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ARTICLE IV.

ISAIAH: A STUDY FOR PREACHERS.

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ONE of the most significant features of the religious life of our day is the prevailing consciousness of ministers that they have very much to learn. The majority of men who are now in the pulpit and pastorate share the feeling sometimes expressed concerning them, that they know only a little of the business of preaching. Amateur preachers may claim that they preach better than the men who give their lives to the work. But the successors of him who cried, "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips!" and of him who wrote, "Who is sufficient for these things?" cry out with deepest humility to their younger fellow-workmen: "Be preachers! Be preachers!" And they hasten away past us, aged men although they be, hastening still onward toward a mark that must seem to them to be far ahead; for they are straining every nerve, searching deeper day and night for the eternal truths—searching with untold struggle for the words that shall truly bear the truth. Diligent, absorbed students they are in the profoundest sense.

It is, indeed, an absurdity to suppose that men will necessarily, or even probably, fall into the class of poor preachers, if they set themselves to study how to preach. Yet there has been much misdirected study in theological schools. I do not need to tell the tale of naturally gifted men, whose souls have been emptied of their enthusiasm by drudgery over things of secondary interest, chilled by lifeless customs, frozen hard by selfish systems. But the dream of a sacerdotal sacredness of the ministry, or of any traditional method of ministerial education, is fast following the divine right of kings to oblivion; and ministers are perhaps of all men

hardest at work, studying the facts and philosophy of their calling, finding and filling defects in their culture.

One cardinal defect has been the neglect to study God's providential ordering of the religious life of men in all its details, the facts of the history of religion, and the philosophy of their development. Preachers have disregarded the relations of men to their spiritual forefathers. But this is to neglect the study of the Divine process of creating souls; it is to overlook God's method of making Christians. Thus the divine work has not been understood, and there has followed failure in the preacher's human work. Our theological seminaries have taught the history of Christian doctrine; and yet again and again in the course of their instruction it is their custom to pass almost without a thought the essential conditions, the foundations and the springs of that history of Christian doctrine. For they neglect the history of religious thought amongst mankind in general, and also specially that portion of the history which concerns thought in the first Christian churches, commonly called New Testament theology, so also the history of religious thought among the pre-Christian Hebrews, commonly called Old Testament theology. Respecting the fundamental science of religion,—the history and philosophy of religion in general,—I may here utter only a word of congratulation to the world of English-speaking students of theology, that men like Professors Max Müller, Fairbairn, Caird, and not a few others, are investigating, lecturing, and publishing with masterly hands, and that schools are slowly appointing chairs for the discussion of the subject. Theological schools are already awakening, also, to the duty of setting forth the thoughts of the biblical writers as they lie in each book individually, and as, viewed successively, they form a history wherein we shall see how Christ came, formed, entered into, and inspired religious thought and life.

In this Article I shall seek to present an argument from life for the immediate value of Old Testament theology to the preachers of life—those who seek by all means to move

and bless the spiritual life of men about us. I hope, moreover, while expounding the practical side of a chapter in Old Testament theology to illustrate, by Isaiah's preaching, this proposition, that to be a true preacher a man must be a profound student.

Think with me, then, of Isaiah, who through a ministry of nearly fifty years moved the Hebrews at all the centres of their life, and who from his stand-point of twenty-six hundred years ago moves the world to-day. In the life of this preacher to the Hebrews there lay a revelation of God. To search out its story, and to build up its record, is to search the deep things of God. To gain and give that knowledge of him is eternal life. Let no sluggishness bid us halt, and leave unsearched these ways of God, crying out, forsooth, "Such ground is too sacred for our feet." We are the sons of God: let us follow our Father. Being in his image, we can know him; being like him, we must know him. He has created thirst in us for knowledge of his ways, and we must obey the command embodied in that creation. No matter how many treatises be written concerning any mysterious doctrine,—e.g. the doctrine of the will, or of the Trinity, or aught else that seems mysterious,—and no matter although these always repeat the formula, "This and this is insoluble," yet there shall always be written fresh treatises. Man will never believe that there are any ultimate mysteries. It is ordained that we be forever busy finding problems, and forever busy solving them. The sluggish souls who would bar these problems round from eager students are sinful in the last degree; for they set themselves in the place of God, and defy his order. We may not, then, hesitate to search faithfully and reverently the story of Isaiah's ministration to the generations amid whom he lived; and to this particular work let us now confine ourselves. For various reasons I follow mainly the method of simple narration.

