

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Studies in Context and Intertextuality

Edited by

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Bloomsbury T&T Clark
An Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

B L O O M S B U R Y
LONDON • NEW DELHI • NEW YORK • SYDNEY

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INTRODUCTION

Craig A. Evans and Jeremiah J. Johnston

The present work begins with two studies that engage hermeneutics and method, thus setting the pace for the volume as a whole. Mark Gignilliat's "Singing Women and Promised Seed" considers the implications of viewing Old Testament Scripture as Christian Scripture, as did many of the early Church's major theologians and exegetes. Although his essay focuses on Isa 54:1-3, the results of Gignilliat's work may have great significance for Christian hermeneutics.

Jeremy Hultin's "*Genesis Rabbah* 48:1-6: Reflections on Thematic Unity and Exegetical Method" critically assesses the interpretation of Gen 18:1 ("And the Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre") in *Genesis Rabbah* 48. He hopes to cast light on how the rabbis employed their citations of Scripture when they commented on Scripture. He believes that in this case of the commentary on Gen 18:1, it is possible to discern considerable coherence between the several individual sections of the midrash. Hultin observes that this coherence depends upon *the contexts from which the petihta verses were chosen*—that is, from uncited biblical material. This is an important observation, given how scholars often assume that rabbinic midrash is atomistic.

The nine studies that follow treat passages and themes in the New Testament Gospels. In his creative essay, Jason Hood probes the significance of the number "forty-two" in Matthew's version of the genealogy. He believes that in early Jewish and Christian literature the number forty-two clarifies the nature of Israel's story. Hood points out that Matthew's whole text is notable for its allusive style, especially so in the case of the genealogy. The evangelist may have had several objectives for the numerical structure of his genealogy of Jesus, but in placing Jesus at or near the conclusion of a *forty-two*-stage "journey" through Israel's story, he may be evoking the wilderness identity of the people of God in their trials and struggles. This numerical metaphor, Hood contends, which derived from the book of Numbers, was commonly employed in early Jewish and Christian biblical interpretation by the use

of numbers associated with forty-two. The thematic use of the wilderness theme in other early Christian literature echoes the numerical use of the theme in Revelation.

Brian Dennert engages Jack Suggs's seminal study of wisdom in Matthew. He focuses on the evangelist's use of Prov 1:20-33 in the Parable of the Children in the Marketplace (Matt 11:16-19). The links may be subtle, Dennert acknowledges, but they do clarify the evangelist's use of the Q tradition, advancing the evangelist's portrayal of Jesus as God's Wisdom. Dennert argues plausibly that the allusions to Prov 1:20-33 have Christological and ecclesiological ramifications.

Jesse Rainbow challenges the conventional correspondence of Herod, Herodias, and John the Baptist in Matthew 14 with Ahab, Jezebel, and Elijah, observing that unlike John, Elijah was never arrested or killed by his royal adversaries. He argues instead that there are numerous similarities between John and Naboth (1 Kgs 21), and that the evangelist Matthew has actually improved the correspondence in several ways in comparison to the Markan parallel. Given that the Naboth story lies within the Elijah cycle in 1 Kings, his proposed realignment of the texts raises the question of how Elijah himself might fit into the comparison. Rainbow argues that the identification of John and Naboth in Matthew 14 implies a shifting of the mantle of Elijah from John to Jesus, a theme that will be developed in Matthew 14-17, culminating in the appearance of Jesus alongside Elijah on the mount of transfiguration (Matt 17:1-13).

Roger Aus treats readers to another engaging study in comparative midrash. Aus believes that Jesus' utterance, "Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25) should be viewed in the light of Nazirite traditions (esp. Num 6:3, where the Nazirite vows to abstain from wine) and the story of the patriarch Joseph, who was betrayed by his brothers and later shared food and wine with them (Gen 37: 39-50). Aus suggests that the Palestinian Jewish Christian who first formulated Mark 14:25 in a Semitic language thought of Jesus as a Nazirite. Following the Aramaic versions of Num 6:3 in the Targums, Aus wonders if Jesus has vowed to refrain from wine—new and old alike—until he drinks it in the Kingdom of God, the wine that will be served at the messianic banquet table.

Steven Notley and Jeffrey Garcia reopen the question of what Hebrew material, if any, underlies the Gospel of Luke. They contend that Jesus' exegesis as reported in the Third Gospel suggests his knowledge and use of Hebrew. Jesus' creative treatment of sacred texts, they believe, betrays a high degree of intertextuality that is possible only through the use of

Hebrew versions of the Bible. To test this supposition they examine four passages (Luke 4:18-19; 7:27; 10:25-28; 22:69) in which Jesus is described to exegete the Hebrew Scriptures. They conclude that the exegetical style attested in these pericopes betrays a sophisticated knowledge of the Scriptures—on par with Israel’s Sages.

