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### The Servant of the Lord in Isaiah Fifty-Three

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**THE "SERVANT OF THE LORD"  
IN ISAIAH FIFTY-THREE**

**A Thesis presented to the  
Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity**

**by**

**John Paul Uhlig**

**Concordia Seminary,  
April 15, 1937**

**Approved by**

*J. Theodore Mueller*

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THE SERVANT OF THE LORD IN ISAIAH FIFTY-  
THREE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO  
MODERN CRITICISM

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

- CHAPTER ONE - THE INTERNAL TESTIMONY OF ISAIAH FIFTY-THREE.**
- I. The Servant's Lowly Origin and Birth, pp. 7-9.
  - II. The Servant's Unattractive Form, pp. 10-11.
  - III. The Servant's Reception by Men, pp. 11-13.
  - IV. The Servant's Sorrow of Heart, pp. 13-15.
  - V. The Servant's Sufferings, pp. 15-19.
  - VI. The Work of the Servant is Vicarious, pp. 19-25.
  - VII. The Unresisting Patience and Endurance of the Servant, pp. 25-28.
  - VIII. The Servant's Grave, pp. 28-28.
  - IX. The Mystery of God's Treatment of the Sinless Servant, pp. 29-31.
  - X. This Servant Had to be God, pp. 31-33.  
Holy-  
Resurrection-
  - XI. The Great Work Which the Servant Carried on, pp. 33-34.
  - XII. The Wide Sweep of the Servant's Dominion and its Foundation, pp. 34-39.
- CHAPTER TWO - THE TESTIMONY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, pp. 40-54.**
- CHAPTER THREE - THE TESTIMONY OF JEWISH TRADITION, pp. 55-74.**
- CHAPTER FOUR - THE TESTIMONY OF CHRISTIAN TRADITION, pp. 75-78.**
- CHAPTER FIVE - ANALYSIS OF CRITICAL ARGUMENTS.**
- I. Jewish Criticism, pp. 79-87.
  - II. Other Criticism, pp. 87-93.
  - III. Four Non-Messianic Interpretations, pp. 93-99.
  - IV. The Interpretation Which Makes the Jewish People the Subject of the Prophecy, pp. 99-108.
  - V. The Interpretation Which Makes the Godly Portion of the Jewish People the Subject of the Prophecy, pp. 108-111.
  - VI. The Interpretation Which Makes the Collective Body of the Prophets the Subject of the Prophecy, pp. 112-116.
  - VII. The Interpretation Which Makes Some Individual the Subject, pp. 116-120.



Thus reads the history of this "Servant of Jehovah"; thus reads that loftiest and (most) sublime of all chapters in the Bible, namely, Isaiah, chapter fifty-three.

But of whom does the prophet speak these things? Who is this "Servant of Jehovah" who thus suffers as man's substitute to gain their forgiveness?

This term "Servant of Jehovah" is used variously in the Scriptures. At times it designates Moses the lawgiver. The term is employed thus throughout the book of Joshua. Compare also Deut. 34, 5: "So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord". The term is also used as describing Joshua, the victorious captain. Thus in Joshua 24, 29: "And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old". The term is frequently used of the patriarch David. Compare Psalm 18, 1: "To the chief Musician, a Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord;" also Psalm 36, 1: "To the chief Musician, a Psalm of David the servant of the Lord;" also Jeremiah 33, 21: "Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign! We also frequently find the same term applied to the patriarch Job. Compare Job 1, 8: "And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth?"; likewise Job 2, 3 and 42, 8. And we even find this term applied to king Nebuchadnezzar. So in Jeremiah 27, 6: "And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the

king of Babylon, my servant".

Will any of these men fit the description of the servant which Isaiah gives us in chapter fifty-three? Incidents in the lives of some of these individuals do coincide with certain incidents in Isaiah's description of the "Servant". Moses was exalted and extolled and was very high (comp. 52, 13); Joshua had a portion with the great (comp. 53, 12); David was a man at whom the kings shut their mouths (comp. 52, 15); Job was severely oppressed and afflicted (comp. 53, 7); and even Nebuchadnezzar was exalted and very high (comp. 52, 12). But of which of the above-mentioned can it be said that "he hath borne our grief and carried our sorrows"? Of what individual can it be said that "he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth"? Of which of them can it be said that "he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days"? Neither Moses, nor Joshua, nor David, nor Job, nor Nebuchadnezzar is referred to by Isaiah in his fifty-third chapter.

Does Isaiah in any part of his book intimate or suggest who this "servant of the Lord" might be? Does he apply the term uniformly to any one individual? No, he too uses the term to designate various persons, groups and classes. For instance, he applies the term to all Israel. Thus in 42, 18, 19: "Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant?" At another place Isaiah uses the term to designate

only the faithful in Israel, "the Israel according to the spirit". Thus 44, 1. 2: "Yet now hear O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen". But in 49, 5 and 6 Isaiah refers to term to the Messiah: "And now, saith the Lord that formed thee from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel". Thus Isaiah uses the term "Servant of Jehovah" in a three-fold manner, as designating all Israel, only the pious, and finally as descriptive of the Messiah.

Who is meant in chapter fifty-three? Critics have split into many camps. Some hold that Isaiah is speaking of all Israel; some, that he designates only the pious in Israel; while certain ones hold that the prophet is speaking of some individual. The Christian Church has, however, from the very beginning held that Isaiah is speaking of the Messiah. And that this is the true interpretation is pointed out at length in the following chapters. In one section of sixteen verses the evangelist of the Old Testament paints a picture of the work of Christ. His humiliation is stressed as well as His exaltation.

And as we study this fifty-third chapter, as we pause to gaze upon this picture of our Messiah, as we see the various details in bold relief, we cannot help but marvel at



the beauty of it all. We gaze long and intently; our tongues are held; we cannot speak; we can only marvel. And when finally after long moments of devout silence we do open our mouths to speak, the only words which pass over our lips are, Hail Messiah, innocent sufferer, Lamb of God, my Redeemer. Delitzsch marvelling at the beauty of this chapter expressed his thoughts thus, "The conception of the servant of Jehovah is, as it were, a pyramid, whose base is the people of Israel as a whole, whose center is Israel according to the spirit, and whose apex is the person of the Mediator of salvation who arises out of Israel".

Blessed beyond measure is he who sees his Savior in these verses of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. And thrice blessed is he who accepts this Messiah as his Redeemer.

CHAPTER ONE

THE INTERNAL TESTIMONY OF ISIAH FIFTY-THREE

Chapter fifty-three of Isaiah begins, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant". The first thing that the casual reader will ask is, 'Who is the person of whom the prophet says, "He shall grow up"?' The eunuch of Ethiopia reading this chapter asked of Philip, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this, of himself or of some other man"? \* That is the great and weighty question which at this moment engages our attention. Who is the "he" of whom Isaiah speaks, who is the "Servant of the Lord"?

Being asked this question, the student will at once read the entire chapter very carefully, pondering upon every word, upon every phrase, to see if in the chapter itself some hint is not dropped as to the subject of the writing. He will study the internal testimony of the chapter itself. This will engage our attention at this time. We shall study each verse, each phrase to see if perhaps we can determine who the "Servant of the Lord" is.

The testimony of the chapter is very clear. This one who bears our griefs, who carries our sorrows, who is wounded for our transgressions, who is bruised for our iniquities, upon whom is placed the chastisement of our peace, with whose stripes we are healed, upon whom the Lord has laid the iniquity

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\* Cf. Parker, "Peoples Bible", Vol. XV. pg. 225-226.

of us all, who was smitten for the transgression of God's people, who made his soul an offering for sin, who makes intercession for the transgressors; that one who does all this can only be one person, can only be the Lord Jesus Himself, the Son of the almighty God. Joseph Parker \* says concerning the testimony of the chapter itself:

No man known to history, but one, can carry this chapter in all its verses and lines and particles. Here and there some other man may come in and partially appropriate a word, a hint, a suggestion; but has any man ever seized the whole chapter, and said, 'That is mine'? He would be a bold man who would claim this chapter. Decency would intervene and say, Do not attempt to wear the constellations, do not attempt to claim the sun as private property. Yet there is one Man in history who would fit the occasion. When we read the life of Jesus Christ, and then read this chapter in the light of that life, every verse flames up into new meanings, every sentence a pinnacle heaven-pointing, every figure a flower grown in the eternal paradise.

After we have considered the verses of chapter fifty-three, then we too will be forced to nod assent to the view of Parker. The evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of the Messianic interpretation of this chapter.

#### I. THE SERVANT'S LOWLY ORIGIN AND BIRTH

The "Servant of the Lord" is a being, a rational individual, and so must consequently have a beginning. He must be born, must originate. Verse two describes this His birth when it says: "For he shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground". This growing up speaks of His origin and birth. It is His entry into the world. He is to come as a "tender plant" and as a "root".

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\* Acts 8, 34.

Both these terms refer back to Isaiah 11, 1: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots". The thought in these two verses is identical. In 11, 1 the "rod" and the "Branch" refer to Christ the Messiah. The terms are Messianic. Therefore, 53, 2 being a parallel of 11, 1 the verse is also Messianic, and can refer only to Christ, the Messiah.

The "Servant's" entry is described very vividly, for he is spoken of as coming as a tender plant and as a root. He shall have no great and large beginnings. There shall be nothing fantastic about his appearance. He shall come quietly, as the root of the tender plant creeps through the crust of the earth silently without much ado. Thus shall this "Servant" make his appearance. It shall be a humble and a lowly entrance. From Isaiah 11, 1 we learn that the "rod", or the "stump", or the "root" is the humiliated house of David. "Out of the stem of Jesse", we read there. So, the "Servant" shall be of royal descent, but alas, shall not come as a noble. This house of David had fallen upon evil days. This ancient family had decayed. From this fallen house comes he who is the "Servant of the Lord". \* Does such a picture coincide with the actual joyous entrance usually accorded to one of royal birth? Is this not rather an unusual picture? A prince is born, but lo, not in splendor, but as a root, unnoticed, and in humility.

And now we look through the pages of history, we study the lives of various men, we try to fit into the prophecy its

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\* Cf. Alexander Maclaren, "Expositions of Holy Scripture",  
Isiah, pg. 92.

subject. Who can this be? Many natural men have had lowly births. And perhaps some of royal descent have come into this world without the accustomed salute of joy. But none of these have come from a decayed house of David. Then we look at the birth of Christ to see if He is not the fulfillment of this prophecy. We find that He is of the house of David, for He is born of Mary and Joseph, who were of the lineage of David. He came in humility and poverty. His parents are mere peasants; His bed is a manger in a stable. He comes quietly, unnoticed by all except the shepherds and the wise men from the east. He comes as a root out of the dry ground. And that was His lot during His entire life, namely, poverty and humility. Common fisherfolk were his disciples; the common people were His devoted admirers, thieves and malefactors were His companions in death, and even now the lowly and the poor are the constituents of His Church. \* Can there be found anywhere a more striking fulfillment of a prophecy than this? Delitzsch expresses his opinion: "The dry ground is the situation at the time of the enslaved and sunken people; He was subjected to the conditions in which the people lived, given up as they were to the tyranny of the world-power" \*\* Comparing the subject of the prophecy with the actual appearance of Christ, we too with unbiased minds, will have to admit, it is Christ, the Messiah.

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\* Cf. F. B. Meyer, "Christ in Isaiah", pg. 160.

\*\*Cf. Delitzsch, Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. II. pg. 279.

## II. THE SERVANT'S UNATTRACTIVE FORM

The description of the "Servant of Jehovah" is unique in this, that it points out minute details which would ordinarily be overlooked in the common man. In 52, 14 and 53, 2 we read the following description: "His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him". We note the unusual tone of this picture. There is something extraordinary in this man, in this "Servant". By his birth his form was marred more than the sons of men. His birth was in itself a marring of his beauty; it was a degradation, such a one with which no natural birth could compare.

What man in his birth has seen more degradation than is possible to men? What man has through birth been humbled more than is natural? None can come under this description, by virtue of the fact that no man can be less than man. But see how this picture fits the life of Christ, the Messiah! He took upon Him the form of men. He took upon Him the flesh that had no beauty of outline or feature. He had no beauty of form. He had no beauty of statuary. \* He, by virtue of the fact that He is God, humbled Himself by this birth, humbled Himself more than any man could humble Himself. He fits the picture beautifully. In Him there was an entire absence of outward show. There was nothing in Him to please

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\* Cf. Joseph Parker, "The Peoples Bible", Vol. XV. pg. 227.

*— also true of  
Note: His incarnation  
itself was not  
humiliation.  
J.O.*

the spoiled tastes of sinful men. So unattractive was He, that the Jews did not want Him but refused to recognize Him. Such was His humiliation and marred countenance that Pilate had to exclaim, "Art thou the man"? \* Christ is the man who has this marred countenance, who is so void of beauty that men shun Him.

### III. THE SERVANT'S RECEPTION BY MEN

In the previous section it has been intimated that this "Servant's" reception by men would not be a gracious one. And in verse one and three of chapter fifty-three we note the striking prophecy. "Who hath believed our report? He is despised and rejected of men; we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not". This "Servant" was to be forsaken of men. The Hebrew original says, אֲנִי וְאֵלֵינוּ. Delitzsch says that this signifies one who lacks eminent men, i.e., has to dispose of their assistance and cooperation.\*\* Men treated him shamefully. They hid as it were their faces from him. The original וְהִסְתִּירוּ אֶת פְּנֵיהֶם מִפָּנָיו means (according to Delitzsch\*\*\*) "as it were a veiling of the face before him, i.e., his appearance excited intollerable horror, so that men turned away from him or drew their garments over their faces". Instead of being received as a prince, this "Servant" was to be treated as a criminal, as a common outcast; he was to be barred from society as the leper was barred from the

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\* Cf. Alexander Maclaren, "Expositions of Holy Scripture", Isaiah, pg. 94.

\*\* Cf. Delitzsch, Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. II. pg. 280.

\*\*\* Cf. Delitzsch, Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. II. pg. 281.

city; he was to be isolated.

We cast about for someone who was thus spitefully treated and shamefully abused. Our eyes may fall upon Job, for he himself says: "They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face".\* But he cannot be the "Servant of the Lord", for he is neither a prince from the house of David, nor was such suffering his lifelong lot. We must look yet farther. Then from above comes a heavenly voice, 'It is Jesus, whom they crucified'. He was truly despised and rejected of men; His claims were ridiculed; His words of wisdom were thrown back on Himself; He was rejected by the Jews, by the rich, by the great and the learned, by the mass of men of every grade and rank. He was eminently the object of contempt and scorn alike by the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Romans. In his life on earth it was so. None were so poor that they could not afford to despise Him as lower than they. His love was repulsed. He was shunned; He was ridiculed. In His death it was still so. Then, in that His hour of extremest need, He was deserted by those whom He trusted most. The Jews were nailing Him to the cross. The disciples had forsaken Him. Peter had denied Him. Even God had for a time left Him without the almighty assistance of a loving Father. And even now it is still so; He is still rejected. Since then His name and person have been extensively the object of contempt. The action of the Jews to this present day, who shun Jesus, who

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\* Job 30, 10.



at the mere mention of His name show their utter contempt for Him by some blasphemous action, is a striking fulfillment of this prophecy. Unbelieving critics have also fallen in line with the Jews in rejecting this Messiah, in heaping shame and disgrace upon Him. The fact that Christ was then rejected by the Jews, and the fact that He is now rejected by the Jews and unbelieving critics is still more proof that Christ is the fulfillment of this prophecy, "He was despised and rejected of men, and we hid as it were our faces from Him".\*

*Modernists*  
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#### IV. THE SERVANT'S SORROW OF HEART

It is quite natural that one who is so treated, who is abused so shamefully, will also experience a sorrow of heart beyond comparison. So it was to be with this "Servant". Verse three tells us: "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." The terms are characteristic of the suffering "Servant". He is a man of sorrows, אִישׁ אֲדָמָה וְיָדוּעַ. Delitzsch\*\* points out that this term demands this meaning, that he be a man of sorrows in all forms, a man characterized by this, that his life be a continual patient endurance of sorrows. The subject of this prophecy was not to suffer sorrows as the natural man suffers them. He was not only to have his occasional sorrow, but he was to have continual sorrow, sorrow uninterrupted through his entire life.

Moreover, he was to be acquainted with grief, שִׂיבָה

\* Cf. Alexander Maclaren, Expositions of the Holy Scriptures, Isaiah, pg. 95, as well as by many others, compare Delitzsch.  
\*\* Cf. Delitzsch, Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. II. pg. 280.

\_\_\_\_\_ . Delitzsch \* says that the expression demands the meaning that the "Servant" be one who has been reduced to the condition of knowing about sickness. The wrath evoked by sin, and the ardour of the self-sacrifice of this "Servant" must consume him in soul and body like a fever. Grief was to be his portion, his constant lot.

But is this such an unusual prophecy concerning the "Servant of the Lord"? Everyone has sorrows. Everyone is acquainted with grief. Death, the grim reaper, seldom fails to dim the faces of those stricken; sickness seldom fails to grieve the heart. At the mention of the terms sorrow or grief, every mature human mind flashes back to some event, some moment which caused the tears to flow or which caused the tongue to keep silence. But can any individual, any sorrowing individual, be placed into this picture? No, for no one has continual sorrows; no one has known interrupted grief; no one has had grief which consumes him like a fever.

