

[K:NWTS 3/2 (Sep 1988) 3-19]

A Sermon on Isaiah 57:15¹

Geerhardus Vos

. . . 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 have ever attained in any prophet. Isaiah sees not only the mountain of Jehovah's house established in the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills and all nations flowing into it (2:2-3), but includes the material universe in the regeneration of the Messianic age. The whole realm of nature will be transformed and glorified; even the mute creation will after its own manner be full of the knowledge of Jehovah (11:9) 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 aspect of his discourse. "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 and perfection of all his powers." Whether in the solemn monotone of the chant of judgment or in the rising swell of the song of triumph which greets the Messiah's birth; whether in the fearful words proclaiming vengeance or in the tender tones in which he consoles his mourning people-there is always the same unmistakable note of sovereign power which betrays the prophet and poet of the grace of God.

Prophecy and Personality

Is it permitted to inquire for the secret of this power? Undoubtedly it springs from the center of Isaiah's personality and in so far belongs to a region of mystery where no human eye can penetrate. Individual character and endowment everywhere, but specially in the sphere of supernatural revelation, are products of the unsearchable working of the divine Spirit dividing to each one severally even as he will and as 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 perhaps 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 (2 Peter 1:21), yet the Holy Spirit has ordinarily adjusted the divine thoughts of revelation to one another and to some one central idea which was more 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. 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 unrivalled 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 unrolls for us?

The answer to this question seems to be suggested by our text. Its opening words express the thought by which more than by any other both the contents and tone of Isaiah's prophecy have been determined, the fundamental thought of his life-work. It is the profound sense of the matchless glory of Jehovah as described in the sublime words: "The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy." Isaiah is the most theological of all the prophets; not of course in the scientific meaning of that term, but in the more simple and practical sense. His God is to him the one supreme reality from whom all other things derive their significance and to subserve whose end their history is shaped. His mind is filled to overflowing with the thought of God. The whole secret of the wide extent of his vision lies in this elevation of his standpoint. But not only do we find here the explanation of what is unique in Isaiah's anthem upon the field of truth and history, the warm spiritual glow so uniformly present in all his preaching is kindled at the altar-fire of the purer and personal religion as this fire was kept for ever burning in his soul by this vision of the divine glory.

Isaiah in this respect finds his great New Testament counterpart in the apostle Paul. Notwithstanding the immense difference necessarily created by the modified conditions of time and environment, these two favored servants of God are remarkably alike in the distinctive features of their message. Isaiah is an Old Testament Paul and Paul a New Testament Isaiah. For both, there is the same deep impression of the infinite majesty and absolute sovereignty of Jehovah; the same intense realization of the awfulness of the divine justice and the inexorable nature of its claims; the unworthiness, the helplessness of sinful man; the same insistence upon the exclusive activity of God in the work of saving his people; the same prominence of the idea of faith as the only thing whereby man can appropriate the blessings of salvation; the same abounding truth in the marvelous condescension and overflowing grace of God; the same unlimited and unlimitable faith in the world-embracing character of the divine purpose. Paul seems to have felt something of the congeniality of Isaiah's mind to his own. He quotes from him often and not seldom 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" (Rom. 10:20), he exclaims with evident appreciation of a noble trait exemplified to a high degree in his own character.

Jehovah the Exalted One

In boldness of conception there is perhaps no utterance even in the prophecies of Isaiah which equals the words of our text. The thought trembles on the verge of the paradoxical: Jehovah the high and lofty one, inhabiting eternity, dwelling in the high and holy place, declares his willingness to abide with the contrite and humble. That Jehovah should dwell with individual man at all is in itself a conception sufficiently startling on the basis of the Old Testament. His presence among Israel in the most holy place was the highest distinction conferred upon the people of God, and even of this, unrestricted enjoyment was not granted to the individual Israelite. It was to Israel as a whole primarily that this privilege applied. Of the single believer, the utmost that could be predicated was his appearing before God in Zion and his dwelling in Jehovah's house. But here the customary relation is boldly reversed; instead of men dwelling with Jehovah, it is Jehovah dwelling with man. And even this does not adequately express the startling character of the conception. For we must observe that Jehovah is here represented as coming forth not from the partial seclusion of his dwelling place in Zion's temple, but from the unapproachable recesses of his heavenly sanctuary to take up his abode with man. The prophet throws upon the idea all the emphasis it can possibly receive from the united force of the expressions in which it is his custom to describe the transcendent heavenly glory of God. And the descent is from the highest point of divinity to the lowest point of humanity. It is not with man as such only, but with those among men of a humble and contrite spirit that Jehovah consents to dwell.

