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all things," assay and test all things, as metal is assayed, was the advice which the Apostle gave to the Thessalonians. And by the gradual convergence of opinions, many of them insignificant in themselves, insensibly grows and spreads the sum of assured truth. Error cannot cleave to it permanently, but the smallest particle of truth helps to swell the aggregate. Even the widow's mites went to the building or repair of the temple, and surely the Word of God is his temple. We then will throw into the box such mites as we may, in the hope that He to whom they are offered will Himself apply them as He will.

W. SANDAY.

THE VISION OF ISAIAH.

ISAIAH vi. 1–8.

I. HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION.

THIS was the Prophet's first vision, first in the order of time, if not the first recorded,—a vision of the eternal realities which underlie the fleeting phenomena of time. Vouchsafed to him while he was still in the flower of early manhood, it set him apart, consecrated and impelled him to the prophetic function. When once he had seen it, the events and changes of time could no longer sway him with their former power. Henceforth the monarch who sat on the throne of Israel was but a passing shadow, a frail and imperfect symbol, of the true King of men, Adonai, Jehovah Sabaoth. The earthly temple, with its sacred emblems and priestly ministrations and ravishing choirs, was but a poor and dull reflexion of "the pattern on the mount," the house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. The motley crowd which thronged its courts was no longer wonderful or impressive to him as compared with the

multitude which no man can number, whose song shook the eternal temple till it trembled as though smitten by a storm of harmonious sounds. For him the pomps and splendours of earth had no longer any glory by reason of the more excellent glory behind and beyond them, and which they vainly strove to express. Henceforth he was raised above the shows and lures of time, its changes and fears and griefs; for he could look quite through them all, and discern the sacred and abiding realities which they dimly shadowed forth.

The experience of Isaiah is a type and sample of that through which we must all pass if we would enter the service and kingdom of God. We must become *seers* before we can become servants. As many of us as are servants have seen a vision which others do not see, and heard a voice they do not hear. For us, as for Isaiah, the eternal realities have shone through the pomps and shows of time; and we have heard a Divine Voice bidding us look to the things which are unseen and eternal, not to the things which are seen and temporal. And hence, in so far as we are obedient to the heavenly vision, our life is a life of faith in "things which do not appear" to sense; we walk as seeing Him who is invisible; our character and conduct are drawn, by an unseen Power, into accord with a Divine law.

And though the great sight by which we were summoned and consecrated to the life of faith may have taken many forms, answering to our several conditions and needs, in substance it is identical with that of Isaiah. What he saw was a vision of the eternal through the temporal, of human sinfulness through the Divine holiness, of purification through sacrifice, of service through forgiveness. And if we have been called to the fellowship of God and fitted for his service, we have seen all that he saw. If we are to be fitted for that fellowship and service, we must see all that he saw: we must rise through the temporal to the

eternal, through our recognition of the Divine holiness to a sense of our own deep sinfulness, through our trust in the Sacrifice for sins to purity of life and lip.

"*In the year that king Uzziah died,* I saw the Lord sitting on the throne, and his train filled the temple." The reign of Uzziah had been long and more prosperous than that of any Hebrew monarch since the days of Solomon. "Fifty and two years had he reigned in Jerusalem." Through the earlier and major part of his reign "he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." "He sought God," and "God made him to prosper." By his victories over the Canaanites, the Philistines, the Arabians, he recovered the provinces and dependencies which had been lost since the death of the Wise King. His fame and power spread abroad even to the gates of Egypt. His liberal and magnificent temper prompted him to devise and execute great public works. He fortified and adorned his capital. He built forts and watch-towers in the desert, digged wells, redeemed waste lands to the uses of husbandry, settled husbandmen on the plains and vinedressers on the hills. He organized and drilled "an exceeding great army," equipped it with new weapons, stored up munitions and cunning engines of war. And in all he undertook "he was marvellously helped" of God, "till he was strong."

But, in the expressive phrase of the Sacred Chronicler, "*when* he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction." Not content with regal, he snatched at sacerdotal power. "He went into the holy place to burn incense on the altar of incense." The priests withstood him. Their bold remonstrance only inflamed his anger. But while the red flush of anger was still burning on his brow, there rose up in it the white spot of a mortal leprosy. The priests "looked on him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead; and they thrust him out from thence; yea, he himself hasted to go out, because the Lord had

smitten him." From that day forth the astute capable king dwelt a lonely leper in "a several house." The active and magnificent figure which had so long ruffled upon the stage was no more seen, whether in the council-chamber or on the field of battle. Never more could Uzziah, the leper, appear in palace or in temple, or so much as enter the hut of his meanest peasant. He was dead while yet he lived.

