

The Servant of the Lord.

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II.

The Servant as Spokesman of God and as Martyr (Isa. xlix. 1-9a, l. 4-9).

IN chapters 49 and 50 we have a very important group of passages about the Servant of the Lord which carries us a double step forward in our conception of him. In the beginning of chapter 42 we found the servant represented as one whose hand is held in the hand of God, in order that he may bring his fellows help from above, and may not despair of being able to save them. Because of his relation to God he is characterized by modesty and gentleness, yet a gentleness that never becomes softness. 'He shall bring forth law faithfully.' We were at pains in the last paper to make clear to ourselves that this Servant of the Lord is not an individual, but the God-fearing heart of the nation through whom, under God, the whole people is to be saved, and ultimately the heathen as well. We must keep this fact of *who the servant is* steadily in view as we approach other passages which are descriptive of him. We must not be misled by metaphors used of him which would in modern England be used only of an individual, and we must, above all things, adhere resolutely to what Scripture says.

At the beginning of chapter 49 the servant speaks: 'Listen, O isles, unto me; hearken, ye peoples, from far. The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the midst of my mother hath He made mention of my name . . . and He said unto me, Thou art My servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.' Yet not the whole of Israel, for he goes on: 'And now, saith the Lord who formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, and that Israel be gathered unto Him, . . . I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be My salvation unto the ends of the earth' (49¹⁻⁶).

I lay this great stress upon the fact of the servant being neither an individual nor the whole nation, but the pious kernel of the nation, because the qualities and functions of the servant which are mentioned in chapters 49 and 50 are really the qualities and functions of the devout Israelites, man by man, who, as a body, constitute that

saving salt of the nation to which the name Servant of the Lord is given. The prophet interprets the collective task through the personal duty.

Now let us see what the fresh features of the servant are. They are three, three that are almost inseparable. He is to express the glory of God, to be a vehicle of that glory to men. He is to be a witness by speech, and his witness will pass into martyrdom by suffering.

1. Jehovah said unto me, My servant art thou; Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

The word rendered 'be glorified' means to 'become visible.' The glory of God is His holiness, His character, known and recognized. But God is Spirit, pure Spirit. If, then, His character is to be made known to those who do not know Him, He has need of a human mediator; and until the Son of God Himself became man, God could be made known to mankind only through those men who followed their instinct for Him, who felt after Him if haply they might find Him, and having found Him, dwelt in His fellowship, their spirits with His. God is necessary to the best in man. He is necessary for the preservation of whatever is good in man.

If Thou take Thy grace away,
Nothing pure in man will stay,
All his good is turned to ill.

And so the Westminster divines were grandly right when they put as the first question and answer in their Catechism—

What is the chief end of man?
Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him
for ever.

That is one of the most inspired utterances of modern times, and has had an incalculable influence in moulding Scottish character. Every schoolboy in Presbyterian Scotland learns as his earliest lesson that 'man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever.' Teach a boy that

from his childhood, teach him to know God as his Father, to interpret God in his life and make Him visible to men, and you have set before him a permanent truth and a present duty, a duty, the fulfilment of which will ennoble him, and make him more Godlike all the days of his life. If, then, the Church is to be a servant of the Lord, if we who are its members are to contribute to make it so, we must see to it that the effect of our lives is to bring God near to our fellows. There must be something about us that needs explaining, a humility that is impressive in its dignity, the reverence of him who is aware that God is always near, and knows God as a Friend. By nothing short of this can God be glorified in us. Philanthropy is good, but it is not redemptive; it relieves from without, it gives no hope of change from within. Any sort of material help whatsoever has reference only to material welfare; and what men need above all things is that we give them a lift, a lifting up of the heart towards God, God who understands and sympathizes, and who alone can provide for all the needs of the creatures He has made. That which we call charity is good in its place; but if it is to uplift men and not pauperize them, it must be backed up by the love whose beautiful name it has usurped, it must be the expression of love,—love which is the character of God that men need to have interpreted and made visible to them.

2. In the second place, the servant is not only to interpret God in his life; he is, if I may so phrase it, to utter God with his lips as well as his life. 'He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of His hand hath He hid me; and He hath made me a polished shaft, in His quiver hath He kept me close' (Is 49²).

'The Lord God hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are taught. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward' (Is 50^{4, 5}).

