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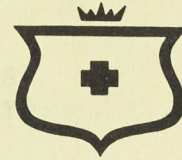
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the opinion



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ADVENT HYMN

by Richard Bower

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domine...
In quietness the candles flicker
down the long dark grey vault
of shadows and faces and heavenly chords.
'Benedictus' is uttered as if half believed
yet lightly it soars to the ceiling
through corridors, 'round pillars
Till comes to rest deep within, and warms.
Its golden softness persuades
and doubts seek to flee.

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domine...
The voices soar higher and higher
and lifted up as if to meet,
with heaven and earth nearly one.
Then all is quiet and soft
waiting to know
with anxious and pleading, await.
The silent flickering lights
pulsing with desire,
with quiet intense, wait too.

(continued)

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RICHARD BOWER, student body president at Fuller Seminary, graduated from the University of Southern California with a B. A. in music. He served last year as Editor-in-Chief of the opinion.

THE SERVANT CONCEPT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

by Ed Blankespoor

The servant is a common Old Testament concept to express relationship to Yahweh. In order to express humility before God the pious Israelite worshipper often designated himself as a servant of Yahweh. Frequently the Israelites described their leaders as servants of Yahweh. The patriarchs are often called servants. The Massoretic Text calls Moses a servant forty times. The prophets are the servants of God as are the kings, especially David. According to Deutero-Isaiah, the nation of Israel as a whole is a servant of Yahweh. In all of these uses of the concept of servant, the key idea is the recognition of belonging to God as a result of God's gracious election. When an Israelite worshipper called himself a servant of God he acknowledged thereby God's lordship over him due to God's favor. And to recognize a leader as Yahweh's servant was to acknowledge that God had chosen that leader for his particular task. In Deutero-Isaiah the complement of Israel's designation as a servant is her election by Yahweh.¹

This common Old Testament concept of the servant reaches its fulfillment in the suffering servant passages of Deutero-Isaiah. Here are four songs which describe in detail the servant as a suffering servant. Bernard Duhm in 1892 was the first scholar to distinguish these servant of Yahweh songs in Deutero-Isaiah. Most scholars now agree that four songs which describe the servant of Yahweh (42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12) form a special group among the poems in Deutero-Isaiah.²

The first song states that the servant is God's elect in whom his soul delights (Is. 42:1). Thus, the suffering servant stands in the tradition of all the Old Testament servants who acknowledge their election by God. God has placed upon this elect servant his Spirit so that the servant can bring judgment on the nations (42:1&4). Slowly but surely he will fulfill this mission (42:2-4). According to the second song, the servant's mission is to bring Israel back to God and be a light to the nations so that God's salvation can reach to the end of the earth (49:5&6). He will also be a covenant to the people. Yahweh called his servant to this mission from the womb (49:1&5). The third song indicates that in order to perform his mission, the servant suffers voluntarily (50:6). But he can bear the suffering patiently and courageously, for God is his helper (50:7-9). The fourth song describes the

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1. W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, The Servant of God (London: SCM, 1957), pp. 13-23.
 2. Joh. Lindblom, The Servant Song in Deutero-Isaiah (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1951), p. 12.

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nature of the servant's sufferings. In the first place, the observers describe the suffering of the servant. They are astonished and amazed at his suffering for they realize that he suffered and died for their sins (53:4-6). His suffering is the source of their healing (53:5). In the second place Yahweh describes his suffering servant. The servant will receive future exaltation and glory (52:13 and 53:12). Although he died, he will live to receive the spoil of his willing sacrifice (53:12). The key idea in the fourth song is substitutionary suffering. The servant of Yahweh bears what others ought to suffer.

From this description of the servant of Yahweh it is possible to distill some basic characteristics of the servant and his mission. God elects the servant for his mission and gives him the Holy Spirit in order to execute his mission. His mission is to bring salvation and judgment to the Jews and Gentiles. And the means for achieving this mission is substitutionary suffering. It is important to note that the sufferings are not merely the consequence of his mission but the means by which the servant fulfills his mission.³

If these are the characteristics of the servant, who then is the servant of Yahweh? To this question there is no simple answer. The exact identity of the servant of Yahweh remains unsolved. Old Testament scholars are still asking the eunuch's question: "About whom, pray, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else" (Acts 8:34)?