Matthew S. Rindge examines Luke’s parable of the “Rich Fool” (12:16-21), which contains a citation of Qoh 8:15 (LXX), a likely allusion to—or echo of—Sir 11:14-19, and several parallels with *I En.* 97:8-10. Although these parallels have not been ignored, Rindge believes only scant attention has been given to the multiple ways in which Luke’s text appropriates, reconfigures, and illustrates these Jewish intertexts. He proposes using “conversation” as a fruitful and generative model for understanding and construing the intertextual relationships between Luke and these three Jewish intertexts. Reading Luke’s parable in concert with sapiential discussions on death and possessions yields different insights than when the parable is read through the primary lens of prophetic texts, which is often what is done. Reading the parable as a sapiential narrative draws attention, for example, not only to avarice but also to issues such as the meaningful use of possessions given the uncontrollable aspects of death and the fragility of life.

Diane Hakala takes a new look at the story of the rich man (Matt 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23). She addresses the difficulty in the story that despite the rich man’s claim to have observed these commands, he is still “lacking.” The cause of this deficiency is much debated. Was it the commands that were inadequate to obtain eternal life, or the rich man’s observance? To answer this question Hakala looks at early interpretation of the Decalogue and its two tables. She concludes that the deficiency on the part of the affluent man is in his desire to choose from one of the tables and not accept the entire set of commandments.

Ruth Sheridan treats John 19:37 (“They shall look upon the one they have pierced”), a most interesting datum in the Passion Narrative. Instead of having his legs broken to hasten his death, Jesus is pierced with a lance, the result of which is a flow of blood and water from his side. This event produces some comment from the implied author, to the effect that the event was “true” and the testimony of the figure who witnessed it was true (19:31-35). Sheridan wants to take another look at the scriptural proofs that the evangelist cites, usually understood as Exod 12:46 and Zech 12:10. She believes that John’s citation of Zech 12:10 in 19:37 is not thematically in accord with other New Testament texts that cite Zech 12:10.

The remaining five papers investigate the uses of Scripture in the letters of Paul and the letter to the Hebrews. Daniel Kirk explores the importance of what he calls “first context” in Paul’s citations of Scripture. He provides an example of the importance of both Old Testament and New Testament contexts by way of a reading of Rom 11:26, where Paul cites Isa 59:20. Kirk attempts to construct a theoretical model that provides a framework for explaining what he observes in Romans 11. In the last part of his paper he probes the utility of his model as a hermeneutical method by applying it to Paul’s citation of Ps 68:10 in Rom 15:3. Kirk concludes that Paul’s audience is drawn into the story and encouraged to understand the work of God in light of the Christ event through Paul’s transformation of his scriptural text.

In “Dominical Shame Tradition in Paul,” Yongbom Lee suggests that Paul’s declaration in Rom 1:16 that he is “not ashamed of the gospel” alludes to Jesus’ challenge to his followers to take up the cross and come after him, “Those who are *ashamed* of me and of *my words* in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be *ashamed* when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38, with emphasis added). Lee wonders if part of the backdrop is Dan 12:1-2 (“...many of those who sleep in a mound of earth will be awakened, these to everlasting life and those to shame and everlasting contempt”). Lee rightly believes that Paul has echoed dominical tradition, not that Mark has echoed Paul. Lee further shows that lying behind Mark 8:34-38 are allusions not only to Dan 7:13, but also allusions to Dan 12:1-12, in which it is envisioned that some will be resurrected in shame.

Alain Gignac believes that the Scriptures Paul cites in Rom 3:9-20 raise three important questions relating to intertextuality. These questions concern (1) the origin of the catena (Pauline or non-Pauline?); (2) the adaptations made by the creator of the catena to the Septuagint text; and (3) the relation between the original context and the Pauline discourse. Gignac wants to show how the pasting of these texts serves narrative purposes and how two different enunciative instances take charge of the text. He asks, How does intertextuality produce narrativity, and how is narrativity assumed by the discourse? How do intertextuality and narrativity merge in a specific discourse? To address these questions Gignac proposes that if we pay attention to the enunciative device of the catena (part of the narrative articulation of the text), we can understand the underlying hermeneutical process as it is inscribed *in the text*, in order to describe the connection between the new theological discourse and its scriptural referent. In other words, the intertextual assembly of

vv. 10-18 (Ps 13:1-3 = Ps 54:2-4; Ps 5:10; Ps 139:4; Ps 9:28; Isa 59:7-8; Ps 35:2) has a *narrative function* and develops its own theory of intertextuality via a *complex enunciative device*, suggesting that the Law is reinterpreted within the context of the experience of Christ.