The first Olympiads were scarce a generation old, and the earliest walls of Rome were a-building, when Isaiah obeyed the voice of God, and began his ministry. In the year 760 B.C.,

or soon thereafter, a youth sat meditating in the magnificent temple which Solomon had built two hundred and fifty years before. It may have been his first visit, or perhaps it was but the culminating hour of many in which the rarely gifted lad sat there, absorbed in thought, wondering at the strange promptings that filled his soul, drinking in the calm that seemed to float about the sanctuary, conscious of growing strength, conscious of the love of Jehovah. He thought of the little kingdom — not little to him, but venerable and glorious amid the traditions of those old golden days when David ruled, and stretched his borders far and wide, until the hill of Zion was the centre of a great empire. He thought how David had bequeathed his throne and wealth to the studious, yet luxurious Solomon, and how the son had built the splendid sanctuary. Fit emblem seemed that shrine of the majesty of David and Solomon, and fit exponent, too, for a consciousness that grew, and ever yet should grow, among the Hebrews, that they were peculiarly precious to the God of hosts. Their value was divinely given and divinely loved. The youth thought of that great God Jehovah; and the great Spirit disclosed himself as he ever does to those who seek him. The Father of souls moved about the young man's soul, whispered confidence. Isaiah looked on God; he turned to look on men. The divinely-made mechanism of that keen, confident spirit ran from point to point of the human landscape that was about him, from king to people of his own land, then to kings and armies of the nations all about. He touched and felt the influence of all the workings of Jehovah's providence. The light beamed from the near Father's face, illumining each dark spot, quickening his soul to profound, reverent meditation on all the living scene that lay about him.

We know little of those hidden processes of God within men's souls by which he giveth knowledge; little do we know of the daily, divinely-appointed work of any soul; but this we do know — that a man's truest devotion to God means an earnest watching of the tracings of the finger of Providence, and the intensest effort to reason thence to our duty by those

laws which are God's modes of thought. By such devotion men discover the will of God and do it. So Isaiah gazed and pondered upon the very thoughts of Jehovah. He trembled with the burden of the revelation. His lips quivered, as all unfit to utter his thoughts. But the majestic, God-given thoughts wrought calmness as they arose within him. The sea of excitement was commanded, and grew still at the voice of the great Ruler. Isaiah needed no conscious argument, long drawn out, to convince him whence came these truths that stood with burning clearness before him, kindling him with mighty eagerness and sublime confidence in his commission to speak. These thoughts were verily *דְּבַר יְהוָה*, the things of Jehovah, or, as we translate it, "the words of Jehovah." Jehovah was there with him; the man was not alone. The majestic God of Israel was communing with his servant. Yet that majesty was not dreadful, it was Precious! Precious!! Precious!!! It was Israel's own peculiar jewel, set apart for them. It was *קָדוֹשׁ, קָדוֹשׁ, קָדוֹשׁ*, thrice separate, thrice holy, a thrice sacred and to be thrice guarded treasure. That temple also which Jehovah filled was to Isaiah precious, *קָדוֹשׁ*, set apart amid all the land, and all the world. From that sacred mount Jehovah's light and love should ever shine. Surely that people were precious. A great, divine yearning for them seemed to be welling forth in answer to the young man's own patriotic love, and henceforth Isaiah's love for them seemed changed into a stream of divine love flowing through him. His love was an utterance of the divine yearning that Israel should be truly set apart, pure, just, steadfast. He knew how often they had done dishonorably, and how careless they now were.

The king Uzziah-Azariah was an old man, weighed down by the cares of a fifty-two years' reign, harassed by sore disease, and soon to die. He had, indeed, been wise to defend and develop his little kingdom; but then, as now, when prosperity had come, the people had grown licentious, heedless of the stern laws of life, prodigal of their manhood, reckless of each other's peace or honor or life. In all this

heedlessness they were ignoring God. They grew careless toward his laws and toward his creatures, and herein they were careless toward God. The godlessness of that age was essentially like the licentiousness of our own day. But licentiousness is weakness; Isaiah saw that the result ere-long would be national overthrow. God had raised the emperors of Assyria to immense military power. Danger was not, indeed, then close at hand, for the lion seemed at that hour asleep; but how often had he leaped up suddenly to roar, to snatch prey, to devour and destroy on every side. Erelong Judah might be a feeble victim.

