

“Some Doctrinal Features of the Early Prophecies of Isaiah”  
*The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 8:444-463. [1897]

Isaiah is beyond all dispute the most catholic and diversified of all the prophetic writers. With marvelous breadth of vision he spans the whole horizon of truth, and not merely one limited section like most of the other prophets. There is hardly a doctrine or principle in Old Testament revelation towards the elucidation and development of which he has not materially contributed. And this doctrinal wealth is displayed on a canvas remarkable for depth of historical perspective. No seer has penetrated so far into the future. Amos and Hosea belong to one crisis in the history of Israel, and their messianic expectations remain attached to the background of this crisis. Isaiah knows that after the Assyrian conflict another is to follow of still more serious import for Israel. He begins to conceive of the world-power in the abstract as a fixed principle in the history of redemption, whose significance is independent of its concrete embodiment in any single nation, be it Assyria or Babel. This again influences his messianic predictions in such a way as to give them the most universalistic scope they ever attained in any prophet. Isaiah sees not only the mountain of Jehovah's house established at the head of the mountains and all nations flowing unto it, but includes the material universe in the regeneration of the messianic age. While Amos and Hosea do not go beyond the promise of a transformed Canaan, Isaiah reproduces the picture of this promise on a cosmical scale and predicts a new heaven and a new earth as the dwelling-place of a new humanity. The whole realm of nature will be transfigured and glorified; even the mute creation will after its own manner be full of the knowledge of Jehovah and eager to celebrate the triumph of His kingdom.

To this wide range of Isaiah's outlook the range of his prophetic lyre perfectly corresponds. There is no kind of music for which we listen in his prophecies in vain. With almost endless variety he adapts his style to the ever-changing aspects of his discourse. As Ewald has observed, “All the powers and all the beauties of prophetic speech combine in him, and yet he is distinguished even less by any special excellence than by the symmetry or perfection of all his powers.” Whether in the solemn monotone of the description of judgment or in the rising swell of the song of triumph which greets the Messiah's birth, whether in the fierce cry of vengeance announcing Jehovah's attack upon His adversaries or in the tender tones in which He consoles His mourning people—there is always the unmistakable note of sovereign power bespeaking the prophet who is at the same time a poet by the grace of God. Isaiah's influence on the formal development of sacred poetry has proved as great and lasting as that exercised in his contribution to the body of revealed truth.

Undoubtedly the secret of this power lies in the center of the prophet's personality, and in so far belongs to a region of mystery where no human eye can penetrate. Individual character and endowment everywhere, but especially in the sphere of supernatural revelation, are products of the unsearchable working of the divine Spirit dividing to each severally as He will and the conditions of His plan require. But if we cannot hope to explain how the prophet's remarkable gifts and powers were imparted as a subjective equipment for his task, it is different in regard to the nature and range of the truth proclaimed. Here we are on objective ground. Although no prophecy ever came by the will of man, yet the Holy Spirit has ordinarily adjusted the divine thoughts of revelation to one another and to some one central idea most congenial to the mind of His chosen organ. The prophet was not placed as a stranger in the midst of a mass of unassimilated material, but made at home in a world of truth where he would discover on all sides the correlates and implications of the supreme

thought that filled his soul. Such a supreme thought is, for example, in Amos the absolute energy of the divine justice, and in Hosea the tenderness of Jehovah's covenant-love for Israel notwithstanding her sin. In this sense, then, it is entirely legitimate to ask what is the dominating thought in the mind of Isaiah and whether it may not furnish some explanation of the unrivaled breadth and depth of his teaching. What is there in the prophet's peculiar point of view that will account for the grandeur and richness of the scene he has unrolled for us?

There is one chapter in the book of Isaiah to which we instinctively turn in seeking an answer to this question. It is the sixth chapter, which, according to the most widely accepted view, is descriptive of the prophet's inaugural vision. On this view it is natural to find here a forecast of the prophet's ministry in its most salient features. But even if the chronological arrangement of the book be insisted upon, it is still fair to expect that this memorable vision will most clearly reveal the distinctive character of Isaiah's message. For in that case it marks the culminating point of his earliest activity, the record of which we possess in chapters 2-5. During these first years, undisturbed by any external crisis, the youthful prophet was permitted to give free play to his individuality in the utterance of revealed truth as was no longer possible under the complex conditions of the later period. As an interlude, no less than as a prelude, therefore, the sixth chapter must be assumed to strike the keynote for all that is typically Isaianic in his prophecies. In the one case the share which the vision had in determining the prophet's tone will, of course, have to be estimated as greater than in the other; but for the representative and exponential significance of the vision it makes little difference which of the two views we adopt.