At last this death-in-life drew to a close. It was known in the city that the King, who had played so brave and conspicuous a part for fifty years, was at the point to die. Such an event, a career so magnificent ending in such disastrous eclipse, might well have inspired solemn and anxious thoughts, moving the nation to profound regret and pity, even if it did not perplex them with fear of change. But the people were unimpressed by it, unmoved. Spoiled and enervated by luxury, plunged in sorbid ambitions and sensual delights, they "did not regard the work of Jehovah, nor discern the counsel of his hands." They saw no omen in the melancholy death of the magnificent King. As Isaiah wanders through the city he meets the women "gadding about with flung up heads and ogling eyes, tripping and mincing as they go;" the men still intent on "adding house to house and joining field to field;" the judges taking bribes, the nobles grinding the faces of the poor.

Oppressed with vague forebodings, he enters the temple, climbs the stairs, passes on to the threshold of the priests' court,—the very court in which Uzziah had sinned and had been smitten for his sin. There he beholds symbols which speak of the presence of a more august King than Uzziah, of a righteousness and mercy and peace which know no change. There is the altar of sacrifice, with its clouds of perfumed smoke; the brasen laver of cleansing, the ministering priests, the Levitical choirs; and, at the farther end of the court, screening the holiest of all, in which was the

Shechinah and the Mercy-seat, he sees the rich voluminous veil, with its wrought figures of cherubim, falling in heavy folds. It was a place full of wonder, of awe, of mystery. Yet how little sense of any awful mystery there seemed to be in the people who traversed the courts of the temple, or even in the priests who served at its altar! They see all the signs of a Divine presence and rule, but they do not perceive the King immortal, invisible; they hear his words, but, hearing, they do not understand. Their eyes are dim, their ears heavy, their hearts fat. Prosperity, luxury, greed, lust, have made the spiritual world a mere dream to them, and the visible world the only reality. Out of the very symbols and services which should have been so many clues leading them up into the unseen and eternal, they have woven a veil which hides from them the sacred and august realities set forth by those shadows of good things.

The Prophet stands among them, or lingers in the temple after they have left it, solitary, sad at heart, because of their unbelief, their lack of moral insight and emotion. His forebodings of evil grow upon him. The consciousness of an endless monotony, insincerity, sordidness in the life of the people deepens within him. Though the political horizon is clear, though no visible calamity threatens them, he finds the portents of calamity in the dead calm and moral stagnation of the time. It is like the ominous pause which precedes and predicts the storm, when there is no stir in the air, and all nature lies still, breathless, expectant. Changes have taken place; a solemn and striking change, the death of the king, is even now at hand; and the heartless indifference with which these changes are contemplated predicates that other, and more radical, and more alarming changes are necessary and will be sent. Where, then, is the young Prophet to look for that which is real and abiding amid changes which carry in themselves the

seeds of farther change? Where is he to look for strength and comfort amid calamities which are but as the drops that precede a very tempest of calamity?

The answer to that question comes to him in a form most strange, most impressive. A vision breaks upon his inward eye. There rises before him a new and awful, yet most familiar, scene. It is still the temple in which he stands, but the temple enlarged, transfigured, illuminated with a splendour and awful with a terror such as his heart had not conceived. There is a throne in it; but it is not the throne of the house of David. There is a King; but it is not Uzziah the leper, nor even Uzziah in the full flush of health and power and conquest; it is Adonai, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Another train than that of the Levitical priests and minstrels fills the temple; and, arching their wings over the Mercy-seat, are other forms than those of the golden cherubim. It is *the temple in the heavens*. Beyond and above all the changing and inefficient forms of time, he beholds their eternal ideals and archetypes. The passing shows of earth open and part, like the mists of the morning, to reveal a new and heavenly world clothed in unimaginable splendours, the world that *is* and is to be, a world like that with which he is familiar, and yet as far above it as the heavens are higher than the earth.

It is enough. He knows now what it is that underlies the shows and shadows of time, what are the substances that cast them. He has seen the everlasting purposes of God in their ideal forms, in their perfect and final embodiment. He knows that no jot or tittle of them can fail to receive its appropriate manifestation among men, that the things which are seen and temporal *must* be shaped after the pattern of the things which are unseen and eternal; he knows even that by the very changes and calamities through which men pass, and by which the counsels of the Divine Will seem to be thwarted, God, who fulfils Himself in many

ways, is preparing men to submit to his will and to share in his glory. And, knowing all this, the Prophet is content,—content to wait God's time, to work in God's way, to confide in God's mercy. Now that he has seen the eternal ideas which God is working out through all the changes and chances of time, he can look without despair on the death of kings, on the moral insensibility of his own people, and even on the disasters which that moral insensibility inevitably portends.

