

ARTICLE IX.

THE SUFFERING SERVANT, AS RECORDED IN
ISAIAH LIII.

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AN advantage will be gained in this investigation, if we clearly define the hypothesis with which we set out. If a mere discussion of words could have settled all the perplexing questions connected with this marvellous chapter, the clear meaning of the chapter would not now be in doubt. Our first assumption is, that the expression "Arm of Jehovah" is the name of a person; or, at least, whatever "My Servant" may mean in this chapter, the same is meant by the phrase "Arm of Jehovah." Our second assumption is, that this "Arm of Jehovah" is an object of prophecy. Not yet is the revelation of him accomplished. However, a promise of his coming is made, that thereby the hearts of all may not faint in the time of trial. We propose the following translation, arranging the chapter in a strophical form, and we will discuss the ideas of the chapter under the various strophes.

I.

Who hath believed what we have heard?
And unto whom shall we reveal the Arm of Jehovah?
For he shall come up as a plant before them,
And as a root out of dry ground:
He shall have no beauty,
And no majesty, that we should look at him,
And no appearance, that we should desire him.

II.

He shall be despised, and forsaken of men;
A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:

And as one who hides his face from us,
 We shall despise and consider him not.
 Nevertheless, he bears our griefs,
 And our sorrows he carries ;
 While we consider him stricken,
 Smitten of God and afflicted.
 Yea, he is pierced by our sins,
 Bruised by our transgressions :
 The chastisement of our peace is upon him,
 And through his wounds we are healed.

III.

All we like sheep have strayed ;
 Each has followed his own way ;
 But Jehovah atones by him
 The erring of us all.
 He is brought near and he is afflicted,
 Yet he openeth not his mouth ;
 He is brought as a lamb for slaughter,
 And as a sheep before her shearers ;
 He is dumb and openeth not his mouth.
 From prison and judgment he is taken.
 Who will think of his generation ?
 For he is cut off from the land of the living.

IV.

By the sin of my people he is smitten.
 And his grave is appointed with the wicked,
 But with the rich is his sepulchre ;
 For he did no violence,
 And in his mouth was no deceit.
 Jehovah was pleased at his smiting,
 When he was smitten with grief ;
 Though his life was offered as a sin offering,
 He shall see seed, shall have length of days.
 Yea, Jehovah was pleased.
 By his hand he shall prosper.
 Of the travail of his soul he shall see, shall be satisfied :
 By knowledge of him the righteous God shall effect righteousness.

V.

My Servant is for many and bears their transgressions.
 Therefore, I will make for him portion in many,
 And he shall have portion as spoil with the strong ;
 For whom he exposed his life unto death,
 Yea, with sinners he was numbered,

And he bore the sins of many,
And made atonement for sinners.

I.

Introductory Strophe, ARM OF JEHOVAH.

Who hath believed what we have heard?
And unto whom shall we reveal the Arm of Jehovah?
For he shall come up as a plant before them,
And as a root out of dry ground:
He shall have no beauty,
And no majesty, that we should look at him,
And no appearance, that we should desire him.

We have separated this strophe, not only because it is separable in the plan of the writer, but because it gives us the key to the literary form of this chapter. This subject of form will be treated later. All that is needful now to observe is, that the first part of it is a tetrastich, while the second part is a tristich.

The prophet has received a revelation. He has heard a Somewhat. It is strange to himself. It is wonderful. Yet he has heard it; he has no doubt of its truth. He will not diminish its marvellousness. He asks: "Who hath believed? Unto whom shall we reveal?" This same prophet had had a marvellous revelation. He had predicted Cyrus by name. Yet, as startling as this fact was in all prophetic messages, it impelled him to no such introduction as we find here. What he now has to impart, will seem to all men beyond credence. This whole chapter has been ever most wonderful to all devout believers in revelation, and it will be found that its introduction is as singular in character as the chapter is wonderful in thought.

