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Isaiah 53 in the Gospels and Acts

Peter Stuhlmacher

For Luise Abramowski on her 65th birthday, July 8, 1993

Summary

The New Testament's Christological interpretation of Isaiah 53 goes back to Jesus' own understanding of his mission and death, here explored by a tradition-historical argument. Jesus' understanding, in turn, depends upon a demonstrable early Jewish messianic interpretation of Isaiah 53, into which Jesus also incorporated passages such as Isaiah 43:3-4; 52:7 and 61:1-2. By making one of the first applications of the whole Servant text, including its suffering motif, to an individual historical figure (cf. also the *Aramaic Apocryphon of Levi*, 4Q541), Jesus and his disciples after Easter extended the early Jewish interpretation independently. Messianic interpretations of the chapter, both ancient Jewish and early Christian, are commonly attributed to an "individualistic" understanding of the servant, as opposed to the "corporate" understanding favored in much recent scholarship. The dichotomy is, however, a false one. In Judaism the individual figure of the Servant-Messiah is the prince appointed by God, a prince who rules over the people of God and simultaneously represents them before God. So also with Jesus. He is the Son of God who leads the people of God; yet that people also constitutes his body. One can call this understanding "individual" only so long as one also remembers the collective aspect and refuses to oppose the two conceptions.

The topic of Isaiah 53 in the Gospels and Acts is often discussed and extremely complicated and can therefore be treated here only partially in a brief sketch.¹

1. There is another reason why only a sketch is possible: Jesus developed his understanding of his mission not only from Isaiah 53 but also from Isa. 43:3-4; 52:7 (cf. Mark 1:14-15) and

The ancient source material discussed elsewhere in this volume by J. Ådna, M. Hengel, H.-J. Hermisson, O. Hofius, B. Janowski, C. Marksches, and S. Schreiner need not be surveyed once again, but can be presupposed. This includes the important fragments from Qumran Cave 4 (especially 4Q540-541) that E. Puech has now finally published and commented upon in a definitive scholarly edition.²

This source material must constantly be kept in mind. So must J. Jeremias's correct observation that in early Judaism we can neither presuppose that the ancients had a "concept of the Ebed as understood in modern research" (especially since B. Duhm's *Das Buch Jesaja, übersetzt und erklärt* [1892])³ nor assume that they encountered the Servant Songs as discrete textual units. The proposition to be refuted here is a different one: the *communis opinio* of recent New Testament scholarship that "the application of the Servant conception to Jesus was the work of the early church with very limited influence."⁴ Rather, as scholars including J. Jeremias,⁵ H. W. Wolff,⁶ O. Betz,⁷ L. Goppelt,⁸ and others

61:1-2 (cf. Luke 6:20; 7:22 par.). Obviously the reception of the entire Isaianic tradition in Jesus' preaching and the Gospels and Acts cannot be investigated here.

2. We now have the definitive edition of the Aramaic texts 4Q529-549: E. Puech, ed., *Qumrân Grotte 4. XXII: Textes Araméens, Première Partie, 4Q529-549*, DJD 31 (2001). A preliminary edition of 4Q540-541 and other texts was also published: E. Puech, "Fragments d'un apocryphe de Lévi et le personnage eschatologique: 4QTestLévi^{c-d}(?) et 4QAJa," in J. T. Barrera and L. V. Montaner, eds., *The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Madrid, 18-21 March, 1991*, 2 vols., STDJ 11 (1992), 2:449-501. M. Hengel has commented on the significance of these textual fragments briefly in his essay "Christological Titles in Early Christianity," in J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (1992), 425-48, esp. 445 n. 67. More fully see §7 of Hengel's essay in the present volume. See also below, nn. 43-44.

3. J. Jeremias, "παῖς θεοῦ," TWNT 5 (1954), 676-713, esp. 681 ll. 14-15 = TDNT 5 (1967), 677-717, esp. 682 ll. 26-27. Jeremias reworked the New Testament part of his article and republished it in his essay collection *Abba: Studien zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte* (1966), 191-216.

4. H. Haag, *Der Gottesknecht bei Deuterjesaja* (1985), 78.

5. Cf. J. Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie I*, 2nd ed. (1973), 283-84 = ET, *New Testament Theology*, trans. J. Bowden (1971), 298-99, as well as Jeremias's article "παῖς θεοῦ."

6. H. W. Wolff, *Jesaja 53 im Urchristentum*, 4th ed. (1984), with an introduction by P. Stuhlmacher.

7. O. Betz, "Die Frage nach dem messianischen Bewußtsein Jesu," in idem, *Jesus — Der Messias Israels: Aufsätze zur biblischen Theologie*, WUNT 42 (1987), 140-68; idem, *Was wissen wir von Jesus?* (1991), 106-8 (this section is absent from the original 1964 German version and hence from its ET, *What Do We Know about Jesus?* [1968]).

8. L. Goppelt, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments I*, ed. J. Roloff (1975), 243-44 = ET, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 1, trans. J. E. Alsup (1981), 195-96.

have long since realized, it is the other way around: the Christological interpretation of Isaiah 53 that comes to the fore in Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3b-5; 1 Peter 2:22-25; Hebrews 9:28, and so forth was not first and foremost the fruit of post-Easter faith; its roots lie rather in Jesus' own understanding of his mission and death. He himself adopted the general messianic interpretation of Isaiah 53 current in early Judaism,⁹ but he understood his sufferings quite independently of the prevailing tradition in the light of the word of God given to him from Isaiah 43:3-4 and 53:11-12. After the completion of Jesus' mission in the cross and resurrection, the song of the Suffering Servant was applied in early Christianity consistently for the first time to a historical individual whose fate made the whole text transparent.

