

thought, in language, in illustration, in poetic beauty and in fervent eloquence it challenges comparison. Viewed purely from a literary standpoint, and entirely apart from the inspired truth that it contains and the wonderful vision which it records, it is a marvel of excellence.

And yet, there are those who, unable to appreciate its sublimity, laboriously search through it with microscopic scrutiny to find some phrase upon which to hang an indictment of its veracity. They are like one who, ignoring the beauty and the fragrance of the flowers in a garden, would exhaust his enthusiasm on a weed.

Fortunately, the great majority of Bible readers enjoy the good, the true, and the beautiful, and to them Isaiah is a continuing delight.

ISAIAH'S ALL ENCOMPASSING VISION

Isaiah differs from the other prophets whose words are recorded in holy writ. He was not called from the plow as Elisha was, neither was he a herdsman like Amos, nor yet did he burst forth from obscurity like Elijah. We know the name of this prophet's father, but nothing more. The Bible commentators, reasoning from the quality of his speech and from his familiarity with the court think that he must have had in his youth all the advantages that his generation afforded.

Like the other prophets, he fitted into his time; and yet, unlike the most of them, his vision took in all the future. He had the prophet's primary virtue; he believed in God. The God whom Isaiah worshipped united in himself all the qualities that a supreme being could possess, and possessed them to a supreme degree. The Jehovah of Isaiah was infinite in power, infinite in intelligence, and infinite in love. He could plan all that His heart desired and carry out the plan.

Isaiah was loyal to his race; he was a child of Abraham and had on his heart the destiny of Israel. Believing in the justice of God, he was distressed by the sins that must bring retribution; his was the love that sought to guard his people against the consequences of sin by pleading against transgressions. Trusting in God and in God's power to deliver, he warned against alliances that would link his race with those who, by their conduct, invited the wrath of God.

ISAIAH FORETELLS THE SAVIOUR

While Isaiah did not ignore the age in which he lived, his eyes were on the days to come when a "chosen people" would see a Messiah—one of the seed of Abraham who would save His people from their sins and lead them into the land of which the "promised land" that they knew was but a promise.

Listening heavenward, he heard the song that startled the shepherds at Bethlehem and, peering through the darkness of seven centuries, he saw light that shone from Calvary.

Prophecy has been described as "history written in advance." Isaiah recorded centuries beforehand, and in minute detail as well as in majestic outline, the sufferings of the Saviour, the sayings of the Saviour's time. The salvation that He bought with His blood and the vicarious character of the atonement are fully set forth and the completeness of His sacrifice is accurately described.

The lesson begins with the call that came to Isaiah in a vision. In the presence of the seraphims he was overwhelmed with a consciousness of his sinfulness, an attitude essential to the beginning of a great enterprise by a servant of God.

"HERE AM I; SEND ME"

Isaiah's eyes were opened to his own sins and to the sinfulness of those about him. As long as he was indifferent to his own acts, he was satisfied with his companionship; when his eyes beheld his own shortcomings he became aware of the shortcomings of his associates.

Isaiah's conversion was as sudden as Paul's and as complete. When by repentance he had qualified himself to answer the call, the call came.

The manner of its coming has given to religionists a very striking phrase, "a living coal from off the altar." One of the seraphim "having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar," flew to Isaiah and touched his mouth with it, saying as he did so, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

First, repentance; then forgiveness and then the call. Isaiah heard the call of the Lord: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah, no longer abashed by the consciousness of sins unforgiven, was ready to bring forth works meet for repentance "Here am I; send

me," he answers the Lord. What religion, save that set forth in the Word of God, has such power to transform weakness into strength?

CHRISTIANITY "LOOKS UP"

I asked a Japanese boy who was old enough to understand both religions to give me his idea of the difference between Buddhism and Christianity. He promptly replied, "Buddhism looks down, Christianity looks up." It is a very practical distinction and one of tremendous importance.

Buddhism is purely a religion of works, and one can understand how it could supplant Hinduism, which is woven about the doctrine known as the transmigration of the soul. The spirit that wanders aimlessly through myriad existences—sometimes in an animal and sometimes in a human being—wearies of the monotony of endless change. Buddhism furnished to the Hindu a ray of hope—the promise that conscious existence can be brought to an end. Buddha taught that after the spirit has committed unnumbered sins it can turn about and do good with the assurance that when, in an indefinite number of future existences, it has done enough good to outweigh the sins committed it can escape from the tortures of life by being absorbed into the spirit of the universe.

