

*THE SERVANT OF THE LORD IN THE GOSPEL
ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW.*

It may be accepted as one of the best attested results of modern criticism that our first Gospel in its present form is a composite document ; and there is, further, widespread agreement as to the nature of the various sources out of which it has been compiled. These, speaking generally, are (1) an historical narrative which corresponds very closely with our canonical Gospel of St. Mark ; (2) a collection of *Logia*, or discourses, in all probability to be identified with the *Logia* referred to by Papias as the work of the Apostle Matthew ; and (3) Tradition, partly written, as in the case of the genealogy of the first chapter, but for the most part oral.

It will be obvious that such an account of its origin does not necessarily interfere with the historical character of the Gospel. A document may be drawn from many sources, and yet these be so combined by the skill and fidelity of the writer as to present a thoroughly trustworthy narrative. But at the same time it is clear that the very fact that a writer does so select and combine his materials indicates that he is guided by some definite motive or purpose in his work. In the case of the Gospel before us the presence of such a purpose is doubtless often unduly pressed ; and even when the grosser exaggerations of the "Tendenz-Kritik" are avoided, we are invited to see in it a deliberately planned and executed work of art, in which words and phrases are carefully studied in accordance with the writer's dogmatic aim. Such a description, needless to say, is altogether alien to the generally simple and artless character of the narrative, and so far as it implies a one-sided tendency on the part of the writer is immediately answered by the phenomena which the Gospel itself displays. For if it be

the case, as we shall see more fully directly, that our first Gospel possesses a generally Jewish-Christian character, it is equally certain that its writer has no intention of so exalting the Jewish side of Christianity as to depreciate or lose sight of the inclusion of Gentiles as well as Jews in the saving purposes of Jesus. On the contrary, it is just here that we find some of the most striking evidence of His kingdom's wider and more spiritual character, as witness the account of the visit of the Wise Men from the East to the infant Jesus (chap. ii. 1 ff.); the plea for a righteousness that shall "exceed" the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (chap. v. 20); the abolition of a merely external purity as compared with purity of the heart (chap. xv. 20); and, above all, the great commission which the risen Lord lays upon His disciples to "make disciples of all the nations" (chap. xxviii. 19). All these, and other similar passages, we would more naturally have looked for in the Gentile Gospel of St. Luke. And the fact that it is our Jewish first Evangelist who alone has preserved them for us is in itself a proof of the impartial and catholic character of his work, and his independence of all parties.¹

At the same time there can be no doubt that the writer of the first Gospel, whom for convenience we may continue to describe as St. Matthew, himself views Jesus' person and work principally from a Judaistic standpoint, and that it is specially with the view of deepening the faith of his Jewish fellow-countrymen in Jesus as the Messiah that he writes. It is "Jesus who is called Christ" (cnaps. i. 16; xxvii, 17, 22), who is ever before his eye, and already in his opening

¹ "That this Gospel, though written by a Jewish Christian, should nevertheless, in those leading points which are at once visible harmonize with Paul, and should exhibit a Christ elevated yet human, law-observing yet superior to the Law, Jewish yet more than Jewish, is to us a complete proof of its essential accuracy" (Keim, *Jesus of Nazara*, i. p. 74 f., E. Tr.). Similarly Jülicher speaks of the writer as "outside the contests of the apostolic time" (*Einkl. in d. N.T.*, p. 194).

chapter he strikes the keynote from which he will have us to regard the whole earthly life of Jesus, "Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet" (chap. i. 22). Thus, for example, after proving by means of an elaborate genealogical table, divided according to Jewish usage into three sections each containing fourteen generations, that Jesus of Nazareth is the legitimate descendant of Abraham and David (chap. i. 1-16), the Evangelist goes on to show that He is the Emmanuel to whose miraculous birth the Prophet Isaiah had testified (chap. i. 23; Isa. vii. 14), and the Governor who, according to Micah, was to come forth from Bethlehem (chap. ii. 5, 6; Mic. v. 2); and, further, that, like the people he had come to save, in Him was fulfilled the old prophecy of Hosea: "Out of Egypt have I called my Son" (chap. ii. 15; Hos. xi. 1). So anxious, indeed, is he to find points of resemblance, that he is not afraid to venture even on a somewhat bold play upon words, and in Jesus of *Nazareth* to find the fulfilment of the old prophecy which spoke of Messiah as *Netser*, a Branch (chap. ii. 23; Isa. xi. 1).¹ He is on surer ground when he ushers in the story of the Galilean ministry by a reference to Isaiah's great promise of the Light that was to spring up for those sitting in the region and shadow of death (chap. iv. 14 f.; Isa. ix. 1, 2); while, when we pass to the ministry itself, in no other of the Gospels do we find so much prominence given to that aspect of Jesus' teaching which connects it with the past, as witness His fulfilment, and not destruction, of the Law (chap. v. 17), and the large space occupied by the Parables of the Kingdom, in which the true character of Israel's Messianic hopes is set forth.