But we should fail to grasp the profound meaning and to realize the great preciousness of this word of God, were we to regard it as a striking example merely of the effect that may be produced by a bold rhetorical contrast. The exaltation of Jehovah is far more than the measure of his condescension in bending down to man. It is not so much in spite of, but in virtue of God's infinite majesty that he delights to dwell with the humble spirit and the contrite heart². Observe however that the characteristics mentioned by the prophet describe man in reference to his self-consciousness. Not the small, the insignificant, the weak, the transitory are here contrasted with the infinite and eternal, but the humble in spirit and the contrite in heart. Whatever may be the nicer distinction between spirit as heart in the Scriptural usage, both terms are at one in this that they denote those central seats of man's inner life in which the reality and mode and condition of his own existence reveal themselves to him.

The Lowly Spirit

Now the humble spirit and the contrite heart are nothing else than that specific attitude of self-consciousness which is sensitive and responsive to the loftiness, holiness, the eternal glory and divinity of God. And this is the reason why they are chosen as the

conditions predisposing man for receiving the presence of God in his soul. Humility and contrition do not appear in this character as ethical dispositions having any meritorious value in themselves. It is not because through them man can in any way influence God, but simply because they enable God to impress himself upon man and to reflect in a created consciousness the infinite glory of his being that the humble spirit and the contrite heart receive this promise. We read here the very essence of Isaiah's conception of religion and find it to correspond perfectly to the prophet's idea of God. As sublime and transcendent as is the one, so profound and pervasive is the other. The figure of the in-dwelling of Jehovah in the human heart gains a richer meaning when interpreted in the light of this correspondence and will be seen to unite in itself both elements that enter into the religious intercourse between God and man, i.e., the mystical and the material. It does not stand for a description of the subconscious presence of God in the soul alone: far beyond the limited sphere of the feelings also, it gives to Jehovah as his dwelling-place, the entire compass of man's conscious life with all its varied powers. The heavenly temple and its effulgence of the divine majesty reproduced in the spirit of man-this is the thought underlying the prophet's figure. A temple is not intended to contain God in the sense of a human habitation; it is intended to be filled with the glorious presence of God. The ideal temple in all its parts, in its ritual of sacrifice and service, with its music and incense, nay in its very construction is nothing but the receptacle and the reflector of the glory of him who inhabits it. The model of such a temple was shown to the prophet in that memorable vision which so deeply impressed itself upon his whole subsequent life and thought, the sublime reproduction of which opens with the words: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" (Is. 6:1). And again: "The house was filled with smoke" (v. 4). In this sense, the spirit and heart of man are to become the dwelling place of Jehovah-the high and lofty one, enthroned in eternity, whose name is holy. The created mind a temple: that is to say, not merely in its innermost shrine a holy of holies where the immediate presence of Jehovah is felt, but from its center to its farthest recesses resplendent with the light of God and reechoing the voice of one crying, "Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts"-such is Isaiah's conception of the perfect religion.