The person about whom this chapter is written, concerning whom the prophet has heard a Somewhat, is called in the introduction the Arm of Jehovah. It is first asserted, that he shall come up as a plant before men. The fact of growth is affirmed. The Arm of Jehovah a growth, the power of Je-

hovah in an organization, subjected to laws of increase—this was an astonishment. This Arm of Jehovah is still further defined. He is “as a root out of dry ground.” The condition for growth is to be most unfavorable. Indeed, such condition as on all human law of reasoning would necessitate scarcely a continuance of growth. Rather such condition as would probably result in premature death. Yet such an one is the Arm of Jehovah. Well might the prophet ask: “Who hath believed?”

This Arm of Jehovah has further development in this introduction. It is given in a negative tristich. “He shall have no beauty.” Rachel was beautiful; her son, Joseph, was beautiful. That outward charm which wins, although possessed by a stranger, which from earliest times and in all places has achieved, is denied to the Arm of Jehovah. All artists have ever vied with each other to paint a face which might in its various lineaments indicate the matchless beauty of those who are most excellent in all spiritual graces. Engrafted also in our deepest self is the faith, that whatever is likest God is not void of beauty. Yet the Arm of Jehovah is to have *no beauty*.

A couplet remains in this tristich. It is synonymous. The thought in the first line is in part repeated in the second. Indeed, this fact is further proved by the identical grammatical structure of each line.

And *no majesty*, that we should look at him,
And *no appearance*, that we should desire him.

Jehovah is king—this is a fundamental faith of Israel. Balaam hears while on the mountain-top a shout coming from the camp of the Israelites; he tells Balak that this shout is the shout for the king. If there were to be an *a priori* speculation as to the character of the Arm of Jehovah, it would have had as one of the essential elements, that he should have majesty, so that we should look at him, and appearance, so that we should desire him. But an essential element according

to human thought is of no necessary consequence in the divine procedure.

II.

First Theme: ARM OF JEHOVAH, *his Life*.—The theme is stated in a tetrastich, and amplified in an octastich.

He shall be despised, and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:
And as one who hides his face from us,
We shall despise and consider him not.

This description of a human life is peculiarly adapted to touch the heart with the feeling of pity. Yet pity is forbidden by the composition, when all the facts are considered. When the outward seeming and the inward character are alike, when the character excites our sympathies or commiseration as well as the garb, then we may truly give pity to the object, but only then. However, the character beneath all this outward seeming is the Arm of Jehovah. This character is the most exalted, and most fitted to excite to admiration. We cannot award pity to him unless we are ignorant of him who dwells within this appearance.

It was no new experience for Jehovah to be "despised and forsaken" by the Hebrews. Indeed, the whole troop of unutterable miseries which fell upon this favored people, their prophets traced to the changed attitude of the people toward Jehovah. It no longer loved but despised Jehovah; it no longer came to him, but forsook him; then Jehovah overthrew this chosen and ancient people. The Arm of Jehovah is to suffer this same experience. He is to be despised and forsaken by men. The parallel thought is found in the fourth line: "We shall despise and consider him not." The change of person in the first and fourth lines is significant. Men and we become identical. Men with the chosen people are here brought under consideration. Men and the chosen people despise him. Yea, not even the chosen people will consider him, and the reason assigned is, that he "hides his face from

us." Impliedly is here found ground for the inference, that, were but his face seen, the chosen people must have considered him. This One, possessing by right all beauty, and yet presenting no appearance such as we should desire; this One, having by right all majesty, yet of such appearance that he does not attract our gaze, may well be said to "hide his face from us."

One line in this tetrastich, describing in brief the life of the Arm of Jehovah, is, by itself, the most weighty, is, indeed, the keynote to the following eight lines that complete the treatment of the first theme. This line is, "A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." The Arm of Jehovah is thus defined. Mystery pervades the definition. The subject is Arm of Jehovah; the predicate is "A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." The Mightiest is yet touched by sorrow, the All-powerful is yet moved by grief. Well may this line have been the object of meditation for the hosts of holy men of all times. The divine is surely here encompassed by the human.

The octastich which follows is really the unfolding of all the meaning in this marvellous line. But it has two parts, each in four lines. The first four lines are:—

Nevertheless, he bears our griefs,
And our sorrows he carries;
While we consider him stricken,
Smitten of God and afflicted.

