

CHAPTER XXI
The Shadow Christ--Isaiah
Isaiah 40-64.

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To attempt to appraise this Herald of the New Time--which is not new at all, but a proclamation of the "Ancient Days," the eternal Real, knowing neither time nor space--requires a pen tipped with Light. Not a vestige of the personality of this prophet appears; he is just a Voice speaking from the latter end of the captivity in Babylon to his fellow captives; looking across the desert to Jerusalem--then a city which lay in ruins, to be rebuilt by the soul of the nation which through suffering had found itself--and from thence to the "ends of the earth."

As Jeremiah had sung the swan song of the old time, the "Great Unknown" sings the trumpet song of the new time--proclaiming the advent of the reign of Righteousness. So modest is this greatest of all Hebrew writers that we find his book attached to that of Isaiah, possibly because the optimism which is the keynote of each made their association inevitable, or maybe because this is the fulfillment of Isaiah's vision. The writer who begins his book with the words, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God," sees farther than he whose vision climaxed with the One who should be born of the house of David, and who would establish what would be still a typically Hebrew kingdom; this seer visions a people going out to conquer the whole world with no other instruments of warfare than gentleness and light.

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the nations. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment in truth. He shall not burn dimly nor be bruised, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law." O, Jewish and Christian nations who have persecuted each other, how far short ye have fallen of his ideal! Ye have slain each other, fought religious (?) wars, and martyred the prophets of light. Yet steady and persistent has his light shone, and the One, who personified himself with the vision, was bathed in his light. Yet this prophet's ideal is not limited to one man; he saw a *people*, those whom he called the "Suffering Servant of Jehovah," resplendent with the spirit that had been put upon them, redeeming a world by shining through it.

Instead of writing this article I was strongly tempted to say to the readers, "Procure a 'Modern Reader's Bible,' read the notes to the book and the book itself--'The Rhapsody of Zion Redeemed'." I am conscious of a feeling of humility in approaching this prophet; and I write about him because, among Biblical characters, this, which is

neither a man nor a character, so far as we can trace, but a Light, is so insistent that all before his time leads up to him--and all after his time must look back to him. In my own Bible, the one used when I first became a student, and clung to for both comfort and healing, this prophet's pages are more marked than any other in the whole book, and that which is most sacred to us we are most reluctant to speak about, because words are so impotent to convey the feelings aroused by one who has been a great inspiration.

Christianity was born in the consciousness of Isaiah but it culminates in him who has been called "The Second Isaiah." His vision is no longer confined to the *Hebrew*, but sweeps out into the *human* race. It is a light of "irresistible illumination, which shall not burn dimly until it reach the farthest ends of the earth." Rhapsody is a word borrowed from music by Professor Moulton to express something which "is not paralleled in other literature. They are spiritual dramas, a fusion of all literary forms." Of this particular book he says: "It may be safely asserted that nowhere else in the literature of the world have so many colossal ideas been brought together within the limits of a single work."

Furthermore: "It is the boast of both England and America that its higher education is religious in its spirit; why is it then that our youth are taught to associate exquisiteness of expression, force of presentation, brilliance of imaginative picturing, only with literature in which the prevailing matter and thought is on a low moral plane? Such a paradox is part of the paganism which came in with the Renaissance, and which our higher education is still too conservative to shake off. The friends of literary education who rebel against the thought of so one-sided a culture have a definite issue to contend for; that at least Isaiah and Job should take their place beside Plato and Homer in the curricula of our colleges and schools."

The American writer who said, "I wish that every young man and woman could go through college, to find out how little they can learn in them," was probably right. Personally I am an ardent advocate of the higher education, but in meeting many college trained men and women have found their education to be what we call in typing the pick-and-peck method. A scrap of learning here, and a scrap there, no beginning, no orderly unfoldment, no climaxes. Thoughts, ideals, nations, do appear, unfold, climax and pass away, leaving their message in the human consciousness, a leaven that never ceases to work for the betterment of the race, so that no matter what the seeming to human outlook, to spiritual vision the race is always "going straight forward."

The great nameless prophet made a discovery, hitherto unrecognized by preceding prophets: Suffering, trials, temptations, deprivations are not evidences of divine displeasure; but divine educations and opportunities to apply the spiritual principles that one professes to believe in. I find this misunderstood so largely among students today. Those students who wonder, Why *this* came to *me*? It is a special opportunity

to demonstrate Truth. They get on the *underside* of it by calling it a *trial* instead of taking the *upperside* by calling it an opportunity.

In captivity the nation had so grown in knowledge and self-discipline that this prophet foresees that they are to be called out to a larger work than just saving themselves: "It is too light a thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth."