Doubts have been expressed concerning the historical accuracy of the chapter. Not that the Isaianic authorship is called in question. But it has long been deemed psychologically inconceivable that the prophet should have entered upon the labor of his life with such gloomy foreknowledge of the result as is here imparted to him according to verses 9-13. If he had known that the effect of his preaching would be hardening and judgment, he could not, it is said, have preserved that zeal and hopefulness which all his prophecies reflect. Consequently it has been assumed that Isaiah wrote this account of his vision long after its occurrence, and unconsciously carried back the experience of his subsequent labors into the first divine summons that had come to him. It is interesting to observe how the most advanced criticism of Isaiah has been led to abandon this once fashionable opinion, so as now to admit that there are no valid reasons why the vision should not have been received in precisely that form, verses 9-13a included, in the year to which the title assigns it, the death-year of King Uzziah. Duhm, Hackmann and Cheyne agree in this opinion. The fact alone that in the year 734 Isaiah had a son old enough to accompany him to his memorable interview with King Ahaz, and that this son had been called, evidently at his birth, Shear Jashubh, "*a remnant only shall return,*" suffices to vindicate the historical character of 6:9-13. Shear Jashubh expresses the same thought as is developed in these verses. Isaiah, therefore, must have believed at a very early date of his ministry that only a remnant would be saved and the great mass of the people perish. But apart from this external evidence, the theory referred to, as we shall have occasion to show, judges the prophet by a modern and therefore psychologically false standard, besides leaving altogether out of account the supernatural factor.

The sixth chapter describes the prophet's commission to be the messenger of judgment to Israel in a way which invites comparison with the first call of Jeremiah. There is an important difference

between the two, however. Jeremiah's visions on that occasion partook of the ordinary nature of prophetic visions in that they contained symbolic expressions of certain truths or events he was to proclaim. He saw the rod of an almond tree, indicating that Jehovah would watch over His word to perform it, and a seething caldron whose face was from the north, signifying that out of the north evil would break upon the inhabitants of the land. Isaiah in his vision sees nothing but Jehovah Himself, for the temple, the throne, the seraphim, the altar, all serve the one purpose of making Jehovah the supreme and central figure and possess no independent significance. When towards the close the commission is given and its contents are communicated, this is done by direct speech of Him who appears in the vision, the revealing word remaining, as it were, in close personal contact with Jehovah and not receiving any further symbolic embodiment. The whole vision is constructed on the plan of a theophany. That it was so understood by Isaiah is clear from his dwelling at greater length upon the manner in which Jehovah appeared, and upon the impression made by his appearance, than upon the mission that so closely concerned himself. We here discover the first outstanding feature of Isaiah's prophecy, what may be called its theophanic character. In every message he has to proclaim, in every interpretation of nature and history he is sent to make, we see rising up before us this same divine presence which rose up before the prophet in the temple. Self-manifestation of Jehovah is the fundamental aspect of every utterance or discourse. All bears the one personal face. Other prophets may make us see with greater distinctness some single work or purpose of Jehovah: there is none who gives us a more real sense of how the one Jehovah reveals Himself in the entire unfolding of His counsel and all His works. But the impression thus made upon the reader is the most immediate reflex of a corresponding impression upon the prophet's part. Isaiah could not have communicated this feeling to such an extent had he not been under its powerful and lasting influence himself. His whole ministry is as much the outgrowth of a continuous vision of God as the call in the sixth chapter was the natural issue of the momentary theophany there recorded.

To this must immediately be added another feature of equal prominence and importance. The theophany in the temple is clearly intended to place in the strongest possible contrast the absolute divinity of Jehovah and the relativity and dependence of created existence. Among all the prophets Isaiah was endowed with the keenest appreciation of the antithesis between God and not-God. The personal presence of Jehovah found by him everywhere bears features most distinctly divine, unique in their divinity. That the scene of the sixth chapter is the temple becomes highly significant in this connection. It makes little difference whether with some expositors we think of the heavenly temple, or with others of the sanctuary on Zion: even in the latter case the careful adjustment of details to the main purpose shows that a deeper explanation is required than Isaiah's accidental presence there. In Jehovah's temple everything is expressive of His holiness, pervaded by the atmosphere of the divine: here everything created covers and humbles and effaces itself. Most strikingly this idea is symbolized by the seraphim, who, though themselves the highest representatives of a higher world, yet in the presence of God are made to feel their own insignificance as profoundly as the earth-born prophet. Owing to this heightened sense of divinity, as specifically distinct from all other being, the idea of God obtains in the prophecies of Isaiah a peculiar ascendancy and pervasiveness. God becomes the one supreme reality from whom everything else derives its significance. The thought of Jehovah expands until it fills all the recesses of creation, and there is no place left for any other being except as a medium for reflecting the divine glory. Not less than three times in his brief account of the vision does the prophet speak of a fulfilling presence to impress us with this idea. Jehovah's train *fills* the temple, the whole earth is *full* of His glory, the house is *filled* with smoke. The words in verse

3 become still more suggestive if, in closer adherence to the original, we render: "the fullness of the earth is (nothing but) His glory." That of which the philosopher spoke as the seeing of all things in God has here found its practical realization in a religious sense.