While the young man sat in the venerable sanctuary all these things rose before him. Then Jehovah shook the earth. Yet the young man's thoughts were not of danger, but of the need of true utterance, that he might utter the truths of God. The Lord of hosts was communing with his child, whom he "made to have dominion over the works of his hands." The earth saw, and bowed, trembling. Isaiah talked with God; together they yearned over Judah and Israel. The solemn voice was unmistakable: "Whom shall I send to save them?" He bowed himself in the dust, and cried, "Send me."

Throughout the long half century of his ministry that hour of his self-consecration seemed never to pass away. For the thought of Jehovah's presence in that sanctuary was ever the material stay on which he leaned for rest when his spirit was worn and weary, and to which he led all who would listen to him. That hour's penetrating gaze into the things of God and of men was but the entrance on a life of constant, restless watching and study. The same sense of divine communion was ever the spring of his great confidence as he preached.

Years passed; and Uzziah's reign and his son Jotham's had ended amid increasing pride, although threats were coming of invasions by feebler nations than Assyria — by the neighboring Samaria and Damascus. The boy king Ahaz came to the throne controlled by harem influences, and grew to be a cringing, unmanly ruler, — superstitious. indeed. vet

just therefore all the more indifferent to the spiritual service of Jehovah. But Isaiah was now a master in all knowledge of the social and political affairs about him. If we read the discourses of chapters ii. to v. by the light of the history of those years — i.e. if we read them by the light of God's commentary — we shall wonder at their massive grasp, and we shall learn the secret of the powerful preacher. He may speak with authority who speaks of that whereof he knows. Isaiah knew the people, and he knew the throne; he knew the customs and the spirit of them all. He tells of their display at every point, from council-chambers to luxurious parlors and boudoirs, from stately ships to bristling armor-houses, from sensual temples to showy gardens, from counting-houses down to drunken music-halls. He knew Judah's relations towards the neighboring states; he knew the jealousy of these states towards Judah. He had searched and discovered the secrets of the alliance between Samaria and Damascus — their plot to get Jerusalem under their own control. Knowledge of all he had sought and found, because it was knowledge of God's providence. His faith bade him gain it; faith kindled the keen eye that gazed on all the facts about him; faith moved his resolve to speak, to do, and, if possible, to save men. His belief in Jehovah's love for Jerusalem was the foundation, or the fountain, at once of his high ideal for the people and of his stern judgment of the present sad reality. As he thought of that fair ideal he felt himself altogether one of the people, and he knew that every one of his countrymen might see the bright vision as well as he. It was the nationally possible vision; for all the nation had lived and grown amid the same influences which had moulded himself. Ay, here was the bitter fact, that the ideal was not his alone, but it was known to all. It had been pictured to their fathers by prophets long before, and now men turned carelessly away from that which they knew to be pure, high, and worthy of their nation; and they were grovelling in decay.

Yet they were men — living, impressible souls. The

preacher knew that it was possible to move them, and the torrent of indignation and argument which he poured out is all afire with eloquence. His faith in Jehovah's love touched his lips, his very manner of speech; for the purpose of that great love was to exalt Judah, to elevate mankind, not to cut off utterly, "not to make a full end." Therefore Isaiah lays hold of his fellows by the heartstrings; now he moves the ties that bind men to the past; now the pulse that quickens at the approach of beauty. His discourse appeared as nothing new or strange to his hearers, not discourse of something hard to love or comprehend, but founded on all the truth and goodness which the fathers had known and loved. As we to-day lay hold of a religious veneration that has been growing for two thousand years,—as, when we preach, we utter first the words that all Christ's followers have read, and that all men reverence, and then we seek to win to righteousness by arguments based on these,—so Isaiah was wont to preach at times from an elder prophecy as his text (ii. 2 ff.; xvi. 6 ff., 13). Again, he would speak a parable—the lovely song of the lover's vineyard, or the story of the husbandman—to hush the multitude, and carry his argument by guile, as it were, to their hearts (v. 1 ff.; xxviii. 23 ff.). Again, his discourse is measured in equal stanzas, and at each pause he cries the solemn refrain: "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still"; and the dreadful, frequent sound strikes home on the soul like a funeral knell. He seems to have searched all forms of utterance, and gathered all that was fittest to win men's hearts.