Brian LePort finds in Rom 16:17-20a six statements that when read together indicate reliance upon the framework of Genesis 2–3: (1) “the teaching that you have learned” in v. 17; (2) the mention of appetites in v. 18; (3) “smooth talk and flattery” in v. 18; (4) the mention of obedience in v. 19; (5) the desire for the hearers of this epistle “to be wise in what is good and guileless in what is evil” in v. 19; and (6) and the crushing of Satan “under your feet” in v. 20. In an epistle obsessed with the unity of the church in Rome we find one final appeal for the hearers to avoid those who would seek to be divisive. The authorial aim, LePort contends, is to associate “those who cause dissensions” with the Serpent figure who deceived Eve in Eden, causing her to rebel along with Adam against the divine command. If the audience heeds to the message of the epistle, theirs will be the reversal of “the Fall,” where this time good is chosen over evil, the divine command obeyed, and Satan defeated.

The volume concludes with a fascinating essay by Silviu N. Bunta, in which he reopens the question that asks if an early form of Merkabah mysticism comes to expression in the book of Hebrews. He notes that although a number of scholars proposed the possibility forty years ago, there has been little discussion since and at least one scholar has criticized the proposal. Bunta finds this criticism unpersuasive, contending that the expression of merkabah mysticism present in Hebrews is clarified by appeal to traditions about Adam (as in Gen 1:26), especially in the light of Ezek 1:26 (“...seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness as it were of a human form”). Bunta argues that Hebrews 1–2 depicts Christ as the subject of both Ezek 1:26 and Gen 1:26. Christ is the glory of Ezekiel 1, which is the human image of God in which Adam is made. The combination of these Adamic features with enthronement imagery in the portrayal of the Son reflects the rapprochement between Ezekiel 1 and Gen 1:26 attested in earlier Jewish and Christian traditions.

1

SINGING WOMEN AND PROMISED SEED: ISAIAH 54:1-3 AS CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURE

Mark S. Gignilliat

Introduction

In the preface to his commentary on Isaiah, Jerome describes the prophet as an evangelist and an apostle (*non solum prophetam, sed euangelistam et apostolum doceam*). His predication of Isaiah, an Old Testament prophet, with post-resurrection language is indicative of an interpretive approach governed by Christian, theological commitments. Again, speaking of Isaiah, Jerome continues, “[I]gnoratio scripturarum, ingoratio Christi est.” For Jerome, and the larger Christian, hermeneutical family, our understanding of Jesus Christ is shaped by the canonical deposit of Israel’s Sacred Scriptures: *κατὰ τὰς γραφάς*. The present study is an endeavor to follow in the train of this Christian, hermeneutical tradition of reading Isaiah as Christian Scripture. I will begin with broader theological and interpretive matters: two vignettes from the early church will provide our point of entry. Then I will direct my attention to the theological exegesis of a particular text, Isa 54:1-3.

In a familiar narrative from his *Confessions*, Augustine recounts his catechetical preparation for baptism. When asked how best to ready himself, Ambrose pointed Augustine in the direction of Isaiah. Ambrose’s understanding of Isaiah’s gospel-toned voice was a shared conviction in the early church: as Jerome’s comments above indicate. Augustine received Ambrose’s instruction and took to the reading of Isaiah only to be met with difficulty and confusion. Augustine said, “He told me to read prophet Isaiah, I think because more clearly than others he foretold the gospel and the calling of the Gentiles. But I did not understand the first passage of the book, and thought the whole would be equally obscure. So I put it on one side to be resumed when I had more

practice in *the Lord's style of language*.”¹ Many first-time readers of the prophets would affirm Augustine's response.

The second vignette comes from Cyril of Alexandria's preface to his commentary on Jonah. The mystery of Christ, for Cyril, is foreshadowed in Jonah. It is the task of the Christian interpreter to explain this dynamic to the reader. Cyril explains,

When a text is developed at a spiritual level, and its central character is selected and adopted as a representation of Christ the Savior of us all, a person of wisdom and understanding should judge which details are irrelevant and applicable, and likely to be of particular benefit to the listeners... Not everything in texts and types, therefore, is relevant to spiritual interpretations—only if a character is introduced who in himself prefigures Christ for us; then we properly pass over human elements and focus only on relevant details, in every case highlighting what is conducive to supporting the purpose of the text... If we do not apply the whole story to the purpose of spiritual interpretation, then, let no one find fault: just as bees in traversing meadows and flowers always gather what is useful for making honey, so the skillful commentator studies the holy and inspired Scripture, ever gathering and compiling what contributes to the clarification of the mysteries of Christ and will produce a mature and irrefragable treatment.²

The hermeneutical point stressed here for Cyril is straightforward, even if difficult to execute. Not every detail of Jonah's story functions typologically or figurally in relation to Jesus Christ. For example, Jonah was sent to preach by the Father. So too was Jesus. But Jonah backed down from his calling. Jesus did not. It takes a wise interpreter to see where the Old Testament texts naturally extend within the divine economy and where the narrative or *historia* does not.³

Taken together, Augustine's narrative and Cyril's comments are a window into the difficulties and joys of theological interpretation in general, and more specifically, theological interpretation of Isaiah. With Augustine, theological exegesis demands an attention to the text itself as one wrestles to learn “the Lord's style of language” in the unified, canonical witness of Isaiah. The literary form of the canonical deposit is

1. Augustine, *Confessions* (trans. H. Chadwick; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), IX, v. 13 (emphasis added).

2. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets* (trans. Robert C. Hill; Fathers of the Church 115; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 149–50.

3. On “natural extension” and figural reading as not “non-literal” reading, see John David Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

not a husk to be shred as one searches for the Christological dimension. As one teacher of mine used to say, the Old Testament is not the booster rockets of the space shuttle falling back into the ocean when finally arrived at a New Testament orbit. The Old Testament is an ongoing means of God's self-disclosure. A commitment to the inspiration of these texts recognizes the text itself as the means of God's self-communication to his people. This recognition demands a wrestling with the way the words go (*ἀκολουθεία*, as the Antiochenes were concerned to demonstrate).⁴

Bernard Duhm's tri-partite reading of Isaiah created hurdles for a unified reading of the book. But this has now given way to more attuned attention to Isaiah's unified voice in these sixty-six chapters.⁵ Still, the confession regarding Isaiah's unity and final form, along with a resistance to form-criticism's atomizing instincts, in no way attenuates the ongoing necessity of exegesis in the book. The Lord's style of language is embedded within the literary deposit of the canonical text, and the exegetical difficulties are numerous. Like Barth said of Calvin, one could spend the rest of their days in the Himalayas of Isaiah's canonical witness wrestling with the exegetical and text-critical difficulties, e.g., the difficult text-critical challenges in Isaiah 53. Nevertheless, the textual form is the inspired form both in the genesis of the material in its compositional history and in its continued role in the life of the church in its textual reception.⁶

Cyril's comments on Jonah show us that theological interpretation of Isaiah is not content with a mere exegetical engagement with the literary and historical contexts of the text itself in an act of description or as a particular species of historical excavation—whether by means of historical reconstruction or by appreciative attention to the religious-historical outlook of the time, both of which in isolation potentially sequester the text's function as Christian Scripture. It requires the text's *historia*, or its narrative dimension, to be extended figurally into a larger nexus of

4. See Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1997), 172; Robert C. Hill, *Reading the Old Testament in Antioch* (The Bible in Ancient Christianity; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 110–11.

5. A leading example in the midst of an expanding amount of secondary literature is H. G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

6. See Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*. Vol. 1, *Prolegomena* (trans. J. Vriend; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 384–85; John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Current Issues in Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

meaning and potentiality provided by the redemptive dynamic of the divine economy.⁷ Various terms in the history of the church get at this dynamic: *historia* and *theoria*; allegory and typology; the medieval four-fold model; literal sense and spiritual sense; the figural reading of Luther and Calvin in their respective attending to the “plain sense” of the text. Despite their differing exegetical conclusions, all of these approaches resemble each other on the instinctual and theoretical level of Christian reading of the Old Testament.⁸

But Cyril also makes the point that it takes skill and wisdom to know where mimetic correspondences or allegorical extension work naturally within a two-testament canonical framework and where such readings are forced. Cyril’s language of skill and wisdom is important because it keeps at bay an attendance to a rigid method: if we can secure the proper method, then the exegetical results will naturally follow.⁹ It takes wisdom and skill, a Holy Spirit intuition, to help guide the reader in locating those places where extension occurs naturally, say even, ontologically, and where it does not. For pre-modern interpreters, the language of piety, humility, and virtue would be predicated on “successful” exegesis. Thomas Cranmer in his first Edwardian homily, entitled “A Fruitful Exhortation to the Reading and Knowledge of Holy Scripture,” claims,

And if you be afraid to fall into error by reading of holy Scripture, I shall shew you how you may read it without danger of error. Read it humbly with a meek and lowly heart, to the intent you may glorify God, and not yourself, with the knowledge of it: and read it not without daily praying to God, that he would direct your reading to good effect; and take upon you to expound it no further than you can plainly understand it.¹⁰

The appeal to piety and virtue does not diffuse tensions created over differing exegetical conclusion: a classic example of this tension is observed in Calvin and Luther’s different reading of Gen 3:15 or the Psalms in general. The appeal to piety, humility, and virtue does, however, reveal the proper posture for Christian reading of the Bible.

7. See the very helpful article by Murray Rae, “Texts in Context: Scripture in the Divine Economy,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* I (2001): 23–46.

8. See the introductory chapter of Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

9. The zealous attention to method is a modern instinct whose roots are in the Cartesian turn to the subject. See Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), Chapter 1.

10. John H. Leith, ed., *Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine, from the Bible to the Present* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 236.