In Life's own school are the beloved of Jehovah educated; and the conditions of life are the spiritual gymnasium in which we develop the power to overcome "all things." In exile, having lost its national life, the nation had found its *international Soul*. Jehovah could not take his "wife" back, to whom he had been compelled to give a "bill of divorcement" because of her many infidelities. The "ungrateful foundling" now was a woman, with a woman's sense of responsibility, and a woman's soul looking out of her clear eyes.

"Sing, O barren,
That thou didst not bear;
Break forth into singing and cry aloud,
That thou didst not travail with child.

For more are the children of the desolate than of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not; lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes. For thou shalt spread abroad on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall possess the nations and make the desolate cities to be inhabited."

Not in sheltered nooks and happy surroundings does character grow broad and powerful. Many a storm and tempest must the great oak pass through before we can rest under its comforting shelter, and only he knows the power of his own soul who has been tested to the uttermost and has found the spiritual power sufficient to meet every demand made upon it. One who has seen only the happy side of life can never touch the heights nor sound the depths of the spiritual universe. Only the soul who has been in the Vast Loneliness lets go of itself in absolute self-surrender; and only that soul that the Spirit finds empty can it completely occupy.

According to Luke, Jesus opened his great public ministry with a reading from this prophet, and was rejected by the Jews on account of the interpretation that he placed upon it. This new name for the nation, "Jews," came with the Babylonian captivity, a contraction of "men of Judah." But it is not this people, the *Jews*, that the great prophet had foreseen, but those that should be born from the soul of the nation, the *Christians*.

Historic research had not gone so deeply into the making up of the Bible in the time of the Nazarene as it has in our day; so when following his baptism by John, Jesus returned to Nazareth, "where he had been brought up: and he entered as his custom was, into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And he opened the book and found the place where it was written, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: he hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.* And he closed the book and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down: and the eyes of all the synagogue were fastened upon him. And he began to say unto them, *Today hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears.* And all bear him witness at the words of grace, which proceeded out of his mouth; and they said, Is not this Joseph's son?"

If the preceding prophets had seen that Jehovah could raise up enemy powers to punish a sinful nation, this one sees that He can also raise up another foreign power to deliver his oppressed people. In the rise of Persia under Cyrus the Great, he sees an instrument which God will use to save the nation. As men and conditions are always to us what we name them, no doubt can exist in the minds of those who understand the laws of mind that this prophet's thought influenced that of Cyrus, and the privileges given to the Jews under this king were the result of his thought of him. By an inevitable law people respond to us from the dominant conviction of our consciousness, truly if the thought be true, wrongfully if the thought of them be doubtful or condemnatory.

The strength of the Hebrew prophets lies in their centralization of power. There was to them no power but God. "Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be any after me. I, even I, am the Lord: and beside me there is no saviour. Thus saith the Lord to his anointed Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee to make the rugged places plain; I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. I will gird thee though thou hast not known me."

The worship of one God is established in this rhapsody; and scorn is shown for all idolatry. History is an endless repetition of itself and not yet have the nations which we consider civilized outgrown idolatry though the fashion of it be changed. Still we find Christians believing that health may be found in medicines, deliverance and freedom in the accumulation of wealth, and satisfaction in gaining some social position and in gratification of the senses. Contempt for idols fashioned by hand and carried in processions we easily can transfer, to suit the times, into idols fashioned in man's thought and laboriously carried around as dead weight to their makers. Jehovah announces himself through this seer as not being something we can *carry* as we do false gods, but as One who having *made* man HE CARRIES HIM.

A complete reversal of thought is given here, which this age has not yet caught up with: it means absolutely yielding our lives to the Supreme One, as the earth has yielded itself to the power that carries it in its orbit around the sun. We do not choose our God, He has chosen us, our work, our whole life, are His and He carries us through to completion. *There is nothing for us to do but accept and permit ourselves to be carried out into His ideal of us.* This which is our work is anything, however, but spineless acceptance of all that comes to us; it is positive rejection of all evil and perfect faith in the power of God to carry us through all the trials and temptations of life to a triumphant climax.

Is not the whole work of man given in the first chapter of the Shadow Christ, Isaiah 40:3-6?

"Prepare ye, in the wilderness the way of the Lord,
Make straight in the deserts a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be exalted,
And every mountain and hill shall be made low;
The crooked shall be made straight,
And the rough places plain:
And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
And all flesh shall see it together:
For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

There is only One Mind and One Thinker; our work is to make way for it. This is done as we rest in the Truth and let this Mind know in us. This pure knowing is what makes us free.

Could anything be more comforting than this, the twenty-eighth to the thirty-first verses of the same chapter?

"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength; they shall mount up with the wings of eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

Today, Great Prophet, thy people are seeing that light from thy consciousness, which has never burned dimly since thou hast spoken thy words of living truth. When we look into the eyes of companions who are comprehending thy truth, we know at last it is penetrating the consciousness of man universal, and our hearts are comforted, and each holding aloft his own torch and marching forward knows that at last thy vision is fulfilled, it is reaching the "farthest ends of the earth."