There is only one who is the fulfillment of this prophecy. There is only one who knew sorrow as it is described of the "Servant of the Lord", and that one is Jesus of Nazareth. He was the true man of sorrows, as Joseph Parker describes His fulfillment: \*\*

His was not an occasional sorrow, a spasmodic pain. They were multiplied in Him, they were His familiar acquaintances. He was despised and rejected of men, spat upon, buffeted, turned away from the door at

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\* Cf. Delitzsch, Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. II. pg. 280.

\*\* Cf. Parker's, The Peoples Bible, Vol. XV. pg. 228.

midnite; he came unto His own and His own received Him not. He was acquainted with grief, which we can never be, nor which anyone can ever be. We have our little griefs, our tiny bubble woes, that rise and burst upon the stream of daily existence. But this man was acquainted with grief. Grim grief nested in His heart. 'The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay His head.' He would be a bold man who claimed this verse, if he were other than the Son of God. All men have their trouble, all men have their touch of grief, all men have their portion of disappointment; but no man can take up these expressions in the fulness of their meaning, and say they are exhausted in human experience.

*Also he labored under the burden of man's sin.*  
J.P.

V. THE "SERVANT'S" SUFFERINGS

The sorrow of heart which the "Servant of the Lord" endured was not the only affliction which was laid upon him. In verses four and five we read of these afflictions: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him: and with his stripes we are healed." That is a description of the "Servant's" sufferings.

Note how great are these sufferings and see how heavy is the load placed upon the "Servant"! We esteemed him "stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." וַיִּכּוּ, וַיִּצְטַעַק, and וַיִּסְבֵּב are all passive verbs. The prophet uses these three terms in the passive to show the severity of the judgment, pain and suffering. These three Hebrew verbs are passive participles. \* This indicates

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\* Cf. Theologische Quartalschrift, Jahrgang 29. Januar 1932. Nummer 1. S.9f.

the continuity of the punishment; it lasts for some time. This "Servant" had to endure smittings, afflictions and pain, not only for an hour, not only for a day, but during the entire time of His ministry, however, especially during the last days of his sojourn among men. But the irony of all this for the "Servant" is that men would esteem him stricken of God. They would imagine that all this punishment was heaped upon the "Servant" by God because he had deserved it. But the prophet Isaiah in this instance shows that the "Servant" was not suffering for his own evils and transgressions.

Note, in the second place, why the "Servant" was suffering this pain and bearing this great burden; note the cause of his suffering! The prophet says that he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, that he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. The words are very clear. The "Servant" was suffering not for his own iniquities, but for ours. We were the sole cause of his pain and burden. He was wounded "for" our transgressions. Luther translates the ⸗ with "um willen"; Gesenius translates it, "wegen"; and the St. James version has "for". The meaning is, "on account of". Delitzsch \* says, "⸗ with the passive answers not to the Greek ὐπὸ, but to ὑπὸ. The meaning is that he was pierced and crushed on account of them (i.e., our sins)." So it is our sin which made him to languish and suffer excruciating torment.

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\* Cf. Delitzsch, Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. II. pg. 284.

But note in the third place, that Isaiah portrays this suffering of the "Servant of Jehovah" as vicarious. "Surely he hath borne our griefs and with his stripes we are healed." This bearing of sin is not merely a taking up and putting away. Its significance is much deeper. Delitzsch says \*:

נ'שׁו here refers to the bearing of sins. It combines the ideas of tollere and ferre. With the accusative of the sin, it signifies to take the guilt of sin upon oneself as one's very own and to bear it, to bear the sin as a mediator in order to expiate it. The Septuagint translates this נ'שׁו by λαβειν κατατιαν, once by αυαθερειν. That this λαβειν and αυαθερειν are to be understood of expiatory bearing, not merely of putting away, is shown by Ezekiel 4, 4-8, where the prophet's נ'שׁו is represented in a symbolical action. The sense is that the "Servant of God" took on himself the sufferings which we had to bear because of our sins and deserved to bear, and in order to deliver us from them endured them in his own person.

This bearing, then, is not an ordinary carrying, but is vicarious bearing of sins for which we should have been punished. This vicarious bearing of sin has this result, that it heals our stripes, as Isaiah says, "And by his stripes we are healed." היִשׁוּב is used. It designates healing, outward and inward peace, "Heil", "Wohlbefinden", "Befriedigung". Delitzsch says, "היִשׁוּב is defined as a state of salvation (Heil)."<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Who will deny the intended sense of the passage? Who will deny what Maclaren says of

\* Cf. Delitzsch, Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. II. pg. 282f.

\*\* Cf. Delitzsch, Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. II. pg. 285. Compare also, Theologische Quartalschrift, Jahrgang 29. Januar 1932. Nummer 1. S. 11.

of the sense of this verse:\*

They were ours. More is suggested than a sympathetic identification with other's sorrows. This is an actual bearing of the consequences of sins which others had committed. He is not entangled in a widespread calamity but is the only victim. This certainly stresses the idea of vicarious suffering. Besides, the description of the persecutions is such that real physical violence and not merely symbolical violence is suggested.

Any who will deny that the "Servant of the Lord" can, according to this verse, be only one, namely, the Messiah, the Christ of Nazareth? He it was who bore the heavy load. He endured pain, for was He not wounded by the thorns, pierced by the nails, bruised by the soldiery? See the spittle of the soldiery in His face; see the scourge plowing long red seams in His flesh; see the bloody sweat beading upon His brow; hear the cry, "Forsaken"! Yes, He was forsaken of God, stricken by God. Joseph Parker describes this condition of anguish:\*\*

He was stricken of God. God would not have Him. He would not extract the nails, would not heal the wound, extract the spear, punish the murderers. He turned away and in His turning made the heavens black. The earth applauded the divine complacency in rocking and earthquake and darkness sympathetic.

It was Jesus of Nazareth who took upon Himself our sins. He acted as our substitute and brought healing and peace with Him. God punished His own Son, not because of sins which He had done, not because of evils which He had committed, but because of our sins. It was upon us that

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\* Cf. Maclaren, Expositions of Holy Scripture, Isaiah, pg. 100.

\*\* Cf. The Peoples Bible, Vol. XV. pg. 229.

this punishment should have come down. We should have been thus shamefully treated. We had deserved this because of our sins. But we poor mortals, whose bodies are so frail that they cannot withstand even sickness, would have perished under the heavy load. Therefore God in His everlasting mercy and grace sent His Son Christ to bear our sins for us and to suffer the punishment which we had deserved, thus changing our lot from hellish torment to blessed salvation. Christ was this bearer of peace. Thus the evangelist Matthew looks upon Jesus in the eighth chapter, verse seventeen, of his epistle. And he who does not see in this chapter the Servant Jesus is blind with unbelief. He who will not accept the testimony of the prophet Isaiah is rejecting the testimony of God.

#### VI. THE WORK OF THE "SERVANT" IS VICARIOUS

There are twelve statements in this chapter, which are worthy of special consideration, for they shed light upon the question as to the interpretation of the passage. These twelve statements are:

1. He hath borne our griefs, verse 4.
2. Carried our sorrows, verse 4.
3. Wounded for our transgressions, verse 5.
4. Bruised for our iniquities, verse 5.
5. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, verse 5.
6. With his stripes we are healed, verse 5.
7. The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all, verse 6.
8. For the transgression of my people was he smitten, verse 8.
9. Made his soul an offering for sin, verse 10.
10. He shall bear their iniquities, verse 11.
11. He bears the sin of many, verse 12.
12. Made intercession for the transgressors, verse 12.





He hath carried our sorrows. The word "carry" properly means to carry as a burden. The idea of carrying sin is not implied in these words. The word "sorrows", ז'א'ו'ו properly means "pain, sorrow, grief". This probably refers to pains of the mind, while the word in the previous section refers to pains of the body. These pains are ours. We had deserved them. But now the "Servant" takes them upon himself. He took upon himself all the sicknesses, sorrows, pains, and trials of life. He was afflicted with them. It was done for us. We had deserved them. Thus we were freed of them, for he took away the cause of this sickness, namely, sin. Could anyone else do this? This is a vicarious work. Who in this world can take upon himself the sorrows and pain of someone else, thus freeing him of those pains? There is only one who can do this, Christ!

He was wounded for our transgressions. The word rendered "wounded", ו'ו'ו'ו'ו, is a participle Po. from ו'ו'ו'ו, "to bore through, to perforate, to pierce, to wound." The idea is that there would be some act of piercing inflicted upon this "Servant". Why should he be pierced? For our transgressions, i.e., not for his own, but for ours. The word rendered "for", ו, is really, "on account of". It was on account of the sins of others that he was pierced through. This suffering was vicarious.

He was bruised for our iniquities. The word rendered "bruised", א'ו'ו'ו'ו, properly means "to be broken to pieces, to be crushed." The "Servant" is to be broken down and crushed,

but again, for our iniquities. It is not for his own sins that he suffers, but for ours. Iniquities are sins. It was our sins that were placed upon him, for which he had to suffer.

The chastisement of our peace was upon him. The word "chastisement" properly denotes the correction, chastisement, or punishment inflicted by parents on their children, designed to amend their faults. \* The word properly does not of necessity denote punishment, though it is often used in that sense. It is properly that which corrects, be it by admonition, counsel, punishment, or suffering. The meaning here is that the "Servant" took upon himself the sufferings which would secure the peace of those for whom he suffered. The word "peace" means peace with God, reconciliation with the Creator. The phrase "upon him" means that the burden by which the peace of men was effected was laid upon him and that he bore it. The idea of this phrase is, that he, though sinless, took upon himself the chastisement, the punishment deserved by us, thus securing our peace with God. This is a clear testimony for the vicarious suffering of the Servant. What man can take suffering, sin, and torment of others upon himself, thus securing peace with God? Man cannot even secure peace for himself. It is Christ who does this.

With his stripes we are healed. The word "stripes" ἰῆρας, properly means "weal, stripe, bruise, i.e., the mark or print of blows on the skin." The idea is that

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\* Prov. 22, 15; 23, 13.

the "Servant" would be subjected to some treatment that would cause such a weal or stripe. The words, "we are healed", literally, "it is healed to us", refer to spiritual healing. Through these bruises, stripes, and weales of the "Servant", spiritual healing, i.e., healing from sins, was to come to us. This "Servant" is himself not worthy of stripes. It is our sins that he takes upon himself. They cause him these stripes. Through this vicarious work of his we are healed from sin. Who else can this be but the Messiah? No man can make amends for another's sins, thus freeing that former one of his sins. Man cannot even free himself of his own sins. He must pray to God for daily forgiveness.

The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. This is the action of the Lord Jehovah. The words rendered "laid on him", וַיִּדְ, mean properly, "to strike upon or against, to impinge on any one or any thing." The meaning is that Jehovah caused sins to meet to rush upon the "Servant" so as to overwhelm him in calamity. It was the iniquity of us all that was rushed upon him. The iniquity is sin; our sins are meant. He suffered in our stead, for us. The "Servant" himself did not become a sinner, but he suffered as if a sinner. This language stresses the idea of vicarious suffering. The "Servant", innocent, suffers for guilty mankind, and gains pardon for him. There is only one who could do this, Christ.

For the transgression of my people he was smitten.

The meaning is here that the "Servant" was smitten on account of the sins of God's people. This smiting is literally a blow,

a stroke. Again, Christ was smitten for sins which he did not commit, so that he might free his people from their sins. Christ, who is God is the only one who could do this.

He made his soul an offering for sin. "Soul", נפש, properly means, "breath, spirit, life". It sometimes denotes the soul, regarded as the seat of emotions. Here it is equivalent to "himself". When he himself is made an offering for sin. "Offering for sin" properly means, blame guilt which one contracts by transgression. It is often rendered, "trespass offering". The idea is here that the "Servant" would be made an offering, a sacrifice for sin. By this the guilt would be expiated and an atonement made. He is himself innocent. His soul or life is given to make expiation for sin. There could be no more explicit declaration of a vicarious suffering of the "Servant". He is not suffering for his own sins, but for the sins of others. And this his suffering is to heal others. This is not the work of the mere martyr. Only Christ could do this.

He shall bear their iniquities. In this statement lies the cause of all the suffering of this righteous "Servant". He is not suffering because he himself has done any wrong, but because he is bearing "their", i.e., our iniquities. "He stood between the stroke of justice and the sinner, and received the blow himself." He endured the results or consequences of sin; we partake of the consequences or the results of his sufferings and death in our behalf. This is the great central doctrine of justification, based upon the work of none other than Christ, the Messiah.

He bears the sin of many. Bearing of sin has been treated in another section of this paper.\* He the innocent "Servant" was to bear the sins of the guilty, freeing the guilty of their sins through this his atonement.

Made intercession for the transgressors. The meaning of making intercession is that of "causing to meet, or to rush"; and then "to assail, as it were, with prayers, to supplicate for any one, to entreat". It does not simply refer to the mere work or act of making prayer or supplication, but rather to the word of intercession at the throne of God. This is the "Servant's" assigned task. This is the closing part of his whole work in behalf of his people and of the world. This is the work of Christ, the Messiah. He is the true Mediator between God and man, for no one else could successfully accomplish this work. No one else would have the basis, namely, a vicarious atonement, which would insure success. Every phase of vicarious work can belong only to Christ. The "Servant of the Lord" could not find his fulfillment in anyone else but Him, for no one can make atonement for sins.

#### VII THE UNRESISTING PATIENCE AND ENDURANCE OF THE "SERVANT"

The "Servant of the Lord" is described by Isaiah as the Sufferer Supreme. But note how unusual is the "Servant's" enduring of the sufferings heaped upon him: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as

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\* Cf. chapter one, V.

sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." \*

See how the "Servant" patiently suffers for our sins as our substitute: We all, 1732, i.e., all mankind, had gone astray. We all, without exception, acted as a flock of sheep without a shepherd. We went astray, wandered to and fro, wandered aimlessly, not mindful of the path upon which we were trodding. Everyone was following his own chosen path, his own 777. And this was the way of sin, as Isaiah implies in the next words. It was not the straight and narrow path leading to glory, but the wide and even way leading to destruction. Our sins had blinded us, so that we could no longer see our shepherd. Without his guidance we were wandering to and fro. But then, behold the action of the Lord, Jehovah: "He hath laid on him (i.e., the "Servant of Jehovah") the iniquity of us all." It is Jehovah who does this. He takes His "Servant" and assigns to him the task of bearing our sins upon himself, of making atonement for them. And the "Servant" does this willingly and gladly. Isaiah informs us in the next verse that he was oppressed and afflicted, thus showing that he accepted the task which his master had placed upon him, accepted it without complaint and without murmur.

Having entered upon his work, we hear Isaiah's description of his reaction to the work. In all his sufferings he opened not his mouth, did not complain. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, and though he deserved it not, yet he

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\* Cf. Isaiah 53, 6.7.

opened not his mouth. Isaiah describes his patience submissiveness with the picture of a sheep led to the slaughter. As such a sheep did not bleat out its objection, so also did the "Servant" not complain. And as the mother sheep is dumb before its shearers, so was the "Servant" dumb before those who inflicted the unmerciful punishments upon him. The mind staggers at such patience and endurance of sorrows and tribulation.

All men suffer. Some are subjected to grievous torments of body and soul. Some are spared the piercing pain of extreme affliction. But no man suffers as this Servant. No man bears all his pain without whimper. No man has undergone misfortune without some thought of impatient complaint. No man has suffered without ever opening his mouth in bitter complain. There is only one of whom it can be said that He bore the griefs heaped upon Him without revolt. There is only one to whom the words of verse five and six may be applied literally, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. It was He to whom Jehovah said, Go my Son and redeem the children who are doomed to hell. And he is the only one who could say, Yea, Lord, most willingly, I'll do what thou commandest. He alone could say that; He alone could do it; and He alone did it willingly and patiently. Never did he complain, never did He revolt against the Lord's plan of salvation. And when in the Garden of Gethsemane He asked the Lord to take this bitter cup from Him, He, thank God, added the words, 'Not my will but thine be done.' Yes, willingly He took upon Himself the task

assigned to Him.