Sensitive to this “family resemblance,” Brevard Childs speaks of a multi-levelled approach to reading the Old Testament christianly.¹¹ In a dialectical relationship between the literary, historical and canonical contexts of the Old Testament and the claims of the New Testament and the apostolic era, one fits together text and subject matter around God’s revealing of himself in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. Key here, to my mind, is Childs’ insistence that this multi-layered reading of the Old Testament is a single act of reading or act of exegesis. In his commentary on Ezekiel, Robert Jenson, who is borrowing from Jason Byassee, calls this single act of reading an attendance to the Christological plain sense of the text.¹² If one allows the Chalcedonic formula to function as an analogue to our understanding of Scripture (and I actually find this dubious), the single reading would resist a Nestorian tendency to dichotomize the historical/literary matters of exegesis from the fuller figural readings of the self-same text. *Historia* and *theoria* come together to form *one* act of exegesis. Or, one does not have Christian exegesis of the Old Testament without attending to its broader location in a two-testament canon within the one divine economy.

Well, lest I fall prey to the temptation ever to discuss theological interpretation without actually turning toward exegesis itself, let me draw our attention to Isa 54:1-3 and seek to establish its *historia*. Then our attention will turn toward its *theoria* or figural potentiality all within the framework of a single act of reading.

Isaiah 54:1-3: The Servant’s Progeny and Zion’s Rejoicing

The seemingly stark shift of subject matter from Isaiah 53, the fourth of the so-called servant songs, to Isaiah 54 lent support to Bernard Duhm’s early insistence on the original independence of Isaiah’s servant songs. Duhm’s logic regarding the compositional history of this section was straightforward: if you lift Isaiah 53 (I will refer to Isa 53 with 52:13-15 in mind as well) out of its current location, then one does not have the contextual whiplash created in the transition between ch. 53 and ch. 54. The theme of Zion so prevalent in ch. 52 moves naturally into the context of Isaiah 54 with a strong level of thematic coherence. But

11. Brevard S. Childs, “Does the Old Testament Witness to Jesus Christ,” in *Evangelium Schriftauslegung Kirche: Festschrift für Peter Stuhlmacher zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. Jostein Adna, Scott J. Hafemann, and Otfried Hofius; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997), 57–64.

12. Robert Jenson, *Ezekiel* (Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible; Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2009).

Duhm's reading has not held up to critical scrutiny primarily because of the strong thematic coherence observed between ch. 54 and ch. 53 as well. The parallel themes are as follows: seed (53:10; 54:3), the many (52:14-15; 53:11-12; 54:1); righteousness (53:11; 54:14) and (peace (53:5; 54:10). Therefore, Isaiah 54's literary fixity between chs. 53 and 55 functions to coordinate the metaphors and themes of this chapter. It is not a redactional misfire.

Though there is thematic coherence between ch. 53 and ch. 54, a shift in imagery is present. The gender has moved away from the masculine servant of Isaiah 53 to the feminine barren woman and widowed woman of ch. 54. More significantly in the literary form of the book as we now have it, the singular servant of Isaiah 40–53 now shifts to the plural servants of 54–66. A trajectory within the imagery of the servant is now present such that the servant's (singular) work has been extended by his faithful and obedient followers who are now called the servants (plural). Childs states, "The suffering innocent one of ch. 53 is seen as having his life, in some way, extended and incorporated through his suffering by those who are now designated 'the servants of the Lord'."¹³ This larger and more textured reading of the literary form of Isaiah in its canonical shaping indicates the antecedent role Isaiah 53's subject matter plays for Isaiah 54.

The barren woman (whose nominal form is seen only here in the latter prophets) is called on to rejoice (54:1). The second colon in this line follows Kugel's "What is more B" understanding of poetic parallelism and heightens the imagery for poetic effectives—from rejoice (colon A) to break forth into singing and cry aloud (colon B).¹⁴ The use of metaphor here, as in much of Isaiah, increases the emotional content of the idea being discussed.¹⁵ Moreover, according to Lakoff and Johnson, "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another."¹⁶ In Isa 54:1-3 the image is the barren woman. In our current cultural context, barrenness is typically a private malady

13. Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (The Old Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 430. See especially W. A. M. Beuken, "The Main Theme of Trito-Isaiah: 'The Servants of YHWH,'" *JOT* 47 (1990): 67–87.