I

The view suggested above in thesis form is confirmed when one situates the debated texts within the formative process behind the synoptic tradition, as it has been newly explained over the last thirty years by H. Schürmann, B. Gerhardsson, M. Hengel, and R. Riesner. According to this new view, the decisive origins of the synoptic tradition lie in the "school" of Jesus, who taught as the "messianic teacher of wisdom" (so M. Hengel). The παραδόσεις or traditions of this school were transmitted to the primitive church in Jerusalem by the μαθηταί whom Jesus himself had called. These traditions then formed an essential part of the "teaching of the apostles" (διδασχὴ τῶν ἀποστόλων) mentioned in Acts 2:42.¹⁰ Since a carefully maintained continuity of tradition existed between Jesus' disciples and the Jerusalem church, and since the apostolic guarantors of the Jesus tradition remained alive until the outbreak of the first Jewish war, synoptic texts may be spoken of as subsequent "formulations of the Church" only when it can be shown exactly who created them, when, why, and for what recipients they were created, and under what circumstances they were accorded equal authority with the Jesus tradition backed by the apostles. When one cannot provide the answers to these questions, one must reckon with authentic tradition in the Synoptics.

Another factor comes into play. F. Lang in his essay "Observations on the

9. Cf. above all the text fragments from 4Q published by Puech (above, n. 2 and below, nn. 43-44) as well as the variant reading of 1QIsa at Isa. 52:14, מְשַׁחֵנִי, "I have anointed," instead of the MT's מְשַׁחֵנִי, "marring" (cf. M. Hengel in §6 of his essay above). Here too belong the statements in 1 Enoch 38:2; 46:4; 62:3, which I believe are to be dated not in the later Christian era but at the beginning of the first century C.E.

10. On this see my *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, vol. 1 (1992), 18-19, 44-46.

Eschatological Preaching of John the Baptist¹¹ has shown that the “more powerful one” (ὁ ἰσχυρότερος) announced by John in Mark 1:7 and parallels betrays “a close relationship to that Enoch-like figure for whom a connection between Daniel 7; Isaiah 11; 42:6; and 52:15 already exists and to whom the motif of ‘coming’ in Dan 7:13 properly belongs.”¹² If this is correct, then we can assume that the Baptist confronted Jesus with the expectation of the soon-to-come messianic Son of Man and Judge of the World, and that Jesus had to relate his own mission to this expectation. He did so by understanding himself as the messianic Son of Man from the beginning of his public preaching and by decisively modifying John’s expectation regarding the “more powerful one” to come, so that Jesus understood his own witness, which led to his death after many disputes, from the perspective of Isaiah 43:3-4 and 53:11-12. Jesus taught his disciples this understanding of his messianic mission and sufferings in private in various settings. Testimony to such private instruction is found above all in Mark 9:31 par.; 10:45 par.; 14:22, 24 par.; and also in Luke 22:35-38.

In the context of the Synoptic Gospels, the so-called *passion predictions* of Jesus (Mark 8:31-33 par.; 9:31-32 par.; 10:32-34 par.) are developed into advance hints of the passion intended to prepare readers in three steps for reading and understanding the passion story. However, this literary framing of the texts in no way denies that they incorporate authentic Jesus tradition. Above all, as J. Jeremias has shown,¹³ one may regard the enigmatic saying of Mark 9:31, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων (“The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men”), as the Jesuanic foundation of the passion predictions. Here the passive παραδίδοται is to be read (as in Rom. 4:25) as a divine passive, and the betrayal of the “man” or rather the Son of Man by God is best understood from the perspective of Isaiah 43:3-5 and 53:5-6, 11-12.¹⁴ Jesus saw himself as the “man” or Son of Man whom God in his love willed

11. F. Lang, “Erwägungen zur eschatologischen Verkündigung Johannes des Täuflers,” in G. Strecker, ed., *Jesus Christus in Historie und Theologie: Neutestamentliche Festschrift für H. Conzelmann zum 60. Geburtstag* (1975), 459-73.

12. Lang, “Erwägungen,” 471.

13. Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie I*, 267-68, 280ff. = *New Testament Theology*, 281-82.

14. Notice the striking verbal agreement between the Greek ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου παραδίδοται (“the Son of Man is delivered up”) and the articular Hebrew construction of 1QIsa^a 43:4b: אֲתָן הָאָדָם תַּחְתִּיךָ, “I give the man in exchange for you” (overlooked in the translation of 1QIsa^a in DSSB: “I give people in your stead”). The MT has only the anarthrous noun “man” in a generic or collective sense, וְאֶתְּן אֶדָם תַּחְתִּיךָ (cf. NJPS: “I give men in exchange for you”). As I mentioned at the beginning, Mark’s double reference in 9:31 to Isaiah 43 and 53 is explained by the fact that the Servant Songs of Second Isaiah were read in early Judaism not as discrete units, but in the context of the whole book of Isaiah.

to deliver up for Israel’s salvation, and the ὑπακοή or “obedience” of Jesus praised in Philippians 2:8 consisted of his submitting to this will of God (cf. Mark 14:41 par.).

