoples and will bring you in' 10 times;

(10) 'I will pour out my fury upon them (you)' 13 times;

(11) 'I lifted up my hand' (i.e. to swear an oath) 9 times;

(12) 'Because . . . , therefore . . . ' 37 times (out of a total of 93 times in the O.T.).

These are but specimens of a large number of such recurrent phrases. There are also characteristic words, such as

(13) 'abominations' (used of idols) 43 times;

to retain its use. For a full discussion of the use of the title 'Lord Jehovah' see Chapter x and Excursus II.

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(14) 'gillūlim' (a rare word for idols found elsewhere only in Lev. xxvi. 30, Deut. xxix. 16 (E.V. 17), 1 and 2 Kings (6 times) and Jer. l. 2), 39 times;

(15) נָסִי (Nāsi) prince, occurring 37 times in seventeen chapters (20 times in xl to xlviii).

This last word is used by no other prophet, but in the Priestly Code and Priestly sections of Joshua it occurs 85 times (elsewhere only 9 times, in Kings, Chronicles and Ezra). [See Note on the Prince, pp. 65 f.]

It is not surprising, in view of the general symmetry and of the frequent recurrence of these characteristic phrases, that up to the end of the last century the great majority of writers regarded the whole Book as coming from one author and that author Ezekiel himself. 'No critical question arises', wrote Dr Driver in his Introduction to the Old Testament, 'in connection with the authorship of the Book; the whole from beginning to end bears unmistakably the stamp of a single mind', and again, 'the volume is methodically arranged, evidently by Ezekiel's own hand: his book in this respect forms a striking contrast to those of Isaiah and Jeremiah'. Cornill in 1891 spoke, if possible, even more decisively (but in later editions, 1905, etc., he spoke very differently). Smend said: 'One could not take out one section, without ruining the whole ensemble', and Bertholet, Kraetschmar and others in varying degrees gave utterance to the same opinion.

These writers were further all of one mind in regard to another very striking feature of the Book of Ezekiel. A study of its phraseology by Jewish Doctors of the Law long centuries ago had revealed the fact that in certain parts it presented a remarkable resemblance to the legal parts of the Pentateuch and especially to the Holiness Code (Lev. xvii to xxvi). We may note, for example, the thirty-three references to meal-

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sin-, and trespass-offerings in Ezekiel xl to xlvi and the almost complete silence about them elsewhere.*

As examples of the very frequent use in chapters i to xxxix of phrases and constructions characteristic of Leviticus, we may take the following from Lev. i. 2: (a) 'When any man of you' (Hebrew construction 'a man when...', and so Lev. ii. 1, iv. 2, v. 1, 2, 4, 15, 17, vi. 1 (E.V. 2), vii. 21), so Ezek. xviii. 21 (lit. the wicked man when) and xxxiii. 2 (lit. a land when I bring) and nowhere else. (b) 'offereth', lit. bringeth near (Lev. and Num. 108 times in this sense), so Ezek. 7 times; rest of Old Testament 4 times. (c) An oblation (Korban, as Mark vii. 11). In Lev. i-vii 31 times, in the whole of P 77 times, so Ezek. xx. 28, xl. 43; nowhere else in the Old Testament.†

* 'meal-offering': Priestly Code 91 times; Ezek. 15; rest of Old Testament 13; total 119. 'sin-offering': P 92 times; Ezek. 14; 2 Chron., Ezra, Neh. 5; total 111. 'trespass-offering': P 28 times; Ezek. 4; rest 6 (including Isa. liii. 10); total 38. ('P' here and elsewhere = Priestly Code and Narrative.)

† See also the following:

- Lev. ii. 1 'anyone' (Heb. 'soul'), so 36 times in Holiness Code and P; so Ezek. 4 times in xviii. 4, xxxiii. 6, elsewhere Deut. twice, Prov. once. Cf. 'souls' (pl.) = persons Holiness Code and P 7 times; so Ezek. 11 times, especially xiii. 18-20 8 times; elsewhere 3 times.
- vii. 18 'shall bear their iniquity', so Ezek. iv. 4, 5, 6, xiv. 10.
- xvii. 3 'whatsoever man there be' (Heb. 'man man', so Ezek. xiv. 4, same Heb.), 8, 10, 13 (4 times) 'of the house of Israel or of the strangers that sojourn {among them',
in Israel'
so Ezek. xiv. 7.
- 10 'I will set my face against that soul... and will cut him off from among his people', so Ezek. xiv. 8.
- 7 'go a whoring' (after idols), so in Ezek. over 20 times.
- xviii. 2, 4, 5, etc. 'I am Jehovah' (17 times) (+ your God) 21 times, so Ezek. xx. 5, 7, 19.
- 4 'my judgments shall ye do and my statutes shall ye keep',