In his account, too, of the Passion, which to many of his

¹ "Es ist nicht die mindeste sachliche Uebereinstimmung vorhanden; nur der Gleichklang der Buchstaben hat zur Heranziehung der alttestamentlichen Stelle geführt" (Hühn, *Die messianischen Weissagungen*, II. Theil, p. 3).

readers must have proved the chief stumblingblock in the way of full acceptance of Jesus' Messianic claims, St. Matthew is careful to connect at every turn even its apparently most outward incidents with some passages from Old Testament Prophecy, and may even possibly have unconsciously modified some of the historical details in order to make them correspond more exactly with the language of Zechariah and the Psalmist, as when he introduces the "ass" beside the "colt" in his account of the triumphal entry (chap. xxi. 5; Zech. ix. 9), or specifies the "thirty pieces of silver" for which Jesus was betrayed (chap. xxvi. 15; Zech. xi. 12), or mentions the mingling of "gall" with the wine (chap. xxvii. 34; Ps. lxxix. 21), statements in which he is supported by none of the other Evangelists. In the same way a parallel evidently suggests itself to his mind between the parting of Christ's garments and the word from the Psalms, "They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots" (chap. xxvii. 35; Ps. xxii. 18). And the same may be said of the mocking cry of chap. xxvii. 43, "He trusteth on God; let him deliver him now, if he desireth him: for he said, I am the Son of God," a clear echo of, if not a direct quotation from, Psalm xxii. 8. Many other fulfilments suggest themselves, notably in the case of some of Jesus' own last words from the cross; but enough has been said to show generally how closely in the Evangelist's mind the whole history of Jesus is associated with God's past dealings with His people, and we must turn now to what is in many respects the most important fulfilment of all, and one certainly which seems to have had a special interest for St. Matthew, and that is the fulfilment in the Person of Jesus of the great prophecies regarding the Servant of Jehovah, or the Servant of the Lord.

It is in II. Isaiah that these prophecies come most prominently before us. And though it has been much discussed to whom the Servant is there to be referred, whether, that

is, to the nation as a whole, or to an elect portion of it, or even to a single individual, the probability is that all three references should be recognized, and that, too, in the order which we have just indicated. Thus nothing can be clearer than the manner in which, particularly in his earlier prophecies, the Prophet unhesitatingly applies the title Servant to the whole nation of Israel, not indeed as a mere aggregate of individuals, but as a society, a body politic—the special object of God's call (Isa. xli. 8; xlv. 1, 2, 21; xlviii. 20). But no sooner does the thought of the destiny to which this call leads become prominent than the Prophet, realizing how little the great mass of the people correspond to it, turns his thoughts not so much to Israel as a whole as to the real Israel within Israel, conscious and effective Israel, the loyal kernel within the nation (chap. xlix. 3-6; l. 4-9). Nor is even this all, but in the great closing section of the prophecy, chap. lii. 13-14, the reference is narrowed still further, and only in an individual person can the full meaning of the Prophet's words be exhausted.¹

But side by side with this development in the idea of the Servant a corresponding development in the idea of his office has been observed. Thus, in the first stage, when the Servant represents Israel as a whole, it is the *prophetic* aspect of his office that is prominent. In the second stage, the faithful Servant, in his very fidelity to his mission, is seen face to face with suffering and death: he is the *martyr* Servant. While in the third stage, where the idea of the Servant culminates in an individual, an *atonement* significance is added to the sufferings and death which he endures on