Still in another respect is the temple vision prefigurative of the life-work it inaugurates. If objectively the place of the divine presence, the temple is subjectively the place of worship. As a result of the God-centered character of his prophecy, Isaiah's religious nature is strongly affected by the revelations he communicates. Never was divine truth brought into fuller harmony with a prophet's soul, never did human heartstrings vibrate more responsively at the lightest touch of the divine word than Isaiah's. As the theophany in the vision stirred him to the profoundest worship, so all subsequent disclosures of Jehovah's nature and purpose awakened a continuous echo in his intensely religious nature. Nothing is more characteristic of Isaiah's prophecies than this fervor of religious appreciation so equably pervading them from beginning to end. And this spiritual responsiveness is of a peculiarly fundamental type. As in the revelation-content of his oracles the specifically divine element is everywhere emphasized, so the prophet's subjective experience exhibits religion in its elementary form, the pure quintessence of worship. For this reason the book of Isaiah offers better opportunities than any other Old Testament writing, the Psalms excepted, for studying and analyzing religion on its psychological side. Not only in this vision, but throughout, wherever the specifically religious chord is struck, three distinct notes make themselves heard. The first is that of vivid perception of the essential divinity of Jehovah, of the infinite majesty of His Being. The second is the note of intense realization of the distance between Jehovah's greatness and purity and the littleness and sinfulness of the creature. These two elements are inseparably united in the consciousness of Isaiah: every time that the transcendent glory of God breaks in upon his vision, there follows without fail this reflex judgment on the finiteness and dependence of self, a most striking scriptural illustration of the truth of Augustine's view concerning the interdependence of the God-consciousness and the self-consciousness, though assuming, of course, a far less intellectual form in the mind of the Old Testament prophet than in that of the church father. Finally, the third note heard is that of joyful self-surrender, wherein Isaiah, at first overwhelmed by the revelation of the divine majesty, regains his mental poise and comes to rest in the worship of Jehovah as the only satisfying purpose of all created existence.

As a result of this deep religious interest in the self-revelation of Jehovah through His word and works, Isaiah's personal life becomes in an unusual degree subordinated to his official calling. Because the conception of Jehovah dominates his prophecy, his prophecy dominates his life. For a tragic conflict between the objective message and the subjective sympathies of its bearer, such as we witness in Jeremiah, there is no place here. The reason is not that Isaiah's oracles are less denunciatory and severe, but his interest is so concentrated upon the divine factor of what passes before his vision as to leave scarcely room for any sympathetic reaction of a different kind. There is on the pages of the Old Testament no record of a life more entirely consumed on the altar of service than Isaiah's; but the service was before all things service of Jehovah. According to the account of the sixth chapter itself, the cry, "Send me," was a cry uttered under the constraint of the vision of the divine glory. Because this was so there was no recoiling when the disclosure followed that the ministry to be undertaken would be one of hardening and judgment. The trembling question, "Lord, how long?" is the only form in which the prophet's patriotic instinct for a moment asserts itself. After that all is resignation. No word of plaintive comment at the close is allowed to break the majestic force of

the divine announcement. To a consciousness thus centered and anchored in God, it could never become more than a secondary question what would be the issue judged from a purely human or national standpoint. It is in overlooking this fact that the psychological criticism of the accuracy of the sixth chapter has been chiefly at fault. The truth is that the prophetic mind in general and that of Isaiah in particular were more swayed by far more elementary and more centrally religious forces than the modern theory with its one-sided emphasis upon the ethical mission of prophetism allows for. But, if once compelled to admit the influence of these deeper motives, we have no right to assert *a priori* that they were insufficient to sustain the prophet in the plain prospect of his failure as a preacher of righteousness. Indications are not wanting that a regard to higher interests than the fate of his people gave Isaiah strength in the most critical stages of his ministry. He knew that even when Jehovah does His strange work and brings to pass His strange act, His purposes are accomplished and His honor vindicated, and he rested in the thought that the ultimate value of prophetic service is to be measured by this standard alone: "I will wait for Jehovah that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him."

All the features we have thus gathered from the sixth chapter as characteristic of the tone and temper of Isaiah's prophecy point in one direction. They show how the prophet's mind was absolutely determined by the idea of God. Isaiah is the most theocentric among the prophetic writers. This, and this alone, will explain the marked peculiarities of his discourses. But, if such is undoubtedly the case, the question becomes of absorbing interest how far this theocentric viewpoint can be shown to stand in vital connection not merely with the subjective coloring of these prophecies, but likewise with the remarkable wealth and fertility of the doctrinal material displayed therein. Can we trace in detail how the wide extent of the vision of truth granted to Isaiah was actually dependent upon the theocentric elevation of his standpoint?

For a reason already mentioned, the earliest discourses (those preceding the crisis of 734) are best adapted to supply the answer to this question. Besides chapters 2-5, we may count among these 9: 8-10:4, whereas chapter 1 must have been written at a later date—if not during the campaign of Sennacherib, at least in or after 734. The sections thus included exhibit not a few points of contact with the book of Amos, which may be accounted for by Isaiah's acquaintance with the oracles of the older Judean prophet, partly also by the similarity of conditions, political and social, under which the two performed their ministries (cf. Isa. 3:6 with Amos 6:10; Isa. 3:16ff. with Amos 4:1; Isa. 5: 11ff. with Amos 6:5ff.; Isa. 5:20 with Amos 6:12; Isa. 9:8ff. with Amos 4:6ff.). But the likeness is not confined to such formal features; there is a noteworthy doctrinal resemblance in the descriptions given by Amos and Isaiah of the nature and attributes of Jehovah. Both emphasize strongly the absoluteness and infinitude of the divine existence and activity. Amos, however, always does so with the definite, practical end in view of lending force by these descriptions to the one great burden of righteous judgment which all his energy is intent upon delivering. His interest is ethical and he summons the divine omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience to give adequate expression to the force of his moral indignation. This, and no other, is the meaning of these "lyrical intermezzos," as a certain writer has called them (4:13; 5:8, 9; 9:6), which the latest phase of criticism is just now engaged in eliminating from the book of Amos. In Isaiah this same aspect of the divine nature is dwelt upon for its own independent significance, because it reveals in the strongest possible manner that divinity of Jehovah in which no creature can share. Owing to this independent interest the resulting statements are both richer in content and more developed in doctrinal precision.