And during His entire suffering, from Gethsemane to Calvary, His mouth was never opened to complain against the indignities heaped upon Him. The prophecy of Isaiah was verbally fulfilled in Christ. He was taken captive in the Garden, but offered no resistance. He was led before the Jewish rulers but endured their blasphemies. He was heaped with scorn and disdain before Pilate, but opened not His mouth. He was slapped, and He was buffeted; He was scourged and crowned with thorns; He was spat upon and ridiculed; He was pierced and He was crucified; He was jeered, yea even forsaken of God - but never did He cry out in revolting complaint. Only when He was adjured to testify to His deity before Caiphas did He speak. Only when silence would have been disowning His Kingship did He speak before Pilate. Who can deny that it is Christ, who is spoken of by Isaiah? The testimony is so overwhelming that one is forced to say with Parker: "He was oppressed and He was afflicted; He said, My soul is sorrowful even unto death; we know that He sweat as it were great drops of blood. We have read that. We compare the prophecy and the history, and they are one." \*

#### VIII. THE "SERVANT'S" GRAVE

One of the clearest testimonies that the "Servant of the Lord" is Christ is given us in the words of Isaiah, verse nine: "And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death." Isaiah vividly portrays the intended

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\* Cf. The Peoples Bible, Vol. XV. pg. 231



action of the enemies of the "Servant" after they had succeeded in putting him to death. They would then try to give him a grave with the wicked. This is just what the enemies of Jesus did do. They intended to deny him an honorable burial and to commit him to the same grave with the wicked. When He died, He died with the wicked, between the two malefactors, though He Himself was not wicked, was not to be numbered with them. And the Jews would have buried Him with them, had not God decreed otherwise. Compare the account given in John 19, 31 ff. The Jews asked that the legs of the malefactors be broken, intending to break Jesus' legs, having in mind that all three should die together and be buried together. Thus Jesus would have been buried with the wicked, had God not intervened with the plans of the Jews.

Isaiah continues by saying that the intended burial of the "Servant" was altogether different from the actual burial, for he was buried with the rich. The account is given in Matt. 27, 57 ff. Joseph of Arimathea took the body of Jesus and placed it in his own grave, which he, being a man of wealth, had prepared for himself. It was a new tomb; it was the tomb of a rich man. Jesus' body was treated as were those of the wealthy, being wound in linens, and anointed with spices, myrrh and aloes. The fulfillment of the prophecy can find its object in only one person, namely Christ.

#### IX. THE MYSTERY OF GOD'S TREATMENT OF THE SINLESS SERVANT

Isaiah says of the "Servant": "He had done no violence neither was any deceit in his mouth." Thus Isaiah testifies

concerning the absolute sinlessness of this "Servant". And in this testimony we have an absolute proof that this is Christ the Messiah. He alone is the sinless one. Of Him alone it can be said that He had done no violence; of Him alone it can be said that His tongue never uttered words of blasphemy. No dweller of this earth, except Him, can appropriate these words to Himself, for all men are born in sin and are shapen in iniquity.

But now comes the mystery of it all, a mystery which cannot be solved, unless we look upon Christ as the "Servant of the Lord." The "Servant" is absolutely holy and sinless, without guile, without any deceit. And yet we read in the eighth verse that "He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken." He is taken away to the judgment hall to be tried. The hands which lead him are not wont to treat him kindly, but they hurry him, treating him roughly and shamefully. And there at the hands of his captors he receives the sentence, 'He is guilty of death, Crucify him, crucify him.' Thus he is out off out of the land of the living, killed.

But how can all this be? He is the "Servant of God". He is sinless and holy. He is not guilty of death. And yet God subjects him to such shameful treatment. Again we ask, how can this be? It is a mystery unfathomable, unless we interpret it of Christ the Redeemer. That God should bruise

this sinless one is a divine wonder and riddle, only to be solved by regarding the words of Isaiah to be spoken of Christ.\* If we regard the "Servant" as Christ, then the mystery unfolds and explains itself. He is the sinless one. But He endures stripes and scorn and punishments that He may take away our sins. He who is rational and sane will realize the difficulty and interpret the prophecy as referring to Christ, for thus only is mystery changed to glorious and comforting truth.

X. THIS "SERVANT" HAD TO BE GOD

HOLY

In verse eleven of chapter fifty-three the prophet Isaiah makes three statements, which require as their subject some divine being, which will not permit a simple human born in sin and dead by nature. Isaiah says, "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." The death which this "Servant" was to suffer had to be a sacrifice according to these words. Is the death of a human a sacrifice for sin? No, such a sacrifice necessitates sinlessness on the part of the donor. The "Servant" himself had to be innocent, that he might give up his soul or life to make an expiation for sin. He who died here did not die as a mere martyr. But this death had the purpose of making expiation for the sins of men. This language cannot be used of any martyr. Of which martyr can it be said that his life was made an offering for sin? The implication is that whoever the martyr is, he must be holy

\* Alexander Maclaren makes this same point in his Expositions to the Scripture, Isaiah, pg. 109.

*of. Definite. Catch  
that Mary  
was holy.*

and sinless. And Meyer \* makes the same point. The "Servant" had to be man, but yet God. There are three inevitable factors in human life. The first is suffering. One cannot traverse a street without hearing an infant's wail, or visit a home on which there is no shadow, cast there by some misfortune. The second inevitable factor is sin. Behind all our sufferings we feel that there is a secret which explains and accounts for them, the sense of sin. This sense of sin has covered the world with altars, temples, and churches. The third inevitable factor in human life is death. The conscience of man connects sin and death by an inevitable sequence. Now this "Servant of Jehovah" had to be man. But he also had to be an exception to this three-fold lot on man in one respect, not in man's sufferings, nor in his death, but in his sinlessness and holiness. Placing such demands upon the "Servant of the Lord" is sealing the truth that it is Christ. Who else is there who is both man and God, who as man lived among men, but not in their sins, yea who was rather holy and sinless, seapart from sin? It is Christ Jesus, and He only.

#### RESURRECTION

The second requirement of Isaiah is given in the words: "He shall see his seed." "Seed" means "offspring, children". The meaning is spiritual. The "Servant" is to see his spiritual seed. His sin offering is to bring forth a rich harvest. Many shall believe in him and he shall live to see these his children, these his spiritual seed. He is to live

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\* Cf. F. B. Meyer, "The Christ in Isaiah", pg. 161.

to do this, see them with his eyes. But how can the "Servant" do this, having died for sin, unless he rise again? And how can he rise again by his own power (for it says that "He shall see his seed") if he be but a mere man? No, he must be man and God. He must be God, first to rise again, and then to see spiritual seed, for human beings have no spiritual seed. The testimony is too clear for argumentation.

The third requirement of Isaiah: "He shall prolong his days", will also not admit a mere human being as its subject. This implies that the "Servant", though having died, was to live again, was to live continually. He had to rise from the dead. And whom does this description fit except Christ? He rose from the dead on the third day; He reigns here on earth with His almighty power; He is eternal in His existence; and His glory in heaven is from everlasting to everlasting.

It is Christ who shall make his soul an offering for sin, who shall see his seed, who shall prolong his days.

#### XI. THE GREAT WORK WHICH THE "SERVANT" CARRIED ON

Isaiah describes the activity of the "Servant of the Lord" in these words: "He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify man: for he shall bear their iniquities." His great work is that of making many righteous. The term "by his knowledge" may be taken either subjectively or objectively. \* Subjectively, the meaning is that this

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\* OF. Theologische Quartalschrift, Jahrgang 29. Januar 1932.  
Nummer 1. S.18.

knowledge which the "Servant" has is such a one that he, through this knowledge or in it, will justify many people. Objectively, the meaning is that the knowledge which one has of this "Servant", concerning him and his vicarious sin-atonement work, brought through the Gospel will justify many. This justification is salvation, "Heil", brought by the "Servant". He gives his own righteousness, for he has earned it for men by suffering, dying, and atoning for the sins of mankind. This justification is full and complete. It is universal and for all. Who is this that justifieth many other than the Messiah? His sufferings alone can be and are the efficient cause of the righteousness of His people. He alone can be the eternal high priest capable of bearing our sins. He alone is the true high priest according to the order of Melchisedek. \*

XII. THE WIDE SWEEP OF THE "SERVANT'S" DOMINION AND ITS FOUNDATION

This "Servant" is not to be an ordinary individual, for Isaiah says of him: "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." He is to have a portion with the great, literally, "with the many". These many are the justified, spoken of in verse eleven. He shall divide the spoil with the strong. The expression, "with the strong", may be taken objectively, the "with" not as a preposition, but as the sign of the accusative. The meaning is, therefore, that the strong ones them-

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\* Ps. 110, 4.

selves are his spoil. Who these strong ones are is not mentioned. Perhaps reference is made to the strongest of all the earthly princes, the devil. \* Through his bitter fight with the devil, the "Servant", having overcome him, has set free those who were held captive by the devil. Thus he has gathered unto himself all these as his own. His they are and over them he rules. That is his exaltation, that he rules over all, over the great and the strong, over the entire world and over his own whom he has gathered.

The foundation of this his dominion is given by the word,           / 2 3, "therefore". Because of his obedient suffering and death he is exalted. It is then based on sacrifice, in the first place. The exaltation of the "Servant of the Lord" is based on his humiliation. To be exalted he first had to be humbled. Isaiah has previously stated that he is holy and sinless. This holy one had to be humbled first, before he could be exalted. He had to be numbered with the transgressors. In order to die he had to be numbered with the sinners, not only in so far as he mingled with them, but he had to be sin for men, a "representative sinner", in order that he might establish his righteousness and spread his kingdom.

The exaltation of the "Servant of the Lord" is, in the second place, based on his intercession. Isaiah says of him: "And he made intercession for the transgressors." He rules over those whom he has justified. He makes intercession for

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\* Cf. Theologische Quartalschrift, Jahrgang 29, Januar 1932. Nummer 1. S.20.

them at the throne of the almighty. He intercedes for those whom he has redeemed. And because he intercedes for them they remain his, they remain true and faithful subjects.

But who is the "Servant of the Lord" in this last instance? Does the prophecy admit of any other person than Christ Jesus. There is only one who humbled himself and became obedient to death. Natural man did not humble himself in death. No, death is his rightful lot and not his humiliation. But for Christ it is his humiliation. No man could bring the sacrifice which Christ brought. No man could efficaciously intercede for his brother, for God alone can justify. No other man could fit into this prophecy but Christ. Delitzsch says: \*

In prophecy itself we see the after effect of this gigantic advance. Zechariah in 6, 13 no longer foretells the Messiah merely as king. He not only reigns on His throne, but is a priest on His throne; sovereignty and priesthood are peacefully united in Him. This servant goes thru shame to glory, through death to life; He conquers by surrendering, He rules after He seems to be enslaved, lives after he seems to have been killed, completes His work after it seems to have been destroyed. This suffering of His is not merely a confessor's or martyr's suffering, but a representative and atoning suffering, a sacrifice for sin; their suffering, was not such.

The statements of this fifty-third chapter of Isaiah minutely refer to Jesus. These statements are not only general references. They relate to His appearance, His rejection, His manner of death, His being pierced, His manner of trial; His being taken from detention and by a judicial

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\* Cf. Delitzsch Commentary, Vol. II. pg. 307.



sentence condemned to death, the manner in which it was designated that He should be buried, and that He was buried with the rich, His Justification, His universal rule, and His intercession. These coincidences could not have occurred if Christ had been an imposter. There are many things which would have hindered such an attempt on the part of an imposter. Too many things in the chapter are beyond the control of the individual, but are solely under the hand of God's providence, and are not dependent on the actions of men. For instance, how could an imposter order it that he grow up as a root out of the dry ground; how could he order it so that he would be despised and rejected of men from the outset; how could he have ordered it from the beginning that he should be buried with the malefactors, be numbered with the transgressors, and yet be rescued by a rich man and placed in his tomb? The impossibility of such an attempt becomes clear at once. An imposter would not have aimed at what constituted the fulfillment of this prophecy. It is a fact that the Jews expected a wonderful great temporal prince. Would the imposter then have gone through all the humiliation described in this chapter? Would he have suffered poverty, the reproaches of men, smitings, buffetings, the scourge, yes, even death? Would he not have tried to fulfill the expectations of the Jews?

But there are many, who in spite of the clear testimony of the chapter itself, still reject Christ as the fulfillment. Some of these say that the prophecy is forged. But that is

impossible. It is certain beyond a doubt that it existed seven hundred years before Christ. Such a contention lacks proof and destroys the credibility of all the ancient writings.

Others hold that the prophecy is the result of the "natural sagacity" of the prophet. But this is an impossibility. No natural sagacity can tell what will be the character of an individual man, or even whether such a man is here referred to would exist at all.

Still others have the audacity to say that the Lord Jesus Himself was a cunning imposter. However, such an argument is in its very essence foolish. It is contrary to the human nature of a man to suffer hardships rather than glory. The Jews expected a proud and powerful temporal prince. Would he then not have come as the Jews expected him?

All the arguments of the critics and scoffers and unbelievers lose themselves in their ridiculous and impossible suggestions. But who is the "Servant of the Lord" then? We present to the critic, to the scoffer, the prophecy, reminding him that it is not conjecture, but minute, full, clear, relating to points which could not have been the result of conjecture and over which the individual could have no control. And then we show him the record of the life of Jesus, minutely accurate in all the details of the fulfillment, and then we ask the critic to explain how this could happen. We demand an answer. To turn away from it does not answer the question. To laugh only shows defeat, for "there is no argument in a sneer or a jibe". And if someone says it is not worth inquiry he is

lying, for it pertains to the great question of the redemption of mankind. But if the critic cannot explain it, then he should admit that it is such a prediction as only God could give, and should then admit the truthfulness of Christianity in referring this prophecy to Christ. Meyer says\*:

When the Man of Nazareth approaches and claims to have fulfilled this dark and bitter record; when He opens His heart and shows its scars; when He enumerates His unknown sufferings, and asks if there were ever grief like His; no one dares to challenge His right to claim and annex this empire as His own.

And in view of the clear testimony of the chapter itself neither dare anyone arise and deny that its subject is Christ without denying the very essence of Christianity, without branding himself as an outlaw of the Church of God.

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\* Cf. F. B. Meyer, "Christ in Isaiah", pg. 159.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TESTIMONY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The student of the Bible, who is endeavoring to determine the subject of the section, Isaiah 52, 12 to 53, 12, will not fail to look into the New Testament for quotations from the section of the Old Testament in question. If the section refers to Christ, then it is indeed one of the most important prophecies in Scripture. If the prophecy is so important, then we may expect that it will be mentioned in the New Testament. It will be mentioned that the Christ of whom the evangelists and apostles write is the identical "Servant of the Lord" who is mentioned by Isaiah.

Therefore, when considering the question, Who is the "Servant of Jehovah" spoken of by Isaiah in chapter 53, it is necessary to look through the books of the New Testament for a possible answer or for a clue to the proper person. And he who is a Christian will accept the testimony of the New Testament writers and abide by it, knowing that they composed only divine truths, their pens being guided by the unerring voice of the Holy Spirit, who has commanded them by divine inspiration.

Nowhere can we find more decisive proof that Christ, who appeared at the time of the Second Temple, who was crucified and who rose again, is the "Servant of the Lord" of whom Isaiah speaks in his fifty-third chapter. The following pages will introduce a number of passages taken from the various books and epistles of the New Testament to prove this.

A passage which proves decisively that Christ is the fulfillment of Isaiah fifty-three is Luke 22, 37, where we read: "For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And He was reckoned with the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end." Christ Himself is speaking. He says that the prophecy spoken by Isaiah in 53, 12 is to be accomplished in Him, that He is the one who is to be "numbered with the transgressors." Surely Christ's own testimony of Himself is true! He who does not accept Him as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy is blasphemously detracting from His majesty and Godhead. For in that case either Christ did not have a clear conception of Isaiah's prophecy and was not aware of the fact that Isaiah referred to someone else, in which case Christ would not be the omniscient unerring God; or He would deliberately be falsifying the prophecy of Isaiah, in which case He would not be the truthful God. If Christ is God, then He is the "Servant of the Lord." And he who believes in Christ must of necessity accept His decision. This is a very decisive passage. \*

Again Jesus bore witness concerning himself that He is the "Servant of the Lord", namely, in Mark 9, 12: "And He answered and told them, Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how it is written of the Son of Man, that He must suffer many things, and be set at naught?" Christ here evidently refers to the fifty-third chapter of

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\* Cf. Augus and Green, The Cyclopedic Handbook to the Bible, pg. 506.

Isaiah. Again, if Christ is God, then His own testimony concerning Himself must be true. Barnes \* comments on this verse:

Jesus told them that it was written of the Son of man that He must suffer many things, and be set at nought. This was written of Him particularly in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. To be set at nought, is to be esteemed as worthless, or as nothing; to be cast out and despised. No prophecy was ever more strikingly fulfilled.

A third proof that Christ is the subject of Isaiah's prophecy in chapter fifty-three will be taken from four passages found in the Gospel of St. John. These passages will prove that the words of Is. 53, 10: "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin", or as the marginal note translates it: "When His soul shall make an offering for sin", or as Hengstenberg \*\* translates it: "When His soul hath given restitution", are written concerning Christ. In John 10, 11 we read: "I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth His life for His sheep." John 10, 15 reads: "And I lay down my life for the sheep. John 10, 17. 18 reads: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again." John 15, 13 reads: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The casual reader may ask, 'How will these passages prove what has been asserted?' Hengstenberg

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\* Cf. His commentary on Matthew and Mark, pg. 238.

\*\* Christology, Vol. II pg. 300.