In the history of interpretation of the servant songs, two views have been prominent. The servant of Yahweh is the prophet himself; or the servant of Yahweh is the nation of Israel. A representative of the first view is J. Jeremias who suggests that the servant is the Deutero-Isaiah himself. Through the concept of the suffering servant Deutero-Isaiah describes his personal suffering and expresses his assurance of God's vindication.⁴

However, a simple identification of the servant with the prophet himself is not satisfying. In the second song the servant is identified as Israel. And many things which are predicated of Israel outside the servant songs are predicated of the servant in the songs. Israel is chosen by God (Is. 41:8, 43:10). God called Israel from the womb (Is. 44:2&24, 43:1, and 48:12). And God pours out his Spirit upon Israel (44:3).

Consequently, interpreters who emphasize the context of the songs contend that Israel is the servant of Yahweh. Morna D. Hooker, for example, argues that the servant of Yahweh is simply the nation of Israel. Therefore, the suffering songs are a theodicy to explain the suffering of Israel.⁵ Such an interpretation, however, hardly does justice to the

3. H. H. Rowley, "The Servant Mission," Interpretation, Vol. 8 (1952), p. 261.

4. J. Jeremias, op. cit., pp. 27-34.

5. Morna D. Hooker, Jesus and the Servant (London: S.P.C.K., 1959), pp. 41-52.

individualistic emphases concerning the servant. According to the second song, the Lord assigned his servant to go to Israel (42:5&6). It would hardly make sense for Israel to go to Israel. Furthermore, the fourth song seems to be very individualistic. Neither the individualistic nor the collective interpretation does full justice to the description of the servant in the servant songs.

Therefore, Oscar Cullmann, H. H. Rowley and others have suggested that the distinction between the collective group and individual personality is foreign to the ancient Semetic categories of thought. Instead, in Semetic thinking the collective and individual representatives are often identified.⁶ The collective can become individual without ceasing to be collective. And the individual can represent the collective group. If we apply this principle to the servant of Yahweh in the servant songs, we can conclude that the servant of Yahweh is the nation of Israel. But the servant is also an individual who represents Israel, possibly the prophet himself. Only such a solution can do justice to the varied descriptions of the servant in the servant songs.

If the servant of Yahweh is Israel and an individual prophet of the Old Testament, it is clear that neither fully accomplished the mission of the servant. Israel never did become the salvation of all the nations of the world (42:4 and 49:6). Nor did an Old Testament prophet ever make a sacrifice sufficient to atone for the sins of the many. So the mission and meaning of the servant of Yahweh were not exhausted by the events of Old Testament history. Instead, the Supreme Servant of Yahweh would come to accomplish fully the servant mission. In the future, Israel would be concentrated in the Servant par excellence who would accept and fulfill the servant mission in a suffering which would be profoundly beneficial.⁷

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6. cf. Oscar Cullmann, op. cit., p. 54 and H. H. Rowley, op. cit., p. 266.
 7. H. H. Rowley, op. cit., p. 268.

A WORD FOR ADVENT

by Douglas K. Stewart

There's an ugly word that goes with the Christmas season, and you should know it: Anguish!

Ugly words are not popular, and any word that bespeaks pain, and suffering seems out of place in a holiday season -- a time of merriment, and exchanging of gifts,

and family reunions, --

the exciting hustle of the holiday crowds, --

and the solemn, simple joy of lighting advent candles,

and singing the old carols,

and reading once again the sacred story.

Oh, there are many words to go with Advent, and joy is one of the foremost; but there is another word: Anguish.

Advent means anguish --

heartache,

discomfort,

sacrifice.

Today we stand in need of this stern lesson because our commitment to the Christ of Advent is so timid that we flounder among the wrappings and never see the gift. We talk about sacrifice --

we who hardly know the meaning of denying ourselves anything for the sake of Christ!

Today, our lesson comes to us through the life of a young girl, probably only in her teens,

a simple, peasant girl who lived in an obscure village

in a downtrodden land ruled by a foreign power.

The place: Nazareth, Palestine.

The time: A long, long time ago, before there ever was a Christmas.

The girl: A devout young Jewish maid, named Mary, engaged to be married to a common carpenter who also lived in her small town.

Let us see her wild joy in accepting God's promise. Then let us share her sobering realization of the anguish and shame that her commitment cost. Finally, we shall see her peace, the tranquility of a triumphant sufferer.

I. One day God spoke to her through an angel and told her the most tremendous news she would ever hear.

And her word of reply, (and our word to repeat after her):

"Here am I; I am the Lord's servant; let it be to me according to your word."