Listen to him discoursing in his own tongue; see there his rich play with thought and word, his skill in that delicate balancing of sentences so pleasant to the Semitic ear. Whatever is attractive in speech, in word, in arrangement, in adornment, whatever is quick and vivid, whatever will leap quick to the centre of the hearer's soul, all that is massive yet tender, rich yet simple, he pours out with brilliant dexterity, but with familiar ease, with tremendous earnestness,

and gentlest love. As you read you see a living panorama, the streets so full,— here stately grandees, there crouching, mean men, yonder the dazzling magician, the rolling chariot, the ogling coquettes; you hear songs in this gay house, and yonder the cry of the poor man and the widow. Suddenly there comes the hissing of hastening storm; the earth trembles in God's great earthquake; you feel in the preacher's words the very shaking and clashing and falling; you see the dirty holes whence the bats fly out as the idols are flung in, and here and there the terrified owners fleeing to the hill-tops round about, where they may perhaps be safe from tumbling walls. The threat of earthquake may seem vain; and of invasion, as absurd; but the day shall come, and then Jehovah alone shall be exalted. He will then also exalt the faithful remnant with himself; for they are with him. The divine purpose shall be fulfilled; evil shall not abide forever; righteousness shall fill the land; and from every house shall then rise the smoking pillar that indicates the sacrifice offered by God's people.

But Isaiah's warnings were little heeded, and in a few months the northern allies were laying Judah waste, and fast hemming in Jerusalem. These allies seem to have hoped to consolidate one great Palestinian union that should break the Assyrian wave from the northeast, or the Egyptian from the southwest, and they desired to hold the comparatively safe fortress of Zion, hidden as it was amongst the mountains, just outside of the fertile plains, where invading armies were wont to linger, aside from the great highway of the coast, and yet in a measure commanding that highway. They would overthrow the dynasty of David and destroy its ancient claim to leadership, enthroning over Judah a creature of their own. In the weakness of Ahaz they saw their opportunity. Isaiah preached again of danger, but now, when the enemy was at the very door, observe how different his tone. The symbols of all that was dear to him, to Judah, to Jehovah were dishonored by these allies' threats of violence. The great faith in Jehovah's love for Jerusalem and for David

was mocked. It is in such an hour that a great faith rises, swells, bursts forth, and the preacher's divinely kindled utterance is the very word of God. In Jehovah's name Isaiah goes forth to preach courage, strength, trust in God's ancient promise of his love. It is a message for David's son, and Isaiah bears it fearlessly to the king. What matters it that Ahaz sneers, coldly declining the fervid preacher's comfort? Confused by the insult, yet not confounded, the warm heart fills, and the old faith trembles to his lips with a mysterious utterance. He cries, "God is with us!" and then with fearful solemnity he reasons before this foolish king who despises Jehovah: "Thou, Ahaz, carest not for him, therefore thou art not of us. Thou and such as thou art shall be shaved away as one shaves the beard, and Jehovah's purpose to exalt us shall stand." In this hour of insult to man and God the blow to the prophet's spirit was like a stroke upon the face, and the pained voice ceased; but the communion with God ceased not, and the prophet wrote a record of that communing for us, revealing how his eloquent discourse was born of hidden intercourse with God. He wrote: "Jehovah spake to me, laying a strong hand upon me, saying, 'Fear not their fear.' Therefore I will wait. Behold, I and my children are for signs, even when voiceless yet full of meaning. King Ahaz would not hear me, but he saw this lad, my son שֵׁרְיָאֵל, by my side. His name is known, it ever preaches of judgment and of the returning remnant. All men know my name, יְהוָה, and as they utter that they preach 'Jehovah is salvation.' Jehovah saveth. The saved remnant shall return, and a true son of David shall then be king."

Isaiah's faith was not in vain. A prince soon came to reign whose spirit was in full sympathy with the prophet. Ahaz bought freedom from the Canaanite alliance by laying himself and his treasures and his people beneath the Assyrian emperor's feet, and for a whole generation Judah was a vassal. But Ahaz died in 726, and his son Hezekiah reigned, of whom we read that "he trusted in Jehovah, God of Israel;

so that after him was none like him among the kings of Judah, nor any that was before him." In the opinion of the writer of the Book of Kings even Josiah, the great reformer of a century later, was not a man of faith like Hezekiah; aye, even the great David was counted less faithful than the royal pupil of Isaiah. In the eyes of the prophet and of the historians of those days Hezekiah was indeed a "Wonderful Counsellor, a Prince of Peace." And who shall say that Hezekiah's character was not largely due to Isaiah's influence? Then as now the man of God was entrusted with the working out of the divine answer to his divinely taught desire. No doubt the preacher won the prince's heart, and such work may such preachers do to-day.

