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Religious.

ISAIAH THE PROPHET.

BY REV. JOHN LORD, L. S. D.
(Reported for the *Watchman and Reflector*.)

The prophets among the Jews were considered great personages, and their authority and commands were seldom called in question or disregarded. They were understood to be the messengers and interpreters of Jehovah. The priests lived apart from men wore a peculiar dress, had no declaration to make, no wisdom, no power to wield spiritual thunders, no inspiration, no connection with kings and political life. But the prophet was a statesman as well as a seer. He was a preacher, a poet, a revealer; and his utterances were regarded in Israel very much as were the sayings of the Delphic oracle among the heathen.

Moses may be said to have begun the illustrious line of prophets, though God made important revelations through the patriarchs. Samuel founded a school of the prophets, and was at the head of it. David, the prophet, king and psalmist united, followed. After Solomon's death idolatry prevailed so extensively among the people that a race of prophets was needed to bring them back to God, and great boldness was exercised by these distinguished servants of God in conveying to kings the Divine messages in that degenerate age. Sometimes they were allied to princes, sometimes obscure, always humble, often stern, noble, majestic. Up to the eighth century before Christ the prophets were mainly confined to the wants and sins of their own times; but afterwards they dwelt much on the calamities which would come on the nation in future times, and holding out a hope concerning the remnant to be saved. There was a commanding dignity about these men. They were philosophers, divines, preachers of holiness, living in retirement, clothed in skins, but learned, cultivated, pious. The splendor of their diction, the impressiveness of their style, the affluence of their imagination, the loftiness and sublimity of their thoughts and the mingling of grandeur with sweetness strike every attentive reader.

Among this class of men Isaiah stands out with great prominence. His writings are quoted by Christ and the apostles. There is a tone of joy and exultation running through them. They abound in profound thought, in rich and varied description, are grand and stern at times. He was a poet, and depicts the coming and reign of the Messiah. Great musical compositions have been founded on his words. Moses, David, Solomon were great in poetic power, but Isaiah reached loftier heights. The writings of Isaiah are always in keeping with the theology of the New Testament. Palestine was as favorable to poets as was Greece. Its grand scenery, cultivated hills, castles and cities, olive groves, trees, shrubs, flowers, birds, streams, a genial climate, a clear atmosphere, nights as glorious as the days, shepherds with their flocks,—all combined to awaken the beautiful thoughts and images with which Isaiah impresses us.

He was also a historian. He is mentioned as such in the Kings and Chronicles. He was a son of Amoz. He resided at Jerusalem, was about eighty-four when he died, after fifty years of service. He had a wife and two sons. He lived an ascetic life, was a counsellor of kings and had a commanding and royal air.

The principal events which took place during his life were the invasion of Judah by Israel and Syria combined, and the Assyrian invasion during the reign of Hezekiah. Isaiah was busy in communicating God's messages to the kings, but he was not always heeded. He saw the tendency in the people to trust in themselves or human help, and to indulge in habits of ease and luxury, and knew that calamities impended over them. He clothed himself in sackcloth, and grieved to think what judgments would fall upon Israel. But he boldly

proclaimed them to the people, and called them to repentance.

Isaiah was a sage as well as a prophet. He brought out certain principles always seen in the government of God. He had definite views on these subjects, and unfolded them in his writings.

I. The constant presence of a direct agency of a supreme and personal God. This is a fundamental principle. It was taught by Moses, Samuel, David, Job, Elijah and Daniel, as well as by Isaiah. It was lifted up as a barrier against the idolatry of the surrounding nations. We need it in our day as well. The great question with many now is, "Is there a God?" Many do not believe in any such God as Abraham recognized. They have old heathen and Jewish idolatries baptized with high-sounding names of their own.

II. The principle of the inevitable punishment of sin. There is a strong tendency now to tone down the plain teachings of the Bible on this point. We must have a philosophy which makes punishment the result of a violation of law, without reference to a personal God; one that makes wrong doing produce derangement only as fire and poison work mischief. We exclude God too much from our ideas of sin and punishment, and look upon the world as wound up like a clock, to run alone, rather than under the direct superintendence of One who is always on hand.

Isaiah held up sin as against God, and punishment as coming from God. He was more prominent than second causes. He visited with judicial blindness. He punished idolatry in Israel. He punished Damascus, Ethiopia, Tyre, Egypt, Arabia, Babylon.

III. Christianity was sent to bring men into willing submission to God. Isaiah abounds in offers of mercy to all who return to God. From his twenty-second chapter to the close he opens the Gospel provisions for sinners. He holds up the Messiah as a suffering and dying Saviour, and proclaims forgiveness to all the penitent, both Jew and Gentile. Minutely did he describe events which transpired seven hundred years after, in the life and death of Christ. He also foretold of the millennial glory in the latter days, when the Gospel should be spread among all nations. He speaks of the restoration of the Jews, and of the prosperity of God's people under the reign of the Messiah as far outshining the gorgeous reign of Solomon himself. It is to be regretted that commentators have given us so little light as to his meaning.