The much-discussed *ransom saying* of Mark 10:45 (Matt. 20:28) points in the same direction. As W. Grimm has pointed out¹⁵ and as I have already shown elsewhere,¹⁶ this logion represents a “dissimilar” or “nonderivable” and hence an authentic word of Jesus. It interprets Jesus’ mission and suffering from the perspective of Isaiah 43:3-4 and 53:11-12 and belongs materially with Mark 8:37 and its parallels (cf. Ps. 49:8-9). According to this logion, Jesus understood himself as the “man” or Son of Man whom God had sent to save Israel and whose life he had designated as a “ransom” (Heb. כֶּפֶר; Greek λύτρον, ἀντὶλύτρον, or ἀντὶἀλλαγμῶς) to redeem the existence of “the many” (Israel: cf. Isa. 53:11-12) from the final judgment, since their existence was forfeited by their guilt.

As I have learned from my former student J. Ädna and from the materials he has worked with, the ransom saying of Mark 10:45 and its parallels coheres surprisingly closely with Jesus’ so-called temple cleansing (Mark 11:15-17 par.).¹⁷ This symbolic messianic act presented the temple priesthood with an alternative — either to continue to carry out the sacrificial cult without reference to Jesus and his message and thereby to become separated from God once and for all, or to face up to this message and together with Jesus to approach “the temple established by God’s own hands” in the βασιλεία (cf. Mark 14:58 par. with Exod. 15:17-18).¹⁸ With this incredibly provocative act Jesus knowingly risked his life, and this was “in fact the occasion for the definitive official action against him.”¹⁹ Jesus’ action against the sellers of sacrificial animals and the money changers in Solomon’s Portico was equivalent to an attempt to under-

15. W. Grimm, *Die Verkündigung Jesu und Deuteronesaja*, 2nd ed. (1981), 231ff.

16. Cf. my essay “Existenzstellvertretung für die Vielen: Mk 10,45 (Mt 20,28),” in P. Stuhlmacher, *Versöhnung, Gesetz und Gerechtigkeit: Aufsätze zur biblischen Theologie* (1981), 27-42 = ET, “Vicariouly Giving His Life for Many, Mark 10:45 (Matt. 20:28),” in idem, *Reconciliation, Law, and Righteousness: Essays in Biblical Theology*, trans. E. Kalin (1986), 16-29. See also my *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments I*, 120ff.

17. See J. Ädna, *Jesu Stellung zum Tempel: Die Tempelaktion und das Tempelwort als Ausdruck seiner messianischen Sendung*, WUNT 2/119 (2000).

18. On the relationship of this saying in Mark 14:58 about a temple “not made by [human] hands” to the early Jewish understanding of Exod. 15:17-18 (“the sanctuary, O Lord, that your hands have established”) see A. M. Schwemer, “Irdischer und himmlischer König: Beobachtungen zur sog. David-Apokalypse in Hekhalot Rabbati §§ 122-126,” in M. Hengel and A. M. Schwemer, eds., *Königsherrschaft Gottes und himmlischer Kult*, WUNT 55 (1991), 309-59, esp. 356.

19. Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie I*, 266 = *New Testament Theology*, 279.

mine the entire buying and selling of sacrificial animals as well as the payment of obligatory contributions in the Tyrian temple currency. These contributions paid among other things for the twice-daily *tamid* sacrifice (Heb. תמיד; cf. Exod. 29:38-46; Num. 28:3-8) by which Israel could be redeemed from its guilt morning and evening (cf. *Jub.* 6:14; 50:11; *Pesiqta of Rab Kahana* 55b; cf. Str-B 2:247 n. 1). If one assumes that Jesus anticipated the priesthood's negative reaction to his deed, then from Mark 10:45 and its parallels it can be concluded that he himself was ready to take the place of the sacrifices offered in vain by the priests for Israel and to redeem the people of God from its guilt before God once for all with his life. The close connection between Mark 10:45 par. and the temple cleansing provides documentary proof that Jesus entered the final disputes in Jerusalem decisively and ready to suffer.

The Last Supper tradition also attests to this. The most difficult (and therefore the oldest) version of the words of institution may be found in Mark 14:22, 24 (and not in Luke 22:19-20 or 1 Cor. 11:24-25). The wording of 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 shows that Paul knew not only the pre-Lukan "cult etiology" which he cited in 1 Corinthians 11:23-25, but also the form of the *verba testamenti* reproduced by Mark.²⁰ Whether the Markan bread saying in Mark 14:22 was formulated with reference to Isaiah 53 is difficult to say, but the Lukan addition τὸ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν διδόμενον ("which is given for you," Luke 22:19) recalls Isaiah 53:6, 12 (παράδιδωμι). The *cup saying* in Mark 14:24 takes up both Exodus 24:8 and Isaiah 53:10-12 and by means of this double allusion shows that the Suffering Servant's passion was understood as an event of atonement, even as it was by Jesus himself. According to Isaiah 53:10 the Servant's life was made an *קִטְוֶה*, that is, a "means of wiping out guilt,"²¹ which gives Israel a new life before God. This wiping out of guilt occurs when Jesus as God's Servant vicariously suffers the violent death which lay before him and makes atonement for "the many" by his blood, thus inaugurating them into the (new) "covenant" that guarantees them forgiveness of their sins (cf. Mark 14:24) and places them in fulfillment of God's will (cf. Exod. 24:8 with Jer. 31:31-34).

If one contemplates the sequence of Jesus sayings in Mark 9:31 par.; 10:45 par.; and 14:22, 24, all of which have been formulated with a view to Isaiah 53 (and Isa. 43:3-4), then the figurative saying about the *two swords* in the Lukan special tradition, Luke 22:35-38, can be counted among the genuine sayings of Jesus based on the criterion of coherence. In Luke 22:37, Isaiah 53:12 is cited not

20. For the tradition-historical connections of these passages see my *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments I*, 130ff.