14. James L. Kugel, *The Ideal of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), Chapter 1.

15. S. L. Stassen, "Marriage (and Related) Metaphors in Isaiah 54:1-17," *JSS* 6 (1994): 61.

16. Cited in Sarah J. Dille, *Mixing Metaphors: God as Mother and Father in Deutero-Isaiah* (JSOTSup 398; London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 18.

suffered in isolation and within the confines of one's family and friends. Within the world of the Old Testament, barrenness carried with it a public, social stigma that was enough to push Sarah to find a remedial route to her barrenness through Hagar. It drove Hannah to the temple to plead with the Lord in a manner that to the uninformed observer seemed like a drunken stupor. Klaus Baltzer claims, "Barrenness is a hard fate in a society where a woman's dignity is bound up with children."¹⁷ And here, the metaphor of barrenness marks Zion's desolation. If Paul Ricoeur is right—metaphors tell us something new about reality and are more than rhetorical ornaments—then the metaphor of the barren women in Isa 54:1-3 provides new understanding of Yhwh's fully orbed and complex self-determination to be God for his people.¹⁸

The cause of the barren woman's rejoicing is indicated with a comparative clause: "many more are the children of desolation than the children of the married, says the Lord" (54:1). The messenger or oracle formula, "says the Lord," ends the first verse and possibly identifies 54:1 as the thematic head of the entire chapter. The cause of the barren woman's rejoicing is the promise of children which beforehand were not possible. The children of desolation (the feminine participial form of שָׂמָה) will be more than the children of the husbanded. The intertextual link here to Isa 6:11, where the nominal form of the same root is used, should not be missed. Isaiah's prophetic commissioning of ch. 6 entails within it the negative promise that his word will function as the means of deafening and blinding the people of God. His words are the agents by which YHWH will make his judgment effective upon his people. Isaiah asks understandably, "How long oh Lord," after the prophetic bait and switch occurs. The answer is: until the cities have no inhabitants, there is no people and the land lays in desolate waste. The nominal form (שָׂמָה) is used here as an adverbial modifier of the verb "to lay in waste."

The laconic and adumbrated promise of Isa 6:13b, holy seed is its new growth, is now actualized in YHWH's redemptive economy. There is holy seed. There is new growth. Zion does have children. The promised destruction, God's "no" to use Karl Barth's language, has given way to God's "yes" as destruction and judgment are not allowed to have the final word. The barren woman, the children of desolation, those who have fallen under the mighty hand of God's judgment are now receiving

17. Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40–55* (ed. Peter Machinist; trans. Margaret Kohl; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 435.

18. Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 52–53.

the gracious promise that their barrenness is no more. Her single-person tent must give way to a larger tent able to house an abundance of children, which, once thought lost, are not promised to her in spades.

Immediately, the question of the identity of this woman comes is rightly asked. The answer seems straightforward. The ladies, along with all the mixed metaphors in this chapter, are Lady Zion or personified Jerusalem.¹⁹ This fits the thematic context of much of Isaiah 40–55, with its detailed attention to Zion and Jerusalem. But it would also seem incumbent upon the reader to press beyond this facile identification of Lady Zion as personified Jerusalem to a more concrete identity in light of Isaiah 54's literary context. This entails an engagement with the identity of Zion as now understood within the framework of the servant motif in Isaiah 40–55. Again, the rejoicing called for in v. 1 is antecedently related to the work of the servant in the previous chapter. To state the matter succinctly, the person and work of the servant makes Lady Zion's rejoicing possible.

The identification of “your seed” (זרעך) in Isa 54:3 is a crux in this matter. In Isa 53:10, a notoriously difficult verse to translate, the servant is promised that he will see his seed and prolong his days.²⁰ It is the vicarious nature of the servant's work on behalf of Israel that actualizes the forgiveness of God for his people. By the knowledge of him, he will make righteous “the many” (53:11). The term “many” (רבים) is also used in the comparison of 54:1: many more are the sons of destruction. The seed promised to the servant is literarily and ontologically related to the seed of the barren woman in Isa 54:1-3. She is given a seed; she is given offspring that were not naturally hers but have been provided for her on the basis of the person and work of another, a surrogate mother, if you will. Zion has children because the servant of the Lord has provided them for Zion by his offering of himself as an אשם.²¹ Zion asked the

19. Beuken states, “The sequence mother–wife may be illogical but is inspired by Israel's history and traditions, by the images that have come to typify the two earliest phases of her existence, the time of the wandering patriarchs and that of the life in the land.” W. A. M. Beuken, “Isaiah liv: The Multiple Identity of the Person Addressed,” in *Language and Meaning: Studies in Hebrew Language and Biblical Exegesis* (ed. A. S. Van Der Woude; Leiden: Brill, 1974), 39.

20. On immortality as related to the extension of one's family or seed in the Old Testament, see Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 108–22.

21. Bernd Janowski, “He Bore Our Sins: Isaiah 53 and the Drama of Taking Another's Place,” in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources* (ed. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher; trans. D. P. Bailey; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 48–74.

question in Isa 49:21, “Who has borne me these? I was bereaved and barren, exiled and put away, but who has brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; from where have these come?” The answer given in the literary association of 54:1-3 with ch. 53 is, “Your children have been given you by the servant.”