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These are but samples. In some chapters of Ezekiel, such as the eighteenth and the twentieth, almost every other phrase recalls a similar phrase in Leviticus. When Christian scholars began once more to study the Old Testament in the original Hebrew, they were at one with the Jewish Rabbins in explaining the resemblances as due to the fact that Ezekiel had so steeped himself in the study of the ancient law that it shaped all his thinking and coloured all his speech. But when modern historical methods of study came to be applied to the Old Testament, it became more and more difficult to maintain this position. Hardly a trace could be found in pre-exilic writings of any knowledge of the Levitical Law, and what apparent traces were found came to be suspected on good grounds as being patches made at a later time in the style which had by that time come to be in vogue. At last, between fifty and sixty years ago, a revolution of view took place. Ezekiel came to be regarded, not as the student resuscitating ancient law, but as, with others, the inaugurator of a new order of things. This order was based upon the older ritual usages, which had grown up during a long period at the Temple in Jerusalem, but it was, during the Exile and after, systematized and developed to form a compact body of law, which would form a hedge round the Chosen People. Wellhausen called Ezekiel 'the priest in the prophet's mantle', and looked upon him as 'the connecting link between the prophets and the

so Ezek. xx. 19. 5 'which if a man do, he shall live in them', so Ezek. xx. 21. 6 'uncover nakedness' (and 19 times), so Ezek. xxii. 10 and 4 times (elsewhere once).
 ix. 6, 23 + 10 times in P 'The glory of Jehovah', so Ezek. i. 28 and 9 times; and 'the glory of the God of Israel', so Ezek. viii. 4 and 4 times.
 xxvi. 22-26 'I will send the beast of the field . . . destroy your cattle', etc., etc., so Ezek. iv. 16, v. 16, 17, vi. 3, xiv. 13, 15, 17, 19, 21.

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law'. Ezekiel, he said, 'claims to be a Prophet and starts from prophetic ideas, but they are not his own ideas; they are' inherited from his predecessors and especially from Jeremiah. 'He is by nature a priest and his peculiar merit is that he enclosed the soul of prophecy in the body of a Community, which' centred not round a king, but round a Temple and its worship. 'Chapters xl to xlviii are the most important in his book and have been called, not incorrectly, the key of the Old Testament.' This view of the Book and of its influence upon subsequent Jewish history has long been dominant in this country and abroad.

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CHAPTER II

FROM 1900 TO HERRMANN

In certain respects, however, both the opinions just referred to, viz. the unity of authorship and the relation of the author to the Law, have not gone unchallenged in recent years. As regards the first point, we must remember that this Book is not an isolated phenomenon. It is one of a whole series of prophetic Books and, if we approach it after a previous study of Isaiah or Jeremiah, we cannot but be prepared to admit that this Book also may have come to us, not entirely as it originally took shape under the hands of him whose name it bears, but rather as it took shape under the hands of an Editor or Editors who finally put it together. This latter is the view which has emerged in the last thirty years. A more thorough analysis of the Book has seemed to shew the existence in it of certain secondary elements.

KRAETSCHMAR (1900) was so impressed by the number of 'duplications' (i.e. of passages which seemed to say the same thing a second time) that he propounded the theory that, out of original Ezekielian material, two independent recensions had been made, which were afterwards put together to form our present Book.

JAHN (1905), however, denied that there were two recensions. He thought that later scribes had written in the margin revised versions of many passages which adapted the prophetic messages to the ideas and needs of the later generation, and that then still later copyists inserted these marginal versions into the Text.

HERRMANN, a devout and reverent scholar, now Professor

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at Münster, in 1908 published *Ezechiel-Studien* and in 1924 a full Commentary on the Book in Sellin's series. In these he, like Jahn, rejects the idea of two recensions, but he considers Jahn to be far too prone to see 'later views' where they do not exist. At the same time he does recognize in a number of passages the intrusion of stranger hands. Let us look at three of these passages.

Chapter xii. Five times over (verses 1, 8, 17, 21, 26) comes the introductory phrase, 'the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying'. The last two paragraphs have little or no connection with those that precede. In verses 1-6 the description of the symbolic actions—putting together (lit.) 'articles of exile', digging through the wall, carrying out the bundle ('by day', verse 4, but according to verse 6, 'in the dark') with his face covered—is in such a state of confusion that we are compelled to see the intrusion of another hand. Note the repetition of 'before their eyes' six times in three verses and other signs of duplication. Note also the use of the word 'prince' of the king in verses 10 and 12. These verses are almost certainly an explanation added at a later time.

Chapters iii. 16-21 and xxxiii. 1-9. Here we have an example of duplication. Both passages set forth the prophet's task as that of a watchman. The latter passage seems to have been the original, because there, in the following section (verses 10-20), we can see how the conception of his task as that of a watchman arose. At the same time Herrmann suggests that Ezekiel may himself, at a later time, have inserted the earlier passage in its present position, because he realized now that what he had later seen to be the nature of his task had really been its nature from the beginning.

Chapter xx. 32-44. In verse 1 we read that certain elders came to enquire of Jehovah, and they are met (verse 3) by the emphatic reply: 'As I live, saith Lord Jehovah, I will not be