The Christian prays for that glorious day, and lyric poets have embalmed our hopes in their sacred hymns. Would that critics, instead of stretching the words of Isaiah over their theories and making them fit, would follow the prophet wherever he leads in disclosing to us the glorious future of the church.

"SCIENCE, FALSELY SO CALLED."

exists at the present day no less than in apostolic times. Perhaps there is no more conspicuous example of this than in the recent developments by Professor Huxley. This is well shown up by an article in the *N. Y. Illustrated Christian Weekly* of the 6th inst., under the enquiry:

IS IT HONEST?

ONE of the attempts made by some of the scientists of the present day is to show that life is simply the result of what they call "molecular forces." All life, they contend—plant and animal not only, but man, with his intellect, feelings, and will—life from a lichen to a Leibnitz, from a fungus to a Faraday, is the resultant of material forces, of the arrangement of the ultimate molecules into which they conceive matter to be resolved. Very well; if these philosophers can prove this position to be true, if they can demonstrate it, we will submit, and meekly say that the reason our brains are not mushrooms or cabbages is because of a difference in their "molecular arrangements."

But these gentlemen do not prove this position. They only assert it, or jump at it from a most slender basis of investigation or logic. Let us take a single sample of the way they draw sweeping conclusions from insufficient premises, as seen in one of the pretended arguments of Mr. Huxley in his discourse on what he terms "The Physical Basis of Life."

Mr. Huxley's object is to show that there is really no such thing or quality as "vitality;" that all manifestations of life are due to molecular changes. To do this he reasons thus:—

Water is composed of hydrogen and oxygen. Take a certain proportion of these elements, pass an electric spark through them, and they unite into an equivalent weight of water. Just so, he says, under the stimulus of pre-existing "protoplasm," (protoplasm is the name given to what Mr. Huxley conceives to be the ultimate substance, the "matter of life," "life-stuff,") carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen unite into an equivalent weight of protoplasm. So much of these elements, so much life. Now the properties of water, he argues, are the result of the molecular arrangements of its component parts. Therefore the properties of the "protoplasm"—including thought and consciousness and moral responsibility—are likewise the result of molecular arrangements. We have no more right, he insists, to say that a certain something called "vitality" took possession of the protoplasm, than we have to say that a certain something called "aquosity" took possession of the oxygen and hydrogen to form them into water. He says that he can "see" no break in this series of steps of molecular complications. But the fallacy of his reasoning is easily shown.

Of course protoplasm (admitting that there is this common basis of life—for Mr. Huxley has not shown that this is the fact at all, and many of the most advanced German physiologists deny it) has certain definite chemical and physical properties. So far as this, Mr. Huxley's analogy, and insured foundation at the best, upon which to rear so pretentious a structure as he would build. And just at the point where the strain really comes upon it, it utterly breaks down. Water owes its properties to the oxygen and hydrogen of which it is composed. But its "molecular arrangements" will never make it anything else than water. Here are steam and ice; chemically they are the same as the water. How is it that water can be converted now into steam, and now into ice? Certainly not by any mere "molecular force." There is something necessary to effect these molecular changes. In the case in hand it is heat added or subtracted. If the water was not acted upon by some force outside itself, it would remain water for ever. It is just so as regards protoplasm. The chemical constituents may be the same in both dead and living matter. But there must be some force to change the dead into living protoplasm. That power, in our ignorance of what it really is and of how it does its work, we call "vitality"—the life principle. It is God's secret of life, and we cannot penetrate it. But we do know there is something which makes organic differ from inorganic matter. One moves, grows, nourishes, reproduces itself. The other remains inert for ever, save as some external force is brought to bear upon it. And though there may be points of analogy, yet it is the difference that is the most remarkable.

Mr. Huxley's argument is the strange one of reasoning from ignorance to knowledge. Because we do not know how the electric spark produces water from the oxygen and hydrogen, therefore we do know, or ought to know, how dead protoplasm produces living protoplasm. Why does not Mr. Huxley effect the "molecular arrangements" that form the basis of life? He can produce water from its elements. Simply because life does not originate

in any such way. It comes from the Life-giver. His pretended argument is a mere juggling with words.

Is it honest to hang such weighty consequences—consequences that drive God from the throne of the universe, and throw man under the remorseless tyranny of fate—is it honest to hang such weighty consequences upon a mere analogy, that breaks down at the point of real controversy, and so makes the argument utterly worthless?

THE TELEGRAPH OUTSTRIPPED.

BY REV. E. B. RAFFENSPERGER, CLEVELAND.

We are accustomed in these latter days to glorify the magnetic telegraph, and to speak with great self-complacency of this wonder of the nineteenth century, by which a message can be transmitted around the earth in an instant.

But the people of Palestine, in the first century, witnessed the working of something far better than any of the modern systems of telegraphing. Without the intervention of electric machine, Voltaic pile, needles, coils, registering apparatus, armature movement, posts, wires, cables, glass and rubber insulators, or any of the appliances by which operators now transmit messages, "a healing word" was sent, instantaneously, a distance of twenty-five miles.