In Isa 54:3 the actualization of the promises to the Patriarchs is seen. In Gen 28:14, language very similar to 54:3 is observed. Jacob is promised that his seed will spread out to the north and south and to the east and west and by his seed the whole earth will be blessed. The same verb, *פָּרַח*, is used to describe the centrifugal motion of God’s blessing to Abraham and then Jacob’s seed. In Isa 51:1-3 Israel’s election entails within it the purview of the nations and the need for election to move missionally to the nations.²² Election for mission is the means by which forfeited blessings caused by rebellion are overcome. And it is the servant in Isa 53:11-12 who is numbered among the rebellious, who bears their transgressions and actually makes intercession on their account. Israel as son of God is identified from the beginning of Isaiah’s corpus as a rebellious child who has forfeited her covenantal blessings and denied the vocation her election demanded of her: be a blessing to the nations. In the midst of this dynamic, the servant is identified both as Israel, unquestionably, and an entity other than empirical Israel who embodies for Israel and the nations what Israel could not, or would not, do or be.²³

In his act of faithfulness, even unto death, the servant makes the promise to Abraham’s and Jacob’s seed an actuality in the divine economy. Zion, who could not have legitimate children of her own because like Sarah she is barren, is now given children—the many, the seed—as a gift on the basis of the servant’s person and work. But key to this fulfillment in Isaiah of the promises to the patriarchs is the central role the servant plays in reorienting the identity of Lady Zion’s children. Lady Zion’s children, the servants of the Servant, are those who have identified themselves in obedience to the identity and vocation of him. These servant followers of the Servant have recognized in retrospect the significance of the Servant’s person and work and act as heralds of his work who live into the righteousness given to them as gift as they negotiate their existence in the eschatological tension. Lady Zion has

22. On the missional character of the prophets, see Christopher R. Seitz, *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 145–58.

23. See Peter Wilcox and David Paton-Williams, “The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah,” *JSOT* 42 (1988): 79–102.

children now, a righteous offspring, the fulfillment of the patriarchal promises, and they have been provided for her because of the servant's person and work. Moreover, their identity is inextricably linked to the self-same servant.

Such is the *historia* or literary/canonical context of Isa 54:1-3. Much more could and should be said about this text, e.g., the specific issue of Israel's particular identity with or over against the nations. But we now seek to fit this text in a single yet multi-layered act of reading within the one divine economy of God's revelation of himself in Jesus Christ by the promised Spirit. Such a reading is warranted because the ecclesial culture in which this text is read affects our understanding of the ontology of Scripture. All interpretive moves—whether Isaiah is to read against the backdrop of its compositional history; whether Isaiah is to be read through the hermeneutical lens of the ancient Near Eastern comparative method; whether Isaiah is to be read in what Odil Steck call its “historically synchronic reading”—that is, the text in its compositional final stages as received by Jews and Christians—are affected by our particular location either in the academy and the church. Interpretive decisions have to be made. Roy Melugin frames the issue well:

As Hayden White teaches us, the totality of resources available to us for our historical research is often so large that we have to choose what is relevant for our historical inquiry and what is not. *We* do the choosing; and our choices are by no means unaffected by *our* particular worldviews, *our* views of human nature, and much else from our own culture and our culture's interpretive communities.²⁴

Admittedly, in the present study I am doing the choosing and this limits the interpretive potential.

A reading of Isaiah as Christian Scripture is an article of faith that can be demonstrated, but not necessarily in an analytically *bruta facta* way. It flows from confession. Karl Barth's pregnant line, “Revelation is not a predicate of history but history is a predicate of revelation,” has hermeneutical cash value when it comes to reading Isaiah as a Christian witness.²⁵ Yes, Isaiah's prophecy is born out of a historically particular situation or situations, and depending on the level of redactional confidence attached to various interpreters, a broad sketch of this historically

24. Roy F. Melugin, “Recent Form Criticism in an Age of Reader Response,” in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism in the Twenty-First Century* (ed. Marvin A. Sweeney and Ehud Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 46–64 (62, original emphasis).

25. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I.2 (ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance; trans. G. T. Thomson and Harold Knight; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 58.

particular character can be had: from single authorship in the eighth century to a long compositional process whose terminus is the second century BCE. And, it should be mentioned, much can be learned and gained from insights gathered from the text's depth dimension. Notwithstanding these matters, however, it is the text in its final form that functions as canonical Scripture, not a recovered depth-dimension. Its potentiality for reading and re-reading in the divine economy is not exhausted by mining the historical particularity out of which the text arose. There is a fixity to its witness in the material form of the book as we have it. But its potentiality, its substance, its revelatory character, identifies the text as an ongoing word. In Herman Bavinck's helpful phrase, "The Scriptures are the eternally youthful word of the Lord."²⁶

As such, this eternally, youthful witness of Isa 54:1-3 is not locked in Israel's ancient past in the attempt at recovering: Who wrote it. Who heard it first? What's the human author's original intent? Rather, the text's literary fixity is naturally extended within the framework of the one divine economy. Its fixity is wed to a Christological plain sense whose substance is defined by God's self-disclosure in a two-testament canon. By way of conclusion, I will outline three ways in which the text of Isa 54:1-3 and its canonical context organically extends into Christian theological claims. These three readings are not exhaustive of the text's theological potential, nor are the readings examined as fully as they should be. Instead, they are offered as indicators of possible readings awaiting further exploration.