\* points out that the word used of laying down the life is ψυχη, soul, the same as is used in 53, 10, "soul", נפש. The expression: "To put one's soul for some-one", as John uses it, does not, independently and by itself, occur anywhere else in the New Testament, except in these four passages just mentioned. Some point to John 13, 37, 38 as an exception, where Peter says, "I will lay down my life for Thy sake (ψυχη, being used). However, in this instance Peter takes the words out of the mouth of the Savior. Others point to John 3, 16 as an exception, which reads: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life (ψυχη, being used) for us." However, in this case again the word ψυχη, is used in reference to those declarations of the Lord. No profane writers ever used this expression. There is a connection between the נפש, in Isaiah 53, 10 and the ψυχη, in John. Both are spoken of the same subject, namely, Christ, for Christ Himself says the words. This is again a clear testimony that Christ is the "Servant of the Lord".

A fourth proof will now be brought forth. The disciples themselves referred Isaiah 53 to the Lord, proving that Christ Himself interpreted it of His sufferings and exaltation.

The evangelist Matthew understands Isaiah 53 as referring to Christ. He says in 8, 17: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took

our infirmities and bare our sickness." Jesus had just healed Peter's wife's mother of her fever; He had just cast out devils and healed the sick. Thereupon Matthew makes the assertion that all this was done in fulfillment of Isaiah 53, 4: "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." Hastings says about this passage, \* "In these passages the "Servant" is identified with Jesus. This, of course, proves nothing with regard to the original meaning; for Christian, like Jewish, exegesis was capable of individualizing terms that originally had a wider application." This is a statement which could only have been uttered by one who does not hold the inspiration of the Bible. One who believes the Bible to be inspired will approve of such a statement as that which Matthew makes in this instance. Besides, Hastings seems to have a corrupted conception of the books of the Bible, looking upon them as commentaries. Moreover, his claim that these terms originally had a "wider application" is without foundation and cannot be proven. To the reader who accepts the inspiration of the Bible this passage proves conclusively that Christ is the "Servant of the Lord."

The evangelist Matthew again voices his agreement in the matter when he describes the burial of Christ, 27, 57-60. He describes how Christ was laid in new tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea, a rich man. This account of Matthew is in complete harmony with Isaiah 53, 9: "He made His grave with the rich in His death." Thus the evangelist silently nods

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\* Cf. Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. I par. 9. pg. 839.



his assent to the truthful claim that Christ is the fulfillment of Isaiah 53, 9.

Now we turn to the testimony of the evangelist Mark. In 15, 28 he writes: "And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And He was numbered with the transgressors." Christ had just been crucified, and on either side there was a malefactor, so that He was also looked upon as a malefactor, in fact, as the worst of the criminals, by virtue of His position in their midst. It is in reference to this event that Mark says that the Scriptures were now fulfilled; and the Scripture which he quotes is Isaiah 53, 12. Could a stranger proof be adduced that Christ is the suffering "Servant" of Isaiah? Matthew Henry \* expresses the same view:

The evangelist takes particular notice of the fulfilling of the Scriptures in it. In that famous prediction of Christ's sufferings (Isaiah 53, 12), it was foretold that He should be numbered with the transgressors, because He was made sin for us."

The reference of Isaiah is thus proved to be of Christ.

Let us compare the testimony of the evangelist Luke. In Acts 8, 28-35 we read the account of the eunuch from Ethiopia, who was reading from the prophet Isaiah. The exact portion which he was reading was Isaiah 53, 7-8. When the eunuch asked of Philip to whom these words referred, Philip explained them as referring to Christ. In verse 35 of Luke's exposition it is said: "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."\*\*

\* Cf. Matthew Henry's Commentary, Vol. V. Mark 15, v. 28; III 4.

\*\* Cf. Hangstenberg's account in his Christology, Vol. II. pg. 330-332.

Again, this is one of the clearest testimonies in proof of the assertion the Isaiah's "Servant of the Lord" found his fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth. F. B. Meyer, \* referring to this passage in Acts, says: "There is only one brow which this crown of thorns will fit."

In Luke's gospel we have another testimony. In chapter twenty-four, verses 25-27 we read:

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Christ had been walking with the Emmaus disciples, who were sad and dejected, for their Master had died. They did not realize that it was Christ who was at their side. He chides them for their little faith and explains that Christ had to suffer all these things, for those the prophets had foretold concerning him. These sufferings were necessary so that Christ might pass to glory. Christ adds that the prophets had also stated this phase in their prophecy, that He had to pass to glory. In Isaiah 53, 12 we read such a prophecy, stating that Christ had to die that he might enter into his glory: "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death." The testimony is clear. Christ refers his sufferings and glory to Himself, stating that they were foretold in the prophets; and upon

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\* Christ in Isaiah, pg. 158.

examination, we find the prophecy in Isaiah 53, 12.

Again, we find another testimony in this same chapter, in connection with one of Christ's appearances to His disciples. He says (verses 44 - 46):

These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.

Christ says that his death and resurrection were foretold by the prophets. We glance into Isaiah 53 and find the prophecy there. Many of the verses speak of his suffering, and one speaks of his resurrection. "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days." These words then Christ refers to Himself, assuring us that He is the fulfillment of the prophecy.

And now we shall examine the writings of the fourth evangelist and compare his testimony. We find a strong passage in John 12, 37. 38: "But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" This is again one of the strongest proofs in favor of the Messianic interpretation of Isaiah 53. The apostle finds in the unbelief of the Jews a fulfillment of Isaiah 53, 1. \* How can anyone deny this with-

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\* Cf. Hengstenberg's Christology, Vol. II. pg. 330.

out denying the integrity and truthfulness of Scripture?

The usual formula in quoting a passage from the Old Testament which is fulfilled in the New is used, namely, ἰκλ

Πληρωθῆναι. No one can doubt that John meant to be understood as affirming that the passage in Isaiah had a designed applicability to the person and the times of the Redeemer. And no one can deny the affirmation without denying Scripture itself.

And John in describing the passion of Christ writes thus that it is clearly evident that Christ is the suffering "Servant of Jehovah" whom Isaiah describes. For instance, in John 19, 3 we read: "And they smote Him with their hands". Note that this is in direct harmony with Isaiah 53, 3 and 4. Yes, He was stricken, smitten and afflicted.

But John, in one of his epistles, writes concerning the vicarious satisfaction of Christ. In 1 John 3, 5 we read: "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin." He refers to the vicarious work of Christ. He was without sin, holy, separate from sinners. He came to take away our sins. Note that this was also the work of the "Servant of the Lord" whom Isaiah describes. The "Servant" was sinless, as Isaiah says, "He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." The "Servant" came to take away our sins, as it is said of him, "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." The two characters coincide. The work of the "Servant" is the same as that work which Christ performed. The two are the same, therefore.

John makes two more references. In Rev. 5, 6 he says:

And I beheld, and, 10, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

In Rev. 13, 8 he says:

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written, in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

We note that John speaks of a lamb that had been slain. If we compare Is. 53, 7 we will find that Isaiah too speaks of such a lamb that was slain:

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Christ is called the Lamb by John and the "Servant" is called the Lamb by Isaiah. Again the two persons coincide, they are the same.

Thus do all four evangelists affirm very emphatically that this Jesus of Nazareth is the same one of whom Isaiah prophesied in his fifty-third chapter.

However, not only do the evangelists affirm thus, but the writers of the epistles add their testimony as proof also.

The apostle Paul, for instance alludes to this several times in various epistles. In Rom. 10, 16 he says: "But they have not all obeyed the Gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?" Paul adds weight to the testimony of John given in chapter 12, verses 37 - 38. He likewise asserts that the unbelief of the Jews is in direct fulfillment

of Isaiah 53, 1. \* Thus he labels all those who do not believe that Christ is the "Servent of Jehovah" as unbelievers. Surely this is conclusive proof! Again in Rom. 4, 25 he says: "Who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification." The eyes of the unprejudiced reader will see that these words are referred to Isaiah 53, 5.6. Again in 2 Cor. 5, 21 Paul says: "For He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." These words are a clear reference to Isaiah 53, 6. 9. And again in 1 Cor. 15, 3 Paul affirms: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." And the Scripture to which he refers is Isaiah 53, 5. 6.\*\* Paul was, according to these His passages, quite accustomed to referring the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah to the vicarious suffering Christ of Nazareth.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews used a terminology which shows that he too was well acquainted with the prophecy of Isaiah 53, and which furthermore shows that he understood Christ to be the subject of this prophecy. In chapter 9, verse 28 he writes: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." The vicarious satisfaction of Christ had been foretold by Isaiah.

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\* Cf. Hengstenberg's Christology, Vol. II. pg. 300 - 308.  
\*\* Cf. Hengstenberg's Christology, Vol. I. pg. 187 - 216.

And now, in conclusion we turn to the testimony of Peter. The entire passage, 1 Pet. 2, 21 - 25 refers to the vicarious satisfaction of Christ as is described by Isaiah in his fifty-third chapter. "Peter makes use of the principal passages of Isaiah 53 and refers them to the vicarious satisfaction of Christ.\*" For instance, verse 22 reads: "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." These are the same words as are found in Isaiah 53, 9: "He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." The words are almost identical. In verse 23 Peter says: "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." Again, see how closely these words correspond with Isaiah 53, 7: "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." Again in verse 24 Peter says: "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." Here there is clear allusion to Isaiah 53, 4. 12: "Surely, He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. He bore the sins of many." The last phrase of the 24th verse is clearly taken from Isaiah 53, 5: "And with His stripes we are healed." And then in verse 25 Peter says: "For ye were as sheep going astray." Again this is a clear allusion to Isaiah 53, 6: "All we like sheep have

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\* Hengstenberg's Christology, Vol. II. pg. 332.

gone astray." Augus and Green \* join in asserting that this passage clearly alludes to Isaiah 53.

But it is alluded to in connection with the death of the Redeemer as an atoning sacrifice for sin, in such a manner as to show that it was regarded by the Sacred Writers as having reference to the Messiah. A careful examination of the above mentioned passages will convince anyone that the writers of the New Testament were accustomed to regard the passage (Isaiah 53) as having undoubted reference to the Messiah, and that this was so universally the interpretation of the passage in their times, as to make it proper simply to refer to it without formally quoting it. \*\*

We now consider a passage in the Gospel of St. John (1, 29): "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world", ἴδε ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ αἰρῶν τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ κόσμου). At first glance we might pass this passage by, considering it as non-important and irrelevant to the question before us. However, Hengstenberg says concerning it: "There can be no doubt that this passage refers to Isaiah 53, for the sin-bearing lamb is spoken of in a spiritual sense." \*\*\* This "lamb of God" is the same individual of whom Isaiah says (53, 7): "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." Bengel says with reference to this point: "The article looks back to the prophecy which was given concerning him under this figure, in Is. 53, 7."\*\*\*\* This "lamb", of whom John speaks, is "of God", θεοῦ

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\* The Cyclopedia Handbook to the Bible, pg. 506.

\*\* Cf. Barnes Notes on Isaiah, Vol. II. pg. 259. V.

\*\*\* Cf. Christology, Vol. II pg. 299 - 300.

\*\*\*\* Quoted by Hengstenberg, Christology, Vol. II. pg. 299 - 300.



John means, He was sent by God, was commissioned by God, was under the guarding and watchful eye of God. And is not this the same thought expressed by Isaiah. He says of Him, "For He shall grow up before Him (i.e., before God) as a tender plant." This lamb, being "of God" was under God's care. Again Isaiah says, "And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (v. 6), or, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him" (v. 10). This "lamb of God" was of God, sent and commissioned by Him. Therefore, God laid the sins of the world on Him. Is not the "lamb of God" the same in both cases! Says Bengel, as regards θεοῦ, compare verse 10: 'It pleased the Lord painfully to crush Him,' and verse 2: 'Before Him' (God)." \* Of this "lamb of God" John says that "He taketh away the sins of the world." That is His mission, that His work, and that His accomplishment. And lo, that is the same mission of the "lamb", of the "Servant" spoken of by Isaiah. In 53, 4 we read: "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;" again, 53, 5: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with His stripes we are healed; or again, 53, 11: "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities." The "lamb" of whom John speaks has the same mission to perform, as the "Servant" of whom Isaiah prophesies. Says Bengel again with reference to this: "As regards ὁ ἀγαπῶν compare verse 4, rendered by the Septuagint:

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\* Taken from a quotation by Hengstenberg, Christology, Vol. II. pg. 299 - 300.

οὗτος ἰς ἡμαρτίαις ἡμῶν φέρει ;

compare verse 11." \* A great number of commentators recognize in this passage a direct reference to the "Servant of the Lord" in Isaiah 53. However, the use of this passage, should not be insisted upon, since some take this as a reference to the Paschal Lamb.

Consider the strength of the above evidence. Jesus Himself testifies and says that He it is of whom Isaiah speaks. The four evangelists affirm the same thing. The writers of the epistles testify likewise. Consider that all this testimony bears the divine seal of approval affixed by the Holy Ghost Himself. It is not only a disciple who affirms this, it is not only a historian who records these statements, but it is the truthful God, in whose mouth there is no guile. The testimony of the New Testament is so sure and certain that he who doubts it brands himself with the seering iron of unbelief. Because of the strength of this New Testament evidence Gesenius was compelled to say (Th. III. S. 191):

Most Hebrew readers who were so familiar with the ideas of sacrifice and substitution, could not by any means understand the passage in any other way; and there is no doubt that the whole apostolic motion of the atoning death of Christ is chiefly based upon this passage." \*\*

He who accepts the Bible accepts Christ as the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 53.

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\* Taken from a quotation by Hengstenberg, Christology, Vol. II. pg. 299 - 300.

\*\* Quoted from Hengstenberg's Christology, Vol. II. pg. 332.

CHAPTER III

THE TESTIMONY OF JEWISH TRADITION

In early times, prior to the controversy between Christians and Jews, when Jews still clung firmly to the tradition of their Fathers, when they had not yet become prejudiced or biased in their Exegesis, Messianic interpretation was quite generally received. This is even admitted by interpreters who later perverted the interpretation, e.g., Abenezra, Jarchi, Abarbanel, Moses Nachmandis. Hengstenberg \* quotes Gesenius as saying:

It was only the later Jews who abandoned this interpretation, - No doubt, in consequence of their controversies with the Christians.

The passage, Isaiah fifty-three, is interpreted as Messianic in the following writings:

The Thargum of Jonathen refers this prophecy to Christ.

He paraphrases the first clause:

Behold my servant Messiah shall prosper; he shall be high, and increase, and be exceeding strong. ----- Then for our sins he will pray, and our iniquities will for his sake be forgiven, although we were accounted stricken, smitten from before the Lord, and afflicted. ---- But it is the Lord's good pleasure to try and to purify the remnant of his people, so as to cleanse their souls from sin: these shall look on the kingdom of their Messiah. \*\*

Hengstenberg (Christology, Vol. II, pg. 311) quotes from an old commentary on the Pentateuch (ed. Chracov. f. 53, c. 3, l.7), the Medrash Tanchuma, which says: This is the king Messiah who is high and lifted up, and very exalted, more

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\* Hengstenberg - Christology, Vol. II, pg. 311.

\*\* Quoted from Driver's and Neubauer's - "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", II. Thargum of Jonathen, pg. 5.

exalted than Abraham, elevated above Moses, higher than the ministering angels."

Hengstenberg \* furthermore quotes a passage from the old book Pesickta, cited in the treatise Abkath Rakhel \*\*;

When God created His world He stretched out His hand under the throne of His glory, and brought forth the soul of the Messiah. He said to Him: 'Wilt thou heal and redeem my sons after six thousand years?' He answered Him: 'I will.' Then God said to Him: (Wilt thou then also bear the punishment in order to blot out their sins, as it is written: 'But He bore our diseases') (Chap. 53, 4)? And He answered Him: 'I will joyfully bear them.' This passage accepts Isaiah 53 as referring to Christ, the Messiah.

R. Moseh Had-darshan expresses himself on Gen. 28, 10 as follows: \*\*\* "The great mountain means the Messiah, and why does he speak of him thus? Because He is greater than the patriarchs, as it is said, 'Behold my servant shall prosper.'" The same Rabbi expressing himself on Gen. 1, 1: "Forthwith the Holy One began to make a covenant with the Messiah: O Messiah, my righteousness, said He, the iniquities of those who are hidden beside thee enter into a hard yoke. ----- Art thou willing to accept this? Said the Messiah, Lord of the world I accept it joyfully, and will endure these chastisements, upon condition that thou givest life again to those who die in my day, and to those who died from the first man until now. --- The Holy One replied, I will do so: and forthwith the Messiah accepted the chastisement of love, as it is written, 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted.'

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\* Christology, Vol. II, pg. 312.

\*\* Printed separately in Venice in 1597, and reprinted in Hulsì "Theologia Judaici", pg. 328 - Cf. Driver's and Keubauer's, "The Fifty-third Chapter", pg. 11.

\*\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-third Chapter





that is, the bread of the kingdom, 'and dip thy morsel in the vinegar,' this refers to the chastisements, as it is said, 'but he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities'.

In the Talmud, Siphre, \* we read:

How much more, then will the King Messiah who endures afflictions and pains for the transgressors (as it is written, 'He was wounded,' etc.) justify all generations! And this is what is meant when it is said, 'And the Lord made the iniquities of us all meet upon him.'