¹ See Prof. G. A. Smith, "The Book of Isaiah" (in *The Expositor's Bible*), ii. p. 255 ff. Compare also Delitzsch, *Isaiah*, ii. p. 174: "The conception of the servant of Jehovah is, as it were, a pyramid, of which the base is the people of Israel as a whole, the central part Israel 'according to the spirit,' and the summit the person of the Mediator of Salvation who arises out of Israel"; and to much the same effect Cheyne, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, 4th Edit., ii. p. 211 ff.; and Kirkpatrick, *The Doctrine of the Prophets*, p. 381 ff.

behalf of others. The three stages may not be always rigidly marked off from each other, but that they exist in broad outline is, we venture to think, undoubted;¹ while upon one point all may be held as agreed, that it is first of all in the one Person of Jesus Christ that they find their complete and final fulfilment. And what, therefore, we are concerned just now to try to show is, that this same progress which we have found underlying the idea of Isaiah's Servant and his work is reproduced in the Gospel portrait of Jesus Christ, and more particularly in that portrait as it is brought before us in the first Gospel.

Thus, to turn at once to the *prophetic* aspect of Jesus' mission, it is unnecessary to refer in detail to the different proofs which have been brought forward to show how prominent the thought of the prophetic Word as a means of salvation is in the first days of Christ's public ministry,² it is sufficient to point to a single decisive passage bearing directly on the point before us. It occurs in St. Matthew xii. 18-21, where the Evangelist sees in the nature of Jesus' work the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy :

Behold my servant whom I have chosen;
 My beloved in whom my soul is well pleased:
 I will put my Spirit upon him,
 And he shall declare judgment to the Gentiles.
 He shall not strive, nor cry aloud;
 Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets.
 A bruised reed shall he not break,
 And smoking flax shall he not quench,
 Till he send forth judgment unto victory.
 And in his name shall the Gentiles hope.

The words are taken, it will be observed, from the description of the Servant in Isaiah xlii. 1-4, and the very freedom with which they are cited may be regarded as a proof that we have here not merely a quotation, but the

¹ See especially Prof. G. A. Smith, *ut sup.*, p. 276 f.

² Comp. *e.g.* Beyschlag, *New Test. Theol.*, i. p. 146 ff., E. Tr.

ideal picture in the Evangelist's own mind of what the ministry of Jesus is like. And what is this picture? Into its different elements we cannot enter at length; but it will be seen that it at least comprises all the leading traits which go to make up the Isaian idea of the true Servant of the Lord—his Divine choice and the Divine power in which he works, the extension of his mission to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews, and the tender and compassionate manner in which that mission is executed. It is thus as a Prophet, a divinely-appointed Messenger of God, making known the justice and righteousness of God,¹ that Jesus under the figure of the Servant is here brought before us.

But this, after all, is only a first stage; and as we follow the description of Christ's mission as it unfolds itself before us in the Gospel, it is to discover that again, as in the case of the Servant, that mission cannot be accomplished without suffering and even death on the part of Him who is summoned to it. Some prevision of this fate must, so it seems to us, have been present to Christ's mind from the very first, and is clearly hinted at on various occasions, as, for example, when He speaks of the Bridegroom, who is to be taken violently away (*ἀπαρθῆ*) from the sons of the bride-chamber (St. Matt. ix. 15). And how indeed could it have been otherwise in view of His own announcement of a Kingdom so contrary to Jewish expectations, and His remembrance of the tragic end that had already overtaken so many of God's Prophets, and more especially His own great forerunner? But while this is so, St. Matthew agrees with the other Synoptists in indicating a definite period or crisis in Christ's ministry, when "from that time began Jesus to shew unto his

¹ The real force of the Hebrew original is apt to be obscured by the translation of מִשְׁפָּט by *κρίσις* (as in the LXX.), which suggests the thought of a judicial sentence.

disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up" (St. Matt. xvi. 21, and parallels). Neither in this, indeed, nor in the two similar prophetic announcements by which it is followed (St. Matt. xvii. 22, 23; xx. 18, 19, and parallels), does Jesus make any direct reference to the prophecy of the Servant in Isaiah; but in all the idea of the *martyr* Servant, which we have seen to be the second stage in Isaiah's conception, is undoubtedly present. For it will be observed that as yet Jesus attaches no thought of any atoning efficacy to His death. That death is presented rather as coming to Him simply owing to the fidelity with which He discharges the work entrusted to Him, and the corresponding opposition He arouses on the part of the Jewish rulers, whose hopes He has disappointed.

