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# The ideal king

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## T H E I D E A L K I N G . . .

Where shall we find him? We go to the bank for gold; to the library for books; to the studio for models. There is but one Louvre. Sir Walter Scott said there is but one book. Munkacsy has given us his "Christ before Pilate"; Michael Angelo his "Moses"; Sir Christopher Wren his St. Pauls, and Handel his "Messiah"; creations these of the painter, the sculptor, the architect and the musician. Where did these ideals originate? Where have any worthy ideals originated?

Truth will bear repetition. The book continues to lead the thought of the world. "There is no new thing under the sun". God's word covers all the ground. Every advance in science; every triumph of genius; every step towards the "grand consummation" finds its prophesy there. "Christ is the central figure of history". His teachings and the teaching of those who wrote of him, hold, in germ-form at least, all fundamental truth, and furnish the key to all genuine civic and national progress. The people that do not discover this are doomed to defeat and decay. Bishop I.M. Thoburn made a statement in a sermon at Asbury Grove last summer that will become historic. "Two things", said he, "I have noticed: (1) Every nation that has refused to receive Jesus Christ is poor; (2) Every nation that has refused to receive Jesus Christ has lost the inventive faculty". Will the business world hear that? It will bear reflection. "Honesty is the best policy". The unthinking

world is heavily in debt to the church of God. -- Large accounts are long overdue that will never be paid her. She stands where she has stood for ~~over~~ two thousand years; and is more than a town-clock or a silent steeple. The skeptical press may chaff the faithful minister, and the cynical millionaire look askance at the modest meeting-house on that principal street, which, he says, "ought to be brushed aside to make place for the onward sweep of commercial enterprise". But both forget that this house and this man have made possible the atmosphere without which there could be no daily and no business to "sweep" in any direction.

We have found the ideal king. But the bible is a folio of ideals. That is not saying that it was prepared by ideal men. It is saying that it was put together by men who had ideal conceptions. "Tall sun-crowned-men" were they, "who stood above the clouds; in-public duty and in private thinking". This, indeed, if any, is their distinguishing trait. Above their neighbors they towered head and shoulders. Inspired souls always do. They are Cotopaxis and Mount Blancs and Mount Everests, standing upon whose <sup>m</sup>its smaller men may see visions afar, and hear strains of the rarer and sweeter music of heaven. Better be inspired than infallible. The former makes man God-like; the latter might exalt him above measure, and make him a god, when he would be a challenge, if not an insult to the Almighty. It is more comforting to know that Isaiah wrote the first twelve chapters of his book than Gabriel. I would

rather read John's Revelation than Michael's. Mount Washington excites my admiration because it has so much in common with its neighbors. The same substance but taller. Rock like its fellows but more of it. And see, how it lifts its proud head into those lofty heights! Daniel, Amos, Isaiah, Paul were men, but they were more-men. Of more massive structure and finer spiritual texture. Heard more, felt more, saw more than their comrades. Walking the same way, they were yet not on the same plane. They breathed a clearer atmosphere, penetrated into the third heaven of God's privilege and were ready to declare truths that men had thought unlawful to utter.

Let us hear from these leaders. If Raphael paints his Madonna, or Powers carves his Greek Slave, or General Booth conceives his Salvation Army, or Bezaleel produces temple-art, or if Isaiah depicts his Messiah, we want to study him.

In Isaiah's conception his ideal king was to be a man. With a birth day. With human parents. Though neither the date of the former nor the names of the latter were known. It is, perhaps, just as well. Bible writers often do this. In their work there is frequently a conspicuous lack of detail. A little exasperating, doubtless, is this to the novel-reader, but not so serious <sup>a matter</sup> to the earnest truth seeker who digs for the kernel, not for the shell; and who gladly accepts a hint when there is nothing better to be had.

"Unto us a child is born<sup>22</sup> unto whom? Probably the purified remnant. "Unto us a son is given<sup>1</sup> a son, # of whom? Probably, again, a son of David, a successor to the ruling power of the

time, probably Hezekiah. To say more than this would be conjecture. In the judgment of the author more is not necessary. Frederick Douglass lost little either in reputation or usefulness because neither his natal-day could be fixed <sup>to a certainty</sup> nor his line of descent accurately traced to its source. The splendid fact is that Frederick Douglass was born; that he was born in the dark days of slavery, and in the midst of its most horrible forms; that he was born with a strong right arm, which, directed by a powerful brain, forged a mighty hammer that struck off the manacles from the withering ankles of his country men, and put a song of freedom into the mouth of four million slaves. "After life's fitful fever he sleeps well".