Yepheth Ben'Ali, one of the Qaraites, the name borne by those Jews who rejected conditions of the Talmud, says concerning Isaiah 52, 13-15:

As to myself, I am inclined to regard as alluding to the Messiah, and as opening with a description of his condition in exile, from the time of his birth to his accession to the throne. Concerning Isaiah 53, 4. he says: From the words 'He was wounded for our transgressions; we learn that by the Messiah bearing them they (Israel) would be delivered from the wrath which rested upon them.'

R. Mosheh Ben Maimon in his "Letter to the South" interprets Isaiah 53, 1 as referring to the Messiah. He says:

What is to be the time of Messiah's advent, and where will be the place of His first appearance?.... Isaiah speaks similarly of the time when He will appear, without His father or mother or family being known. He came up as a sucker before Him, and as a root out of the dry earth, etc.\*\*

In the Midrash Koven the following quotation is to be found:

The fifth mansion in Paradise is built of onyx and jasper, and set stones, and silver and gold..... There dwell Messiah son of David, and Elijah, and Messiah son of Ephraim;.... and within it, Messiah son of David who loveth Jerusalem. Elijah takes

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\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah" pg. 10, from the original in Raymund Mertini Pugis Fidei, pg. 674.

\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg. 374.

Him by the head, lays Him down in his bosom, holds Him, and says, 'Bear thou the sufferings and wounds where-with the Almighty doth chastise thee for Israel's sin;' and so it is written, He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, until the time when the end should come. \*

In the Asereth Memroth, from the Teh Discourses of R. M'nahem 'Azaryah of Fano (ca. 1640), II 7 of the part headed 1. 771 P 17, the author testifies to the Messianic interpretation of Isaiah 53 when he says:

The Messiah, in order to atone for them both (i.e., for Adam and David), will make His soul a trespass-offering, as it is written next to this, in the Parashah, Behold my servant. And what is written after it? He shall see His seed, shall have long days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.

Chapter 19 of the Sepher Ha-Gilgalim of R. Hayyim Vital reads very Messianically:

You must know also that the soul of celestial splendour no created being in the world has ever yet been worthy to obtain: the King Messiah, however, will receive it; it is accordingly said of Him, He shall be high and exalted, etc. or, as our Rabbis say, 'He shall be higher than Abraham, exceedingly above Adam'. \*\*

The author of the Yalqut Hadash \*\*\* understands Isaiah 53 as Messianic, for he writes:

While Israel were in their own land they freed themselves from such sicknesses and other punishments by means of offerings, but now the Messiah frees them from them, as it is written, He was wounded for our transgressions.

From the Order of Prayer for the Day of Atonement, the following quotation is cited, to show that the ancient interpretation of Isaiah 53 was Messianic:

\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg. 394.

\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg. 395.

\*\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg. 396.



Messiah, our righteousness, hath turned from us; we are in terror, and there is none to justify us! Our iniquities and the yoke of our transgressions He will bear, for He was wounded for our transgressions: He will carry our sins upon His shoulder, that we may find forgiveness for our iniquities, and by His stripes we are healed. \* This distinctly shows the Messianic interpretation.

Herz Homberg in the Korem, an exposition of the entire Old Testament, refers Isaiah 53 to the Messiah. He says:

The fact is, that it refers to the King Messiah, who will come in the latter days, when it will be the Lord's good pleasure to redeem Israel among the different nations of the earth.\*\*

Levi Ben Gersham, in his commentary on the Pentateuch, says the following in explaining Deut. 34, 10:

It follows necessarily from this verse that no prophet whose office was restricted to Israel alone could ever arise again like Moses; but it is still quite possible that a prophet like Moses might arise among the Gentile nations. In fact the Messiah is such a prophet, as it is stated in the Midrash on the verse, Behold my servant shall prosper. \*\*\*

F. C. Cook in his commentary \*\*\*\* referring to Dr. A. Wuenschel's book, Die Leiden des Messias, S. 49, quotes Synagogical Prayers used annually at the Passover, which show that the old interpretation of Isaiah 53 was Messianic.

Make speed, my Beloved, until the end of the vision dawn; hasten, and the shadows shall flee from hence. High and lifted up and exalted shall He be, that is despised. He shall deal prudently and shall reprove, and shall sprinkle many.

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\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg. 399.

\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg. 400.

\*\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg. 568.

\*\*\*\* Vol. V. pg. 270. I.2.

The above quotations prove very definitely that the ancient tradition among the Jews was to refer the section of Isaiah 53 to the Messiah, to the suffering Messiah. But it is little to be wondered at that this ancient tradition did not remain and was not generally accepted in later years. Chas. H. H. Wright \* suggests the following sequence. He holds that when the Jews returned out of the land of exile to the land of promise, their hearts were filled with Messianic, expectations. But this expectation soon began to die away. Wright uses Jesus the son of Sirach (Ben Sira) to illustrate this. Ben Sira ignored the Messianic hopes of the prophets. The "Servant of Jehovah" he identified with Elijah, asserting that Elijah's future work would be (1) "to pacify wrath before fury and to turn the heart of father to son, and (2) to restore the tribes of Israel", thus assigning to Elijah the Messiah's work. In this way Messianic hope faded away. But when sorrow and affliction again came upon the Jews the Messianic hope was revived. The "Psalter of Solomon \*\* bear this out. In this Psalter the Messiah and His kingdom again become evident. But there is never a reference to the suffering Messiah. Thus Chas. H. H. Wright traces the decadence of the Messianic interpretation among the Jews.

There can be no doubt that the ancient tradition among

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\* In his article, "The Pre-Christian Jewish Interpretation of Isaiah 52.53", (found in the Expositor, edited by W. Nicoll, Third Series, Vol. VII, pg. 373).

\*\* Eighteen psalms extant only in Hellenistic Greek.

the Jews favored the Messianic interpretation of Isaiah 53, but that gradually, through the centuries, this interpretation was cast aside. There are also several reasons why the Jews should eventually reject this passage as referring to the Messiah.

Hengstenberg \* suggests that this was in fulfillment of the Scripture passage 1 Cor. 1, 23, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock." And what unbiased mind will deny that the later action of the Jews was and is in direct fulfillment of this passage? That stiffnecked and proud race cared nothing for a Messiah who would redeem their soul. They did not want a Messiah who would suffer and die for their sins. They needed none to save themselves, but hoped to be saved by their own good works. They would care for their spiritual troubles. It was their temporal troubles which afflicted them. They were under bondage. Therefore they looked for some glorious Messiah who should free them. All passages they consequently interpreted carnally, even this passage. A quotation from a commentary, composed in Arabic by an unknown author on Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the Minor Prophets\*\* (1196) illustrates this carnal quest for a Messiah whose work it would be to free Israel from temporal oppression. "But God was pleased to depress Israel in the latter end of

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\* Cf. Christology, Vol. II pg. 315.

\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah." pg. 65.

the captivity, in order that they might repent before their king appears, and therefore has he made them sick; O that thou wouldst take his confession as the sacrifice of his soul, that so he might see the king, prolong his days, and that the pleasure of God might prosper in his hand! From the travail of the captivity he shall deliver his soul, he shall see vengeance on his enemies and be satisfied with the plunder of their possessions. As a reward for this I will divide for him the spoil of Gog who are the many, and the cities of mighty nations he shall divide as prey."

Temporal salvation, alleviation of temporal troubles was their chief concern. Small wonder, then, that they discarded Isaiah 53, which speaks of suffering and humiliation, as referring to the Messiah.

Naturally, when Christ the Messiah came in humiliation and suffered, they refused to recognize Him, for they could not reconcile the prophecy with the fulfillment. They had taken only those passages in the prophets which speak of Christ's glory. Therefore, they expected Him to come in grandeur and splendor. The Messiah who came, the son of Mary and Joseph, was not a person of distinctive glory. How could He be the long expected Messiah! An extract from the fifth chapter of the Wars of the Lord by R. Ya'qob bar Reuben, the Rabbanite (1170) \* shows that the Jews actually did chose only those passages speaking of the Messiah's glory.

You begin by saying that the royal Psalmist was addressing Him when he spoke the words, 'Thou art fairer than the children of men' etc. (Ps. 45, 3); you say also that Jeremiah speaks of Him similarly as fair or beautiful (Ps. 48, 5; Jer. 11, 16); and add that all this testimony respecting Him is true. And now you go on to assert madly that the words, 'so marred was his countenance beyond man' etc. refer to Him likewise. But how

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\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, the Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah, pg. 57.

can this be when you already admit and believe that all the words of the prophets are unfailing and true? You can be only perverting their words and corrupting and falsifying their prophecies if you maintain that when the Psalmist speaks of Him as "beautiful", Isaiah can come and testify that His countenance and form are 'marred', or that He is 'despised and forlorn of men;' or again, that if Isaiah says that He has 'no form nor comeliness', Jeremiah can call him 'a flourishing olive tree, beautiful with well-formed fruit.'

Does this quotation not show distinctly that they could not bridge the gulf between prophecy and interpretation! Moreover, as Hengstenberg \* points out, "they failed to reckon with the element of time in prophecy. They failed to realize that this Messiah who came in humility would also establish His Kingdom of Glory, but only after His work had been done."

Consistently now the Jews began to refuse to refer Isaiah 53 to Christ. For instance, Don Yizhaq Aborbanel in his commentary on Isaiah says the following:

"The opinion held by the learned among the Nazarenes is that the prophecy refers to Jesus of Nazareth, who was put to death at the end of the second Temple..... This opinion, however, if properly examined, possesses many weak points."

\*Yonathan ben Uzziel refers this passage to the Messiah, but not to the suffering Messiah. Notice how he twists the words into an unnatural meaning. Verses four and five chapter 53, which to every normal reader say that the servant will bear griefs, carry sorrows, be wounded, be bruised, Yonathan interprets as follows:

"Then for our sins he will pray, and our iniquities will for his sake be forgiven, although we were

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\* Christology, Vol. II. pg. 315.

\*\*Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah," pg. 156.

accounted stricken, smitten from before the Lord and afflicted. But he will build up the Holy Place, which has been polluted for our sins, and delivered to the enemy for our iniquities; and by his instruction peace shall be increased upon us, and by devotion to His words, our sins will be forgiven us." \*

Hengstenberg, describing this method of Yonathan, says, "He twists the meaning so that by exegetical acrobatics all the words refer to Christ's glory and not to His suffering."\*\* But this view of Yonathan has been abjected to. Most Jews do away with Christ and seek an altogether different person for the subject of this prophecy. \*\*\*

The interpreters of this section may be divided into two main classes, 1. those who refer the יְיָ יְיָ to some collective body, either the whole Jewish nation in contrast to the Gentiles, or the better portion of the Jewish people, i.e., the pious among them; 2. Those who refer the passage to some single individual.

The most prevalent of the above critical anti-Messianic interpretations is that which refers this section to the entire Jewish nation as a whole. This interpretation was advanced very early, since the reasons why the Jews opposed Christ were voiced rather early. Hengstenberg\*\*\*\* quotes a discussion between Origen and certain learned Jews on Isaiah 53. During the course of this controversy Origen

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\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah," pg. 5. 6.

\*\*Christology, Vol. II. pg. 317.

\*\*\*Hengstenberg (Christology, Vol. II. pg 317,) points out that the principal non-Messianic interpretations of this passage are found in the Rabbinical Bibles, and also in Hulkins (C., pg. 339).

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Christology, Vol. II. pg. 317.

received this answer from them: "That which here was prophesied of one, referred to the whole people, and was fulfilled by their dispersion." This explanation which makes the entire Jewish people the subject of the prophecy was endorsed by such leaders among the Jews as:

R. Abraham Ibn 'Ezra. In his commentary he says: "The proof of its proper meaning lies in the passages immediately before (52,12, where 'you' signifies Israel), and immediately afterwards (54, 1, where 'the barren one' designates the congregation of Israel); similarly 'my Servant' means each individual belonging to Israel.....'My Servant' may mean Israel as a whole, as in 41, 8."\*

R. David Qanihi. In his commentary he remarks: "This Parashah refers to the captivity of Israel, who are here called 'my servant' as in 41, 8." \*\*

Don Yizhaq Abarbanel. In his commentary, expounding 52, 13-15 he says:\*\*\* "Israel is addressed as my servant, because of the many grievous years of exile which it endured for the honor of God, without forsaking His ordinances and His service, like a servant true to his master."

R. Lipmann of Muhlhausen. In section 236 of the Nizzahon, composed by him about 1430, he says,

"These and the following verses down to 52, 12 make it plain to every one to whom God has given eyes to see and a heart to understand, that the Parashah beginning with the next verse must refer likewise to Israel's redemption from captivity."\*\*\*\*

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\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauers, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg. 43. 44.  
\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauers, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg. 48.  
\*\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauers, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg 168.  
\*\*\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauers, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg 147.

Others could be mentioned as supporting this view, such as R. Yoseph Qara; R. Jacob Ben Reuben, the Rabbanite; R. Yoseph Ben Nathan; R. Y'sha'yah Ben Mali, and many more.

The unbiased reader of Isaiah 53 will ask, How can these men refer this prophecy to the Jewish people? Hengstenberg\* explains their method by saying that they hold that the prophecy "describes the misery of the people in their exile, the firmness with which they bear it for the glory of God, and resist every temptation to forsake His law and worship; and the prosperity, power, and glory which shall be bestowed upon them at the time of the redemption. In verses 1-10, the Gentiles are supposed to be introduced as speaking, and making a humble and penitent confession that hitherto they had adopted an erroneous opinion of the people of God, and had unjustly despised them on account of their sufferings, inasmuch as their glory now shows, that it was not for the punishment of their sins that these sufferings were inflicted upon them." The refutation of this interpretation will be taken up in chapter five. At the present time it will suffice to say that it is false and self-centered. The arguments which they use are very shallow and scarcely worthy of note.

For example, R. David Qarnhi argues: "I should like to ask the Nazarenes, who explain this Parashah of Jesus, how the prophet could have said, 'He shall be lifted up and lofty exceedingly?' If this alludes to the flesh, Jesus was not 'lifted up' except when he was suspended upon the cross; if it refers to the Godhead, then he was mighty and lifted up from the beginning (so that it could not be said, he will be lifted up). Moreover, the prophet says to them ( 133 ), ver. 8, but then he ought to have said to him ( 13 ) for 133 is plural, being equivalent to 473. Again he says, 'He shall see seed': if this refers to his

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\* Christology, Vol. II, pg. 317. 318.



flesh; then he had no seed; if to his Godhead, as the literal sense is inappropriate, they explain the word seed as alluding to his disciples, although his disciples are nowhere spoken of as either sons or seed. He says, too, 'He shall lengthen days;' but in the flesh he did not lengthen days, and if he says of his Godhead that as a reward he will have long life, are not the days of God from everlasting to everlasting? Lastly, he says, 'And he interceded for the transgressors;' but if he is God himself, to whom could He intercede?\*

These arguments as advanced by R. David Qamhi are typical of all the anti-Messianic Jewish arguments. However, they are easily refuted, and will be rejected in chapter five.

Now, therefore, we proceed to the second class of interpretation which makes the godly portion of the Jewish nation the subject of the prophecy in Isaiah 53. These interpreters hold a kind of vicarious satisfaction on the part of the pious for the ungodly. Now, though these critics hold an erroneous and badly twisted doctrine of vicarious satisfaction, they are in error when they ascribe to humans what alone should be ascribed to God. Thus they brazenly presume a divine prerogative on the part of the Jewish godly portion. Hengstenberg \*\* points out that some interpreters even divide the pious sufferers into two classes, those who in general must endure much misery and many sufferings, and those who are publicly executed, as Rabbi Akiba and others.

A good specimen of this interpretation is found in the Treatise of the Talmud termed Berakoth, 5a: \*\*\*

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\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, 'The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah,' pg. 55,56.

\*\* Cf. Christology, Vol. II. pg. 319.

\*\*\* Chas. H. H. Wright cites it in his "Pre-Christian Jewish Interpretation of Issaiah 52 and 53" (found in the Expositor, edited by W. Nicoll, Third Series, Vol. VII. pg. 404).

Raba said, or possibly, Rab Chisda:- If a man sees that chastisements come upon him let him search his actions. For it is said, Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord (Lam. 3, 40). And if he has searched and found nothing, then it (the chastisement) hangs upon neglect of the Law, for it is said, 'Blessed is the man that Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest out of they Law' Ps. 94, 12). And if he has attended to (that point) and not found (anything wanting), it is evident that the chastenings are from love, for it is said, 'For whom the Lord loveth He reproveth' (Prov. 3, 12). "Raba said Raba Sechorah said Ral Huma said:- Everyone whom the Holy One, blessed be he! delights in, He bruises him with chastenings, for it is said, 'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, He hath put him to grief' (Is. 53, 10).

A similar view is held by Rabbi Alshech. Hengstenberg cites this. \* Rabbi Alshech refers Is. 52, 13-15 to the Messiah. In the following verses, however, he holds this view:

Isaiah, in the name of all Israel, approves of what God had said, and confesses that, by this declaration of God regarding the suffering of the Messiah, they have received light regarding the sufferings of the godly in general. They perceive it to be erroneous and rash to infer guilt from suffering; and henceforth, when they see a righteous man suffering, they will think of no other reason, than that he bears their diseases, and that their chastisements are for their salvation.