First, the vicarious work of Christ makes his followers righteous and makes possible righteous acts on the far side of redemption. In Isaianic terms, the seed identified as righteous in 53:10-11 is now called on to enact her missional responsibilities that flow from her election and redemption (54:3). A similar dynamic is at play in 56:1, where righteousness as gift and righteousness as covenant obligations are comfortably situated next to each other. Calvin's understanding of the *duplex gratia* may illustrate this Isaianic theme. Todd Billings explains Calvin's *duplex gratia*: the first grace is justification and the second grace is sanctification or our partaking in righteousness.²⁷ Both aspects of the one salvation event are distinguishable yet insolubly bound together. Moreover, they both flow from the gracious character of the one who suffered in our place. Something of this dynamic is present in the work of the Servant as

26. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1:384.

27. J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (Changing Paradigms in Historical and Systematic Theology; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 15.

one who makes righteous and makes righteous acts possible on the far side of the gracious gift of righteousness—both of which flow from the objective character of his reconciling work.

Second, an organic link exists between the Servant and his servant followers: to speak of one entails the necessity of the other. The Servant is promised on the far side of his crushing that he will see his seed. The Servant's identity is prolonged in his seed; it is extended in those who have been made righteous because he bore their iniquities. The Servant's identity is carried out and extended in this progeny. The Servant is primary; he is the cause and means by which the servants enact their missional obligations. Still, their mission is so interwoven with his that language applied to the servant can be applied to them as well—in the remainder of Isaiah's corpus the servants' identity are also caught up in the complex of humiliation and exaltation much like that of the Servant.

Augustine's *Totus Christus* ecclesiology is related in substance to the insoluble bond between Servant and servants in Isaiah. He says in *De Doctrina*,

We know that we are sometimes being given hints that head and body, that is Christ and Church, constitute one person... So according to this first rule (first rule of Tychonius' seven rules against the Donatists) we should not let it baffle us when a text passes from head to body and from body to head, and yet still refers to one and the same person" (III.44).

The language the risen Jesus uses when he speaks to Paul in Acts 9 is indicative of this dynamic: Why do you persecute me? Jesus and his body are ontologically bound to each other. *Totus Christus* is also why Paul can speak about himself and his apostolic ministry in such a way as to cause discomfort: I carry the death of Jesus in my body (2 Cor 4:10); I make up for that which is lacking in his suffering (Col 1:24). Again, the substance of Augustine's ecclesiology organically relates to the relationship between Servant and servants in Isaiah 40–66.

Finally, and related to my first observation, election demands mission. It is of little wonder that Isa 54:1-3 served as the catalyst for William Carey's famous sermon on missions.²⁸ Carey found biblical warrant in this text for the necessity of human agency in proclaiming the gospel around the world: "Lengthen thy chords and strengthen thy gates." Carey's reading of this text led to his famous phrase, "Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God." The Christian reception of Isa 54:1-3 propelled one of the greatest missionary movements of our

28. Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Pelican History of the Church, 6; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1964), 222–23.

time. And it should be stressed that Carey's engagement of this text is in accord with its missional impetus, fitted within the context of the one divine economy of grace. It is not merely a homiletical reading but a reading of the way these words go in light of God's triune action in Jesus Christ. Isaiah 54:1-3 reveals that a responsibility is placed on the shoulders of those who have reason to rejoice. The promises to the patriarchs, "lengthen thy cords," were actualized in Isa 54:1-3 and continue as an effective word of the Lord for generations of servant followers of the Servant. William Carey was, in fact, one of those followers and in a tight reading allowed the force of this text to be heard as a young, fresh and urgent word of the Lord.

In his illuminating work *Canon and Creed*, Robert Jenson puts the matter boldly, "If Christ interpreted the Old Scripture 'with authority,' as if he were the author, it was because, in the final ontological analysis, that is what he is."²⁹ If Christian readers of the Bible affirm Jenson's statement—a statement whose substance can be found in the writings of Irenaeus, Luther, and Calvin, just to name a few in the history of interpretation—then our approach to reading the textual witness of the Old Testament will have to accord with this fundamental, Christian confession. The *logos*, whose name in time is revealed as Jesus Christ, precedes the Old Testament. This theological claim fundamentally shapes our hermeneutical approach.

29. Robert W. Jenson, *Canon and Creed* (Interpretation: Resources for the Use of Scripture in the Church; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 22.