The quotation given a moment ago is taken from the ninth chapter of Isaiah's prophecy; one of the most wonderful of his wonderful book. Bold, searching, hopeful, it comes as a gleam of light into the dense darkness of ~~the~~ Jewish life. When all others are looking down, the prophet is looking up. When others see around them naught but "gloom and anguish", he sees the land of Naphtali and Zebulun bathed in the glory of promise. When others "walk in darkness and the shadow of death" he walks in the inspiration of "a great light". Others see dreadful carnage and garments rolled in blood, but he sees beside the horn of plenty, the river of joy and the pastures of peace. For the drum-beat of strife and the martial music of advancing armies he substitutes the ring of the blacksmith's anvil and the more welcome chatter of merry children. ~~For unto us a~~

child is born, unto us a son is given".

Is this son identical with the Immanuel of the eighth chapter? Let us say at once, and thoughtfully, No. And for two or three reasons. The quotation is one of three parts that make a harmonious whole. Note the setting. The prophet is singing, in <sup>is</sup> the ninth chapter, of the glories of the time that is soon to come to the people. Many welcome tidings will herald its approach. Among the more conspicuous are, (1) The land will be relieved of ~~the heathen~~ <sup>its heartless</sup> oppressors, the Assyrian armies, (9:4); (2) The weapons of war will be destroyed, (9:5); and (3) A child is born (9:6). This last is not least, but greatest. The order is cause and effect. A child is born. The emphasis is on child. To make his description more vivid the author employs the past tense.--A customary grammatical construction among Hebrew writers aiming at effect. But Isaiah is thinking of the future. This child is yet to be born. Chapter 11:1 makes that absolutely certain. Now if the child is not yet born it cannot be one with Immanuel, since the latter has been ~~already born.~~ "The child of 9:6 is born after the Assyrian period of oppression is begun; at its end, and not at its beginning".

This is important and should be borne in mind. The environment and mission of the two were entirely different. Immanuel, in fact, has no character and no mission. It is not necessary to suppose that any child was ever called by this name. It was to be suggested by circumstances. Long before and

immediately preceding Immanuel's birth dark <sup>indeed</sup> ~~times~~ were to be the skies over Judah. At his coming a great change for the better was to take place. Days of prosperity were to come and should continue until the period arrived when the child knew how to distinguish good from evil, -- say two years. These were to be years of great blessing. At the end of this period a change for the worse would come. Reverses would again set in and Israel once more pass under the cloud. Thus Immanuel was "the representation of a generation to whom the promise of their birth was soon to be cruelly broken". In other words Ahaz was to receive a sign of the child's advent - a sign which would confuse and not comfort him. "The rapid change impending over the land of Judah in the next years is revealed in the stages of a child's life. The child, whose conception according to verse 14 is to be expected immediately, if it has not already occurred (as Gen. 16:11), will receive at its birth the name Immanuel, God with us, because just then, and so in a set number of months, God's miraculous assistance will have been experienced. This is affirmed in verse 16, which justifies the name Immanuel (verse 14). The kingdoms of Syria and Ephraim, now such objects of fear, will be heavily punished by a conqueror. But upon this turn of things, to which Judah owes momentary deliverance, follows quickly a second turn to its disadvantage. This change is hinted in verse 15 and explained at length in verses 17-25. Before the boy arrives at the age of reason and moral responsibility, and then in a brief term of years, a desolation

will come upon Judah such as has never been seen for long, and that through the great powers Egypt and Assyria, which will come into collision in the land of Canaan".

Not so with the child of 9:5. Brighter days had already dawned for Israel when he came. And he was to be the harbinger and promise of their continuance. For he was to assume office, and under the guiding and controlling power of the divine Spirit, restore the chastened people to their inherited and God-given position of prominence and example to the nations, and make his place a throne of unprecedented and unrivalled influence; established upon the word of God, and felt from the center to the circumference of the world's habitat.

Isaiah has another suggestion: His ideal king was to be an extraordinary man. An extraordinary future was his, and his extraordinary facilities to ~~the~~ make the most of that future. Nature is generous to him. He comes before his race with large endowments. God is rich in resources. The supply always equals the demand. The moral history of our world furnishes no more interesting fact than this. In God's workshop any order can be executed. At various times wonderful specimens of his workmanship have appeared, necessary limitations observed notwithstanding. Solomon astonished the world, with his wisdom; Joseph with his stability; Abraham with his faith; Sampson with his  <sup>prowess</sup> physical  ~~powers~~; and now comes the ideal king, the ultimate and most perfect example of divine power, - an individual whose character is a wonderful combination of all the

virtues of his illustrious predecessors.