First of all, Isaiah's monotheism is most sharply formulated. The idols are Elilim, "vanities" (2: 8, 18, 20), a term probably meant as a wordplay on the meaning of El, the true God. To represent this monotheism as not yet reflecting upon the unreality of the heathen gods except for Israel (with Baudissin), or to tone it down to a nascent belief (with Kuenen and many others), we cannot but attribute to an imperfect appreciation of the innermost spirit of Isaiah's theology. Even if there were not 2:2-4 and 6:3, the antithesis between Jehovah and the idols which pervades chapter 2 admits of no other construction than that divinity is the exclusive attribute of Jehovah.<sup>1</sup> Because idols are the caricature of divinity, idolatry is the caricature of religion. How little thought the prophet has of placing the idols in a category by themselves, somewhere beneath Jehovah, yet as in a lower sense divine, appears from the statement (2:8, 9) that the worship of idols degrades whilst true religion uplifts man. To be sure, all this is said of images; but the underlying thought is that the material product constitutes all the reality which the deities represented by these images possess. Isaiah knows of no gradations to fill up the distance between Jehovah and the creature; it is an infinite distance, in which there is no place for any intermediate being. And as Jehovah has the only title to divinity, so He is the only absolute agent. Man has a breath in his nostrils, is dependent on an extraneous source of life (2:22), is therefore weak and perishable, whilst Jehovah is spirit moved from and by Himself, inexhaustible in power, much more being implied in this term than what is ordinarily understood by the spirituality, in the sense of the immateriality, of God.

The most conspicuous divine attributes, however, are with Isaiah holiness and glory, the former of which occupies so central a place in the prophet's conception of Jehovah as to give rise to the distinctively Isaianic name, "The Holy One of Israel."<sup>2</sup> Diestel's interpretation of this name, "The One consecrated to Israel," in connection with his view that holiness is always a relation-term, meaning either the appurtenance of persons and things to Jehovah or the appurtenance of Jehovah to His people, can scarcely be maintained. God's covenant relation to Israel is indeed implied in the name, not, however, in the word *Kadosh*, but rather in the added "of Israel," the whole phrase embodying not one conception, but combining the two poles in the prophet's idea of Jehovah. Holiness predicated of God is with Isaiah always a comparative term, descriptive by means of contrast, with a constant side-reference to what is not-God. Its remarkable prominence is due to nothing else than that it gives most pointed and comprehensive expression to the fundamental contrast in which all the inspired thinking of Isaiah moves. In the widest sense holiness is equivalent to all that which renders Jehovah distinct from every other being without special restriction to the ethical sphere. This idea of distinctness assumes, however, with Isaiah, almost invariably the characteristic form of exaltation and lofty majesty. The prophet naturally associates it with figures of height (cf. 6:1, and for a classical passage in the later discourses, 57:15). The doxology of the seraphim ascribes holiness to Jehovah in this widest sense, since the immediately subjoined clause, "The whole earth is the fullness of his glory,"<sup>3</sup> forbids limiting it to ethical perfection, and since, moreover, it is proclaimed by the seraphim with evident realization of the distance it creates between Jehovah and themselves. Here, then, the contrast expressed in Hosea 11:9: "I am God and not, man, the Holy One," has been traced to its ultimate foundation, and holiness has been clearly grasped as incomparable divinity.

But the most striking peculiarity of Isaiah's teaching on this subject will appear when we consider that the same point of view is consistently adhered to where the prophet has in mind not this so-called metaphysical, but the ethical holiness of Jehovah. The precise relation between these two

applications of the idea of holiness in the Old Testament is somewhat of a problem, inasmuch as the central feature in the former, that of incommunicableness, would seem to have been no longer retained in the latter, ethical character being shared by the creature with Jehovah. The true solution of the problem is nowhere indicated so clearly as in Isaiah. His fundamental belief that God is exalted above every creature leads him to combine the two elements of infinite majesty and moral excellence into a single harmonious conception, the grandest conception of holiness in all prophecy. This will explain why in the ethical sphere the prophet draws the same sharp line of demarcation between God and the creature as elsewhere, and speaks even here, not as we are accustomed to do, in terms of intensity, but in terms of dimension (5:16). Undoubtedly his acute sense of the universal sinfulness of man has something to do with the absoluteness of the contrast, but much more is intended. Even apart from all consciousness of sin the divine holiness is so majestic as to fill the created mind with awe. In it Jehovah's divinity, as it were, concentrates itself. It involves not merely that His nature is stainless, empirically free from sin; He is exalted above the possibility of sin; in Him as the absolutely good evil cannot enter.