True Worship

We find then in our text indirectly expressed if not explicitly formulated what must always be the governing principle of the highest worship of Jehovah. The relation here defined between Jehovah's exalted being and the humble spirits of his acceptable servants is typical of every God-centered attitude that may be properly called religious. Were we to seek an abstract name for this, we might say that it consists in the full adjustment of man's conscious life to the nature, the claims, the purposes of God; the joyful subordination of the creature to the Creator and his glorious kingdom. But it will be more profitable perhaps to look at it concretely and historically by analyzing the

elements of this frame of mind as we are able to observe it in Isaiah. In doing this we perceive that whereas the prophet lifts his soul directly to God and the specifically religious chord is struck, three distinct notes make themselves heard. The first is that of amazing and enraptured contemplation of the infinite perfection of Jehovah; the second is the note of intense realization of the finiteness and imperfection of man; the third is the note of blessed self-surrender wherein the prophet, at first almost overwhelmed by the sense of the divine majesty, regains his mental poise and recognizes as the only possible, the only satisfying purpose of created existence, the glory of God. From the blending of these three impressions in Isaiah's soul results what is peculiar in the prophet's religious consciousness.

We can clearly trace this effect of the self-revelation of Jehovah upon Isaiah everywhere in the cosmical, the moral and the redemptive sphere, and in each of these it appears to have been essentially the same. First of all observe the manner in which his religious nature responds to those attributes of Jehovah whereby he is exalted above the finite conditions of time and space and nature-those called in theological language the transcendental or metaphysical attributes of God, here represented by the words: "The high and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity." This last phrase specially gives utterance with great simplicity and directness to the profoundest thought human reflection has ever been able to reach in this unfathomable subject. Eternity is the form of the divine existence, that in which Jehovah dwells, the atmosphere that surrounds him. Such a thought can find its full comprehension in him alone in whom it is reality. God himself is the only one able to compass its infinite content with the infinitude of his mind. But this impossibility of adequately thinking out the conception of the greatness of God, far from making it a useless element in Isaiah's experience is precisely that which imparts to it its religious significance and power to stir his soul to the deepest worship. On this point the prophet of the eighth century B.C. might have taught a lesson to the philosopher of our own day who denies the possibility of our knowing the infinite God. Isaiah would have answered him that every futile attempt to comprehend the infinite being of Jehovah contributes by its very failure towards making our knowledge of it more real and practical. Though trembling at the vision, the prophet delights to fix his gaze upon this eternity which is Jehovah's dwelling place. He is the first and the last, beside whom there is no God, the Creator of all things, the King, Jehovah of Hosts. He sitteth upon the circle of the earth and the inhabitants are as grasshoppers before him; whole nations as a drop of a bucket, as the small dust on a balance. Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient to prepare him a burnt offering.

The most striking element, however, of all the descriptions of the transcendent greatness of Jehovah lies in this-that they convey not abstractions of thought, but a sense of the living presence of a personal God. Isaiah does not shun the boldest anthropomorphic language to express this intensely personal character of his vision of

the majesty of Jehovah. He speaks of his glorious eyes, his glorious voice, his glorious arm. And when the prophet thus scales Jehovah above every created being, it is not relative greatness he predicates of him. All comparisons have but in their inadequacy to impress us more strongly with the uniqueness of the divine nature and mode of existence. Isaiah knows of no gradations to fill up the distance between the Creator and the creature: it is an infinite distance which nothing can fill up however exalted. The seraphim, though themselves belonging to a higher world, worship in Jehovah's temple and cover their faces and their feet with the same profound sense of their own insignificance as the earth-born prophet. Each time Isaiah proclaims the absolute greatness of God there follows without fail as an echo, the confession of the absolute littleness of every creature. After painting that sublime judgment scene of the terror of Jehovah as the glory of his majesty shaking the earth, the first and only thought awakened in his soul is: "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he able to be accounted of" (Is. 2:22)? And "the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit" (31:3). The excited, sometimes sarcastic language, in which the prophet speaks of the worship of idols is inspired by this keen sense of the incommensurableness of God and what is not-God, even more than by the idea of Jehovah's spiritual nature. "To whom then will ye liken me, that I should be equal to him? saith the Holy One" (40:25). "I am Jehovah: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (42:8). From the same source springs the prophet's belief in the absolute sovereignty of God over all created beings as expressed in his figure of the clay and the potsherd in the potter's hands (45:9). But enough has been said to show how this principle of the divine exaltation pervades and molds the prophet's thought at every point.