Is it not clear, then, why *we* need the very vision vouchsafed to Isaiah? Changes must and will befall us. And when sorrowful and adverse changes fall upon us, how are we to have any peace of heart unless we also see and believe that God rules over all, and that He is sending these changes to carry out the eternal purposes of his love for us and for all men? If we are to enter into a stable and abiding peace, if even we are to work together with God for our own good and the good of the world, we must be able to look clean through the driving rack of vicissitude, to the clear bright heaven above; and to believe that the clouds will soon pass, that they will bless and enrich us even as they pass over us, and that, when they have swept by, God our Sun will once more shine down health and gladness upon us. When the rains fall, and the winds roar, and the waves beat, we must know that our house is on the rock, not on the sands; and that, even when *this* house of our tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, a home in the heavens. In fine, if we would not be driven from all peace by every wind of change, if we would not lose heart so often as God shifts the scenes in the drama of this mortal life, we must link ourselves on to the everlasting purposes of his Will; we must learn, with Isaiah, to see the unchanging in the changeful, the ideal in the actual, the eternal in and through the temporal.

It is indeed by this vision of the ideal and eternal in and behind the actual and the temporal that men gain strength, excellence, joy, peace, in every province and department of human life. What is the poet, for example, but a man in whom persuasion and belief have ripened into faith, and faith has become a passionate intuition; a man who has so cultivated in himself the vision and the faculty divine that even as he looks abroad on the visible world, lying in the common light of day, he becomes aware

> "Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky; and in the mind of man:
> A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts,
> And rolls through all things?"

What was Shelley's grand vision but a modern paraphrase of the vision of Isaiah?

> "The One remains, the many change and pass;
> Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
> Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
> Stains the white radiance of eternity,
> Till Death tramples it to fragments:—Die
> If thou wouldest be with that which thou dost seek."

All men who do really great work for the world have some touch of this divine faculty and vision. Even the man of science, is, at his best, a seer and a poet; for it is not only observation and reflection, but imagination also, which enables him to see the real behind the phenomenal, to look quite through the shows of things, and to gaze on an universe utterly unlike this visible universe, a world in which a few great forces, in obedience to a few great laws, robe themselves in an infinite variety of forms. Under the drifting and confused play of events the historian, again, if he be worthy of his name, discerns an increasing purpose, a secret law, a divine order, a growing harmony. Even the

statesman is great only as he too can look through the welter of passing events, and see what are the ruling forces and principles at work beneath the surface of national life, and how he may avail himself of these for the general good. While artists of every kind live and move and have their being in this ideal world, and discharge their proper functions only as they see, and enable us to see, order in confusion, the beauty which lies in common things, the light which never was on sea or shore; only as they hear, and enable us to hear, harmonies inaudible to all but spirits finely attuned.

And if we would enter into the kingdom and peace of God, we too must rise into this ideal region; we must receive and cultivate the vision and the faculty divine. That is to say, in this common life of ours, so full of discord, change, temptation, sin, we must see an eternal purpose, a secret order, a governing law, a growing harmony. We must not estimate things by their outward bulk and glitter only or mainly, but by their inward and intrinsic worth. When we lay our hands upon a man for example, we must feel that we touch God,—feel that under all the imperfections of his character and life there lies an immortal spirit capable of rising, through circle after circle of approach, till it rest in the God who made it in his own image and is redeeming and renewing it after his own likeness. In the common tasks of life we must see the opportunities of a Divine service; in the changes and losses of time a Divine discipline by which we are being fitted for eternal honour; in its joys and successes a Divine bounty by which we are being drawn into a closer fellowship with the Giver of all good. Whatever comes, we must believe in an ideal life, an ideal good, an ideal world behind this present world, yet ever running down and forward in it. We must hold fast the conviction that God has a gracious purpose concerning us, and concerning the world at large, which is being

wrought out by the very forces and events which seem to obstruct, if not to thwart, it; and that this purpose is nothing short of the resolve to transform the whole world into a vast temple, purify and consecrate all men to his service, and fill the whole earth with the glory of his holiness.

S. Cox.

THE HISTORICAL CHRIST OF ST. PAUL.

1 CORINTHIANS xii. 3.—"Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed; and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." This passage seems to imply that there existed in the primitive Church a traditional and historical test of the boundary line between the Christian and the non-Christian. The words sound like a Church formula; at all events, St. Paul would not have ventured on his own uninspired responsibility to prescribe such a test of the right to the name of Christian. In the absence of our Gospels, and looking simply to the facts of Church history, we should have expected a more narrow and severe line of demarcation. The question is, in the presence of our Gospels, Is this the line we should have expected? We can have no hesitation in saying, Yes. It seems to us that both the negative and positive clauses of this passage find in precise terms their warrant in our Gospels. "No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed." Read these words in the light of St. Mark iii. 29, 30. Christ had been accused of demoniacal possession, of acting by means of an unclean spirit. He declares that this accusation is a sin against the Holy Ghost, and therefore a manifestation of radical and unpardonable evil; it is a boundary line between light and darkness.