

increasingly into prominence and clearer vision. The promises of old acquire a new and deeper meaning: they assume shape and outline which become ever more definite as the daylight grows. It is the future, with Israel's Messiah-king to rule a people restored and converted, and an endless, boundless kingdom of righteousness and peace which in its wide embrace includes, reconciles, and unites a ransomed world, obedient to the Lord, which is now the great burden of their message, and the joyous assured hope of their thoughts.

"It is not meant that these prophets had not their message for the present also; to Israel and Judah, and to their kings, as well as regarding events either contemporary or in the near future. Had it been otherwise, they would not have been prophets to, nor yet understood by, their fellow-countrymen. Besides, God's dealings and discipline with Israel is still continued, and would of necessity continue, primarily to the coming of the Christ, and then beyond it to the final fulfillment of His purposes and mercy. Hence their ministry was also of the present, though chiefly in warning and announcement of judgment. But by the side of this despair of the present, and because of it, the ideal destiny of Israel came into clearer minds, the meaning of the Davidic kingdom, and its final spiritual realization in a happy future; and along with denunciations of impending judgment came the comfort of prophetic promises of the future.

"Two points here especially present themselves to our minds. The first is, that with this period commences the era of written prophecy. Before this time the prophets had spoken; now they wrote, or, to speak more precisely, gathered their prophetic utterances and visions into permanent records. And as connected with this new phase of prophetism, we mark that it is rather by vision and prediction than by signs and miracles that the prophets now manifested their activity. But the importance of written records of prophecy is