He is a Man of sorrows, but the sorrows are our own sorrows. He is a Man acquainted with grief, but the griefs are our own griefs. O how burdened is the Arm of Jehovah by our griefs and our sorrows! This is a transference which we least of all could have anticipated. It is another feature, which is so mysterious, that in the presence of it well might the prophet say, "Who will believe what we have heard?" It is no light burden. Its weight is beyond the lifting of the human. No power short of the Arm of Jehovah is sufficient. But a grief

is not carried on the back nor a sorrow on the shoulder. It is in the heart where griefs and sorrows are born and carried. Surely the miseries of the human have touched mightily, all-mightily, the divine.

But what is the attitude of those for whom suffering is endured? The last two lines of these four set it forth:—

While we consider him stricken,
Smitten of God and afflicted.

By no fair reasoning can God and the Arm of Jehovah be regarded here as the same. At least, the human way of considering them is under the belief of different personalities. The nature of the Arm of Jehovah is to be argued by his doing, and truly, only the omnipotent power and love of the divine can be adequate for his work. Here is evidence of the strange bewilderment of this chapter. That which attests to God the unique service and worth of his arm is to man only an evidence that God smites and afflicts this person.

The second four lines in this octastich are as follows:—

Yea, he is pierced by our sins,
Bruised by our transgressions :
The chastisement of our peace is upon him,
And through his wounds we are healed.

This Arm of Jehovah hath other burdens besides our sorrows and our griefs. The full complement of his service is not yet reached. What remains, is told in the words, "our sins," "our transgressions." These pierce him, these bruise him. The work of sin and transgressions has a fearful detailing in this couplet. They wound us, they wound him. How near he is to us, as set forth in these lines! Truly he is one with us. Can more be told? Yes, it is contained in the last two lines of this part:—

The chastisement of our peace is upon him,
And through his wounds we are healed.

Here is the greatest mystery. Here all reverent minds proceed with awed advance. Here the facts asserted may be

pointed out. Their explanation may be scarcely attempted. Punishment to him, peace in consequence to us. His wounding is our healing. It is not Jehovah that does the wounding, it is our sins that pierce and wound. It is not Jehovah that does the punishing; it is our transgressions that bruise and make the wounds. Only the infatuated, deceived judgments of ourselves "consider him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." We are the authors, not God. All is endured that peace may come to us and also healing come to us. Here is a sight; here is teaching that hath power to touch in them the heart of stone and make it a heart of flesh. Here is power unto atonement.

III.

Second Theme: ARM OF JEHOVAH, *his Death*.—This theme is also stated in a tetrastich, and amplified in an octastich. The following states the theme:—

All we like sheep have strayed ;
 Each has followed his own way ;
 But Jehovah atones by him
 The erring of us all.

The universal "All we" is such an one as Paul accepts without controversy. The comparison "like sheep" is exhausted in the statement of the verb "have strayed." The figure has no further suggestiveness. The irregular wandering of sheep is a picture of mankind. Both need a shepherd. Herein is found the principal meaning of the verb, translated, "atone." The power, personal and active, which reaches us all in our erring is this Arm of Jehovah. Here is the foreshadowing of the parable of The Good Shepherd and The Lost Sheep. The word "atone" is here employed only to express the fact that this diverse wandering of us all is corrected, made impossible, because all no longer follow their own ways, but the ways of Jehovah; there is an at-one movement, there is atonement.

The activity of Jehovah is the remarkable feature of this

tetrastich. It is not strange, this wandering of mankind. The history of the race makes this fact most familiar. The problem is to correct it. Legislation is witness to efforts to restrict it. But a method by which it may be reached, corrected, this has been the hopeless aim of all human endeavor. This remarkable passage asserts, that this end hath been accomplished by Jehovah in him. We may not see how this is. Man cannot see in the beginning of a great movement all that it ultimately achieves. But this limitation upon vision adheres not in God. We have his word that all has been accomplished.

The octastich following presents the Trial, the Conviction, the Death of the Arm of Jehovah. Five of the lines are employed to set forth the Trial.

He is brought near and he is afflicted,
 Yet he openeth not his mouth ;
 He is brought as a lamb for slaughter,
 And as a sheep before her shearers ;
 He is dumb and openeth not his mouth.