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DOUGLAS K. STEWART, a senior at Fuller Seminary, graduated with a B. S. from the U. S. Naval Academy in 1958. This is a sermon preached in Homiletics this quarter. Credit is given to Mr. Joseph T. Bayly for material taken from an editorial in His magazine, Dec. 1958, and used herein by his permission.

And the angel left her. The power of his presence still charged her small room with a glow even now that he was gone. Engulfed in a flood of awe and perplexity, Mary pondered the shock and meaning of this confrontation.

His greeting was as startling as his appearance:

"Hail, O favored one..."

His words still rang in her ears:

"Do not be afraid, Mary, for God has been gracious to you; you shall conceive and bear a son, and you shall give him the name Jesus."

What words! Gradually the impact of this announcement became intelligible in concrete terms, and a sudden thrill surged through her slender body. Did her visitor mean that she would be the Mother of the Messiah?

"Ohhh, too good to be true! Me! The mother of our Messiah! The hope of every Jewish girl since the time of our great King David!"

And Mary was caught up in the wildest joy she had ever known--
elation,

wild, delirious joy.

In a saner moment, she trembled as she thought of the temerity of her reply to her visitor; but it was a reasonable question:

"How can this be, since I have no husband?"

His calm, reassuring answer about the Holy Spirit coming upon her left her puzzled as before. But his other words brought back a tremor of excitement:

"Therefore the Child to be born will be called holy,
the Son of God!"

Such astounding news!

What marvelous words!

She turned them over and over in her mind, treasuring each one as a jewel.

And then he said, "Your kinswoman, Elizabeth..."

"Yes! Elizabeth. What about old Aunt Elizabeth? -- She's pregnant!" This realization startled Mary anew, but it must be so. For her visitor had said so, and there was no doubting his word.

Suddenly, Mary wanted to move,

jump up and down,

dance,

sing,

shout!

Oh, you can't hold news like this inside! And when you're only sixteen!
O God be praised!

Of course she must be off at once to see Aunt Elizabeth. Of course. But that was a four day trek, down through Samaria, to Jerusalem, and then beyond the capital into the rough hill country of Judah. But never mind -- she was strong and lithe; and surely she could find a band of countrymen to accompany her. No thoughts for Joseph now. She must be off to tell her parents, gain their permission to go, and be on the road to Elizabeth.

As she left the room, the late afternoon sun glinted through the doorway on her long black tresses, and the sunlight of her smile faded behind a cloud of concern for just an instant. She recalled the daredevil recklessness of her last solemn words:

"Here am I; I am the Lord's servant. Let it be to me according to your word." What did she mean?

Then the sun reappeared on her young face, and she was out of the doorway, calling, "Mother!"

II. Now the scene shifts to the road that spans the Palestine countryside between Nazareth and Jerusalem. Three months have passed, and we see a small band of Israelites making their way north, and Mary is one of them, walking a little apart by herself. Her fellow countrymen have been kind to her, but she is glad that they are strangers as she nervously tugs at the sash about her waist, wishing that it were not so tight.

She was not returning in the same boundless joy that possessed her when she had traveled south on this same dusty road a few months before. Now she was tormented by a reality that nagged at her heels by day, and robbed her of sleep at night.

Like Elizabeth,

she too, was pregnant.

The sober realization of this unalterable fact bore down upon her.

She was not a married woman, but she was pregnant.

She was an innocent girl, but she was pregnant.

And now she was beginning to show.

Another specter stalked her by day and night: Who was going to believe her story? Mary wept when she came to see how naive she had been over the joy of becoming a mother. She had shared her news only with her Aunt Elizabeth, who somehow seemed already to know. But now she must face the searching eyes of her own dear mother and father! What would they say?

And Joseph -- oh the thought of that encounter filled her with dread. How could she ever confront poor hapless Joseph with this -- this shame? A child that wasn't even his, and they weren't yet married!

As Mary walked along the path, she found she could pray. And as she prayed, she remembered words that gave her new heart for the ordeal ahead:

"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."

The first week back in Nazareth dragged by like an age for Mary. She must see Joseph, but first she sought her mother. Mary tried to control herself, but the tenderness and sympathy of her mother only invited the tears; and she collapsed in her mother's strong arms --

a frightened girl who was glad that at last she was not alone in this world of birth and babies. Her mother believed her story, and went to her father. His reaction was one of mixed emotions, of belief and unbelief:

Pride in his daughter's honor struggling to overcome the shame that he felt was inevitable.