Further, from this combination between the ideas of absolute divinity and moral perfection Isaiah gains a strictly theological basis for the principle of retributive righteousness. This also belongs to the uniqueness of Jehovah's holiness, that in Him it is attended with the sovereign right, the inherent need to vindicate its own supremacy. The vindicatory justice of God is but the absolute intensity of His holiness translated into action. We see this reflected most clearly in the peculiar emotion which the disclosure of Jehovah's ethical holiness is represented as producing in sinful man; not merely the sense of uncleanness and guilt but the sense of ethical divinity brought to bear upon the creature, the fear of absolute moral dissolution expressed in the words, "Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of Hosts."<sup>4</sup>

Closely connected with the conception of holiness is that of the divine Kabod or glory (3:8; 4:2, 6; 6:3). The latter is the outward manifestation of the former. Glory is revealed holiness in the metaphysical as well as in the ethical acceptance of the term. Falling within the visible sphere, Kabod is that to which the aesthetic disposition, which forms so potent a factor in the prophet's nature, attaches itself. Its aesthetic significance appears from the combination of beauty and glory in 4:2. But the point to be observed is that this aestheticism also has its deepest root in the supremacy of the idea of God and is thoroughly religious in its character. Divinity and all-pervading self-revelation are to Isaiah's thought inseparable one from the other; Jehovah being what He is must set His impress and image upon what exists beside Himself everywhere. And precisely because this reflection of the divine nature in the visible world appeals to the instinct of disinterested worship in the creature, it becomes the object of aesthetic appreciation. Where an element of self-interest and fear enters, as in chapter 2, not Kabod but other terms are used. The prophet with his interest centered in God perceives the divine glory everywhere, in the world of nature, as the richness of his imagery drawn from that source testifies, and still more in the world of man. In reading, for example, the masterful description of the Assyrians in 5:26-30, we feel the sensation of aesthetic delight with which Isaiah beheld in them the power of Jehovah. Among Israel, however, and in Zion, the divine holiness is manifested in a special sense; consequently here the glory which is its accompaniment appears in a heightened, concentrated form.

At still another point can we trace the influence of the supreme thought of Jehovah's divinity in Isaiah's teaching. Throughout, the prophet is keenly conscious of the divine character of the word of revelation and of the immediate contact into which it brings its recipient with the supernatural world. It is on account of the holiness inherent in the word that his lips are cleansed in the vision in order that God's message may pass over them. The doctrine of hardening also, formulated in 6:9, 10, is entirely in line with the principle that Jehovah's word must be effective under all circumstances. If not believed and accepted, far from returning void, it exerts its energy in the opposite direction. A concrete illustration of this principle is given in 9:8-10:4, probably a prophecy and not a historical retrospect as most commentators assume. Here the word and its effect are so inseparably united that the former is said "to light upon Israel," each new message of rebuke, instead of leading to conversion, provoking Israel to new rebellion, to be followed by still severer distress, till at last wickedness burns as a fire and the land becomes one great forest aflame, rolling upward thick columns of smoke. In view of this undoubtedly early discourse, the theory that 6:9, 10 must be subsequent interpretation of actual experience becomes entirely untenable.

When next we inquire into Isaiah's statements in these early prophecies concerning the relation between Jehovah and Israel, we still find the same point of view prevailing. It is the element of sovereign lordship in this relation which is most strongly emphasized. Hence the favorite name, "the King," wherewith the prophet designates Jehovah. Even where the bond between God and Israel comes under consideration on its ethical side, it still remains for Isaiah a relation in which Israel is subservient to and exists for Jehovah. According to the parable of the fifth chapter, the house of Israel and the men of Judah are a vineyard upon which Jehovah has expended all possible labor for the purpose that it should bear Him fruit. Judgment and righteousness are fruit due unto God. Evidently the covenant-idea, although not entirely wanting in Isaiah, is less adapted to the expression of this thought, since it embodies either the reciprocal communion or the self-communication of the Covenant-Lord to His people. It is interesting to compare Isaiah on this point with the one prophet to whom the covenant-idea occupies the central place—Hosea. In the closing chapter of Hosea, Jehovah is Himself represented as the tree from which Israel plucks the fruit (Hos. 14:8). This is reversed in Isaiah: God here expects to reap fruit from Israel, His vineyard. And that this figure was not chosen by the prophet for a merely rhetorical purpose may be seen from 3:14, where it appears likewise as a characteristic description of the theocracy: the elders and princes have eaten up "the vineyard," which was Jehovah's own (cf. 27:2ff.).