Worship, Dependence and Surrender

We may well pause here for a moment to reflect upon the significance of this fact. Are there not many in our day who would stigmatize all that I have enumerated as the product of philosophy, which the sooner it is eliminated from the religious consciousness the better? We are invited to conceive of God under those aspects exclusively in which he is like ourselves; that is, possessed of the communicable or so-called ethical attributes. There and there alone we can know or understand and profit by (it) in a religious sense. Now if one thing is plain from the testimony of Isaiah it is this-that these so-called metaphysical abstractions lie at the very root of all religion, that there can be no living worship worthy of that name where these are ignored or neglected. Religion is love of God or a sense of dependence upon God but not entirely after the same manner as we cherish love for our fellow creatures or feel dependent on them in certain relations. Religion begins when we realize our dependence on the absolute, infinite being, the eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient God. What men are urged to discard, therefore, is precisely that element which differentiates a religious experience

from any other state of mind. Do not misunderstand me. I do not mean to say that the bare recognition of the greatness of God and the littleness of man is sufficient to produce true religion. For this the third element observed in Isaiah is indispensable—the element of joyous self-surrender to the greatness and sovereignty of God, whereby the creature feels uplifted and glorified. And this cannot enter until after the coal of fire has touched the lips and the consciousness of sin forgiven been imparted. When thus the soul inwardly delights in the infinite perfections of Jehovah, then and not until then is fear changed into reverence; or, as the prophet calls it, humility of spirit. But such worship (the highest flower of religion) it is impossible to cultivate where the perception of God's transcendent glory has been obscured. Religion may not be metaphysics, but there is a theology of the heart, the banishment of which means blight and starvation for all vital piety.

Jehovah the Holy One

This will become still more obvious when we briefly consider how the exaltation of Jehovah affects Isaiah in the moral and redemptive sphere. In our text contrition of heart corresponds to the divine holiness in the same manner as humility of spirit answers to Jehovah's inhabiting eternity. But the predicates of loftiness and highness belong to the former as much as to the latter. Indeed the peculiarity of Isaiah's teaching on the divine holiness consists precisely in this—that it unites the two elements of infinite majesty and moral excellence in a single harmonious conception. Jehovah's holiness appears to the prophet as the loftiness of ethical perfection, towering high above human sin and levelling it in judgment to the dust. This is the general conception of holiness in all prophecy and yet here as elsewhere simplicity and grandeur go hand in hand. The fundamental belief that God is glorious over every creature applied to the moral sphere is the source of this conception. While we are accustomed to speak of holiness in terms of intensity, the prophet speaks of it in terms of dimension. By it as much as by his eternity, Jehovah is exalted above all finite being. Holiness in God has a peculiar divine glory distinguishing it from created holiness in angels or man. Even apart from the consciousness of sin, its revelation is so majestic as to fill the soul with awe. In Jehovah's holiness his divinity as it were concentrates itself. It involves not merely that his nature is stainless, empirically free from sin, but means that he is exalted above the possibility of sin—in him as the absolutely good evil cannot enter (if owing to this the sinless seraphim hide themselves while proclaiming him holy, how should sinful man endure?).

Isaiah's whole doctrine of sin shows the influence of this conception. From first to last he emphasizes that aspect of sin in which it offends against the infinite majesty of Jehovah. This may be done by human pride and wealth as power infringing upon the divine right to unique greatness. Hence there is a day of Jehovah of Hosts upon all that

is proud and haughty and upon all that is lifted up, to bring down the lofty works of man. Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day. Jehovah will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria and the glory of his high looks because, although a mere tool in the hand of God, he usurped the praise of his achievements for himself. But the highest personification of sin in this sense is that king of Babel who said in his heart: "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High" (14:13-14). In this figure of the last representative of the world-power that came within his ken, the prophet has drawn the character of diabolical sin and we need not wonder that the name "day star, son of the morning" here borne by the king of Babel, was later (in the form "Lucifer") transferred to Satan.