According to this interpretation the "Servant of the Lord" becomes a personification of righteousness. \*\* It is not difficult to see that the refutation of this argument will center about this one point, can a man redeem his brother by vicariously suffering torments and torture; is Scripture in error when it says that none of them can by any means redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for them, for the

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\* Christology, Vol. II. pg. 319.

\*\* Rabbi Mosheh Kohen holds a similar view. Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg. 127.

redemption of their souls is precious, and it ceaseth forever?

The second major non-Messianic interpretation advanced by critics, already by certain Jewish Rabbis, is that one which refers the "Servant of the Lord" to some other individual besides Christ. In-so-far as this group refers the subject of the prophecy to some other person besides Christ there is uniformity. But as soon as these same Rabbis begin to mention who the individual, other than Christ, should be, the uniformity ceases, and gross confusion sets in. There are many individuals who are suggested as subjects of this prophecy in Isaiah 53. We shall note the following:

Some say the יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה is King Josiah. Dan Yizhag Abarbanel is a staunch supporter of this view. Says he; \* "The second method is to refer the entire prophecy to Josiah, king of Judah, who 'did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord,' and like whom 'there had been no king before him' (2 Kings 22, 1; 23, 25).... Nor is there anything remarkable in this prophecy coming in the midst of a series of promises of the future redemption; for the prophecies in this book are not all of them connected or related to one another."

Abarbanel continues in his explanation, fitting verse after verse into the life of Josiah. The following is typical of his method:

The prophet dilates upon his perfections, saying how he was like a root out of the dry land, because his fathers Amon and Manasseh were evil, and sinners before God exceedingly, so that when Josiah became king, the land was all drought and darkness, filled with

\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg. 187.

\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg. 191.

idols and strange worships; Josiah, however, came forth as 'a lily amongst the thorns' and as a 'root out of the dry land,' but now, when the misfortune comes home to him, and the terrors of death fall upon him, he has no form and no beauty, i.e., 'the complexion of his face is changed. \*

Reading such exegesis, one is almost made to believe that hermeneutical rules are an invention of the twentieth century.

Another interpretation refers to the subject of Isaiah 53 to the prophet Jeremiah, who, it is true, endured many hardships and trials. The Ga'on, R. Sa'adyah \*\* holds this view. He understands the 'he will sprinkle' of Is. 52, 14 in the sense of 'dropping word's, because Jeremiah prophesied about many peoples. He points out that the word 'sucker' is an allusion to his youth. 'He bore the sin of many' when he stood before God 'to speak good for them.' The words 'I will divide him a portion with the great' have reference to the provisions with which he was supplied every day. R. Abraham Ibn 'Ezra speaks of this interpretation as being 'attractive'. \*\*\* YShudah Ben Balam says of Jeremiah, "And the description given in it is quite consistent with such an interpretation." \*\*\*\* Rabbi Saadiah Hagggaon, as well as R. Saadia Gaon and R. Mosheh hak-Kohen (ca. 1200 A.D.) follow R. Abraham Ibn 'Ezra.

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\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah, pg. 191.  
\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah, pg. 153.  
\*\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah, pg. 43.  
\*\*\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah, pg. 551.

A third view is to ascribe these words in Isaiah 53 to Hezekiah. R. Yaqob Yoseph Mord'khai Hayyim Passani subscribes wholeheartedly to this view. Says he: \*

I have therefore been led to the conviction that the the Parashah may after all be referred intelligibly and naturally to Hezekiah. For although, like all other prophecies, most of Isaiah's also point to the latter days, when the Messiah will have appeared, still there are particular ones which have reference to that just monarch, and to the fall of Saurerib, which took place in his days and through his merits.

R. Sa'adyah Ibn Danan says: "And now I will make known what has been communicated to me from heaven, how namely, the Parashah was originally uttered with reference to Hezekiah, king of Judah and Israel."\*\*

There is yet a fourth view worthy of mention, coming properly under this group, which makes the prophet Isaiah himself the subject of his own prophecy. This view has been defended in modern times by Gesenius. \*\*\* This concludes the enumeration of the critical theories concerning the subject of the prophecy advanced by Isaiah in chapter 53.

We have listed the ancient Jewish tradition which treats the passage as Messianic and have also pondered over the later interpretations which are anti-Messianic. Does the tradition of the ancient Jewish Church offer an argument in the face of all the later opposition? Indeed it does! The fact that the Jews in more ancient times referred this prophecy to the

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\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg. 407.

\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg. 203.

\*\*\* Cf. Wm. Gesenius: Commentor uber den Jesaias, Vol. II pg. 170 ff.

\*\*\*\* Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. II. pg. 259.

Messiah proves that such is the obvious reference. When their minds were not yet blinded with hatred against Jesus of Na-a-reth, when they were looking forward to the coming of a deliverer, they applied the passage to Him. And though they could not reconcile the misery and humiliation which Isaiah portrayed with the exaltation and glorious nature of the "Servant" as described elsewhere, yet they believed, and did not call this document into question. Barnes \* adds this thought:

Such was the fact in the Christian Church for seventeen hundred years. The unvarying sense affixed to any written document for seventeen hundred years is likely to be the true sense. And especially is this so, if the document in question has been in the hands of the learned and unlearned; the high and the low; the rich and the poor; the bond and the free; and if they concur in giving to it the same interpretation, such an interpretation cannot easily or readily be set aside.

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\* Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. II. pg. 259.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TESTIMONY OF CHRISTIAN TRADITION

When considering the subject of the section, Isaiah fifty-three, it will be well to refer to the testimony of the Christian Church, though this testimony is only secondary. It cannot be used as proof therefore, and is only mentioned to show the striking coincidence, for the from earliest times the Church interpreted the prophecy as referring to Christ, the Messiah.

It is a strange fact that the interpretation of this prophecy has had the same history among Christians as among the Jews. The early Jewish tradition considers Christ to be the "Servant of Jehovah". The same is the case among Christians. All the early writers, with but few exceptions, held that Christ the Nazarene is referred to by Isaiah. Hengstenberg notes a few of these rare exceptions. A certain Silesian, called Seidel, an atheist, held that Christ had never come nor yet ever would. \* He, therefore, and a certain Grotius, held Jeremiah to be the subject of Isaiah 53. These are two of the noted exceptions. Outside of these few, almost all Christians interpreted Isaiah 53 of Christ.

We shall note the following testimonies of several Church Fathers.

Augustine (354-420) says:

Isaiah has not only reproved the people for their iniquity and instructed them in righteousness, and foretold to the

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\* Hengstenberg's Christology, Vol. II. pg. 320. He quotes from Jac. Martini. 3, de tribus Elohim, pg. 592.

people calamities impending over them in the future; but he has also a greater number of predictions, than the other prophets, concerning Christ and the Church, i.e., concerning the King, and the Kingdom established by Him; so that some interpreters would rather call him an Evangelist than a Prophet.

Following these words Augustine quotes Isaiah 53 and closes with these words:

Surely that may suffice! There are in those words some things too which require explanation; but I think that things which are so clear should compel even enemies, against their will, to understand them. \* The testimony of Augustine is clear, and refers Isaiah 53 to Christ.

Theodore (386) also remarks on this fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. He says:

The Prophet represents to us, in this passage, the whole course of His (Christ's) humiliation unto death. Most wonderful is the power of the Holy Spirit. For that which was to take place after many generations, He showed to the holy prophets in such a manner that they did not merely hear Him declare these things, but saw them. \*\*

The Church Father Clement (101) in writing his first epistle to the Corinthians, also refers to Isaiah 53.

The testimony of the majesty of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came not in the noise of an imposter nor in arrogance, also not as a powerful one, but being humble, as the Holy Spirit has said concerning Him; for He says: Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed. \*\*\*

Heretupon Clement quotes the entire fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, thus showing that he, in agreement with other Church Fathers, understood the prophecy to refer to Christ.

\* This quotation is taken from Hengstenberg's Christology, Vol. II. pg. 320, who quotes from Augustines De Civitate Dei, 1. 18, c. 29. Note that Augustine makes a similar remark in his De Consensu Evangelistarum, 1. i. c. 31.

\*\* This quotation is taken from Hengstenberg's Christology, Vol. II pg. 320. He quotes from Theodoret, opp.ed. Hal. t. II. p. 358.



Barnabas (a contemporary of Paul) held the same opinion.

He says:

For it is written concerning Him (Christ) both to Israel and to us, and thus it says: He was bruised for our iniquities, He was wounded for our sins, we are healed by His stripes. As a sheep He is led to the slaughter, and as a lamb before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. \*

Barnabas quotes the fifth and seventh verses of Isaiah fifty-three and refers them to Christ.

To the testimony of these could also be added the testimony of Justin (160), Irenaeus (177-202), Cyril of Alexandria (400) and Jerome (331-342) who follow the tradition of the ancient Church and refer this prophecy to Christ.

And down through the ages the Church has abided by the true interpretation as given by these Church Fathers. Here and there some exegete left the well marked road, but his voice was not the testimony of the Church. The interpretation of Isaiah 53 was always of Christ. And at the time of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, we find the same view held. Luther (1483) says:

And no doubt, there is not, in all the Old Testament Scriptures, a clearer text or prophecy, both of the suffering and the resurrection of Christ, than in this chapter. Wherefore it is but right that it should be committed to memory, that thereby we may strengthen our faith, and defend it, chiefly against the stiff-necked Jews, who deny their only promised Christ, solely on account of the offence of His cross.\*\*

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\*\*\* Cf. I. Clementis ad Cor. XVI. 2-16; found in the Patrum Apostolicorum Opera by Gebhardt, pg. 9.

\* Barnabae Epistula, V. 2; found in the Patrum Apostolicorum Opera by Gebhardt, pg. 50.

\*\* This quotation of Luther is taken from Hengstenberg's Christology, Vol. II. pg. 321.

The entire fifty-third chapter of Isaiah does not speak of any people, individual or nation, but only of Christ, who is the Head. The exposition of this passage does not allow several explanations, but only one. It must be referred to Christ. \*

Nor did the various reformers, who differed on many points, as for instance, on the Sacraments, on church polity, on externals, differ on the interpretation of the prophecy before us. They held to it, for it is a characteristic of Christianity. For example, Zwingli (1484-1531) says:

That which now follows is so clearly a testimony of Christ, that I do not know whether, anywhere in Scripture, there could be found anything more consistent, or that anything could be more distinctly said. For it is quite in vain that the obstinacy and perversity of the Jews have tried it from all sides. \*\*

The testimony of the ancient Christian Church is indeed striking, for it shows that the Messianic interpretation has been accepted almost unanimously. And though this is no proof for this interpretation, yet it tends to add weight to the Messianic view.

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\* Cf. Luthers Works, St. Louis edition, Vol. VI. 641, 1.2.

\*\* Quoted from Hengstenberg's Christology, Vol. II. pg. 231. - from the Annot. ad. h.l. (opp. t. III. Tur. 1544, fol. 292).

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS OF CRITICAL ARGUMENTS

In spite of the clear internal testimony of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, in spite of the testimony of the New Testament, in spite of the testimony of Jewish tradition, in spite of the testimony of the tradition of the Christian Church, yes, in spite of this evidence, there are many who refuse to look upon Christ as the fulfillment of this prophecy. Jews and Gentiles alike have attacked the Messianic interpretation. Scholars have spent energy and time advancing arguments to disprove the Messianic interpretation. This prophecy has been attacked most fiercely. The prophecy has been approached from almost every angle. By methods of induction and deduction critics have succeeded in amassing a great number of arguments against the interpretation held by the true Christian Church. All arguments center around one central point of controversy, namely, that Christ is not the "Servant of Jehovah". Those who attack this prophecy are usually rationalistic, modernistic, or atheistic, and at times it is very difficult to determine just which of the above classifications fit the critics.

I. JEWISH CRITICISM

The Jewish interpreters lead the field in advancing arguments against the Messianic interpretation. Their minds are so prejudiced against Christ, are so filled with hatred, that for hundreds of years they have prepared arguments against the current Christian interpretation. But they are

all biased and prejudiced. Here are some of their objections.

1. "If he is God (and not man) to whom could he intercede?"\*
2. "How could it be considered as a future fact that he should be exalted? Is not the Godhead always exalted?"\*\*
3. "How can he be first in a state of depression?"\*\*\*
4. "How can it be said that he will understand, since the Godhead always understands?"\*\*\*\*
5. "How does his receiving a reward agree with his nature?"\*\*\*\*\*
6. "If he is God, he could not be a servant."\*\*\*\*\*
7. "How could it be said of him, that he did no violence, since God could not do it?"\*\*\*\*\*
8. "How can God be termed despised, forlorn of men, and stricken?"\*\*\*\*\*
9. "If he is smitten by God, how can it be said that he himself is God?"\*\*\*\*\*
10. "If the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all, then he is inferior to God the agent."\*\*\*\*\*
11. "If God bruised him, he is inferior to God,"  
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12. "If he were God, it would not be said, The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand, since it would then be God's own hands."\*\*\*\*\*
13. "The Eternal could not undergo change or death."  
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\* Kimchi, Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah," pg. 56.

\*\* R. Jacob b. Reuben. Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah," pg. 58.

\*\*\* R. Jacob b. Reuben. Cf. the same reference as above.

\*\*\*\* Abarbanel, Cf. Driver's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah," pg. 158.

\*\*\*\*\* (Note that all these references are taken from Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah." Mordekhai, pg. 381.

\*\*\*\*\* R. Jacob b. Reuben, pg. 60.

\*\*\*\*\* Joseph b. Nathan, pg. 71.

\*\*\*\*\* Lipmann, pg. 148.

\*\*\*\*\* R. Jacob b. Reuben, pg. 59.

\*\*\*\*\* Lopez, pg. 346.

\*\*\*\*\* Ibn Shaprut, pg. 93.

\*\*\*\*\* Abarbanel, pg. 161.

\*\*\*\*\* Eliyyah Cohen, pg. 146.

\*\*\*\*\* Cf. the introduction to Driver's work, pg. 1.

There were other abstract arguments advanced by Jewish critics. E. B. Pusey lists some of these \*\*\*\*\* (pg.80) It is held, that the Incarnation is impossible; or that it is against the doctrine of the Atonement; or that Jesus, if the Messiah, ought to have removed temporal death; or to have repaired Adam's sin entirely; or that mankind ought to have been sinless afterwards; or that the Atonement is an encouragement to sin. Concerning these arguments Pusey says, "They are irrelevant to this prophecy, or presuppose the same meaning of its words. The ignorant criticisms upon our Lord's teaching, or flippancy in which they sometimes indulge, are still less relevant."

There are only four criticisms of the Jews, as Pussey points out, that would affect our faith, and which must be refuted by us for that reason. These four arguments advanced by various Jewish writers we shall now consider.

1. The first objection is based on the word "grief",  
37. The contention is made that the Messiah never had a pain, "even a headache", up to the day of His death. The terms used here, "grief" and "sickness" were not realized in his person, and so cannot apply to him.

Answer: At first glance there may seem to be some truth in this statement. The Messiah never endured any kind of bodily ailment or sickness up till the time of His death. That is not a misquotation of facts. But the word rendered "grief" does not always mean bodily ailment, as the Jews contended. It also means "mental ills". In fact Isaiah himself

uses the word in that sense here in chapter fifty-three. Strange it is indeed that the eyes of the Jews are hidden. In the fourth verse we read, "He hath carried our sicknesses". Now, we ask, can one actually bear the bodily ailments of another person? Impossible! The word then refers to mental trouble. Again in the tenth verse we read, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." (3177), the terms here referring to "grief" in verse 3. The term is used of mental ills also in other parts of the Scripture, for instance, in Jer. 6, 7, where we read: "As a fountain casteth out her waters, so she casteth out her wickedness: violence and spoil is heard in her; before me continually is grief and wounds." (Compare also such passages as Hos. 5, 13; Jer. 10, 19; Ecol. 5, 16; 4, 2; Is. 57, 10, Jer. 5, 3. The meaning then is, that He took upon Himself grief, that is, mental pains, for He had to carry our sins; and the realization of this task made Him to suffer mentally. We recall that Christ sweat bitter drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane, for He then felt the weight of our sins. Mentally anguished, He asked the Father to remove the cup from Him, if that be in accordance with the will of the Father. Again, Matthew, the Evangelist, removes the shadow of doubt from this passage, for he distinctly interprets the words of Isaiah as referring to Christ in this instance. We read in chapter 8, verse 17: "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." Delitzsch remarks concerning this: "The evan-

gelist saw the fulfillment of these words in the help which Jesus rendered to the bodily sick of all sorts." \*

2. The second objection of vital importance, advanced by the Jews, regards the word יָסֵף, rendered, "on him". They hold that this word is a plural and not a singular, and being a plural and relating to the subject of this section, it distinctly shows that the subject is a collective and not an individual. Kimchi says, "Moreover the prophet says "to them" (יָסֵף); but then (if related to Jesus) he ought to have said, "to him", יָסֵף; for יָסֵף is plural, being equivalent to יָסֵפִים." \*\* In his grammar Kimchi says \*\*\*, "יָסֵף occurs as the suffix of the 3rd person singular, as in Job 20, 23; 22, 2. For יָסֵף and יָסֵף (יָסֵף) contains in itself the sign of the plural noun, and indicates the masculine singular also. For יָסֵף is the sign of the 3rd person masc. plural, and the יָסֵף of the 3rd masc. sing.: and therefore יָסֵף is used both of many and of one." Thus Kimchi here contradicts his first statement. Many modern critics refer it to "my people". Ewald says, \*\*\*\*

It cannot be denied that the very old יָסֵף is sometimes used by some poets in the sense of a singular, in very little words, as יָסֵף for יָסֵף "to him", as if in it the יָסֵף of the singular were especially heard thru, Ps. 11, 7; Job. 22, 2; Deut. 33, 2, twice; Is. 44, 15.