21. This translation of *קִטְוֶה* has been proposed in the essay in this volume by B. Janowski, "He Bore Our Sins: Isaiah 53 and the Drama of Taking Another's Place," above, pp. 65-67.

according to the Septuagint but according to the Hebrew text: "He was numbered with transgressors" (μετὰ ἀνόμων = אֶת־פְּשָׁעִים). The formulation of the saying is only partly Lukan,²² and in it Jesus submits to the will of God revealed to him in Isaiah 53 no less obediently than he does in the other sayings just mentioned. He was ready to let himself (and his faithful followers) be "numbered with the transgressors" and to end his life as God, through his word in Scripture, had determined for him.²³

From the Jesus sayings examined up to this point it is safe to draw the following conclusion: *The earthly Jesus himself understood his witness and his approaching death in the light of the tradition already given to him in Isaiah about the (vicariously suffering) Servant of God. He understood the suffering laid upon him as an event in which God's will was fulfilled.*

II

On the basis of the Easter events the former disciples of Jesus led by Peter founded the Early Church in Jerusalem shortly after Jesus' death and resurrection. Because according to Acts 1:12-26 the core of the Early Church was formed by the circle of the Twelve (supplemented only by the eyewitness Matthias) which Jesus "created,"²⁴ by members of Jesus' own family, and by women from Jesus' home area, the teachings of Jesus known to these men and women and their recollections of his person and story were transmitted to the Early Church. Together with the earliest confessions and the kerygmatic stories of Jesus' passion, burial, and appearances formulated after Easter, these first-hand recollections constituted an essential part of the διδασχὴ τῶν ἀποστόλων (Acts 2:42).

In the light of the experience that Jesus' prophecies about his own death based on Isaiah 43 and 53 had been fulfilled by his crucifixion, burial, and resur-

22. According to J. Jeremias, *Die Sprache des Lukasevangeliums* (1980), 292-93, "the singular τὸ γεγραμμένον used as a designation of a Bible verse occurs in the New Testament only in Luke 20:17; 22:37 and in 2 Cor 4:13. This expression is consistent with Luke's fondness for the substantival participle." On the other hand, the presence of non-Lukan tradition in Luke 22:37 is suggested by several expressions, including λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι, δεῖ ("it must be") used in the context of the passion, the divine passive τελεσθῆναι, "to be fulfilled" (sc. according to the plan of God), and τὸ περὶ ἐμοῦ, as well as by the citation of Isa. 53:12, which follows not the LXX but the MT.

23. On this understanding of the saying see Jeremias, *Abba*, 214-15, and I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 2nd ed. (1979), 826-27.

24. Cf. the formulation of Mark 3:14: καὶ ἐποίησεν δώδεκα κτλ.

rection, Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection were interpreted on the basis of Isaiah 53 with full conviction in the "school" of the apostles. One can see this best in the *traditional texts* that Paul quotes in his letters. After his spectacular call, the apostle was made familiar with the διδασχὴ of the apostles by the Christians of Damascus, Jerusalem, and Antioch, and he cites in his letters a few of the didactic texts which he learned in this way.

The two-line *Christological formula* in Romans 4:25 interprets Jesus' passion and exaltation as the work of God. In agreement with Jesus' own teaching (see above), it says that God handed over "Jesus our Lord" to death διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν and raised him from the dead διὰ τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἡμῶν. Behind this formulation stood above all the Hebrew text of Isaiah 53:5, 11. By contrast, if the Septuagint of Isaiah 53:5-6, 11-12 had been the basis of the formula in Romans 4:25, it would have suggested speaking of ἁμαρτίαι, "sins," instead of παραπτώματα, "transgressions" (which goes back to the "transgressors," חַיִּיִּשִׁים, of Isa. 53:12), and of the justification of the Servant himself (cf. 1 Tim. 3:16) instead of the justification of the many.²⁵

The confessional formula that Paul cites in 1 Corinthians 15:3b-5 probably presents a summary of the teaching of the gospel that is constitutive for faith. It has been prepared for easy memorization in religious instruction by a fourfold ὅτι and by a twofold (generalizing) use of κατὰ τὰς γραφάς. Paul learned it himself and then passed it on in his missionary teaching (e.g., in Corinth: cf. 1 Cor. 15:1). This catechetical text calls Jesus Χριστός, thus taking up Jesus' messianic confession before the Sanhedrin in Mark 14:61-62.²⁶ It is based on Jesus' own predictions of his death and summarizes the passion and Easter traditions known in Jerusalem (and Antioch). It is therefore not to be understood in isolation from these traditions or even as an alternative to them (as is usually done), but with reference to them and in connection with them.

25. In Isa. 53:11 LXX the expression δικαιοῦσαι δίκαιον εὖ δουλεύοντα πολλοῖς speaks not of the Servant justifying the many, but rather of the Servant himself being given the rights that his enemies wish to deny to him. On the differences between the Hebrew and Greek texts of Isa. 53:11 see now D. Sapp, "The LXX, 1QIsa, and MT Versions of Isaiah 53 and the Christian Doctrine of Atonement," in W. H. Bellinger and W. R. Farmer, eds., *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* (1998), 170-92, esp. 173-76, 186-89, and E. R. Ekblad, *Isaiah's Servant Poems According to the Septuagint*, CBET 23 (1999), 249-60.

