

Evangelist, its historical interpretation would never have been questioned. The use he made of it, however, is manifest, as will be indicated in the next division of the subject.

Coming to the Prophetic age, or the age of the great canonical prophets, a new stage of development is reached. During this period, Messianic prophecy proper begins. Hitherto the passages investigated, if Messianic at all, have been Messianic only in the sense of having exercised an influence in the development of the Messianic idea in the Old Testament, or of having received an application to the historic Christ in the New Testament. In no instance, have we found a passage having any direct reference to the future Messiah. In Isaiah ix. 2-7, however, the first Messianic prophecy, in the true sense of the term, occurs. In the conception of a child, descended from the seed of David, whose throne should be established in righteousness and whose reign should be characterized by peace, "we meet for the first time," as Prof. W. Robertson Smith correctly says, "with the idea of a personal Messiah."* From this time onward, numerous representations of the ideal Messiah appear, although, as has been stated, they appear under a variety of forms.

It would be interesting and profitable, were time and space permitted, to apply the same principles of interpretation, that we have hitherto adopted, to the leading Messianic passages throughout the various prophetic books. In that case, it might be shown that every prophetic passage, that is applied to Christ in the New Testament, refers originally either to an *ideal* person who was expected in the future, or to a *real* person who was living at or near the time of its delivery. An example of the first kind of reference has been given in Isaiah ix. 2-7. Other examples of this kind of reference to an ideal person occur in Isaiah xi. 1-10; Jeremiah xxiii. 5-8; Micah v. 1-4; Zechariah ix. 9. An example of the second kind of reference is found in Isaiah vii. 13-17, where the natural and original reference is to the birth of a child, which was shortly to take place as a sign or pledge that the land in question would speedily be forsaken of its kings. Hence there is no direct, much less ex-

* "The Prophets of Israel," p. 277.