No atmospheric disturbances, no accident to the wires or machinery, no want of skill on the part of an operator endangered the transmission.

Behold its effect. There, in the sick chamber of a family belonging to the upper class, honored and respected, surrounded with the comforts of life, lies a child—perhaps the only son of doting parents. For days and nights they have watched the progress of the disease that baffles the skill of all the physicians, and defies the efforts of kind friends and neighbors.

At last, with broken and bleeding hearts, they give up in despair. They have exhausted the last remedy, and still the child grows worse! Is there no hope? Can mortal skill suggest no restorative? Is this disease not to be cured? Have we done all that can be done to save our darling? "Yes," say the parents, "we have done what we could, and oh, how willingly would we give all our possessions for the restoration of our dying boy!"

"No," says one, "there is still hope. Physicians can't save him. Medicines can do him no good, but there is One who is greater, and wiser, and better than all physicians. He attended a marriage, not long since, and actually converted, for the benefit of the guests in attendance, six large vessels of water into excellent wine. He can save your child!"

The agonized father acts upon the suggestion, and starts out at once for Cana of Galilee. He makes no apology for his rudeness, and rushes at once into the presence of the miracle worker. His manner indicated to all "the strong contrast of an outward need, a need which no other but He could supply." "Come down to Capernaum at once, my son is dying," is the touching request. "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe," is the ambiguous response.

The anxious nobleman needed a gentle reproof. How he had rushed into the presence of One who had power to open the eyes, unstop the ears, still the waves, and raise the dead—and yet in his heart he limits the power of Jesus, and seems to think that nothing but his actual presence can do any good for the dying child. He had faith enough to go to Jesus, but he seemed to doubt his ability to send help so far! He repeats the request: "Sir, come down ere my child die." The response is, "Go thy way: thy son liveth."

With the utterance of these words, there goes forth a power that is felt in that distant sick-chamber.

To the astonishment of the attendants, a sudden, a striking, an unprecedented, an unaccountable, a miraculous

change takes place. The pulses at once become regular, the skin moist, the eyes natural, the limbs strong, the voice right—the dying child leaps up from his couch, and is just as well as any of the attendants.

Next day, the father, strong in the faith that the Saviour's word was true, is delighted to hear as he approaches the house, "Thy son liveth." "At what hour began he to amend?" asks the nobleman.

"Yesterday at the seventh hour, the fever left him." Here now was a "mathematical proof" that the telegraph worked accurately. Thus, the ruler reasoned: Yesterday in Cana, at one o'clock in the afternoon, I besought Jesus; and here, in Capernaum, twenty-five miles distant, at one o'clock precisely, the fever left him.

Is it any wonder that this man and his whole household believed? May not that same incident serve to establish our faith in the ability of Jesus, who is still the Lord of life?

Yea more, are there not similar responses to the prayers of God's people now! Can we only behold these wonderful coincidences on every page of the history of prayer? God has placed the foot of the ladder reaching to heaven, with angels ascending and descending at our very feet. It is our privilege to pray. It is our duty to pray for our dying son, daughters, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, fathers, and mothers—and while we are yet speaking, God will hear and answer.

"ISN'T IT WORSE FOR A MAN, FATHER?"

It is two years since I left off the use of tobacco. I certainly did enjoy my cigar. I prided myself on my fine Havanas, and might have been seen almost any morning with one in my mouth, walking down to business and puffing away in a most comfortable manner.

Why I left it off was this: I had a little son about six years of age. He always hurried to be ready to walk down with me as far as his school. His bright face and extended hand were always welcome and he bounded along beside me, chatting as such dear little fellows only can. The city has in it many uncareful for boys, whose chief delight seems to be to pick up pieces of discarded cigars and broken pipes, and with their hands in their pockets to puff away in a very inelegant manner. One morning it seemed as if little Edgar and I met a great many of those juvenile smokers. I became very much disgusted, and pointed them out to little Edgar as sad warnings of youthful delinquency, talked quite largely, and said the authorities ought to interfere and put a stop to such a public nuisance.

A little voice, soft and musical, came up to me as I gave an extra puff from my superb Havanna. A bright little face was upturned, and the words, "Isn't it worse for a man, father?" came to my ears. I looked down on the little fellow at my side, when his timid eye fell, and the color mounted on his boyish cheek, as if he feared he had said something bold and unfitting. "Do you think it is worse for a man, Edgar?" I asked.

"Please, father, I think boys would not want to smoke, if men did not do it."

Here was the answer. I threw away my cigar, and have never touched tobacco since in any form!

MINISTERIAL BLUES

A young clergyman, while on a visit to his brother, also a clergyman, agreed to preach for him in the evening. Neither had been long in the ministry, and they had never heard each other preach. The pastor preached in the morning, and on returning from church his brother said to his wife, "Kato, I cannot preach this evening. While listening to my brother I felt that I had mistaken my calling. I ought never to preach anywhere. I cannot preach here to-night."