We have comparatively few of Isaiah's Judean discourses from the later half of his ministry. But here let us observe that he preached not to Judean audiences only. His enthusiasm for the Zion sanctuary may not be called a narrow particularist's care for Judah only. His doctrine was that Judah was but the centre whence preachers should go out to all men. One of the most striking passages in his magnificent discourse on the coming golden age declares that even then the business of Judah shall be to preach to all the world, and by this preaching to heal and save mankind. Further, he himself sends special messages to neighboring tribes and far-off kingdoms. He sent peculiarly tender words to Samaria when she revolted from Assyria and fought desperately for life through three long years of siege ere she was crushed to almost utter ruin. The beautiful city sat like a crown upon the hill-top that rises gracefully out of one of earth's loveliest and richest vales; but the fair Samaria was full of wine-loving men who foolishly mocked the prophet, turning the very simplicity and persistence of his teaching into a reproach, but thereby testifying to his faithful kindness (xxviii. 9 ff.).

Through all that siege of Samaria Judah was uneasy, as she well might be; for a besieging army is a dangerous neighbor. There was now a double temptation to play off the

Egyptian power in the south against the Assyrians in the north. Each of these, doubtless, regarded Canaan as valuable for outer defence and offence against the other, and as a rich source of tribute also. There was in Jerusalem a faction who thought they saw political capital in this, and who schemed secretly to contract sham alliances, now with Egypt, now with Assyria. Isaiah's keen eyes followed them, and he divined their purpose. His course was quickly chosen; he would forestall them by moving the people to a truer policy. He builds his manly discourse on the old foundation, crying, "Be honest; trust in Mount Zion"; or, to translate his counsel in paraphrase: "To lie is to pull out stones from the walls of our life. It is to make a "bed shorter than that a man may stretch himself upon it, a covering narrower than that a man may wrap himself therein." It does violence to man and to all real relations, therefore it does violence to Jehovah. Trust in his plans. Behold his character which he reveals in Zion. Believe that he dwells among us. Build your policy on that foundation. רַחֲמֵיךָ לֹא יִחַיֵּשׁ. "The faithful man shall make no hasty flight." They who are trustworthy are ready for all events' (xxviii. 14 ff.). Somewhat later he discovers fully one of the political plots of this Egyptian party, and he pours out a torrent of indignant scorn: "Pharaoh's strength shall be shame. Woe to them that go down thither." But why forbid patriotism? Is a burden ever honorable? Isaiah appeals to reason inspired with faith. 'Assyria's immense might is but the work of Jehovah's providence, and rebellion now would be destruction; but Jehovah's love will preserve Judah long after Assyria is forgotten. Let us not frustrate our hopes and his purposes. Learn of his wisdom from the parable of the husbandman, who ordereth all his labors, ploughing this and letting that lie fallow' (xxviii. 28-29). In this modern day of temptation to force Providence for the sake of the apparent interests of the few we may well think of Isaiah's parable. Let us know God, and be humbly thankful for his providence.

Samaria fell at last; and now all Judah trembled before a

real danger, lest the troops, flushed with victory, should march the few miles south and sack Jerusalem. The heroic prophet shared the people's fear. Raising his old watch-word, *יְהוָה קָרוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל*, he went forth to preach God's comfort to his people. His discourse in this hour, as we read it in chap. x.-xii., is one of the grandest, yet tenderest utterances, most magnificent in conception, yet humblest in devotion, that ever poured from eloquent lips in the hour of faith's trial and faith's victory. He pictures the Assyrian host, the proud rod of God, a very forest, so many are the spears, waving, moving, hurrying on till Jerusalem is beneath their shadow, then at once consumed. But this shall be only a part of the wonderful deliverance. Another rod of Jehovah shall grow; the final development of the national history seems at hand, the high ideal is surely now to be fulfilled. Jehovah is with us, the great Spirit rests upon Judah's prince, and so abiding that Spirit shall make the prince's spirit all godlike. He shall be changed; all things shall be changed. The prince shall purify the nation, and the very beasts shall take on a new nature. Not Judah only shall be blessed, but from the Judean centre light, preaching, and peace shall flow out to cover the earth.

Thus in the hour of extremity comes God's opportunity to reveal himself, and the excited seer leaps from darkest fears up to his loftiest thought, his most unworldly vision. The great religious fact of the world shall work out the great moral change. The Almighty God is the author of the highest hope. He is now purging by his rod, and there shall be only a remnant left. So far the great preachers of the past had also preached; but Isaiah looks far deeper into human hearts, and sees the lack in that elder preaching. Why should the remnant who are left do better than all others? The doctrine of Immanuel solves the great problem. The Spirit of Jehovah rests upon us, his abiding shall change all hearts. Then shall we forever preach him to the world.