26. On the authenticity of this text I have already commented in my *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments I*, 115ff., and in my essay "Der messianische Gottesknecht," *JBTh* 8 (1993): 131-54. M. Hengel also assumes that the earthly Jesus made messianic claims in his two essays "Jesus der Messias Israels," in I. Grünwald et al., eds., *Messiah and Christos: Studies in the Jewish Origin of Christianity, Festschrift for D. Flusser* (1992), 155-76 and "Christological Titles in Early Christianity."

1 Corinthians 15:3b takes up the ὑπὲρ from the Last Supper tradition (Mark 14:24 par.) and speaks of the death of Christ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν. The κατὰ τὰς γραφάς suggests that we should think above all of the fulfillment of Isaiah 53:5, 10-12. In 1 Corinthians 15:4a the burial of Jesus is spoken of with reference to the burial traditions; this could have been understood as the fulfillment of Isaiah 53:9. 1 Corinthians 15:4b confesses Jesus' resurrection on the third day "according to the scriptures." The date corresponds to the finding of the empty tomb on the third day after Jesus' crucifixion, but the appended expression κατὰ τὰς γραφάς is presumably intended to point to the fulfillment of Hosea 6:2²⁷ and could also refer to Isaiah 52:13 and 53:10-11. In 1 Corinthians 15:5 the confession of the resurrection of Jesus is followed (much as it is in Luke 24:34) by a mention of Jesus' appearances to Peter and the Twelve. Whether these appearances were understood in the light of Isaiah 53:10-12 cannot be said with certainty. Nevertheless, because the Twelve led by Peter were destined to become rulers and judges over the end-time Israel (i.e., "the many"; cf. Luke 22:30) and were newly established in Jerusalem in order to represent the people of God there, one can see in the appearances of Jesus to Cephas and the Twelve a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12: God will give the exalted Servant "a portion with the many."

In sum, from the catechetical summary of 1 Corinthians 15:3b-5 and from Romans 4:25, we see by examples how the interpretation of the passion from Isaiah 53 advanced by Jesus himself provided Christians after Easter with clear and precise soteriological terms for speaking about Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection.

III

Soteriological discourse about Jesus' death and resurrection was not limited to confessional or faith formulas in early Christianity. Rather, the faith-knowledge expressed in these formulas combined with the teachings of Jesus and with memories of his deeds and destiny to form a new entity when the gospel traditions were fixed. It is to this that we owe the narrative testimony to the ministry and death of Jesus as God's Servant.

27. The formulation of Hos. 6:2 LXX, ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ ἀναστήσόμεθα, "on the third day we shall rise," has points of contact with 1 Cor. 15:4 that extend to the very wording. In early Judaism Hos. 6:2 was related to the end-time resurrection of the dead (cf. Str-B 1:747). Therefore, the κατὰ τὰς γραφάς of 1 Cor. 15:4 could express the faith conviction that with the resurrection of Jesus, the end-time resurrection of all the dead has begun (Rom. 1:3-4 says the same thing). Paul apparently understood 1 Cor. 15:4 this way, judging by what he says in 1 Cor. 15:20-22.

In Luke 24:6-7, 44-46, the Evangelist has programmatically shown how an understanding of the saving significance of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection was first opened up to the New Testament witnesses by the mouth of God's heavenly messengers and the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures by the risen Christ. The retelling of Jesus' passion along the lines of the psalms of suffering, Psalms 22, 69, and Psalm 31 (cf. Luke 23:46), rests upon this faith perspective just as surely as does the development of Jesus' passion predictions into passion summaries (i.e., Mark 8:31-33 par.; 9:30-32 par.; 10:32-34 par.). Jesus' prophecies of his death based on Isaiah 43 and 53 are thereby once again shown to their best advantage (see above). In Luke 17:25 the first of these summaries is repeated. A saying of Jesus represented in only a part of the textual tradition of Luke 23:34, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (πάτερ, ἄφεες αὐτοῖς, οὐ γὰρ οἶδασιν τί ποιοῦσιν), has clearly been formulated with reference to the Hebrew text of Isaiah 53:12, "He made intercession for the transgressors." This saying provided the pattern for Acts 7:60 (Stephen: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them") and is therefore a genuine part of the Lukan tradition.²⁸

The old-fashioned language in Acts about Jesus as God's anointed Servant or παῖς θεοῦ (Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30), humiliated and put to death by his enemies according to God's will but exalted by God and invested with divine authority, refers back to Isaiah 61:1 and 52:13; 53:11. Parallel to this, Jesus is called ὁ δίκαιος, the Righteous One, in Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14 (cf. Isa. 53:11 and 1 Enoch 38:2; 53:6). Whether such expressions merely take up individual motifs from the Servant tradition or rather present a more comprehensive picture of Jesus' ministry, suffering, and exaltation as God's Servant is a question that can be answered by two considerations. First, the two titles predicated of Jesus are certainly pre-Lukan and must therefore be considered not apart from but together with the Jerusalem formulaic texts Romans 4:25 and 1 Corinthians 15:3b-5 (see above). Moreover, Luke has used them not independently of his passion story but only in conscious connection with it (cf. Acts 3:13-16; 4:27-28; 7:52). Both considerations suggest that in the figure of Jesus a holistic concept of God's Servant has been realized. Without such a larger concept it would be impossible to understand the language of the forgiveness of sins that came through Jesus' mission as the παῖς θεοῦ, which Luke repeats almost stereotypically (cf. Acts 3:13, 19 with 2:38; 5:31; 10:43, etc.). But the intercessions in Luke 22:32 and 23:34 together with Isaiah 53:12 explain this language quite well. The exalted Christ will continue the "intercession for transgressors" which