He was to make an impression from the outset. Genius was to assert itself. His fame was to spread far and near. Not by some species of magic; not by the jugglery of the impious knave; not by "pious fraud" was he to become renowned. His deeds were to demonstrate the presence in him of the Spirit of Yahveh; and by virtue of his intrinsic and inherent power - the gift of God - he was silently, but inevitably, to impress men and win them. This is the secret of genius as distinguished from artifice. It needs no advertising. Will not, in fact, accept it. The mere actor must have it. There is no other way to get his name before the public. His once honorable profession has now degenerated into mere business with its tricks <sup>and</sup> ~~of~~ trade. The patent medicine, and the patent medicine man must needs seize type and wood cut, and mortgage the columns of our supine dailies to wholesale upon a patient public the debilitating pictures of sick folks and their more abundantly debilitating stories, - a sad commentary upon the perversity of human nature in general, and the publishers in particular, and a sadder training for the "new generation". Of the ubiquitous and iniquitous quack. What with prize fights and Celery Compounds and Pulmonine it has become easy to acquire cheap fame. But the idol-makers and the idol-buyers have interests in common, - with a slight advantage on one side: the former grow rich as the latter grow poor. It is a case of profit and loss. No indeed. Genius will not submit to such humiliation and travesty. It

is born not made, <sup>is</sup> not bound but free. "Cometh not with obser-  
 vation", but cometh, nevertheless. Can afford to wait for  
 discovery. If not always seen, its subtle and positive power  
 is always felt. The fading stars of the morning tell us there  
 is a mightier light approaching them somewhere in the heavens.  
 Silently but inevitably the king of day marches to his throne;  
 eclipsing his onlookers as he goes, and carrying day and delight  
 in his train. But that faint dawn introduces the day. Sir  
 Benjamin West's genius betrayed itself in the playful, if care-  
 less pencil strokes upon the walls of the nursery. They were  
 rude enough marks but genius lay hidden beneath them. Ruben-  
 stein's unmistakable genius spelt out its own name under the  
 first touches of the child's fingers. His devoted mother at  
 once recognised the promise of the future master, who would yet  
 make kings and queens his willing slaves. Charles Wesley's  
 poetic genius appeared in nursery rhymes before he was quite  
 relieved of the infantile dress encumbrance. And the founder  
 of Methodism gave evidence of his genius for organization in  
~~the arrangement of his toys, and later, in maturer form when he~~  
 instituted his Oxford Club, which was destined to become the  
 forerunner of one of the mightiest ecclesiastical organizations  
 known to history. The world bows before geniuses. It cannot  
 do other. A brilliant man dazzles, genius convinces. The  
 clever man courts success, but the born genius commands it.  
 He is a living magnet whose very presence draws men unto  
<sup>him</sup> ~~itself~~; the uncrowned king who is yet crowned in the estimate

of men, and before whom men and women unconsciously prostrate themselves, and offer no apology, and can give no explanation of their action. These are the normal effects of the presence of a great personality, the natural results of the power of a commanding genius. Working by inexorable laws, the same in all ages, and among all peoples, in Isaiah's time as now, this unconscious recognition by the people of incarnate "genius for godliness" manifest in the person of the ideal king, finds expression in a unanimous chorus of tribute. The ancient Jews expressed themselves in this way. It was the best they, in their beautiful simplicity, knew. They told all that was in their heart when they said; "His name shall be called wonderful" - not by his parents at his birth as in the case of Immanuel, but by any one who had heard of or seen the Messiah. "He shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace".

And his deeds were to demonstrate his right to the appellation. "What's in a name?" Not much, certainly, if it is simply an ornament - given by overweening parents or infatuated cousins and aunts; but a great deal when it becomes an index finger pointing towards <sup>a</sup> future, <sup>pregnant with</sup> mighty movements; or maps the life work of a great Deliverer, and constitutes the platform upon which a divine hero will prosecute well laid plans, make history and <sup>h</sup>change the current of events.