Isaiah enjoyed a religion that required no wandering through a labyrinth of lives in order to reach a haven of rest. It only required a moment of repentance and another moment for forgiveness, and then the light of a new life burst upon him, with the glory of God's service within his reach. The past was blotted out; the future was bright with hope.

Isaiah answered, "Here am I; send me." Here we have a child-like faith and just such a volunteering for a task as every parent understands. The methods of the mind may be laborious, but the methods of the heart are simple. The mind calculates with care; the heart "trusts and obeys."

A PRACTICAL LESSON

The lesson for today is a very practical one. A religious life begins in the humility that comes with consciousness of sin—"God be merciful to me a sinner." Forgiveness follows, and with it the dawn of a new day—"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Then the heart, open to divine suggestion, hears the call to service and answers, "Here am I; send me."

From that time on life is an ascent, but strength is promised with every new difficulty, and joy is assured as duties, revealed from day to day, are performed. May we all, old and young, have the spirit of consecration embodied in the song:

"I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord; I'll be what you want me to be; I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord; I'll do what you want me to do."

HOW PEACE WILL COME TO THE WORLD By WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

BIBLE TEXT—LESSON FOR MAY 7

(Isaiah ii: 2-4; xi: 1-9)

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and

And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf

and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Do you long for world peace? Do you pray for it, strive for it? Would you know how world love and justice is to come?

Then turn to Isaiah. He was preeminently the prophet of peace, and in the two extracts from his great book which we shall consider today he brings his wonderful gift of imagery to bear upon this subject of supreme importance to the world.

These extracts are from the Second and Eleventh Chapters. I shall take the liberty of transposing the quotation and refer to the second quotation first.

Isaiah speaks of the coming of the Messiah; He is to be of the seed of Abraham and a descendant of Jesse and David. "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." The word "spirit" is here used four times and to this spirit is linked "the fear of the Lord."

We often hear the critics of the Bible finding fault with the word "fear." We are told that it is a narrow religion that teaches fear; that love should be a sufficient inducement to righteousness. Strange that the worshippers of nature should overlook the fact that fear is written upon every page of nature's book.

"THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM"

Fire is essential to human life, and yet we fear fire. We are afraid to thrust a hand into the fire or to allow fire to escape from man's control.

The air is necessary to life, and yet we fear the air when the wind raises to a certain velocity. The air in the form of a cyclone or hurricane is as destructive as fire unconfined.

And so with water. It is the daily need of every living thing, and yet it may take our lives when it comes in the form of a flood or we go into it beyond our depth.

Why not bring an indictment against nature for exciting fear? Why should the very things that sustain life and give us the physical pleasures that we know become so deadly when their wrath is aroused?

The God of nature is to be feared as well as loved—"the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Only the foolish find fault with fear as a restraining agency. The fear of God holds us in check until we reach a point where our "delight is in the law of the Lord."

Isaiah has the Messiah delighting "in the fear of the Lord." Obedience comes before the knowledge; the child learns to obey before it knows the reason why. Is not the difference between man and the Heavenly Father as great as the difference between the parent and the child?

"A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM"

The coming Messiah was not to be dependent upon the avenues of information upon which ordinary mortals have to rely. A human judge learns by sight and by ear, but the Messiah could not be dependent upon seeming things. "He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears." He would have an insight into the truth, even the spirit of wisdom, and of understanding and of knowledge. He would judge the poor with righteousness and "reprove with equity for the meek of the earth."

Throughout history the righteous judge has been described as the one who does justice to the poor. It was one of the proofs that Christ gave of His Messiahship—"the poor have the gospel preached to them."

The prophet's description of the completeness of the peace that was to come leaves nothing to be imagined. Even the animals are to be purged of the savagery that dominates their world. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion and the fatling shall be companions; "and a little child shall lead them." one of the wonderful sentences that Isaiah coined for the world.

Probably no one save Christ has ever so exalted the child, although throughout the ages child leadership has been an outstanding fact. A child's tiny hands, before they can lift a featherweight, bring two hearts nearer together, and its presence sobers the thoughtless and makes them begin to plan for life a real thing.