It was the abiding of that Spirit upon Isaiah that filled him with the knowledge and fear of Jehovah and made him

preach, made him what he was, and made him utter himself, his inmost, central, moving self, to his fellows. It was *קְבוּיָאֵל*, the abiding Spirit that kindled the great preacher's thought and that inspired him to sing, as he closed his splendid prophecy, the glorious song:

הִנֵּן יְהוָה יְשׁוּעָתִי
אֲבַטֵּחַ וְלֹא אֶפְתָּח

"Behold, Jehovah is my salvation;
I trust, and shall not tremble."

Jehovah was already there; Isaiah's life was filled with salvation. Fitly was he called *יְשׁוּעָתִי*. It was of small consequence that the actual form of deliverance did not realize the seer's vision. Indeed, there pervades all Isaiah's discourses a tone of indifference towards mere outward success. Witness his counsel that no Egyptian help be sought against Assyria. His work during the long years in which Hezekiah quietly paid tribute shows the same. The kingdom had rest, gathering strength and proving Isaiah's wisdom, and in these quiet years there grew up new carelessness and religious formalism. It was doubtless in these years that Isaiah wrote at least part of the first chapter of his book denouncing ritual and sacrifices. Beneath these, men thought they could hide their uncleanness from Jehovah's sight. But the sacredness of Zion meant to Isaiah no intrinsic peculiarity of the place which made sacrifices and prayers sacred because offered there. To him that sacredness (*קִדְשׁ*) meant the preciousness to Jehovah of an abode among his loved ones. To Isaiah, and such as Isaiah, the place was precious where they meditated on God, felt him near them, communed with him. In his thought holiness was not so much something to be attained unto by Israel as something already possessed by Israel. Israel *was* separate (*קָדוֹשׁ*) unto Jehovah, as Jehovah *was* separate (*קָדוֹשׁ*) unto Israel. That which was God's majesty in the eyes of all other men was God's preciousness to Israel. The Holy One of Israel, or, the One holy to Israel, separate for Israel, became such by the peculiar love he bore toward Israel, by which he seemed set

apart for them, their own treasure. Such was to Isaiah the meaning of holiness. It was not a characteristic of God to be thought of with fear, nor a characteristic of man to be sought after as an end in itself. It was something in God's character thought of with unmixed delight by every one who understood it; it was something possessed already by every child of God. Zion also was holy; but only because there true children of Israel were about their God. If these were wanting, then gifts and words, sacrifices and prayers, could not be holy. We are apt to misread to-day the spiritual Hebrew's idea of holiness, reading into it much that has come to us through monasticism from heathenism. It would be well for us to return to the old Hebrew idea of Isaiah, and see to it simply that we are one with Christ in our principle of life and in our service, assured that holiness will then be truly possessed. For holiness is hardly an object to be grasped, but a quality which accompanies certain character,—scarcely even the flower so much as the flower's fragrance.

We possess few of Isaiah's words from these more quiet years; but results tell us that they must have been full of pastor-like care. The century had nearly closed when we hear again the voice that spoke loudest over stormiest waves. The iron monarch Sargon of Assyria died in 704, and then arose a great revolt in the southwest. Hezekiah, too, threw off the yoke and joined in the wide alliance to resist the new emperor Sennacherib, who was eagerly hurrying to subdue again the revolting people. Calmly the venerable Isaiah looks out on the troubled horizon, and rises to preach the old faith once more. His aged voice trembles, he turns from discourse to prayer:

“O Jehovah, be favorable unto us,
For we have waited for thee” (xxxiii. 2 ff.).

Now he is ready to preach again as of old:

“Jehovah is exalted,
He dwelleth ever in a lofty place,
And Zion hath he filled with righteousness.”
“The righteous also shall dwell in lofty places
Exalted in rocky fastnesses.”

“A king in royal splendour thou shalt see.”
 “The people who dwell in Zion
 Are forgiven their iniquity.”

Love for men and faith in God can thus believe and preach it. Listen again to the aged prophet. He is silent awhile, absorbed in thought of the Great Presence. He sees God's purposes. Now he speaks again; it is the very voice of God:

“I have already put my hook in thy nose, Asshur;
 I have already turned thee back
 By the way that thou camest.
 I have hedged over this city to save it,
 For mine own sake,
 And for my servant David's sake” (cxxxvii. 21 ff.).

