

# The Self-Consciousness of Jesus and the Servant of the Lord.

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## I.

### The Old Testament Revelation.

ALL investigations which have their starting-point in the self-consciousness of Jesus must be, from the nature of the case, hypothetical. The inner life of any individual is, in large measure, sacrosanct. Analysis of the elements which go to shape even the least complex personality can never surpass a probability. The most potent motives and aims will generally be concealed. This principle will apply with immensely greater force to the self-consciousness of Jesus. The loftier and profounder the individuality, the more inevitably must it elude the common scrutiny. The average standards of thought and feeling, at which we arrive by personal self-examination, are baffled by the dominant figures in history. Both history and experience show that Jesus stands solitary.

It is quite legitimate, of course, for modern scholars to expend their energy in estimating, for example, the various factors which composed the environment of Jesus, and thus may be reckoned among the influences which had a part in moulding His character. There is some satisfaction in attempting to picture the natural setting of His early days, His home life, His education, the devout circle of His family friends, the pressure of social conditions, the impact on His mind of religious truth as handed down in the Old Testament. Some would go further, and assign a place to the theology of the synagogue, the thought-forms of the Jewish community, above all, the popular presentations of the Messianic Hope. Suppose it were possible to reach approximately accurate judgments on these influences, the supreme fact remains untouched, the mystery of His personality. That by virtue of which His followers call Him Lord is precisely the stratum of His being which defies analysis. It is so in greater or less degree with all the creative persons in the history of the race. They are not bundles of influences which you can take apart and label by specious names, Greek, Jewish, Babylonian, and the like.

If this were possible, their achievements would have been commonplace. It is the additional factor, which has fused all the other forces of their being into a commanding sovereignty of nature and influence, that has given them their imperial power over the lives and destinies of their fellows. When his friend Eckermann remarked how ready people were to doubt the originality of some famous man, and to attempt to trace the sources from which his ability was derived, Goethe said, 'That is very ridiculous, we might as well question a strong man about the oxen, sheep, and swine which he has eaten.'

But there is another tendency prevalent at the present time, which must no less carefully be guarded against. There is a certain view of history which regards the material handed down in the records of past centuries as *bare data*. Certain figures emerge upon the scene of human existence. Outlines of their lives are presented, which never profess to be complete. Important sayings are recorded. Crucial events and experiences are described. From the nature of things, large gaps remain in the narrative. How is the historian to deal with the situation? We are told that he may do nothing more than reproduce his authorities, after critically testing their material. The serious consequences of this conception of history, as a grouping of statistics, are most clearly seen in the interpretation of commanding personalities. Even the most complex human experience is a unity. And the student of history, if history is to have meaning, demands something like a unified picture of experience.

In no case is this more clamant than in that of Jesus. The Synoptic Gospels are nothing more than brief sketches of His career, based on a selected group of materials. Certain focal points are emphasized in the narrative. The impression He makes as a growing boy, His Baptism, His Temptation, His relation to the Baptist, His

authoritative teaching, His caution against false views of His position, His works of mercy, His unique claims, the confession of His disciples, His conviction of His approaching Passion, His Death and Resurrection,—these are the hinges on which the record turns. Again and again the careful reader is conscious of a hiatus. This is peculiarly true of the earlier period. The 'silent years' at Nazareth must have been epoch-making in their significance for Jesus.

Now the scholars to whom I have referred (e.g. Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*, pp. 279, 330, *et al.*) insist that we confine ourselves to the bare data of the Gospels. They forbid all 'reading between the lines.' They pour contempt on what they call 'psychologizing' (*psychologisieren*). No wonder that at the close of an elaborate discussion of the Jesus of the Gospels, Schweitzer concludes: 'The historical Jesus must be for our time a stranger or an enigma' (p. 397). But Christians refuse to accept that situation. The New Testament is for them, in a sense, the most real of all worlds. The Jesus of the New Testament, so far from being an enigma, is the clue to the meaning of their own lives. Otherwise these must be insoluble riddles. They are disposed, therefore, to question the methods of investigation which have led to such an *impasse*, and to substitute others. Probably it will turn out that the despised 'psychologizing' is the most fruitful of all. For what does it truly mean? Nothing else than that sympathetic approach to the subject which alone makes genuine interpretation possible.<sup>1</sup> As regards the life of Jesus the inevitableness of the method is obvious.