This was the <sup>a</sup>task before the ideal king. The cares of any nation are heavy enough, but Israel's burdens were burdens many times multiplied. ~~It is frequently easier to fell the trees~~

and drain the swamps of a new country, inaugurate a new civilization and establish a new nation than to resurrect an old one, amend its laws and bring the disorganized multitudes into line and set them marching toward victory. Yet this was the work of the ideal king. It would be difficult to overdraw Israel's sad condition. On the human side it was almost hopeless. Plato tells, in his Republic, of Glaucus the old seaman, who loved the sea, He dwelt in it so long that his form became disfigured beyond recognition even by his nearest friends. It was even so with Israel. Long residence in an element, at once foreign and hostile to <sup>the development of</sup> godliness; persistence in wrong-doing, determined and repeated crossing of Yahveh's beneficent purposes resulted in estrangement from him; and in loss of moral identity. Scarcely a feature of old Israel, with its altars and temple service, could be found. Its most ardent friends would not recognize it. The nation had become a caricature and a byword. Thoroughly corrupt, the people committed sin and were not aware of it (5:20). They had reached the last stage in moral turpitude and had got "past feeling." "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint - - - Hear O heavens, and give ear O earth."

This was at once the prophet's lamentation and the nation's benighted psalm. It was a good sign. Such a condition called for heroic measures. The ideal king appears. He brings with him an ideal policy. The people were past feeling, but not beyond hope. "Return to the Lord, and he will have

mercy" was the watchword. Judgment must begin at the house of God. Leaving God out of the question there was no such thing as reform for the people. He came representing reform in himself. "Like priest, like people". He would bring the people to God; but he would bring God to the people. He would be God's representative. His character would silently but eloquently proclaim the holiness and power of his office and his attachment to his God.

It is always thus in the kingdom of heaven. The most successful man is the man who most perfectly shows God to man and man to God. Whether it be in the person of a Wesley, or a Gustavus Adolphus, or an Oliver Cromwell, or a Jonathan Edwards. You cannot drive; people must be led. Their sympathies must be enlisted; confidence secured; some legitimate and powerful stimulus applied, and conquest is easy. The ideal king was the man for the hour. He had the necessary qualifications. The people saw it. He could steady the staggering nation because he had a balancing power for the individual. Possessed of the Spirit in great fullness, he was able to promise, whether in presence or in words, great accomplishments. He spared not himself, and in the spending of his resources he earned his wonderful name. But during these great deeds he after all received not the praise, but Yahveh; for not he but Yahveh brings them about. "Because of his name, he manifests in his deeds a power which can only be explained as resulting from the possession of such an endowment of the Spirit

of Yahveh as made him practically omnipotent." His power with God and with men was greater than <sup>that of</sup> any of his ~~own~~ predecessors or contemporaries. Moses and the Elders (Nu. 11:17); David and Solomon (2 Sam. 14:20; 1 Ki. 3:12); Joseph (Gen. 41:38) ~~and~~ Saul (1 Sam. 11:6) and Gideon (Jud. 6:24) were all peculiarly endowed. But the ideal king eclipsed them all; was more than they all; and greater than all. He was in fact the Wonderful, Counsellor, Divine Hero, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah makes a further suggestion. His ideal king was a perfect man. 1. In ideal union with God. How did it come about? He was born for it. But so are we all. Capacity for God is a universal inheritance. It comes as all other good and perfect gifts come, from above. God is no respecter of persons. Men say, they ~~have not~~ <sup>do not possess</sup> the "religious nature". We like to charge heredity with our faults and failures, and following the example of Adam, hide ourselves behind some tree of excuse and so make fellowship with the Father and the Son impossible. Ah, God's presence does not inspire fear but love. Wait for him. Let God greet you, and watch for sunrise in your soul! Let him put his hand upon you, and note the pulsations of new life! Let him speak, and harken for echoing melodies! Let his hand touch the broken chords of your heart and what oaeans of music will fill the corridors of your "religious nature"! Allow God to come into your life and see how possible ideal union is between him and your soul.

Here was a man who erected no barrier between <sup>himself</sup> his soul and



and in its highest form, included the moral element. It was seen in deliverance from calamity; in the prevalence of peace and plenty; The smile of Yahveh, seen in full pantries, in goodly families, in long life, in the possession of one's inheritance; and in the thousand and one smaller things that make up a happy daily life. Such was Isaiah's conception. And his Messiah was in his thought the pledge and promise of this condition. His ideal king is a man who, by virtue of his perfect identity with Jehovah and perfect attachment to him, is able to be a <sup>sure sign</sup> ~~sovereign~~ to the people, and perfectly to represent God to man, bringing to him, in God's stead, solace, deliverance and inspiration.