Isaiah's last words are like all that went before them, messages of peace through faith. This is true preaching. Thus do all true preachers preach, and their words are the words of God, for they are according to the mind of God, who inspires them.

Do we ask now for the story of the great preacher's latter days? No answer can anywhere be found. His life's story lies all in this, that he brought life to men by preaching. His record is all a record of words of God. Fitly did the recorders forget those lines of the picture that are but human, and leave us only the visions of a man who was with God. The words of Isaiah are a vision of God. Happy the preacher who gazes thereon, for he shall thence reflect the same light and life. The man disappeared and was not; but all later Hebrew history bears the impress of his moulding hand. I have not time to tell here how king Hezekiah gave formal realization to Isaiah's great faith, sending out from Zion influences that purified all the land. Nor can I tell the story of Manasseh's reaction, how soon it spent itself, and how that king reigned for fifty-five years, longer far than any other king save one. Oriental kings who reign long are generally able men; and, moreover, we read that after Manasseh's earlier reactionary days he turned and followed his father Hezekiah's footsteps. How much of Isaiah's influence is traceable here! The next king began also with a reaction.

but ere long conspiracy slew him. Yet the people, grown order-loving under those influences which Isaiah had begun, brought the conspirators to justice, and set upon the throne Josiah, the great reformer, and the final royal establisher of the temple upon Mount Zion as the one only sanctuary of the Hebrews. Under him the Isaian doctrine became the established state religion, and now the lofty spiritual heights, whence the giant of the past had thundered, became the easy plains where sluggish souls lay down in a new sleep of formalism. Such, indeed, has always been the course of men's religious history. A fresh system of sacerdotalism is the sure mark of the graves and the recent homes of spiritual heroes.

We have listened to the great preacher from the day of his call till the day when God took him, and he was not. I have, indeed, scarcely alluded to any of his discourses to audiences not immediately about himself, for it was especially with his work as a preacher, from whom we may learn to preach, that we have had to do. Intensely important to the preacher, as a theologian, are, indeed, many other questions connected with the book. But with our present purpose it would be impossible even to indicate these. We have seen Isaiah's direct work — his hidden spring of life, his outlook, and the high ideal which he preached. We have seen him mount up and stand near Jehovah, the one majestic Lord of Hosts, Controller of all, before whom men are atoms, and all powers but the breath of his mouth. To such lofty height of religious thought the Semitic mind rose early, while our Indo-European fathers grovelled long amid fancies of gods that were as contemptible as selfish men. Yet Isaiah shrank not in fear of that overshadowing presence. He sat within it, and felt a warm affection touching him on every side, until he knew himself precious to God, and knew God as the Precious One, the Holy One of Israel. Man and God were each holy to the other. Here lay the wondrous magnetism that drew him to gaze on both, God and man, and to speak for the one to the other. And Isaiah was but a part

of a patriarchal tribe, his life and relations were to him only representative of those of the great family. Therefore all his nation seemed to him precious to Jehovah; his fathers, his brethren, all the children of Israel, ay, even the land itself, their cities and villages, and, above all, the beautiful sanctuary in Zion, all were precious to Jehovah. Yet many cared not. Observe here how his thought of man awoke while he thought of God. His theology was the basis of his anthropology and of his philanthropy. While he meditates on God, by the inspiration of God and in his name, he rises to arouse men from their awful indifference. To this man of sublime faith his own inner ideal is the God-given vision of God's purpose, and from his own experience of the great Spirit's communion with himself he draws his knowledge of God's method for raising men to the ideal height. His gospel of salvation is that the Spirit of Jehovah resting upon men gives wisdom and discernment, counsel and might, knowledge and the fear of Jehovah. This way of salvation is no mere speculative theory, but rests on the preacher's own actual experience. On the foundation of communion with God, that is, on the knowledge of God which brings him life, or, as we may say, on the basis of a living theology he builds his gospel of salvation. On that foundation, also, he builds all his practice of preaching, for never were discourses more singularly observant of the facts of God's providence, never was preaching more directly aimed at the times, or more skilfully spoken into the very ear of the soul — into the ear which God formed for hearing his own voice.