The theocentric principle determines in a peculiar way also the prophet's utterances on the subject of Israel's sin. For first of all he measures sin by its contrast with the ideal which ought to be embodied in the life of the people of God. This ideal, described in 2:1-4, is none other than that Israel shall be the perfect instrument for revealing Jehovah, being so thoroughly fashioned after His Thora and having its life so entirely pervaded by His glory as to become the conspicuous center of the religious concourse of all nations. This is what the prophet means by "walking in the light of Jehovah" (vs. 5), a condition from which the actual Israel was at the farthest remove. But not only in this general way, in detail also Isaiah recognizes the chief sin of Israel in their having obstructed and obscured that divine self-revelation for which they were designed to be the perfect receptacle (5:24). For this reason the sin mentioned before all others in chapter 2 is the practice of pagan divination (vs. 6), the offensive feature of which lies in this, that it involves a slight of Jehovah's divinity, whose right it is to supply all Thora to Israel Himself. God's people ought to be open constantly to the influx of divine

truth proceeding from Him.<sup>5</sup> To idolatry and its abasing influence reference has been made already. It appears to Isaiah as a dishonoring of the majesty of Jehovah to exchange Him for something manufactured by man (vs. 8).

But it is not through divination and idolatry alone that Israel has infringed upon the prerogative of divinity; the same principle is applied in still other directions. Luxurious and riotous living are condemned because inconsistent with the proper receptivity to Jehovah's revelation. Those Judeans who rise up early in the morning to follow strong drink and tarry late in the night till wine inflames them, whose feasts are harp and lute and tabret and pipe and wine, they are those who do not regard the work of Jehovah, neither have they considered the operation of His hands (5:11, 12). "The work of Jehovah" is His work in history; Isaiah requires that every truly religious man have his eyes and ears open to what the course of events as well as the word of prophecy forecasts of the divine purpose, for history is a revelation of Jehovah, an architectonic work in which His thoughts are embodied.<sup>6</sup> The people go into captivity for the lack of such knowledge (5:13). Most clearly, however, does Isaiah's theocentric standpoint reveal itself in his condemnations of pride, the most prominent form of sin in these early discourses. Pride of wealth, pride of military equipment, pride of art, pride of coquetry, pride of intellect, all fall under the same charge (2:11, 12-15, 17; 3:16-25; 5:14-21; 9:9, 10). Isaiah himself, as we have seen, is responsive to every type of beauty and grandeur the world presents to his view. And yet he condemns the silver, the gold, the pleasant imagery, the fine apparel of the daughters of Zion. Beauty irreligiously appreciated detracts from the glory of Jehovah. The fullness of the earth belongs to Him, and to take any natural object, intended to reflect His divinity, for the purpose of making it serve the exaltation of the creature, is the essence of sin. How universal and fundamental is the prophet's perception of this principle may be seen from his condemnation of the pride of the Assyrian power in a later discourse (10:12, 13). It made no difference whether the boasters were the petty rulers of Judea or the powerful monarchs of the East. Apart from Jehovah there is no greatness in any creature. The claims of the Assyrian are blasphemous. Its highest embodiment of the sin of pride was found in that king of Babel, the last representative of the world power that came within Isaiah's ken, who said in his heart: "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit upon the mount of the congregation [i.e., the mythical mountains where the gods assemble] in the uttermost parts of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High" (14:13, 14). Pride is, therefore, self-deification, and such self-deifying pride being the controlling principle of diabolical sin, it was not unnatural to find in the king of Babel here described the type of Satan (cf. Luke 10:18; Rev. 9:1).<sup>7</sup>

Even where Isaiah denounces the sin of oppression of the poor, so familiar from Amos, and the acquisition of vast landed properties, his motive is not so much ethical as religious. The amassing of the land in the hands of a few is to him not merely a moral evil because often accomplished by foul means, nor merely a social evil because creating great disparity, but primarily a religious evil, because it deprives the poor man of the basis on which in the theocracy his relation to Jehovah rests (5:8). God enters into judgment with the elders and princes of His people because they have eaten up the vineyard, that is, according to 5:7, appropriated for themselves what belonged to Jehovah.

If the idea of God thus determines the prophet's arraignment of sin, it is equally influential in shaping his vision of judgment. The central thought of the prophecy of judgment in chapter 2 is that of "the day of Jehovah." We know this conception from Amos, but it is highly interesting to observe

in how entirely different a way it is handled by the two prophets. With Amos the day of Jehovah is a day of punishment of the wicked; it is darkness and not light, very darkness and no brightness in it (5:20). The sweeping away of evil is the supreme interest of this prophet of righteousness; hence he depicts the scene from its subjective and human side. Isaiah immediately shows the theological bent of his spirit in seizing upon the day of judgment as the occasion for a supreme self-manifestation of Jehovah. Punishment for him becomes revelation, theophany, together with the unmasking of what is falsely deified. Thus the day of Jehovah will be in the full sense what its name entitles it to be, a day in which He is the central figure, attracting by His glorious appearance the attention of all (cf. 5:16). The double refrain in chapter 2, "Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day" (vss. 11, 17) and "The terror of Jehovah and the glory of His majesty" (vss. 10, 19, 21), is intended to heighten the effect of this conception. With reference to it are chosen also the two figures in which the idea of judgment is clothed, that of the storm and the earthquake. The former is adapted to picture the overthrow of everything high and exalted with which sinful pride has in any way been associated. This storm strikes first the forests of the north, the cedars of Lebanon, the oaks of Bashan; next it descends upon the fortresses and cities, then from the land it passes over to the sea to wreck the ships of Tarshish.<sup>8</sup> All this has been abused to exalt man, therefore it must be humbled in order that the loftiness of man may be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man brought low (vs. 17). What the storm does for the high objects, that the earthquake accomplishes for the idols. It exposes their impotence and worthlessness, so that men throw them to the moles and to the bats. So centered is Isaiah's interest upon the divine aspect, the theophany of this judgment scene, that even the final fate of the sinners themselves remains undefined and in obscurity. After all the pride of nature and art has fallen, the prophet with fine skill shows us men hiding themselves in caverns and clefts, leaving Jehovah alone on the scene with His solitary majesty. Nor ought it to be overlooked that here again the theocentric treatment is that which not merely renders the description sublime, but also what gives it its specific doctrinal value. The reader instinctively feels that the drama here enacted is on too large a scale and of too grand proportions to be a national judgment on Israel and no more. It is the judgment of the world. Subsequent revelation bears witness to this by borrowing from it for its descriptions of this last event. The fitting finale is, "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