Is not Isaiah's conception, in its twofold aspect, correct? We have nothing to do with salvation beyond. It is a question in the present tense. George Eliot, not without reason, smiled at the Christian's "otherworldliness". Repudiating all claim to the possession of worldly goods, he yet looks forward to large inheritance in the better world. It is not strange that someone should ridicule the paradox. The principle is wrong. Hope of the future should not lessen one's interest in the present. In fact living for the future is not so vital a matter as living for the present. The future will take care of itself; or rather God will take care of it. Right living now ensures right reward by and by. Right living now will equip us for service now. It is here <sup>in this world</sup> we are to make paradise. The earth is to be the future heaven; and shall be when John's vision is actualized. "Impossible", said Napoleon, "then it shall be done." A greater than Napoleon has said: "Whosoever shall say unto-

this mountain Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it." "Behold I make all things new".

3. One word more: Messiah was to be an ideal administrator of the affairs of God's kingdom. "And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit; and the Xpirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord; and his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes; neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins". Linked to God Vitally and indissolubly his success was secured. It was to be universal, but not accidental. He was to possess the necessary qualifications of leadership; qualifications which guaranteed triumph. Group them. As given in the first six verses of this 11th chapter they are, (1) wisdom and might, (2) prudence and power, (3) knowledge and fear of the Lord. This quotation helps us greatly. In 9:5 we were left somewhat in <sup>doubt</sup> ~~the dark~~ as to the means <sup>by</sup> ~~which~~ this wonderful person was to accomplish his wonder-

ful work. But this 11th chapter puts the matter quite beyond question. All his power is given him by the Spirit of Jehovah, by whose assistance alone he is the ideal king, (2 Cor. 12:6) and by which he was to supersede all others in the splendor of his achievements. Knowledge and fear of the Lord <sup>implies</sup> ~~explains~~ a closer union with Jehovah than the expression used in 9:5.

"He is a prophet in the truest sense, as well as an ideal king; - <sup>in</sup> the secret of and in harmony with the plans of Jehovah."

His highest joy was found in obedience to Jehovah.

Possessing remarkable insight he would not find it necessary to inquire into the affairs of any given case; nor need he form his conclusions, in making judgment, according to the doubtful statements of uncertain witnesses. His wonderful knowledge and correct decisions, resulting from correct evidence, would make him a model judge; not necessarily of the earth; but of the land. There is nothing in the text to sustain the A. V. rendering and make his rulership universal. He punishes not with the rod of iron but with the rod of his mouth. Recalling New-Testament analogies, <sup>e.g.</sup> Peter in the case of Ananias and Sapphira ( Acts 5:5-10 ). Righteousness and faithfulness are his girdles. Strength of character and truthfulness are, like those of his Master, characteristics of his administration.

Beautifully does Isaiah sing of the glories of Messiah's reign. Whether the 12th chapter of his prophesy belongs here or not, it is at any rate aptly placed and is surely good enough to form an Old Testament doxology, or a <sup>national</sup> ~~prophetic~~ ascription of

praise to the God of glory. For because of his compassion and loving-kindness and long-suffering, operating through the divine <sup>here</sup> ~~word~~ - Heaven's executor and mouthpiece - joy and peace everywhere abound. Barren hill-sides tell the story in returning verdure, and skipping lambs. Wolves have lost the instinct to destroy. Every home is a house of God. Teaching is easy. So docile and obedient are devouring beasts that a little child leads them. It is high noon. The sun of righteousness shineth in his strength. Heaven and earth are reconciled. The nations learn war no more. Songs echo round the world. "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. And the prophets abode is glorious".

You see a picture of Jesus Christ here. So do I. Did Isaiah? I do not know. It is not necessary to suppose he did. Though this thought leads me inevitably to him and creates longings which are adequately met only in him. Isaiah probably wrote better than he knew. Let us not judge him from ~~our~~ our stand point; but from his own. He was not the only one who conceived the ideal king, though he was the first who elaborately described his person, and his reign. Micah and Jeremiah also had this conception of the ideal king. If Isaiah was not thinking of such a person as our New Testament shows us in Jesus Christ, there is <sup>at least</sup> here an exquisite picture of him. He perfectly answers the description given in the gospels. This makes the bible one book, - "one and inseparable". Following Isaiah's thread of thought the humble seeker can, like -

Augustine after he read Cicero's "Hortensius", find his way to the Savior of the world - the Son of God, whose throne is Calvary and whose love fills the universe. Was God near to the human race in Isaiah's ideal king? He is nearer still in Christ Jesus. Was he incarnate in human nature in Isaiah's Messiah? He is more perfectly incarnate in the Beloved Son, who was literally made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory as of the only begotten from the Father) full of grace and truth. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name".

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