And then Mary went to see her betrothed. For the first time in three months she set out on the path that she knew so well, and presently she found herself at the door of his shop. She had decided that she must tell him alone, but how would she ever achieve that? (In first century Palestine, engaged couples were seldom left alone.) But here he was --

Joseph looked up from his bench, and instantaneous delight spread itself over his sweaty face. His smile suddenly brought Mary out of her pensive mood, back to the hard reality of her task.

Somehow -- she could never remember how -- somehow she got out the story, bit by bit.

And piece by piece its implication began to dawn on this sturdy Son of the Covenant. He was visibly shaken.

"Mary, Mary, do you realize what our Law requires of this -- this violation?"

He could promise no hope, no comfort. He left his own shop not knowing what to do.

Mary returned home in grief, fighting back the tears. But stubbornly she thought to herself, "Well, what did you expect?"

The next day, it was Joseph who called at her home; and in the presence of her mother and father, Joseph resolutely announced that he was going to take Mary as his wife! She was thunderstruck. She cried again, but this time, they were tears of joy. Joseph, her fiance, her new husband, would share in some measure, her anguish. He would be the one to shield her from the stares and stoning of their townsfolk. How good God was to send her this protector! She thought again of the words:

"Fear not, Mary, for you have found favor with God."

The months passed, and then the blow fell: A trim young Legionnaire with a mounted entourage came through the town one day and reeled off the decree of Caesar with a haughty voice in crisp Latin that was then interpreted by a cohort. Every resident was required to register in the city of his family line. For Joseph this meant he must close up his shop,

leave his trade,

and travel

all the way south beyond Jerusalem to Bethlehem. He was a poor man; this decree was a hardship. And with Mary due to deliver any day!

"O God, be merciful."

Mary took the trip as best she could. She walked when she was able, for riding on their little donkey was almost unbearable. She gritted her teeth and remembered that with God nothing would be impossible. He would deliver his people. Late one afternoon she and Joseph and their exhausted little donkey passed through the gate of Bethlehem in time to find the town jammed full of immigrants, just like themselves. Joseph found a quiet place for Mary to rest, and then felt the weight of the world descend on his shoulders as he set off to find an inn where they could pass the night. An hour later he returned,

shamefaced and frustrated --

there was no place for them.

The labor pains had started. Gently he carried her to a stable and made her a bed and went off to get a midwife.

Mary's thoughts came in spasms now, just like the pains that shook her young frame:

"Wretched place to be delivered. Birthplace of oxen, of asses, of vermin. Pain. Labor in a stable."

Then she remembered a calm, reassuring voice who had once told her, "Fear not, Mary,..."

"Stench of manure. Straw, pungent, acrid. Birth pangs in a stable."

"For you have found favor with God."

"Pain. My first baby. A boy. Born in a stable, born away from home. Nine months. Nine long months."

"You will conceive in your womb and bear a son.

The Lord will give to him the throne of His father David."

"God in a stable? But palaces, not stables, 'for kings!"

Pain. Pain. Stables for asses, for sheep. For a little lamb."

And through the long night her thoughts jerked between the assuring words of that bright visitor who confronted her so long ago, and her own reckless resignation:

"Here am I; I am the Lord's servant."

III. But now the baby has come! Mary's anguish is over! The peace and joy of the triumphant sufferer crosses her face as the sweat is dried by the cold night air. She smiles weakly as her attendants wash and wrap the baby.

"My baby. Those fingers, so tiny. Round little arms and legs. My baby."

"Therefore the child to be born will be called holy."

"Cover him up. Wind it tight. Drafty old stable. Smelly manger, hard and cold."

"He shall be called the Son of God."

"Those hands, those tiny, perfect little hands. God's Son, my Saviour."

"It's cold tonight. Cover the hands too."

So spoke one young girl,
in a time long ago,
in a place very remote,
who was a servant of the Lord.

Mary's story is ended. But a new story remains to be written:
The place: Pasadena, California. Your home.

Your shop.

Your stable.

The time: Advent season, 1967. The season when God confronts you with a decision --

the decision to let Him reign over all of your life,
your time, your loves;

the decision to let Him rearrange the values of your life;

the decision to let Him rebuild you for His glory.

Your word of reply: What will it be?

Mary's word was, "Here am I; I am the Lord's servant. Let it be to me according to your word."

What will your word for Advent be?

THE ENCOUNTER

by Harry J. Klassen

The encounter may take place at any time and under any circumstances. I suppose that is why it is so exciting for those who have it. Barriers of one type or another often prejudice the case before-hand, thus destroying the encounter. It may reach embarrassing proportions. One contemporary play calls the Incarnation "the ultimate indiscretion". I hope the following apocryphal narrative will arouse our consciences at this very point.