Finally, glancing at the remaining eschatological ideas of these early prophecies, we observe on more than one point the influence of the same spirit. Isaiah confidently expects a new beginning of things after the judgment.<sup>9</sup> The universalistic form which this expectation assumes in 2:1-4 is clearly dependent on the exalted character of Him who dwells on Zion. This character reflected in the ideal worship of the later days, when the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, is to the prophet the pledge of the future recognition of Israel's God by all nations. Two features in this are significant: it is the worship of Jehovah connected with the temple which constitutes for Isaiah the final goal of this world-conversion, and, side by side with this, emphasis is placed on the larger sphere which will be opened up for the self-revelation of Jehovah. Both these thoughts we have found to be typically Isaianic and prominent in other connections. As to the origin of the new Israel and the new state of things in general, while maintaining throughout the continuity between what now is and then is to be (4:2, 3; 6:13), the prophet yet even more strongly emphasizes the creative activity of God in their production. Indeed, he traces this production back into the sovereign counsel of Jehovah, finding at its basis the divine predestination. None shall be called holy but those that are written unto life in Jerusalem (4:3). If in the outcome the new Israel is to be the

perfect revelation of Jehovah, then its first ideal origin must be the product of His choice.

In connection with this thought the Israel of the promise ceases to be a thing of the mere future and assumes a present reality, leads a hidden life in the midst of the outward organization as the vital stock and substance thereof (6:13). This is a step in advance of Amos and Hosea. By them, to be sure, the presence of a better remnant, of righteous, poor ones, is always recognized, but there is no bond connecting them. Isaiah conceives of these as an organic unity and creates for them the designation "the holy seed," a new name expressive of a new idea. Perhaps it is also due to this train of ideas when nothing is said in these discourses of the subjective change of the people, of their conversion to the true service of Jehovah. In this respect again Isaiah stands decidedly nearer to Amos than to Hosea. Hosea dwells at length upon the moral impression the judgment will produce upon the heart of the remnant of Israel. Amos sees the judgment so entirely as righteous retribution that he cannot think of it under any other aspect, and without transition places the threatening and the promise side by side, much to the confusion of some critics who cannot understand this and think that Amos 9:8-15 must be of a later hand. The same absence of connection is observed in Isaiah's early prophecies, probably because from his theocentric standpoint the new Israel was already potentially given. The judgment serves no other purpose than extirpation of the evil mass (4:4).

The question how far the personal messianic element plays a role in the oldest eschatology of Isaiah is beset with great difficulties, owing to the uncertainty of the exegesis of 4:2. But whichever of the contending views be adopted, whether "the branch of Jehovah" be made directly messianic, in the sense of Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; and Zechariah 3:8; 6:12, or be understood primarily of the growth of the soil, miraculously produced by Jehovah in the land left waste by judgment, and in this capacity typical of the Messiah, it is plain that in either case the significance of the phrase lies in the prominence it gives to the exclusive operation of the divine factor. If and in so far as the Messiah here appears, He appears in harmony with the general character of these prophecies, not from the active, but from the passive side, as a product, a gift, a special incarnation of the glory of Jehovah.<sup>10</sup>

In the closing verses of chapter 4, the prophetic vision of the new order of things gazes upon the final glory. As Isaiah's ministry opened with a temple-scene, so the first cycle of prophecies in chapters 2-4 ends with a temple-scene, but enlarged, the whole of Mount Zion being changed into a sanctuary with the visible symbol of the divine presence hovering over it. Here once more the impulse of worship, which reigned supreme in the prophet's soul, asserts itself. Nothing is more characteristic of this eschatological outlook than that the highest privilege awaiting the people of God consists in an unlimited opportunity for engaging in religious service. All the inhabitants of the new city shall be holy, that is, fully consecrated to Jehovah. Neither the alternation of day and night, nor the vicissitudes of the weather will interfere any longer with the assemblies gathered for worship. "For Jehovah will create over the whole habitation of Mount Zion . . . a cloud and smoke by day and the brilliancy of a flaming fire by night," and "over all the glory shall be a canopy." "And there shall be a pavilion for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a refuge and for a covert from storm and rain." Face to face with the new Jerusalem Isaiah's interest still centers in the fact that there the perfect religion will be realized; and once more it is owing to the molding influence of this supreme idea that the prophecy strips off all national limitations and assumes features found worthy to be copied by subsequent inspired eschatological painters from Isaiah himself in his later discourses onward to St. John in the New Testament Apocalypse.