28. On the textual criticism of Luke 23:34 see B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (1994), 154.

he began on earth, and even in the final judgment he will bring them forgiveness of sins through his vicarious death for sinners.²⁹

In Acts 8:26-39 Luke reports about the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch (taking up an older Philip tradition). In 8:32-33 the Septuagint text of Isaiah 53:7-8 is cited. The question of this "court official" (δυνάστης, 8:27) in 8:34 about whether the text refers to the prophet or to someone else is understandable when we consider that in early Judaism the Servant could be understood "collectively" as well as "individually" (see below) and that the tradition of the martyrdom of the prophet Isaiah was current among Jews and Christians.³⁰ The content of the gospel Philip preached to the official starting with this Scripture (cf. Acts 8:35) is not further explained in the text; all that is clear is that Philip applied the Isaiah text to Jesus and thus interpreted it Christologically. The reader of Acts (and of the Gospel of Luke) can and should understand Philip's message on the analogy of the Lukan passages already mentioned.

Matthew's summary of Jesus' healing ministry in Matthew 8:16 is expanded by the Evangelist in 8:17 by a retrospective citation of Isaiah 53:4. Matthew presupposes the Hebrew text of this passage; even Jesus' messianic healings should be understood as the work of the Servant. Whether an isolated motif of the text has thereby been taken up in a merely "atomistic," early Jewish manner,³¹ or whether Matthew has extended the interpretation of Jesus' sufferings already known to him (cf. Matt. 16:21-23; 17:22-23; 20:17-19, 28; 26:26-28, 45, 54; 27:14 [cf. Isa. 53:7]; 27:19 [cf. Isa. 53:11]) to encompass Jesus' mission and healing ministry as a whole can be decided only after the fulfillment citation of Isaiah 42:1-4 in Matthew 12:17-21 has been considered.

29. On the Old Testament and early Jewish motif of the forgiveness of sins based on the intercession of the suffering righteous, cf. B. Janowski, "Sündenvergebung 'um Hiobs willen': Fürbitte und Vergebung in 11QJob 38,2f. und Hi 42,9f. LXX," *ZNW* 3 (1982): 251-80. O. Hofius deals with the same motif in *Tg. Isa. 53* in an essay that unfortunately remains unpublished: "Kennt der Targum zu Jes 53 einen sündenvergebenden Messias?" in *Freundesgabe für Prof. P. Stuhlmacher zum 50. Geburtstag* (manuscript, 1982), 215-54.

30. Cf., e.g., *Lives of the Prophets* 1 (translation in *OTP* 2:386; Greek text in A. M. Denis, *Concordance grecque des pseudépigraphes d'Ancien Testament* [1987], 868). Further references are given by A. Strobel in P. Rieger, ed., *Das Kreuz Jesu: Theologische Überlegungen* (1969), 113, including Heb. 11:3; Justin, *Dial.* 120; Tertullian, *De patientia* 14; Josephus, *Ant.* 10.38; *b. Yeb.* 49b; *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* 5:1-14.

31. U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, Bd. 2: Mt 8-17 (1990), 19 = ET, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, vol. 2, trans. J. E. Crouch, Hermeneia (2001), 14: "In contrast to 12:18-21, the word παῖς θεοῦ ('servant of God') does not occur here. Precisely that part of Isa 53:3-5 is used here [in Matt 8:17] that does not speak of the suffering of God's servant. Our quotation is an example of the way early Christian exegesis, like the Jewish exegesis of the time, sometimes quotes individual words of scripture without any regard for their context."

U. Luz rightly considers this old-fashioned citation in Matthew 12:17-21, which goes back to the Hebrew text, to be highly significant. He ascribes it to "a pre-Matthean christological *testimonium* that late in the process was connected, perhaps by Matthew himself, with the summary of Mark 3:7-12,"³² which Matthew takes up himself in 12:15-16. The formula quotation "opens the eyes of Matthew's readers to the entirety of the story of Jesus," which is "a story of gentleness, of mercy, of nonviolence, and of love."³³ If one considers the fact that the so-called fourth Servant Song was available to early Judaism and Christianity only in the context of the book of Isaiah and the Deuteroisaianic sayings about the Servant as a whole, then one will no longer be able to play off the messianic understanding of Isaiah 42:1-4 and its use in Matthew 12 against an understanding of Jesus' sacrifice based on Isaiah 53. One must rather combine the two. It would appear, then, that in the Gospel of Matthew, the understanding of Jesus' mission on the basis of the Deuteroisaianic tradition of the (suffering) Servant has been extended from Jesus' passion predictions and the passion story to encompass the whole story of Jesus.³⁴ The messianic Immanuel proclaimed by Matthew, who will save the people of God from their sins (cf. Matt. 1:21-23) and who, as the exalted one, will be with his missionary messengers until the end of the age (cf. Matt. 28:20), is none other than the Servant appointed by God for the salvation of his people (and the Gentiles) who proclaims the εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας (cf. Matt. 4:23; 9:35). His ministry as the authoritative yet humble Messiah in word and deed,³⁵ as well as his passion, may be comprehended as events of messianic fulfillment from the perspective of Isaiah 42:1-4; 52:7; 52:13-53:12; and 61:1-2.³⁶

32. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 2:246 = ET, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 2:192.

33. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 2:250 = *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 2:195, 196.

34. According to A. Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Matthäus*, 6th ed. (1963), 283, by means of the scriptural citation that Matthew supplies from Isa. 53:4 in Matt. 8:17 ("He took our infirmities and bore our diseases"), the Evangelist does not want to correct Jesus' self-understanding as Suffering Servant, but to demonstrate that Jesus found even more meaning in Isaiah 53. J. Schniewind, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 12th ed. (1968), 112, evaluates the citation the same way: "Up until this point Jesus' miracles appeared as signs of unlimited power. Now they are described as part of the suffering of God's Servant. He takes our diseases upon himself as *passion* (cf. John 11:33, 38; Mark 1:41D [ὁργισθεῖς — Trans.]). That Matthew intends his citation of the prophetic passage to be taken this way is shown by the further use of Isaiah 53 and of Second Isaiah generally by Matthew (12:17ff.; 11:15) and by the early church (Acts 8:32ff.; 1 Pet 2:22ff.)."

35. For this formulation see Schniewind, *Matthäus*, 8, 37, 106.

36. The Qumran fragment 4Q521, *Messianic Apocalypse*, has recently become available. See E. Puech in DJD 25 (1998), 1-38, plates I-III; DSSSE 2:1044-47; G. Vermes, *The Complete Dead*

IV

The interpretation of Isaiah 53 in the *Gospel of John* (and in the Johannine letters) is not easy to ascertain, because the Johannine gospel tradition after Easter emanated from the "school" of John in a long and complicated process involving both the adoption of old apostolic tradition and the independent rereading and supplementation of the Synoptic tradition. Moreover, outside John 12:38 there are no citations of Isaiah 53 in the Johannine corpus, but only allusions to the Servant Song by means of words and motifs.³⁷ If one assumes with M. Hengel³⁸ that both the Johannine letters and the Fourth Gospel go back to the πρεσβύτερος John, then the letters were composed during the lifetime of this "elder" according to 2 John 1 and 3 John 1, whereas the Gospel in John 21:23 already has in view the death of the Beloved Disciple (in whom the elder saw himself embodied). It is therefore necessary to approach our problem by way of the letters.

In 1 John 2:1-2 the exalted Christ is called first the "righteous one" (δικαίος) and second an "advocate" (παράκλητος), which is grounded, third, in the fact that he is the "means of atonement for our sins" (ἱλασμός περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν). All three expressions can be understood very well against the background of a Christological interpretation of Isaiah 53:4-6, 10-12.³⁹ The same goes for 1 John 4:10: "God loved us and sent his Son to be the means of

Sea Scrolls in English (1997), 391-92. This fragment provides a wonderful parallel to Matt. 11:2-6 and makes it clear that the Qumran Essenes already had very concrete ideas about the fulfillment of Isa. 35:5-6 and 61:1-2 by God's Messiah. On this text see O. Betz and R. Riesner, *Jesus, Qumran und der Vatikan* (1993), 111-15 = ET, *Jesus, Qumran and the Vatican*, trans. J. Bowden (1994), 90-93, and my essay "Der messianische Gottesknecht."

37. The book of Revelation also forms part of the tradition of the Johannine school. But only in Rev. 14:5 is there possibly a direct citation of Isaiah 53 (cf. 53:9) or more probably of Zeph. 3:13. According to Rev. 14:4-5, the 144,000 "have been redeemed from humankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in *their* mouth no lie was found (ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτῶν οὐχ εὐρέθη ψεῦδος); they are blameless" (NRSV). Yet as Wolff, *Jesaja 53 im Urchristentum*, 105, rightly emphasizes, "in Rev 14:5 it is not Isaiah 53 that appears, but Zephaniah 3:13." Wolff believes that the difference between the singular "*his* mouth" in Isa. 53:9 (οὐδὲ εὐρέθη δόλος ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτοῦ) and the plural "*their* mouth" in Zeph. 3:13 (οὐ μὴ εὐρέθῃ ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐτῶν γλώσσα δολία) is significant, and that this difference "ties Rev 14:5 [which also has the plural] firmly to Zeph 3:13" rather than to Isa. 53:9 (Wolff, 105 n. 456).

38. M. Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (1989).

39. H.-J. Klauck, *Der erste Johannesbrief*, EKKNT 23/1 (1991), 106ff., does not mention Isaiah 53 in his explanation of 1 John 2:1-2. He points only to cultic atonement and the intercession of the aged martyr Eleazar in 4 Macc. 6:28-29. However, in the context of the Johannine preexistence Christology, the intercession motif is better explained by Isa. 53:12.

atonement for our sins". (ἵλασμός περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν). On the basis of these passages one may also interpret John 3:16 and the discourse about the (voluntary) surrender of life by the good shepherd for his sheep (10:11, 15, 17, 18) against the background of Isaiah 53.