Isaiah could not have framed this bold conception of sin, however, had he not first been granted the vision of the King Jehovah of Hosts in the temple of his holiness. (All the sinister grandeur that invests the figure of Satan is here as elsewhere but the reflex of the majesty of him to whose throne he aspires. God's glory is so great that the bare attempt at usurping it renders the usurper half-sublime.) From still another point of view, the unique character of the divine holiness appears in Isaiah's preaching of judgment. Being not merely holy but majestic in holiness, Jehovah upholds and asserts his ethical glory for the punishment of sin. Isaiah has felt most keenly that God would not be God, would not respect his own divinity, did he not avenge evil. Because he is the absolutely good, because his name, the essence of his being, is holy; therefore in him holiness is attended with the sovereign right to vindicate its own supremacy. Nowhere else are we taught so clearly as in Isaiah that the vindicating justice of God is but the intensity of his holiness translated into action. We see the transformation under our own eyes when the prophet represents the Light of Israel as becoming a fire and his Holy One a flame which burns and devours the thorns and briars of sin in one day (10:17).

Contrition Before the Sovereign

Do we wonder, then, that our text requires contrition of heart as the only attribute in which man can venture to approach the moral majesty of God? The same threefold reaction observed above may again be witnessed here in the prophet. First his eye is dazzled by the view of an infinite perfection. Next he realizes the contrast that exists between this divine purity and the uncleanness of a sinful creature. Fear falls upon him, the fear of absolute moral dissolution, expressing itself 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" (Is. 6:5). As this fear results from the consciousness of disharmony with an infinite holiness, there is no dread excited by any finite power in the universe worthy to be compared with it. When the sinful people tremble on account of human enemies, strangely forgetful of their exposure to Jehovah's judgment, the prophet is instructed by

a special revelation not to fear their fear, nor to be in dread thereof: "Jehovah of Hosts, him shall ye sanctify, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread" (8:13), words vividly reminding us of our Savior's admonition to fear him alone who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Mt. 10:28).

But even this unique fear cannot be the final thought to which the vision of Jehovah's ethical glory moves Isaiah. True contrition involves more than the sense of guilt and pollution than fear and shame continued. It is the specifically religious response to these moral perceptions, whereby the sinner abhors his unholiness not from any selfish motive, but from the stand point of God from the profound conviction that it is a slight of his purity and infringes upon the supremacy of his glory. Spiritual penitence is God-centered and by this feature may be distinguished from the purely moral self-criticism and self-condemnation which does not presuppose a change of heart. The difference between these two is clearly described by Isaiah. It is mere terror of conscience that makes the sinner in Zion speak: "Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings" (33:14)? "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from among us" (30:11)! But genuine contrition acknowledges the propriety that sin and the sinner and everything defiled by sin should be swept away and Jehovah of Hosts be exalted in judgment and God the Holy One be sanctified in righteousness. So powerful is this constraint of the moral majesty of God's law in the prophet's soul that he cannot conceive of any hope or future for Israel except there arise one who by vicarious suffering shall satisfy the supreme interests of the divine holiness. And in harmony with this conviction the idea of the Messianic king was deepened and enlarged in Isaiah's mind to that of the Suffering Servant, in whom perfect contrition is joined to perfect innocence, who humbles himself and opens not his mouth and makes his soul an offering for the sin of his people.

It would be interesting to trace the influence of the principle thus made supreme in the moral sphere throughout the whole range of Isaiah's doctrine of salvation. Objectively we should here find to predominate the glory of the divine grace and love and saving power, and subjectively faith sustaining the same relation to these attributes as humility and contrition to the greatness and moral majesty of Jehovah. (This is in so far suggested by our text as God's indwelling is said to unify the spirit and the heart, and as the bestowal of life is elsewhere associated by Isaiah with the eternal being and the creative omnipotence of God, being conceived as a strictly divine act. The experience of the effect of God's life-giving presence upon spirit and heart is an experience, therefore, in which man is made conscious of the unique glory of him who alone has life in himself.)