In these two passages the prophet evidently puts his own experience into the lips of the servant. The words describe the writer. His utterance is like a sharp sword, which does its work perfectly, because it has been forged and

tempered by the hand of God Himself. His speech is like a pointed arrow going straight to the mark through all opposition of sin and pride and faithlessness. It has lain in the quiver of God, and at length been taken forth and drawn by the divine hand. Where, except in the words of Jesus, can we find a message from God more calculated to make men penitent and trustful than in the prophecies of 2 Isaiah? This is speech that comes from the tongue of the learner, as the prophet so significantly says. If any man speak on behalf of God, he must speak as the oracles of God; he must have listened with the inward ear for what the Holy Teacher saith; that and that alone must he utter without addition or subtraction. Here we have what is practically a definition of prophecy from one of the greatest of the prophets. And he represents this utterance as an ideal towards which all devout men, those who are the servant of the Lord, should aim. He seems to say: 'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets!' Let us examine a little more closely what is required in order to make a man the spokesman of God.

The first condition is that silence shall precede speech. The sword must be hidden in the shadow of God's hand, the arrow lie in His quiver. But this silence is not listlessness. So far from that, 'He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learners.' No listlessness this, but punctual waking by the heavenly voice with a view to instruction. Speech that is to be helpful must be the outcome of a life. Behind the speech must be the life that is hid in God, a life which is unseen by others, but not unfelt by them; the uplifting, of which they are conscious, is something which they know must be traced back to God. If we are to succour the weary with words, we must not be strangers to the secret place of the Most High. The silence in which the Lord Jehovah opens our ear and gives to us the tongue of the learner must precede the speech which is to convey the succour of God to those who are weary. And even though our words be very few, yet we ourselves shall be so full of our experience of God, that our bearing and our lives will, as I ventured to express it, utter God even beyond what the power of words can achieve. Let us see to it that morning by morning our ears are opened to the heavenly voice. Some of us have not many minutes, it may be, but let

us make the most of whatever time we have. And if you believe that a conversation every day with a good man would be a real help to you in resisting temptation, and would stimulate you to do your best, what may you not expect from even two minutes spent morning by morning in the presence of God listening to His voice?

But mark this, after the silence must come the speech.

I was not rebellious,
Nor turned away backward.

The speech may be in many words or few according to circumstances, but there is no man who is entitled to perpetually hold his peace and never name the name of God to a single human being.

I have spoken of the servant as one in whom God is glorified and made visible, and also as the spokesman of God. From v.⁶ onwards he is described as a martyr. Martyr is a Greek word spelled with English letters; but in Greek it means only witness, in English it means one who suffers because of his witness to the truth. In the experience of the servant of the Lord, the witness becomes the martyr. Now the Bible never blinds this fact, and neither must the expositor of the Bible nor anyone who means to regulate his life by the Bible. Jeremiah spoke of himself as a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. 2 Isaiah uses a similar phrase of the servant in chapter 53. Jesus bade His disciples rejoice and be exceeding glad when they suffered for righteousness' sake, 'for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.' Paul says that we must, *must*, through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God. And Browning echoes these greater voices of the past

when he says, 'How very hard it is to be a Christian.'

Jesus says that if a man will not take up his cross daily and bear it after Him, he cannot be His disciple. He says that 'he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.' But He says, 'I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is.' I know, therefore, all is well. 'Fear not, for I am with thee.' If thou couldst have served Me better in another place, there would I have placed thee. Paul, again, compares the Christian life to a warfare. 'Fight the good fight of the faith,' he said, and do not be surprised or discouraged if it feels like a real fight. You were never told to expect anything else. But, thank God, He knows all about it, and is not indifferent, but equips us in His own armour. And so, when His servant has to endure hardships, he can confidently say, 'The Lord God will help me; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.'

Savonarola, a man of noble family, gave up the prospect of social and political position and became a Dominican monk. He loved his adopted city of Florence with a passion that made him labour by all means for moral and spiritual reform. The pope let him have his way for a time until his reforms seemed likely to clash with the interests of Rome; and the prophet who had made the bonfire of vanities was himself burnt at the stake. But it is only he who is ready to lose his life for Christ's sake that can truly save it.

'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.'

Recent Foreign Theology.

Nietzsche's Mission.¹

IN recent years German writers have given much attention to 'the modern man' and his attitude towards Christianity. A series of essays on this subject is appearing in the *Hefte zur Christlichen*

¹ Der moderne Mensch und das Christenthum. Skizzen und Vorarbeiten ii. *Nietzsche's Mission. Christlich oder Modern?* Von Hans Weichelt. Williams & Norgate. 9d. net.

Welt; pt. 2 of this series, which has just been issued, contains two articles by Hans Weichelt, entitled respectively, 'Nietzsche's Mission,' and 'Christian or Modern?'

Weichelt holds that Nietzsche was nearer to the kingdom of God than many a Christian Pharisee, and enters a protest against the hard things which have been said of him in Christian pulpits. Nevertheless, Weichelt acknowledges that Nietzsche is