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- \* Cf. Delitzsch Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. II pg. 282 ff.  
\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg. 55.  
\*\*\* This is quoted by Pussey, in Driver's work, pg. lfi; Pussey has quoted it from Pococke, who quotes it from Kimchi's Grammar, f. 266. I, Ven. 8vo.  
\*\*\*\* Quoted from Pussey, (Cf. Driver's work mentioned above, pg. lfi) who quotes from Ewald, Lehrb. Paragraph 247, pg. 625 ed. 8.

Answer: That 133 may refer to a collective is not to be denied. But it is plainly evident from the context that here it refers to an individual and not to a collective.

Pussey points this out in a most striking manner. He says:\*

The subject of this section is spoken of in the singular, sixty times in verbs and pronouns (and three times in this very verse), it is to be spoken of once in this one verse in the plural; and that 'the kings,' alleged to be speaking in the plural 'we,' 'our,' fourteen times previously, should in this one verse speak in the singular, 'my people', i.e., the people of each of them. This double anomaly is to take place in four words, without any indication in the context. Those who were before spoken of in the singular are to be spoken of in the plural, and those spoken of in the plural are to be spoken of in the singular.

The testimony of the context speaks against taking this 133 in the sense of a collective. It is altogether natural and in accordance with good grammar to refer it to an individual. And in this sense it well refers to Christ the Messiah.

3. The third argument hinges upon the word "death", 4' 573. Jewish critics hold that the word should be rendered "deaths", plural. Thus the subject of the prophecy is not one but many. Lipmann uses this argumentation: \*\* "Observe, he does not say 'death,' but 'deaths'; yet a single man cannot die more than once."

Answer: This argument is a very weak one. Let us take a similar plural, 4' 17. This word is not translated "lives", but "life", singular. There are many words which

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\* Cf. the introduction to Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg. liii. liv.

\*\* Cf. Drivers work mentioned above, pg. 149.



the Hebrew uses in the plural, but which have a singular meaning. Why the language is thus constructed we do not know. Every language has its own peculiarities. The plural is used of a condition, as a period of life, or of a condition of the body. Compare these words: אֵלֶּיךָ, age; אֵלֶּיךָ, youth; אֵלֶּיךָ, maidenhood; אֵלֶּיךָ, bridehood, Jer. 2, 2; אֵלֶּיךָ embalming, Gen. 50, 3; אֵלֶּיךָ, blindness. \* There is absolutely no reason why אֵלֶּיךָ cannot mean 'state of death' just as אֵלֶּיךָ means 'state of life'. Besides, this agrees much better with the meaning of אֵלֶּיךָ, "in, at".

Besides all this we have the testimony of the early interpreters, who render it as singular. The Septuagint says, "And I will give the wicked for his grave and the rich for his death." Jonathan renders it, "the death of utter destruction". \*\* Saadyah says, "his death"\*\*\*. Yepheth b. Ali says, "How the Messiah will resign himself to die"\*\*\*\*. Joseph b. Nathan says, "in his death"\*\*\*\*\*.

With all this positive evidence the argument of the later Jewish critics does not stand.

4. We now take up the fourth weighty argument advanced by most of the Jewish critics. It has to do with the word

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\* Pussey quotes these examples from Ewald, *Lehrb.* Parag. 153 a. Cf. Driver's work mentioned in ( ), pg. lv, introduction.

\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah," pg. 6.

\*\*\* Cf. Driver's work, pg. 18.

\*\*\*\* Cf. Driver's work, pg. 27.

\*\*\*\*\* Cf. Driver's work, pg. 73.

rendered "seed", v77. They hold that this word is never used metaphorically, but always of the physical descendants of a person. But Christ never had any physical descendants, so He could not have been meant. If the disciples of His had been meant, it should have been written "sons", for the word "seed" is not used in this way. Abarbanel says: \*

'He shall see seed, shall lengthen days.' Yet, according to what is related of his life, Jesus died in youth, and had neither son nor daughter. Or, if 'seed' be explained of those who followed his doctrine, then such as these are never in the whole of Scripture so named.

Answer: The text does not say "his seed" but "a seed". This thought then corresponds with that given in Ps. 22, 27: "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee"; and with that given in Ps. 22, 30. 31: "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this." So, the "seed" refers to the spiritual Kingdom of Christ. And in this way the earliest Jewish interpreters understood "seed", namely as "a seed". Thus Yepheth b. Ali \*\* says: "I will pay him his reward and he shall see seed."

Concerning the objection that "seed" must necessarily mean "physical offspring," we must critically say that this is little short of an absurdity. If disciples, we are not

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\* Cf. Driver's work, pg. 161.

\*\* Cf. Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah," pg. 28.

sons, can be called sons, then likewise, not being physical seed, they may yet also be called seed. That "seed" does not necessarily mean "physical seed" is seen from the passage in Gen. 3, 15. The seed of the serpent is there mentioned. The meaning here is that the seed of the serpent is the devil whom the seed of the woman, namely Christ, crushed by His resurrection and death.

Thus we have seen that the four great arguments of the Jews when closely scrutinized fall to the ground, giving way to truth. And perhaps one of the most striking things which speak against all anti-Messianic interpretations is the fact that there are so many various interpretations. Those who do not refer the passage to Christ are unable to agree among themselves who it should be. They cast about in the sea of doubt, as a ship deprived of its rudder, till they catch on some rocky precipice. And clinging to it they are finally dashed to pieces, for it is a dangerous rock upon which they have rested. Those who do not find Christ in this prophecy in truth reject His Truthfulness.

## II. OTHER CRITICISM

But the Jews are not alone in advancing arguments against the Messianic interpretation of Isaiah chapter fifty-three. Men from Christian circles have also come to front attacking this prophecy. In the next pages we shall consider three arguments advanced by them, which must be refuted.

1. It is asserted very emphatically that the Messiah is nowhere else designated as the "Servant of God." \* Answer:

This is a very bold statement, and cannot be substantiated. In fact, there are several instances where "the Servant of the Lord" is especially and distinctly mentioned as the Messiah. For instance, in Zechariah 3, 8 we read: "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH." Christ is the נְצִיץ, the Branch. Most interpreters are unanimous in referring this expression to Him. Hengstenberg shows that also the Chaldee Paraphrast explains this נְצִיץ by מְסִיחַ מְלִיכָא, "Messiam et revelabiter".\*\*

Again in Ezekiel 34, 23, 24 we read, "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even my servant David, He shall feed them, and He shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be His God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it." The shepherd to whom the Lord refers as the "Servant" is none other than the Christ the Messiah.

Again, in Isaiah 42, 1 we find these words: "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." It is generally admitted that the Servant of the Lord" here describes Christ the Messiah. The New Testament substantiates the claim that the "Servant" here referred to is the Messiah. In Matt. 3, 17 at the baptism of Christ, the words, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him", refer to Is. 42, 1. Again, Matt. 12, 17-21

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\* Cf. Hendwerk.

\*\* Cf. Hengstenberg's Christology, Vol. II, Pg. 327.

quotes 42, 1-3, and refers these words to Christ, "And charged them that they should not make Him known", that the words in Isaiah 42, 1-3 may be fulfilled.

Again, in Isaiah 49, 3 we find that Christ is referred to as the "Servant of the Lord": "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." Isaiah 49, 6 makes the same claim: "It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel." That this latter passage refers to Christ is shown from Luke 2, 31.31, where Simeon designates Christ as the σωτηριον of God, which He had prepared before the face of all people. This refers to the words in 49, 6: "That thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." And again Simeon describes Christ as "the light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of my people Israel", Directly referring to the words in 49, 6: "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles." Again, Acts 13, 46. 47 shows that 49, 6 refers to Christ, and therefore that the "Servant of the Lord" is Christ. The passage reads, "I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."

On the basis of this evidence, the contention of the critics that the Messiah is nowhere designated as the "Servant of God" is false and contrary to fact.

2. A second argument is advanced by certain critics, among them Gesenius, which states that everything spoken of in this chapter is represented as past, and must refer to some action before the time of the writing of this chapter.

These critics hold that it is not admissable both for grammatical and philological reasons to interpret everything here spoken of as future. Rather, the suffering, death, etc., of the "Servant" are here represented as past, since in Is. 53, 1-10 all the verbs are in the preterite. Only the glorification appears in the future, and is expressed in the future tense.

Answer: This argument is rather an important one and must be given careful consideration. In the first place, it is not true that all verbs in this section are in the past. In some places the prophet uses the future even when referring to the sufferings. For instance, in verse 7 we find וְיִשְׁמַח; in verse 10 we find וְיִשְׁמַח; in verse 12 we find וְיִשְׁמַח. In the second place, Isaiah sometimes speaks of the glorification in the preterite, and not always in the future, as the critics contend. For instance in verse 8 we find וְיִשְׁמַח; in vers 12, וְיִשְׁמַח. In the third place, it is a fact that the ancient translators sometimes rendered these preterites as futures and not as past. Thus in the Septuagint we find in verse 14: ἐκστίνονται - ἰδοὺ ἵσκει.\* Accordingly, therefore, we find that the arguments of the critics fall when scrutinized very closely. We find, then, that the prophecy is of Christ. Isaiah, in vision, is placed in the midst of the scenes which he describes. He looks on the sufferings of the "Servant". He describes His humiliation, suffering, agony, death as if they were then occurring. Though, therefore, the events which he describes

were to occur several hundred years afterwards, yet they are portrayed, as his other prophecies are, as passing before his eyes, and as events which he was permitted in vision to see.

3. A third argument advanced by the critics is this. It is asserted that the idea of a suffering Messiah is foreign to the Old Testament and stands in contradiction even to its prevailing views of the Messiah. We note that this is not a new contention, for the Jews already advanced the same argument.\*\* The basis for this view is that it rests upon the expectation of Messiah, who is not to suffer, but who is to be glorious, who is to come in glory, rule in glory, and lead his people to glory. "offerings are to be foreign to the Messiah.

Answer: In answer to the above declaration, it must be said that it is a statement which absolutely lacks proof and which can easily be disproven. Christ Himself declared that His whole suffering had been foretold in the Old Testament. In Luke 22, 37 we hear the words of Christ; "For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned with the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end." And again in Mark 9, 13 Christ said: "Elias verily cometh first, and restoreth all things; and how is it written of the Son of man, that he must suffer many things, and be set at naught."

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\* Hengstengerg treats this argument in his Christology, Vol. II, pg. 327-328.

\*\* Cf. Lipmann, Driver's and Neubauer's, "The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah", pg. 148.

Clearer testimony could not be given, than the words of Christ Himself.

Moreover, when Christ finally appeared, the more enlightened of the Jews expected a suffering Messiah. John the Baptist thus spoke of Christ, for he said, "Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." Old Simeon realized that this Messiah had to suffer, for he said, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against. Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed," (Luke 2, 34.35). The idea of a suffering and dying Messiah was not foreign, for else these men, such as Simeon, would not have known that this child had to suffer.

It is true that every single Messianic prophecy does not show Christ's complete work. The prophet Isaiah is one of the few who in his various prophecies presents a complete picture of the life and work of the Lord. But we meet with various phases of the Messiah's work in various passages. In the following passages we meet with the suffering and dying Messiah; and these show that such a Messiah was spoken of in the Old Testament. In Isaiah, chapters 49 and 50, in Daniel 9, in Zechariah 9, 9,10, in Zechariah 11, 12, 13: "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was priced at of them. And took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast



them to the potter in the house of the Lord." The lowly birth of the Messiah is spoken of in Micah 5, 1.2: "Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us; they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." In view of this evidence the above contention, that the idea of a suffering and expiating Messiah is foreign to the Old Testament, cannot be held.

### III. FOUR NON-MESSIANIC INTERPRETATIONS

It stands to reason that those who object to the Messianic interpretation will find another subject, other than the Messiah, for the prophecy. However, they cannot agree on the subject. The suggestions are varied and numerous. But only four explanations are worthy of consideration, first, the one which makes the whole Jewish people the subject; second, that which refers it to the godly portion of the Jewish people; third, that which refers it to the collective body of the prophets; and fourth, that which refers it to some individual other than the Messiah Himself. The following points may be advanced simultaneously against all four interpretations.

In the first place, as Hengstenberg points out, \* they

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\* Cf. Hengstenberg, Christology, Vol. II. pg. 334.

destroy the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible. According to these interpretations the contents of Isaiah 53 is not truth, but mere fancy. Says Hengstenberg,

If these interpretations be true, then the prophets are no longer godly men moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1, 21). Then their name Y<sup>h</sup> 27, by which they claimed divine inspiration, is a pretence. The Lord himself, who treats Isaiah 53 as speaking of Him, is made a liar and a cheat.

In the second place, Hengstenberg points out \* that "if one of the four above interpretations be correct, then the subject is not a real person, but an ideal one, a personified collective." However, it is impossible to hold this ideal subject through the entire prophecy. In several instances in chapter fifty-three a single individual is required. For instance, in verse 3 the subject is called Y<sup>h</sup> 27; in verses 10 and 12 the subject has a soul; the grave and the death which are mentioned in the singular require a singular subject. Moreover, if we compare this passage with those where the expression "Servant of the Lord" is referred to a collective body, to Israel, we notice a distinct difference. In the following passages the expression refers to Israel: Is. 41, 8.9; 44, 1.2.21; 45, 4; 48, 20.21; 42, 24.25; 43, 10 - 14. In these passages there can be no doubt that the reference is to collective Israel, for the names Jacob and Israel are added. Besides this, the prophet uses the plural beside the singular, to show that the "Servant of the Lord"

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\* Cf. Hengstenberg, Christology, Vol. II. pg. 335.

is an ideal person, a collective. But in the prophecy before us, Isaiah 53, the singular term is used so often, and conditions applicable only to an individual are used so often, that it is impossible to refer the passage to any other than the Messiah.

And in the third place, Hengstenberg points out a very strong argument against all of the four above interpretations.\* He shows that the absolute sinlessness and righteousness of the "Servant" was essential. And this is true. In 53, 9 we read, "Because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth;" and in verse 11 we read, "He, the righteous one, my servant, shall justify many." Yes, he had to be holy, sinless, free from deceit and guile. Now, place any of the four interpretations under the light of this condition, and they fall. How can any one say that the Jewish people as a whole were free from sin, when we know that they continually murmured against God, yes, even went so far as to build for themselves a golden calf? They murmured under the yoke of Egyptian bondage. They murmured when they were freed, complained that they had to undergo so many hardships. They longed after the fleshpots of Egypt. They complained when God fed them with manna from heaven. They refused to hear God. Again and again they had to be punished. Such a murmuring people could not be free from sin. Such a complaining nation could not be holy, for else they would have done what God had commanded them.

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\* Cf. Hengstenberg, Christology, Vol. II. pg. 336.

How can any hold that the better portion of the Jewish people were free from sin, for all men are under the law? How could the prophets be the subject, when they too sinned, as we read in their confessions. And finally, how could any individual be the "Servant" of the Lord, for all men are born in sin, are dead by nature? And if someone will say that men are free from sin, then let him read any of the passages of Holy Scripture, where the sinfulness of mankind is taught as being universal, e.g., Gen. 2; Gen. 3; Gen. 6, 5: 8, 21; Job 14, 4; 15, 14-16; Ps. 14; 51, 7; Prov. 20, 9.

On the basis of these passages it is very clear that man is sinful and evil. How then can man be a substitute for his brother, since he is guilty of sins, as is the brother? The doctrine of the substitution by men is foreign both to the Old and to the New Testaments. This seems a truth so self-evident that no one would debate it. But lo, we find men trying to prove that the idea of the substitution of man was very general in Scripture. Gesenius is one of these critics, who holds this position. He argues that the guilt of the fathers is visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation, and this he calls substitution. \* Gesenius \*\* quotes 2 Sam. 21, 1-14, and states that it seems that the family of Saul is punished for his deeds of sin. This again, he holds is substitution. However, this is not substitution. Hengstenberg explains this:

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\* Cf. Gesenius, Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. II, pg. 189. Compare also Gesenius - "The Authenticity of the Pentateuch," Vol. II, pg. 446 ff.

\*\* Cf. Gesenius, Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. II, pg. 189.