In John 1:29, 36 John the Baptist calls Jesus ὁ ἄμνός τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἵρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." In the context of the Fourth Gospel, this designation refers first and foremost to the vicarious atoning death of Jesus as the end-time paschal lamb (cf. John 1:36 with 1 Cor. 5:7) and only in its depth-dimension to Isaiah 53:7. However, since the expression about "taking away the sin of the world" can be explained only by Isaiah 53:4, 11-12 and not by the tradition of the paschal lamb, the Suffering Servant tradition certainly stands behind the designation of Jesus as ἄμνός τοῦ θεοῦ as well.⁴⁰

These passages from 1 John 2:1-2; 4:10 and John 1:29, 36 show that Jesus' mission, passion, and exaltation were understood from the perspective of Isaiah 53 in the "school" of John despite the absence of direct citations. Moreover, in the two "fulfillment" citations in John 12:37-40, the stubbornness and unbelief of the Jews in the face of Jesus' σημεῖα is interpreted as the fulfillment of God's will by references to Isaiah 53:1 (LXX) and 6:10 (MT). Paul argues the same way in Romans 10:16. If one proceeds from the assumption that all the Johannine passages are coherent, then one need not see this citation of Isaiah 53:1 in John 12:38 as proof of the atomistic exegesis of Isaiah 53 in early Christianity.⁴¹ Rather, we may assume with H. W. Wolff "that the evangelist has cited it here out of his deep insight into the whole prophecy 'Behold, my servant shall prosper.'" ⁴²

V

Looking back, the thesis mentioned at the beginning is once again established: *Jesus' appearance in history and his messianic understanding of his mission, which*

40. Once one sees these connections it is no longer necessary to follow the complicated procedure of Jeremias, *Abba*, 194f., who traces the expression ὁ ἄμνός τοῦ θεοῦ back to an Aramaic טליא דאלהא, which in turn is supposed to point to an עבד יהוה.

41. Cf. R. Schnackenburg, *Das Johannesevangelium, II. Teil*, HTKNT 4/2 (1971), 516 = ET, *The Gospel According to St John*, vol. 2, trans. C. Hastings et al. (1980), 414: "The fact that the passage is part of the last Servant Song, which talks about the Servant's expiatory suffering, does not justify the conclusion that Is 53 had a strong influence on John. The remark is only an aside on the part of the prophet, and does not bring in the Servant."

42. Wolff, *Jesaja 53 im Urchristentum*, 84.

was oriented toward Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (as well as Isa. 43:3-4; 52:7; 61:1-2), present a decisive new development in the history of the interpretation and influence of Isaiah 53. Given Jesus' own understanding, the Easter witnesses were able for the first time to relate the whole Suffering Servant text to an individual historical figure and to interpret Jesus' sufferings soteriologically from this text. However, this Christological interpretation of Isaiah 53 in the post-Easter texts of the New Testament is not primarily or only an expression of the faith-knowledge opened to the Christian church by Easter; it is also an answer and a reaction to Jesus' own prophecies of his death, which appeared to the witnesses to have been confirmed (by God) in the light of Easter.

As Jesus applied Isaiah 43 and 53 to himself and his sacrifice and as early Christianity interpreted the Suffering Servant Christologically, they connected with the messianic exposition of the Servant tradition in early Judaism and extended it independently. To be sure, the early Jewish messianic interpretation of Isaiah 53 and the messianic application of Isaiah 53 to Jesus which is dependent on it are often ascribed to an "individual" understanding of the Servant according to our current terminology, over against which the "collective" understanding (known to every reader of Isaiah from 49:3) is then juxtaposed. But historically, this alternative is skewed and clarifies neither the Jewish nor the New Testament position. The Servant is understood messianically in early Jewish texts such as the *Aramaic Apocryphon of Levi* (4Q540-541),⁴³ the *Aramaic Testament of Jacob* (4Q537),⁴⁴ 1 *Enoch* 38:2; 46:4; 62:3, and then later in the *Targum of Isaiah* 53. He is thus viewed as priest, righteous man, son of man, or God's chosen one, but never without reference to the people of God. The Servant is the "prince" (נשיא) appointed by God who rules over God's people and, in so doing, simultaneously represents them before God.

Matters are no different in the New Testament. Jesus in his messianic mission as Son of God and Son of Man always saw himself as belonging to the end-time Israel. He founded the circle of the Twelve to gather up and represent the end-time people of the twelve tribes (cf. Mark 3:14-19; Luke 12:32; 22:28-30). He gathered the Twelve around himself as representatives of this people at the Last (Passover) Supper in order to give "the many" a share in his atoning death (cf. Luke 21:14-16). He took the way of sacrifice in order to effect a "substitution of existence" (*Existenzstellvertretung*) for Israel according to God's will, and it is

43. For the texts of 4Q540-541 and a French translation see Puech in DJD 31:213-56. For the same texts with an English translation see DSSSE 2:1078-81; cf. Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 526-27. Further on these texts see §7 in M. Hengel's essay in the present volume.

44. See DJD 31:171-90; DSSSE 2:1075-76; Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 526.

no accident that when Jesus publicly confessed himself to be the Messiah, he was already on the way to his death (cf. Mark 14:61-62 par.). Early Christianity's confession of the Χριστός whose death and resurrection become soteriologically transparent from Isaiah 53 was likewise about the Son of God who leads the people of God, has this people as his "body," and represents the members of his body before God in prayer. One can call this understanding "individual" only to the extent that one simultaneously takes up the collective aspect and refuses to play them off against each other.

When matters are seen in this way, it becomes clear that in their interpretation of Isaiah 53, Jesus and early Christianity by no means robbed Israel of the Isaiah texts first addressed to it. But historically speaking, they did irrevocably confront Israel with the question of whether and how the Deuteroisaianic statements about the Servant can be interpreted more appropriately than they have been in the New Testament. By the same token the Old Testament, Jewish interpretive tradition confronts New Testament scholars with the responsibility of not glossing over the biblical and early Jewish traditions in their interpretation of the relevant texts, but of taking them fully into account in their discourse about Jesus as the Suffering Servant.