The silence of him is divine. He by silence argues his unique nature. The divine must not defend itself before the human tribunal. To do so, would be to deny the irreproachableness of the divine. Afflicted—yes, by us; silent—yes, before us. Able to endure the violence of our little might in silence.

The limitations of the comparisons again must be set. Helplessness is the dominant thought; doomed to be slaughtered, yet as helpless as a lamb; doomed to be spoiled, yet as helpless as a sheep. That the divine could so lay aside his power, that he could be so completely in the hands of men—is marvellous. Yet he laid aside his power only in the sense of not employing it, and by his own choice he gave himself into the power of man. This is the method of the divine. He will come near to us. He will come even though we raise our hands to slay and to spoil him. Nearness may touch us into love for him. This method of atonement is surely divine.

If the method is divine, the manner of him who atones is divine. The greater the human strength employed against him, the stronger is the language employed to express his silence. He is dumb. There is no utterance. Silence deepens as violence increases. "He is dumb, he openeth not his mouth."

The Condemnation and Death are portrayed in three lines:—

From prison and judgment he is taken.
Who will think of his generation?
For he is cut off from the land of the living.

The facts of condemnation and death are set forth in the first and last of these three lines. There is no hovering over these two facts. There is no astonishment expressed concerning them. But the second line is what arrests our attention; it is another element in this message, heard by the prophet, so mysteriously, that he asks, "Who will believe?" This line, fraught full of marvellous questioning, is a clear interrogative, caused by a look beyond the grave. "Who will think of his generation?" Surely no one would think of his generation. His death ends all. This is truly an unlooked-for closing to this octastich. The question is such that but one answer could be looked for. Can such an inquiry be made when he is cut off from the living? There is much that ends according to the human estimate, which is but the beginning of the divine, omnipotent working. The end of a matter with man may be but the commencement of Jehovah's mightiest and most signal triumphs. "Who will look for his generation?"

IV.

The Third Theme: ARM OF JEHOVAH, *his Resurrection and his Reward*.—This strophe contains twelve lines, but the arrangement within it is somewhat different from the two strophes which precede. The order here is first a pentastich, then a tristich, then a tetrastich. At first we have the fact of

the death of the Arm of Jehovah dwelt upon. This is an influence of the former strophe. There it is given as a reason for a query which the prophet makes. The fact of his death is developed in five lines of this strophe.

By the sin of my people he is smitten.
 And his grave is appointed with the wicked ;
 But with the rich is his sepulchre ;
 For he did no violence,
 And in his mouth was no deceit.

The power that smites—it is “ the sins of my people.” These are Jehovah’s own words. He who is smitten is the One, living and dying among us. The smiting is not traceable to any source but our sins.

The last four lines of the above are singular. The ad-versative idea first attracts attention. The appointment and the fact differ. The appointment is to have the grave with the wicked, but the fact is that he is sepulchred with the rich. We are not to point out how this distinction is carried out in the Gospel narratives. It is simply our aim to emphasize that this distinction is here made and expressed. The reason has more immediate claim upon our attention. What is there in a character which has never done violence, whose every act in life was replete with the gentleness of love, that could suggest even that this peculiar and noble character would influence the place of such an one’s burial? What is there in absolute truthfulness so mighty that it can influence *where* one who speaks thus, shall be buried? Again, what peculiar truth is made prominent by the fact, that one with character for gentleness and no violence, with truth and no deceit, shall have sepulchre with the rich? These are all questions which force themselves on the attention. Worth must have recognition sometime. Recognition is to enrich where poverty had been present. Recognition is the gift of the rich, in the realm wherein recognition is conferred. This truth may be connected with the words under consideration. Also another,

which lies at the basis of all princely giving by the rich, is illustrated; namely, that the rich have their best returns, when they employ all their possessions in honoring those who are greatest and noblest in character. Perhaps we may find in these truths some clue to the singular causal statement, that he was sepulchred with the rich, because he did no violence and in his mouth was no deceit.

A tristich follows, in which the fact of Resurrection and Reward is given.

Jehovah was pleased at his smiting,
Though his life was offered as a sin offering.
He shall see seed, shall have length of days.