The Practice of the Knowledge of God

As time, however, forbids our further following up this thought, permit me to point out in conclusion one or two practical inferences that may be drawn from the facts we have been considering. And first let us observe that there is in the whole history of Old Testament revelation not a second example as striking as this of the power of truth for the enrichment of religious life. The modern prejudice so widely spread that the intellect is an uninfluential if not injurious factor in the formation of spiritual experience is contradicted at well-nigh every point of the sacred record, but stands exposed in its utter folly when tested by the history of a spiritual giant like Isaiah. In his case the influence of a pure and deep knowledge of God over all the other elements that enter into a harmonious religious development is plain beyond all possibility of denial. What else but the great thought of God supernaturally introduced into the soul of this man produced that untold wealth of spiritual power which even the world hostile to divine truth cannot help honoring when it puts him with the most illustrious examples of religious genius in all ages?

But we may go further than this and confidently affirm that not only must truth from the nature of the case be the prime mover in every religious activity of the soul and in all progress of piety, but also the more fundamental and ultimate the truth apprehended, the greater will prove the power stored up in it for fructifying and quickening spiritual life. Many, while admitting in a general way the importance of the truth for the vesture of piety, yet seem to think that truth cannot be made *the* truth, cannot be systematized to any extent without straightway losing this beneficent quality and becoming a barren intellectual thing. If ever we have been inclined to adopt this idea, let us learn from the prophet how little it has to recommend itself. With Isaiah the issue to view all things in the unity of the divine plan and purpose was born from the very love of God. Can we not conceive of a thirst for harmony in our knowledge of divine things so entirely the expression of identification in thought and sympathy with God as to be a worship in itself? And if we were to seek for a single point of view that is likely to impart to our study of God's word this profoundly religious character, what higher or better could be found than this of Isaiah? What could be more adapted to warm our hearts than the constant thought of God's eternal excellence and glory? It ought not to be difficult for us to assume this standpoint. I deem it wholly within the limits of historical sobriety to say that Isaiah represents among Old Testament writers most distinctly that aspect of revealed truth and religion with the embodiment of which in Christian thought and life we count it our privilege under the providence of God to be identified. Not as if the other writers could represent 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 when consciously apprehended are capable of developing.

Let us not then hastily despise or think antiquated what comes to us associated by both history and the infallible word of God, in holding to which we are in company with the most princely spirits of the old and new dispensation. I urge this upon you the more since you are to be ministers of God. If the character and tone of Isaiah's preaching are partly due to his representative position as a prophet of Jehovah, ought not the same to apply to your ministry? Is there any frame of mind more appropriate to the ambassador of God than that which is guided in its thinking and speaking and living by the supreme desire for the divine glory? Is there any consecration more entire, any inspiration more lasting, any comfort more unfailing than that derived from this principle? It would be difficult to find in the history of the church of God the record of a life more entirely consumed on the altar of service than that of Isaiah. But like everything else in this life, the cry "Send me!" was a cry uttered under the constraint of the vision of Jehovah's glory. And only because this was so, there was no recoiling when the disclosure followed that the prophet's ministry would be one of hardening and judgment. Isaiah knew that even when God does his strange work his purposes are accomplished and his honor indicated; and that the ultimate significance of service in his kingdom is to be measured by this highest standard alone. And thus believing he spoke: "I will wait for Jehovah that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him" (8:17)! It is not likely that any of us will be called to a ministry offering so little prospect of what the world calls success. But even though some of us were, if Isaiah's vision be ours, if like him we walk face to face with the glory of Jehovah, there need be no disappointment or discouragement. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? the everlasting God Jehovah the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of his understanding . . . They that wait upon Jehovah shall renew their strength, they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint" (40:28, 31).

Preached, December 12, 1896

Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey

Notes

1. The first page of this manuscript is missing.
2. The thought of Jehovah's exaltation so absolute as to efface all relative distinctions in human greatness is quite familiar to the Old Testament. Having no rival and being no rival, it is his divine prerogative to take account of the weak and poor as much as of the strong and honorable. "For Jehovah your God, He is God of Gods and Lord of Lords, the great God, the Mighty and the terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward. He doth execute the judgment of the

fatherless and widow and loveth the stranger in giving him food and raiment" (Dt. 10:17-18).