I have spoken of the gaps in the Synoptic outline. Now, in so far as these merely affect chronology, they are of secondary importance. It is otherwise when we are confronted by Jesus' Messianic claims. It is a satisfactory result of the most recent New Testament criticism that even scholars of a keenly critical bias, like H. J. Holtzmann, Bousset, Wernle, and others, are here in agreement as to the facts. Jesus did claim to be Messiah. 'Every attempt to contest the Messianic claim of Jesus founders upon the wholly unmistakable final confession: "I am," Mark 14<sup>62</sup>' (Holtzmann, *op. cit.* p. 29).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. H. J. Holtzmann, *Das Messianische Bewusstsein Jesu*, p. 49: 'Without a certain measure of divination it is impossible to have a historical work which rises above the level of a chronicle.'

Controversy is still keen as to the processes of Jesus' Messianic consciousness. When did it emerge into clearness? How did it take shape? What was its relation to His consciousness of Sonship? What is the psychological basis of that wonderful phenomenon of His personality? It is vain to expect satisfying answers to these questions. Those of us who in Jesus find God will ask the questions with profoundest reverence. And yet they are bound to be asked. And any light which may be thrown upon them must be welcome. It is in view of this situation that we propose to discuss the relation of the remarkable figure of the *Servant of the Lord* to the Messianic consciousness of Jesus.

It will be needless to spend much time on the numerous critical problems which surround the interpretation of this noteworthy conception. The material which is of chief importance for our purpose is that contained in the so-called Ebed-Jahweh Songs which are found in Is 42<sup>1-7</sup> 49<sup>1-6</sup> 50<sup>1-10</sup> 52<sup>13</sup>-53<sup>12</sup>. We shall also refer to 61<sup>1-2</sup>, which, in any case, has a close relation to the other sections.

It is well known that the above passages portray the Servant of Jehovah with the features of an individual. But besides, there are various references to the Servant in Deutero-Isaiah (usually marked off by recent investigators as embracing chaps. 40-55), which quite plainly refer to the *people* of Israel, e.g. 42<sup>19</sup> 44<sup>21, 22</sup> 48<sup>20</sup> etc. Accordingly Duhm and others have attempted to show that the Songs of the Servant are of later origin than Deutero-Isaiah, and the work of a different author. These scholars further believe that the remarkable personal characteristics of the Figure were derived from actual historical individuals, Jeremiah, Eleazar the scribe, Zerubbabel. Sellin actually identified the Servant with Zerubbabel. It is by no means improbable that striking traits in the delineation were suggested by the actual experiences of godly men in the nation. But definite identifications must surely be rejected as arbitrary. And it is noteworthy that recent discussions of the problem (especially that of Giesebrecht, *Der Knecht Jahwes des Deutero-jesaja*) have strongly confirmed the position that the Songs of the Servant form an integral part of Deutero-Isaiah (see especially the parallels in Giesebrecht, pp. 128-131).

This result has, of course, an important bearing on the meaning of the conception as a whole.

For it suggests that there will probably be no fundamental contradiction between the representation of the Servant as in some sense equivalent to 'Jacob' (e.g. 44<sup>1</sup>) or 'Israel' (e.g. 44<sup>21</sup>), and the wonderful personifications in such passages as 52<sup>13</sup>-53<sup>12</sup>. It is scarcely necessary in this discussion to emphasize the distinction between the actual manner in which the broad outlines of the prophet's foreshadowing were filled in as a completed picture in the historical person, Jesus Christ, and the shape which these outlines took for the mind of the prophet himself and those of his contemporaries who understood his utterances.