Here, then, may preachers learn how to preach, here study what their calling is. Here may they find the foundations, the eternal laws of spiritual influence, the philosophy on which they must stand, if they would win and save; the rocks which endure forever while the tides of excitement rise and fall, while the sands of thoughtlessness shift, and the waves of development roll on forever. Here shall we learn how and also what we must preach. For preaching has been

well defined, by one of the ablest preachers and profoundest of lecturers on homiletics, as "public discourse on religious truth with a view to persuasion." It might be difficult to reach a definition of religious truth which would satisfy us all; yet evidently it includes and nearly equals "the facts concerning our feeling or mind toward God and our faith as to his feeling or mind toward us." Discourse on these facts means utterance of the realities of the unseen. It speaks of that which lies at the foundation and spring of our life. It declares the character of that Will which ordains all things, — all beginnings, all evolutions, all histories. It tells of the heart which is eternal, and which ultimately controls our existence, our possessions, our joys, our fate. It asks what are our thoughts of God? It tests them all, searching them from the most subtle hidden meditation to the minutest outer consequence, testing whether they agree with the truths of God, sifting the chaff from the wheat. It asks what is real in the unseen and what are our ideals.

Moreover, to creatures such as we are these realities and ideals must be the motives to action. They are the marks toward which we press, or at which we gaze as we foolishly float away from them. Discourse on religious truth, therefore, concerns character. Here it reaches its highest task; for the soul's power to create its character is its most nearly Godlike nature. Language almost fails when we try to touch and examine this our creative work, to know its features, to describe it; for character is altogether a spiritual thing, and eludes our language, which is so material. Yet we do each know that something which we bear in us is our own utterly. We charge ourselves only with its existence. Responsibility for it we bear alone. So exalted is the power whereby we do right or wrong, that it transcends even the power by which God created us fit to have such power. It stands alone on equal plane with that power by which the Judge of all the earth does right.

Here, then, lies the high calling of the preacher, that he shall set before a man the motives that move God. But

whence shall we bring these? Who is sufficient for these things? What tremendous solemnity gathers about this work of persuasion! Preaching is discourse on religious truth with a view to persuasion! Persuasion there must be. We must influence character, else we do not preach. The preacher's work is not begun, if he have simply tried to move men's intellect, or if his hearers only say that intellectually his argument is very convincing. In truth, such language is fallacious. It is impossible so to divorce a man's intellect from his soul that while the intellect shall have utter satisfaction in the discourse, seeing pure harmony therein, the soul shall yet sit apart from all this unsatisfied. But how shall we then persuade men? Where shall we learn the moving arguments that lie always before God, weighed by him, moving him, and alone fit to move men? Let us turn to Jesus's words; for the true method of solution of every theological problem is to fall back on the foundations of theology. Listen to the primitive doctrine: "And I if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto myself." Spoken first with a material sense, the words are figurative of a cardinal Christian faith. "They preached Christ." The vision of Christ overpowers and wins by its bright glory, its ineffable beauty, its love to the uttermost. And the preaching of Christ—true discourse concerning that bright revelation of the Eternal One—is disclosure of the face of God, is declaration of the character of God, of the great love and justice of his purposes. Therefore the Christian doctrine of preaching is that the disclosure of God himself will persuade men. It is thus our Christian doctrine that discourse concerning all religious truth, the setting forth of the unseen realities, the exposition of the divine ideal, is the discourse by which persuasion is wrought; for this is disclosure of God. Such discourse is the business of the preacher; our work is to manifest God. True it is, indeed, that we have to set before man the motives that move God; for what moves God save his own perfect thoughts? Set these before men, reveal God himself, preach the eternal truth, and men will be persuaded. Lay hold of men as Isaiah

did ; bring them before Jehovah's unveiled face ; let God and man gaze, eye to eye, each into the other's soul. Then the child will know his Father ; the prodigal son will return ; the man shall see the great motive as God sees it, and will choose it. Such was Isaiah's preaching. He looked on God's purposes, and declared them ; he revealed God's character. Standing by faith near God, he uttered and was a revelation of God ; for he worked along God's methods for God's ends.

The preacher must ever abide with God, near him, that he may gain God's view of men and things, that he may know the truth concerning all. And he who companies with the men of God shall be in the company of God. The preacher who stands beside Isaiah and Isaiah's peers stands near God, and is himself Isaiah's peer. The man who searches, as Isaiah searched, the ways of God, his providence, his character, — he who searches men as Isaiah searched their deeds and their nature, — the man who studies as Isaiah studied, and enters into the ways and word whereby God moves within men, even into the ways and words whereby he suffers men to move men — he who studies the history of men's souls, — he shall discover God ; he shall see God in Christ ; and, constrained by that living vision, he shall preach. The vision shall persuade men, and they will live.