But there is yet a third stage in which, not so often perhaps or so clearly as we might have expected in view of later apostolic teaching, but still unmistakably, the *atoning* or *sacrificial* aspect of that death is brought out. Two words of Jesus are specially noteworthy in this connexion. The first occurs in His conversation with His disciples after the ambitious request of the sons of Zebedee, when He sums up the aim of His mission in the words, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (St. Matt. xx. 28). The second forms part of the instructions at the Last Supper, where the Evangelist represents Jesus as adding, after He has bade His disciples drink of the Cup, "For this is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins" (St. Matt. xxvi. 28). Both words have proved the subject of much controversy, and the exact meaning to be attached to some of their terms is still hotly disputed. But at present all

that we are concerned to point out is, that in the case of both there is a reminiscence not only of the idea of, but of the actual language used regarding, the Servant of the Lord in Old Testament prophecy.

Thus, in the case of the first word, it is idle to pretend that the last clause is simply a repetition of the one immediately preceding, and that its meaning is exhausted in the thought of service, even of service endured unto death. The thought of vicarious suffering in some form must underlie the words "a ransom for," or more literally, "instead of many" (λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν).¹ And the meaning is then brought into close parallel with the prophetic announcement of the suffering Servant: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. liii. 4, 5). While, as regards language, it is impossible not to see in the "many" for whom ransom is provided a reference to the "many" of Isaiah liii. 11.²

The history of the second word, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of

¹ So convinced is Baur of this that he makes it the basis of an altogether unwarranted attack on the authenticity of the word, on the ground that such an idea of vicarious suffering is, with the other exception of St. Matthew xxvi. 28, wholly foreign to Jesus' teaching (*Vorlesungen über Neutest. Theologie*, p. 100).

² Dr. Briggs (*The Messiah of the Gospels*, p. 111) thinks that the term "ransom" was probably derived from the second Isaiah: "I have given Egypt as thy ransom, Cush and Seba in thy stead. Since thou art precious in mine eyes; thou art honoured, and I love thee; and I will give mankind in thy stead, and peoples instead of thy life" (Isa. xliii. 3, 4). But the LXX. rendering for the Hebrew קָנָה is here ἀλλαγμα, and not λύτρον. At the same time the *idea* of ransom in the above passage as the price of redemption from bondage corresponds more nearly with the Gospel sense than is the case in some of the other Old Testament parallels which are often cited, as Psalm xlix. 7, where the LXX. reads ἐξλασμα (see Ritschl, *Christl. Lehre von der Rechtfertigung u. Versöhnung*, 3te Aufl., ii. p. 81).

sins," is not so clear. The Passover, the covenant sacrifice at Sinai (Exod. xxiv. 1-12), and the new covenant of Jeremiah (chap. xxxi. 31-37) and Ezekiel (chaps. xxxiv. 25-31, xxxvii. 26-28), would all seem to have been in Jesus' mind as He spoke, and from each the rite He was instituting gathered some of its significance. But why leave out of sight along with these the thought of the covenant which in II. Isaiah is directly connected with the Servant of the Lord, "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness . . . and will give thee for a covenant of the people" (Isa. xlii. 6; comp. xlix. 8)?¹ or ignore again the reference to the "many" whom God's righteous Servant is to justify (Isa. liii. 11)?

Further than this we cannot carry the present inquiry. Our aim has been simply to try to show that that portion of Old Testament Scripture, which has been claimed as Jesus' own favourite portion,² has full justice done to it by the Evangelist, who of all the Synoptists brings out most clearly the organic connexion between the Old Covenant and the New; and that in the one Person of Him who reigned from the tree we have the perfect fulfilment of the prophetic picture of the suffering and yet triumphant Servant of the Lord.

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¹ Briggs, *The Messiah of the Gospels*, p. 121.

² "Parmi les prophètes écrivains il fit un choix. Il ne semble pas les avoir tous également goûtés. Ésaïe paraît avoir été son auteur de prédilection" (Stapfer, *Jésus-Christ avant son ministère*, p. 104 [Holtzmann, *Neutest. Theol.*, i. p. 115]).