It is pretty generally agreed that this prophecy 'has for its author a prophet writing towards the close of the Babylonian captivity' (Driver, *L.O.T.* p. 223). He has had a fresh vision of the meaning of those crushing experiences of disaster through which his nation has passed. He discerns that they are not mere isolated misfortunes, but have a place in God's unified purpose for humanity. They constitute a discipline of suffering which is to have profound moral issues. Those who have learned the Divine lesson have undergone a spiritual purification in order that they may discharge a world-wide function. 'It is too light a thing that thou shouldest 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 end of the earth' (Is 49<sup>6</sup>). This passage is extraordinarily suggestive for the meaning of the conception. In the first place, the 'Servant' is clearly distinguished from 'the tribes of Jacob,' and 'the preserved of Israel.' That is to say, in the light of descriptions such as 44<sup>1-21</sup>, the 'Servant' stands for a community within the community, or, if we choose to use the term, for the *ideal* Israel. In the second place, the 'Servant' is to be the medium of God's redemptive purpose on the widest scale. It is by virtue of his operations that the kingdom of God (to adopt a later phrase) shall be finally established. This later aspect of the conception is perfectly clear.

But we must return, for a moment, to the former. When we speak of the 'ideal Israel,' we do not mean that the prophet is simply living in a land of dreams, far from the solid earth. Each stage in their experience of God's dealings with them has emphasized for the people of Israel some special element in the Divine purpose, has contributed some distinct features to the end and goal

of their development as the instrument in God's intention of salvation for the world. We can discern that with absolute clearness, as we look back across the O.T. period, and follow the orderly succession of its epochs. The prophet felt the same truth intuitively, on the ground of experience. As he surveyed the history, he would be conscious that in each stage of the development there existed a sketch, if one may so say, of the ideal, a sketch gradually filled in as the spiritual outlook of the people was enlarged, its lines and colours growing in beauty and balance, until at last it stood before him in this mysterious, finished picture of the Servant of Jehovah.

It seems almost irrelevant to ask whether the Servant can be identified with the conception of Messiah. The question is generally put on the assumption that the Messiah is the supreme figure of the religious forecasts of the O.T. But, as a great scholar has expressed it: 'what is interpreted as Messianic in the New Testament, is rather everything in the Old Testament that is ideal of its own kind, whatever that kind may be—an idealism only to be realized in the last times, whether, for example, it be the king, or the people, or the priest, or the individual saint' (Davidson, *O.T. Theology*, p. 366). These words go to the heart of the situation. They imply that the Servant is certainly to be regarded as belonging to the realm of Messianic ideas and hopes, a channel of God's saving grace, whatever be the local background of the Figure or personification for the mind of the prophet. Accordingly, it is of only secondary importance to inquire whether the personification ever passes over into a person, whether the ideal is ever truly individualized. The Servant is, in any case, the concentration of the loftiest spiritual conceptions which have ever dawned on the soul of the prophet. And in this prophet we touch the high-water mark of O.T. revelation.

To prepare the way for our more special investigation, we have still to consider more closely those functions of the Servant which the prophet places in the forefront. Plainly, the term he has chosen gives the clue to his thought. This wonderful figure is the *Servant* of Jehovah. He is at His bidding to carry out His behests. There is nothing accidental in the work laid upon him. He has been 'called from the womb' (49<sup>1</sup>), 'formed from the womb to be his servant' (49<sup>5</sup>). He is God's Chosen in whom His soul delights (42<sup>1</sup> 43<sup>10</sup>). All