Our rapid survey of the doctrinal material of the prophecies selected leaves no doubt concerning what must be the answer to the question put at the beginning. The controlling, unifying, productive principle of Isaiah's teaching lies in the complete subordination of every other thought to that of the divine glory. This is the secret of the prophet's power. As to the single elements of the revelation-content of these discourses, they are scarcely different from what is presented by Amos and Hosea. And yet the total doctrinal result is strikingly new, because all these elements have here entered into the service of one idea, the only idea equally favorable to breadth of objective outlook and to depth of religious experience and to the maturing of all the noble fruits which depend on the intimate union of these two. With Isaiah the desire to view all things in the unity of the divine plan and purpose was born from the very love of God, so entirely the result of identification in thought and sympathy with Jehovah as to be a worship in itself, and the fire of this love and worship in turn was constantly kindled by the vision of Jehovah's glory in all His works.

If we look for a companion to this princely mind in the history of revelation, the case of Paul naturally suggests itself. Notwithstanding the immense difference necessarily created by the modified conditions of time and environment, Isaiah and Paul are remarkably alike in the distinctive features of their character and message. In both there is the same deep impression of the infinite majesty and absolute sovereignty of Jehovah, the same intense conviction of the awfulness of the divine justice and the inexorable nature of its claims, the same overwhelming sense of the insignificance, the unworthiness, the helplessness of sinful man, the same insistence upon the exclusive activity of God in the work of salvation, the same prominence of the idea of faith, the same abounding trust in the marvelous, condescending grace of God, the same unlimited and illimitable faith in the world-embracing scope of the divine purpose. Paul seems to have felt the congeniality of Isaiah's mind to his own. He quotes from him often and with that fine spiritual insight which penetrates beyond the surface meaning of a passage into the innermost mind of the author and divines the subtle shade of his momentary thought and feeling. "Isaiah is very bold," he exclaims (Rom. 10:20), with evident appreciation of a trait exemplified to a high degree in his own character.

The parallelism between Isaiah and Paul tempts us to draw another, and find in the work of the Old Testament prophet the prefiguration of that type of Christian thought and activity which is associated with the names of Augustine and Calvin. It is certainly within the limits of historical sobriety to say that Isaiah is the Augustinian and the Calvinist among the prophets. Not as if the other inspired writers could have represented or did represent any view of Jehovah's relation to the world fundamentally different from his; but with Isaiah this principle bursts into the clear light of conscious recognition and acquires that intensity and fruitfulness which only the highest truths consciously apprehended are capable of developing. Comparisons between figures and movements belonging to the history of revelation, on the one hand, and the history of theology, on the other hand, are not to be indiscriminately indulged in, because too often they obliterate the difference between the infallible truth of God and the fallible thought of man; but if once the line of continuity is traced back from Calvin to Augustine and from Augustine to Paul, there is reason to go one step further, and, prolonging it into the old dispensation, to place at its beginning Isaiah the prophet.

(Footnotes)

<sup>1</sup> In the later discourses, 31:3, "The Egyptians are men and not God; and their horses flesh and not spirit," a

passage of undoubted genuineness, is decisive on this point. The manner in which the Egyptian gods are here simply ignored as a factor in the contest speaks more emphatically than any positive statement could speak.

<sup>2</sup> Besides in Isaiah it occurs in Jeremiah and a couple of times in the Psalms. Cf. Hos. 11:9; Ezek. 39:7.

<sup>3</sup> The two clauses do not express a contrast between Israel or the temple where Jehovah's *holiness* is known and the whole earth where His *glory* is known. As will appear immediately, holiness and glory are not separated but concentric attributes of divinity.

<sup>4</sup> It is of importance to mark that manner in which Isaiah's general conception of the divine holiness determines his ethical view of the same. The relation of the two as indicated above is clearly the opposite of that assumed by the evolutionary critics in their view of the development of prophetic monotheism. Isaiah's advanced theology was not born of his ethical absolutism: to say the reverse would come nearer the truth.

<sup>5</sup> For a similar train of thought, see 8:19, 20.

<sup>6</sup> Primarily it is, of course, the duty of the prophet as "watchman" to observe what is developing. On this, however, as on other points, the specific task of the prophet is generalized. To the ideal of prophetism all should attain.

<sup>7</sup> Hence Satan's name *Lucifer* given him from the Latin of this passage by Tertullian and Gregory the Great.

<sup>8</sup> Compare the fine appreciation of the beauty of this passage in Duhm's *Commentary*, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> What the critics at present endeavor to eliminate from Amos, they must admit for Isaiah. Query: If the consistency of the prophecy of judgment must be broken somewhere, why not in Amos as easily as later on? Isaiah is as strong in his representation of the inexorable character of the divine justice as his predecessor.

<sup>10</sup> This agrees with the manner in which the Messiah is introduced in 9:6: "Unto us a child is *born*, unto us a son is *given*."