It was an ordinary day involving an ordinary person. John Bacchus, the conscientious provider for his wife and three children, frequented the local bar with his associates. This cathartic act provided release from the drudgery of the assembly line, not to mention the stimulation of casual chatter. (The topless waitresses are purely incidental to our account.) It is therefore not surprising to find John and his friends at Harry's Bar on this sultry Wednesday evening. After three ice cold beers, the spirits of all revived, but the conversation took on a more sombre note. Tonight the otherwise verboden topic of "the church" came under scrutiny. The traditional remarks were recited with such vehemence and assent that it could have been the recitation of the creed.

"The church is full of hypocrites. They are irrelevant. They don't give a damn about me, so to hell with them." As John left the group that night he caught himself thinking, "What's the church really like?"

As John leisurely strolled along home, he became cognizant of the neighborhood church for the first time. The sign outside said, "A warm welcome awaits you in this friendly evangelical church". In his cheerful mood, a responsive chord was struck, although he could neither pronounce nor define "evangelical". His curiosity was aroused when he heard the lusty singing of "Bringing in the Sheaves". Now John was not a farmer but he had some idea as to the meaning of sheaves. Since the congregation were obviously all urbanites, he mused over this strange song. "Why not take the plunge?" he thought. After some degree of hesitation, John entered in a deliberate fashion. (The pious among you will find the leading of the Holy Spirit in this dramatic action, whereas the profane will no doubt attribute this bold step to the previous overindulgence in intoxicating beverages. I myself, choose not to take sides, but only to record the narrative.)

John opened the door to the hall (that's what he thought it resembled), and thereupon broke rule number one of Evangelical church polity. Never, never, NEVER enter such a church with the smell of liquor on your breath. "What do all those icy stares have to do with a friendly church?" he wondered. But the demythologizing had just

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HARRY J. KLASSEN graduated in 1963 from the University of Manitoba. He is vice-president of the Senior Class at Fuller Seminary, and chairman of the Church in Mission at Home Committee.

begun. The back chairs were of course taken, but he did manage to find an inconspicuous place. The attention of the group was once again focused upon the minister. The text was taken from John 2:1-11, the wedding feast. Our friend John was acquainted with the name Jesus Christ, but he knew it only in a different context. As the story unfolded before him, John became more and more captivated. What's this? The wine ran out? What a ghastly thought? Are you kidding me? Jesus turned the water into wine so that the party could go on? Why he even made it the best wine of the entire evening! A rather strange occupation for the leader of Prohibition, n'est ce pas? By this time John could hardly contain himself. With the spontaneity of a child, he exclaimed, "Why that Jesus is a damned good guy!" Thus John committed his second blunder. Never articulate your thoughts in such forthright fashion. No sooner had these words been uttered than Mrs. "never-missed-a-Wed.-night" Smith dropped her hymnal to the floor with a resounding thud. A general coughing spell ensued such as you would only expect to hear at a symphony. All sat with stunned looks upon their faces imploring their pastor to rescue them from the evil one. How had he got through the impenetrable walls? Pastor Christian was very adept at handling such problems. Only last week he had emphasized to a Negro couple seeking membership the obvious advantages of remaining with their own kind. With that awesome, confident look, he addressed himself to John. "The miracle is a demonstration of Jesus' power, not a commentary on his social habits. Furthermore, and even more decisively, wine in Bible times was really only strong grape juice." The chorus of amens and nods of the heads were a stirring testimonial to the unity within that church.

Somehow, John felt that perhaps he should not have intruded. Mrs. Smith and the rest of the congregation were by this time their warm smiling self again. John made his inauspicious departure to the singing of "Rescue the perishing". It had been quite a day for John. As he contemplated his favorite rocker, pipe and beer, his pace quickened. Oh yes, I must not forget that golf date with Carl this Sunday morning.

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ADVENT

by Bill Richards

Hope became old waiting,
 Anna with arms outstretched
 The bitter hope within expressed.
 Glory to God.

She was wrinkled waiting
 (husband gone and children never come)
 Until Messiah to Jerusalem came.
 Glory to God.

People pondered, waiting
 On her words as Anna told
 Of Jesus, Mary's son, God's Chosen One.
 Glory to God.

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BILL RICHARDS, a junior at Fuller Seminary, graduated in 1960 with a B. A. in mathematics from Lawrence University. Before coming to seminary, he spent two years with Operation Mobilization.