that is said of him, of his unique character and endowments, is said in view of the work he has to accomplish. God has put His Spirit upon him (42<sup>1</sup>). He has made him a true and polished shaft (49<sup>2</sup>). He has given him the tongue of them that are taught (50<sup>4</sup>). The Servant has accepted his mission, although it involved sore humiliation and suffering. 'I gave my back to the smiters. . . I hid not my face from shame and spitting' (50<sup>6</sup>). He was able to face these trials through the consciousness of God's nearness to him: 'In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me' (49<sup>2</sup>); 'He is near that justifieth me . . . who will contend with me' (50<sup>8</sup>); 'I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee' (42<sup>6</sup>). The bearing of the Servant is in harmony with his origin and vocation. 'He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street: a bruised reed shall he not break' (42<sup>2,3</sup>); 'Behold my servant shall deal wisely' (52<sup>13</sup>). His mission is uniquely glorious: 'to raise up the land' (49<sup>8</sup>), 'to restore the preserved of Israel' (49<sup>6</sup>), 'to set judgment (or, right) in the earth' (42<sup>4</sup>), 'for a light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoner from the dungeon' (42<sup>7</sup>), to be God's 'salvation unto the ends of the earth' (49<sup>6</sup>).

But most impressive of all, it need scarcely be said, is the delineation of chap. 53. We have had hints already that the Servant's vocation led him along a path of shame and suffering (*e.g.* 50<sup>6f.</sup>). Now the meaning of these mysterious experiences is unfolded. 'He was wounded for *our* transgressions: he was bruised for *our* iniquities . . . the Lord made to light on him the iniquity of us all' (53<sup>5, 6</sup>).<sup>1</sup> His experience is vicarious. That in his lot which seemed so disastrous was in reality the climax of his Divine vocation. 'It pleased the Lord to bruise him . . . as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb, yea, he opened not his mouth.' Yet 'if his life should make a guilt-offering, he should see a seed, he should prolong his days, and the purpose of Jehovah by his hand should prosper.' . . . Therefore I set him a share with the great, yea, with the strong shall he share the spoil, because he poured out his life unto death, and bare the sin of the many' (53<sup>10, 7, 10, 11, 12</sup>, mainly G. A. Smith's translation). Could these extraordinary affirmations have been at all intelligible apart from their New Testament realization?

<sup>1</sup> It makes no difference, for our purpose, whether the words are interpreted as spoken by Israel or by the Gentiles, as some scholars believe.

## The Great Text Commentary.

### THE GREAT TEXTS OF ST. LUKE.

#### LUKE XXII. 19.

'And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and gave to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.'—R.V.

#### EXPOSITION.

'When he had given thanks.'—The other two reports give 'He blessed,' instead of 'He gave thanks.' There is, of course, no real difference between them. Thanksgiving and blessing both entered into what we may call the Jewish 'Grace,' and were so far convertible terms. It is noticeable that St. Paul's account in 1 Co 11<sup>23</sup> agrees on this point with St. Luke's.—PLUMPTRE.

'This is my body.'—The metaphorical language could not be misunderstood by Jews. Jesus said, 'I am the light,' 'I am the door,' 'I am the way.' In the O.T. we read

'All flesh is grass' (Is 40<sup>6</sup>), where the simple verb 'to be' evidently introduces a metaphor. Analogously we may understand our Lord's words here to mean, 'This represents My body.'—ADENEY.

'This do.'—The proposal to give these words a sacrificial meaning, and translate them 'Offer this, Sacrifice this, Offer this sacrifice,' cannot be maintained. It has against it (1) the ordinary meaning of ποιεῖν in N.T., in LXX, and in Greek literature generally; (2) the authority of all the *Greek Fathers*, who knew their own language, knew the N.T. and LXX, and understood the words as having the ordinary meaning, 'Perform this action'; (3) the authority of the *Early Liturgies*, which do not use ποιεῖν or *facere* when the bread and wine are offered, but προσφέρειν or *offerre*, although the words of institution precede the oblation, and thus suggest ποιεῖν or *facere*; (4) the authority of a large majority of commentators, ancient and modern, of the most various schools, who either make no comment, as if the ordinary meaning were too obvious to need stating: or give the ordinary meaning without mentioning any other as worthy of con-