The statement is not, that Jehovah was pleased to smite him. The statement is, that Jehovah was pleased at the time of his smiting. Not the smiters, but the One smitten, gave the pleasure. Not the suffering, but the noble Sufferer, gave the pleasure. The second line leads us to the cause of the pleasure of Jehovah. He, the Arm of Jehovah, was a sin-offering. He was a power, the mightiest power to atone sin. Life of him was yielded in the movement of atonement for sin. Jehovah was pleased. The third line is the great utterance of the new thought. "He shall see." Dead, but yet he shall see. Here is a statement of a new fact. Here is another element in this marvellous something which the prophet had heard, which seemed to his own mind impossible to win credence; for he says: "Who shall believe what we have heard?" He shall see seed. The former strophe closes with the question:—

Who will think of his generation?
For he is cut off from the land of the living.

The answer is simply that "he shall see seed." Nor this alone, but that "length of days shall be his" also. There is no limitation on his life. His eyes shall see his generation.

The prophet will not permit mistake on this important

feature of his message. He repeats the tristich in the following four lines:—

Yea, Jehovah was pleased,
 By his hand he shall prosper.
 Of the travail of his soul he shall see, shall be satisfied,
 By knowledge of him the righteous God shall effect righteousness.

The facts of the pleasure of Jehovah and of this seeing by him of his seed, are repeated from the former lines. But it is additional to state that Jehovah shall prosper him, and that he who has been the sufferer shall be satisfied in what he sees. But the great and significant line is the last one of these four, if one may dare to describe differences of magnitude where all seem beyond measurement. It is asserted that knowledge of him is that power by which Jehovah, the righteous God, shall make righteous. Righteousness, when accomplished, needs no justification. It is not open to condemnation. The great truth declared is, righteous by knowledge of him: Jehovah's method of making righteous is by knowledge of him. "Who will believe what we have heard?"

V.

There remains but the conclusion of this wonderful chapter to be considered. But before considering it, one remark must be made concerning the form of the chapter. The introduction is in two parts, a tetrastich and a tristich. Three and four are the numbers that prevail throughout. Thus each strophe is made up of twelve lines—three times four. There are three strophes. The conclusion is identical in character with the introduction. It is made up of a tetrastich and a tristich. We believe that at the basis of all the marvellous utterance of the Old Testament lie numbers, just as at the basis of the flower-kingdom is found the dominance of number. That investigations along this line will pour a flood of light on much now obscure in the Hebrew Scriptures, is an abiding faith with me.

The conclusion is as follows:—

My Servant is for many and bears their transgressions,
Therefore, I will make for him portion in many,
And he shall have portion as spoil with the strong;
For whom he exposed his life unto death.

Yea, with sinners he was numbered,
And he bore the sins of many,
And made atonement for sinners.

There is limitation expressed in the first line. For *many*—it is a phrase of limitation. My Servant bears their transgressions. The fact, not the method, is here given. The chapter has suggested the method. *Many* shall be the portion of him. The *many* and the strong, for whom he died, he shall have portion with *both*. Such is the brief teaching of the first four lines. The same thought had been spoken before, in the earlier part of this chapter. So important is the thought that now again it is rehearsed. Indeed, the last three lines is but another repetition.

Yea, with sinners he was numbered,
And he bore the sins of many,
And made atonement for sinners.

Perhaps these three lines will give us some light upon this word “many,” which appears three times in this conclusion. It would seem that “bore the sins” and “made atonement” were synonymous expressions. At least, that the same peculiar and unique fact is set forth in each expression. Then, “sinners” and “the many” are interchangeable. The logic of the lines is, that he who was numbered with sinners is he who bears their sins. Among them, but not like them; among them, and taking away their burdens; among them, and making atonement for them; this is he who is My Servant, this is he who is the Arm of Jehovah. His portion is many. These are the things the prophet has heard. So mysterious, even to him, that he says:—

Who hath believed what we have heard,
And unto whom shall we reveal?

They who believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, shall believe in the prophet's words; for unto all others it is incredible. They who have had their transgressions borne by the Saviour will believe. They who see the Christ in suffering for them will believe, for such *seeing* opens up the heart unto his loving sorrow, and this leads to a return movement unto God.