The evil spirit which filled Saul, pervaded his family at the same time. It was probably in the interest of his family, and with their concurrence, that the wicked deed had been perpetrated. As Saul himself was already overtaken by the divine judgment, the crime was punished in the family, who were accomplices. \*

And this indeed seems to be a very proper and correct interpretation. Certainly the idea of Gesenius, that this is substitution on the part of the family for Saul, is not correct, for the Bible then would be contradicting itself.

Gesenius again refers to 2 Sam. 24. There we read how the people are punished, seemingly for the sins of David, their king. Gesenius has also seized upon this text to prove his contention that substitution on the part of man was not foreign to the Old Testament. \*\* Again Hengstenberg \*\*\* explains this very well when he says:

The people do not suffer as substitutes for the sin, which David had committed in numbering the people; but the spirit of pride which had incited the king to number the people, was widely spread among them.

Thus the difficulty in this passage is explained away.

Gesenius\*\*\*\* likewise refers to 2 Sam. 12, 15-16, where it seems that the child of David and Bathseba is punished for the sin of its parents. However, the fact that the child died, does not mean that it died for the sins of its parents, and was thus a substitute. Hengstenberg says:\*\*\*\*\*

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\* Cf. Hengstenberg, Christology, Vol. II. pg. 336.  
\*\* Cf. Gesenius, Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. II, pg. 189.  
Compare also Gesenius - "The Authenticity of the Pentateuch," Vol. II. pg. 446 ff.  
\*\*\* Cf. Hengstenberg, Christology, Vol. II. pg. 336.  
\*\*\*\* Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. II, Pg. 189.  
\*\*\*\*\* Christology, Vol. II, pg. 336.



In the fourth place, we ask this question. Which of those suggested by the four interpretations could really fulfill the details of this prophecy? Which of those, either the group of Jews, prophets, or some individual, was ever cut off from the land of the living, died, and then saw his seed again and prolonged his days? Which of these can say, 'I have done all these things.'\*

There is no one to whom this prophecy can refer, must be the conclusion of him who openly hears the counter-arguments thus far presented.

#### IV. THE INTERPRETATION WHICH MAKES THE JEWISH PEOPLE THE SUBJECT OF THE PROPHECY

For the benefit of completeness we shall now list the individual interpretations, studying the various phases of each, and rejecting them on the basis of impossibilities. The first interpretation, one which, as stated in chapter three, was already advanced by the Jewish critics, is that which makes the Jewish people as a whole the subject of the prophecy. How is this interpretation fit into the prophecy? Beecher explains this very well:

It is Israel, whom Yahweh chose, separated from the peoples, led through a cover of mingled suffering and victory, set for a light to the nations, and made to be, in very important senses, the world's redeemer. It is Israel whose mission of good to mankind has so largely resulted from his sufferings, from his being scattered among the people, and subjected to undeserved contempt and ill treatment.

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\* Cf. Cook, F.C., in his 'Holy Bible with Commentary, Vol. V. 271, II. 2. (c) presents the same argument.

\*\* Explained by Willis J. Beecher in "The Prophets and the Promise", pg. 285.

Among those who refer the "Servant of the Lord" to the whole Jewish people we find the following:

Gesenius, who says, that the fact that the New Testament applies this passage to Christ, does not prove that it is fulfilled in Christ. Reason: it was the custom at that time of the New Testament to refer to these prophecies and use them disregarding their local sense("Localsinnes"). Besides, Isaiah fifty-three is never used in the New Testament as a vicarious atoning. \* Gesenius here makes statements which cannot be proven and are also false. But he then continues, and gives his opinion as to who the subject of the prophecy is. He says that the interpretation which makes the Jewish people the subject of the prophecy has also been suggested, and that to him it appears that this one is the most logical.\*\* Others who hold that the entire Jewish people is the subject of the prophecy are Rosenmueller \*\*\*, Hitzig \*\*\*\*, Koester \*\*\*\*\* , Schuster \*\*\*\*\*, Telge \*\*\*\*\*, Doederlein.\*\*\*\*\* , Stephani \*\*\*\*\*, Eichhorn \*\*\*\*\*. The interpretation of these men is practically the same as that of the Jews, with but one slight difference. The Jews considered the sufferings as a reference to their then existing exile, while these men con-

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\* Cf. Gesenius, Commentar ueber Jesiah. Vol. II. pg. 162.163.

\*\* Gesenius, Commentar ueber Jesaiah, Vol. II. pg. 163.

\*\*\* In the second edition of his commentary.

\*\*\*\* Handwerk.

\*\*\*\*\* De Servo Jehovah apud Jesaiah. Kil. 1838.

\*\*\*\*\* Jesaiae Oratio Prophetica cap. 52,13 - 53,12.Gott.1794.

\*\*\*\*\* Meletemata Ad Carmen Fatidicum Jes. 52, 13 - 53,12.

\*\*\*\*\* In the preface and annotations, in the third edition of Issaiah.

\*\*\*\*\* "Gedanken ueber die Entstehung u. Ausbildung der Idee von einem Messias," Nuernberg, 1797.



sider these sufferings as referring to the Babylonian exile. Otherwise their interpretations agree. In verses one to ten the Gentiles are supposed to be speaking. These Gentiles confess that they have had a wrong conception of the Jews. They imagined that the Jewish nation was suffering for its own sins, but now they (the Gentiles) confess that it is their sins which cause the Jews all this suffering. Thus according to this the Jews suffer for the sins of the Gentiles as substitutes. \* George F. Moore \*\* has the following to say concerning this interpretation:

There are afflictions for which self-examination discovers no explanation either in the way of transgression or of negligence. For such a special category was made, "chastisements of love," 'Whom the Lord loveth he correcteth' (Prov. 3, 12). Every one "in whom the Holy God takes pleasure, he crushes with sufferings, as it is said, 'The Lord took pleasure (in him); he crushed him, made him ill'" (Isa. 53, 10). Such evidences of God's peculiar love must be accepted in corresponding love: 'If thou makest his life a sacrifice of restitution.' As a restitution-sacrifice is made with consciousness (of the reason), so chastisements (are to be received) with a consciousness (of the reason, so. God's love). Then only do they have the consequences promised in the second half of the verse, 'He shall see his posterity and prolong his days; and the purpose of the Lord shall succeed through his instrumentality' (Isa. 53, 10b).

Again he says: \*\*\*

The Jews to whom there was only one Book of Isaiah - no Deutero-and Trito-and to whom all prophecy was a

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\*\*\*\*\* In his exposition of the Prophets.

\* Cf. Hengstenberg's explanation of this in his Christology, Vol. II. pg. 322.

\*\* Cf. George Foot Moore, "Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era," Vol. II. pg. 256.

\*\*\* Cf. pg. 327.

unitary and consistent revelation of God, had no inkling of all this, and interpreted the latter part of the Book of Isaiah in accordance with the former. Thus Isa. 42, 1, 'Behold my servant the Anointed (Messiah), I will draw him near, my Chosen in whom my word delights; I will put my holy spirit upon him, and he shall reveal my judgment to the nations.'

But this interpretation is presumption, and therefore cannot stand. \* And now we shall attack this view from the various angles which present themselves.

In the first place we note that the parallel passages do not admit this interpretation. Beck remarks: \*\*

Even so far back as chapter 42, 1, difficulties are met with. How is it possible that the people who, in verse 19 of that chapter, are described as blind and deaf, should here appear as being altogether penetrated by the Spirit, so as to become the teachers of the Gentiles? Chapter 49 is a true cross for the interpreters. Finally, the section, chapter 1, Hitzig himself is obliged to explain as referring to the Prophet; and thus this interpretation forfeits the boast of most strictly holding fast the unity of this notion.

In the second place, the contents of Isaiah fifty-three itself overthrows the notion that the subject is the Jewish people as a whole. Hengstenberg notes the mention of four things in the chapter which are very important, namely, "First, the Servant voluntarily takes upon Himself his suffering; comp. vv.10-12; secondly, he, who himself is sinless, bears the sin of others (compare verses 4 to 6); thirdly, by means of this his suffering, the justification of many is effected (compare verse 5); and fourthly he suffers quietly

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\* Gesenius holds this view, Cf. Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. II. pg. 165.

\*\* Quoted from Hengstenberg, Christology, Vol. II. pg. 336.337.

and patiently (compare verse 7)." But we shall note that not even one of these four signs will fit the Jewish people as such.

The "Servant of the Lord" had to suffer voluntarily, for we read: "He hath poured out his soul unto death." When did the Jews ever suffer voluntarily? Critics say that this suffering of the Jews refers to their exile to Babylon. If this is true, then our case is still stronger, for if the Jews ever opened their mouths, it was in bitter complaint against the heavy yoke which was being placed upon them. They certainly did not bear their captivity voluntarily.

The "Servant of the Lord" had to be sinless. Can this be said of the Jewish people? If one reads the Old Testament his answer will be an emphatic 'No'. Their captivity came upon them because of their sins. Moses and the Prophets had warned them, that because of their sins they would have to suffer grievous captivity. Cf. Lev. 26, 14 ff: "But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments..... I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you." \* Isaiah himself reminds the people that because of their sins they shall be punished. He says, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your finger with iniquity; your lips

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\* Compare also the following passages: Deut. 28, 15 ff; 29, 19 ff.

have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. \*

And again he says: \*\*

Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their going: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.

And again he says: \*\*\*

In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.

And again he stresses the sin of Israel: \*\*\*\*

Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord, He against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in His ways, neither were they obedient unto His law.

Again we find this mention of the sinfulness of the people:\*\*\*\*\*

Put me in remembrance: let us plead together; declare thou, that thou mayest be justified. Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers have transgressed against me.

Again God tells Israel that it is purely because of His grace and mercy that He is redeeming them from the punishment which they fell into because of their sins: \*\*\*\*\*

For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how shall my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

How then can these same Jews, of whom the Bible speaks as being full of sin, "polluted", be the "Servant of the Lord",

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\* Is. 59, 2.3.

\*\* Is. 59, 7.8.

\*\*\* Is. 59, 13.

\*\*\*\* Is. 42, 24.

\*\*\*\*\* Is. 43, 26.27.

\*\*\*\*\* Is. 48, 11.

who must be sinless?

But in the face of all this testimony some still hold that the Jewish people are the subject of the prophecy \*. Hitzig builds up a sort of "treasury of merits". The Jews suffered for their sins, it is true, he says. But so great was their punishment, that it far exceeded their sins, so that a surplus was built up, by which the Gentiles were benefited. But this view of Hitzig is likewise contrary to Scriptures, for the prophet Isaiah shows that the punishment laid upon them because of their sins was "tempered with mercy", and was not the due reward of their sins. He says:

For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. \*\* Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.\*\*\*

So, according to the above testimony it is clear that the Jewish people could not have been the subject of the prophecy, for the Jews were sinners and the subject must be sinless.

We note furthermore that the "Servant of Jehovah" was to justify many by his vicarious satisfaction. Could the Jewish people do this? In order for suffering to be vicarious absolute sinlessness and righteousness must exist in the subject. But the Jews were sinners. How then could their sufferings justify any, since, as sinners, their sufferings could

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\* Hitzig.

\*\* Is. 48, 9.

\*\*\* Is. 1, 9.

not even justify themselves? \*

And finally, the "Servant of the Lord" was to bear his suffering with patience. How little can the Jewish people fit into this picture! They, above all other things, did not have the quality of patience. In fact, it was one of the main tasks of the prophets to oppose their continual murmurings.

Isaiah himself chides them because of this: \*\*

Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it? What makest thou or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What has thou brought forth?

Can these people be the subject of this prophecy, they who murmured that the Lord had released them from the bondage in Egypt, they who complained against Him when He sent manna from heaven? It is hardly possible.

A third argument against the interpretation that the Jewish people is the subject of the prophecy is given by Hengstenberg: \*\*\*

Against the hypothesis that the people are the subject of the prophecy, there is the circumstance that it carries along with it the unnatural supposition that, in chapter 53, 1-10, the heathen are introduced as speaking.

Giesebrecht holds this view, that the heathen are the speakers. His reasons are these: first, "It is the heathen who are spoken of in 52, 13-15, and a change to Israel would

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\* Compare Lange's Bibelwerk, Jesaja, S. 605, where the same contention is brought forth.

\*\* Is. 45, 9 f. Cf. Lange's Bibelwerk, Jesaja, S. 605.

\*\*\* Cf. Christology, Vol. II. pg. 339.

be too sudden." \* Smith answers: "The heathen are not spoken of in this section; it still would not be too sudden of a change to switch to Israel here, for Isaiah abounds in abrupt transitions."

Giesebrecht's second reason is that:

The words in 53, 1 suit the heathen. They have already received the news of the exaltation of the Servant, which in 52, 15 was promised them. This is the לְכֹל אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעוּ, i.e., news we have just heard. לְכֹל אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעוּ is a pluperfect of the subjunctive mood: Who could or who would have believed this news we have just heard, and the arm of Jehovah to whom was it revealed!, i.e., it was revealed to nobody.

Giesebrecht cannot hold this point, for לְכֹל אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעוּ is not a pluperfect subjunctive, but is a simple perfect. Besides, the "Servant" was not yet exalted.

Giesebrecht's third point is this. He alters the reading of verse 8 from כִּפּוּרֵי אֲשֶׁר עָלְמוּ עַל עַמִּי, "for the transgression of my people was the stroke to him" to כִּפּוּרֵי אֲשֶׁר עָלְמוּ עָלָיו, "for their stroke was he smitten". But, we answer, that this just shows the impossibility of taking the heathen as speaking here. Note that the speakers own that the "Servant" bears their sins. It is then said in the text that the "Servant" was stricken for the sins of "my people". Ergo, the speakers must be the same as "my people" and cannot be the heathen. Knobel\*\* adds this point to the argument, saying that it would be against Jewish national pride that the Jew should atone for the sins of the heathen.

\* Geo. A. Smith quotes from Giesebrecht, "Beitraege zur Jesaja Kritik", 1890, pg. 146 ff; The quotation in Smith: "The Book of Isaiah", Vol. II. pg. 349.

\*\* August Knobel, "Der Prophet Jesaja," S. 362.

In final argument against the interpretation which takes the "Servant of the Lord" as a reference to the people of Israel, we look at the passages, Zech. 3, 8 - 10 and Jer. 23, 5 - 8. The prophet Zechariah apparently identifies the Branch, a familiar designation of the Messiah, with the Servant, whereby the iniquity of the land is taken away. It is the Messiah who bears the sins of the people and not the people themselves who bear their own sins. We must agree with John Davis, who says that "the description of the suffering servant of chapter 53 actually finds its counterpart in Christ." \*

V. THE INTERPRETATION WHICH MAKES THE GODLY  
PORTION OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE THE  
SUBJECT OF THE PROPHECY

Another interpretation refers the "Servant of Jehovah" to the pious portion of Israel. One of the chief advocates of this interpretation is Paulus \*\*. Ammon \*\*\* likewise defends it. This view is built up on this idea, that the pious Israelites suffered for the sins of the wicked of their nation. The pious portion remained true to their Jehovah, while the ungodly forsook the faith of their fathers. Exile came upon the ungodly, but also upon the godly, for they were bearing the sins of the former. When therefore the ungodly saw that their pious brethren were being punished as they, they drew the inference that the faith of the godly had been in vain. But then when the captivity came to an end, the ungodly saw

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\* Davis, "A Dictionary of the Bible", pg. 697 f.

\*\* Cf. Memorabilien, Bd. 3, S. 175-192.

\*\*\* Christologie, S. 108 ff.



their error. They realized then that the hope of the godly portion had not been in vain, but that it was well founded. They then realized that they, the ungodly, were the cause for the punishment and exile of the godly. And humbly they then acknowledged their fault and repented of their sins. \* Others who support this view are von Coelln \*\*, Thenius \*\*\*, Maurer and Knobel. The latter critic says, "Ganz unhaltbar ist die messianische Auslegung." He holds that the idea of a suffering and an atoning Messiah is foreign to the Old Testament and stands in contradiction to the idea of His rule and power. Knobel then continues:

The writer of Isaiah is dealing with the ungodly portion of the Jews and is directing his words against them. His words grow sharper and more bitter, as he continues. Now, these people are not the "Servant of Jehovah". However, the greater part of the Jews did not belong to this ungodly class. The greater part, the godly, still clung to the worship of Jehovah. But this godly portion is divided into two groups, those who continue in the Jewish religion as mere formalists, and those who are sincere. \*\*\*\*

He then asserts that in this instance the sincere portion constituted the "Servant of Jehovah".

In the first place, those who are righteous, those who through faith have put on the cloak of righteousness and holiness, cannot render a vicarious satisfaction for others. These same individuals, who are now righteous, have come to their new estate through conversion, for they were according

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\* Compare Hengstenberg's description of this theory, found in his Christology, Vol. II, pg. 323.

\*\* Biblische Theologie.

\*\*\* Wiener's Zeitschrift, II.1.

\*\*\*\* Der Prophet Jesaiah, S. 366 - 369.

to their former state begotten of sinful seed, as we read in the Psalm, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." \* Even in this new state of righteousness there is no total escape from sin. Those who dwell in this holiness sin daily, and must daily come to the mercy seat of God in prayer asking for forgiveness. Compare the words of the Psalmist: \*\* "Keep back they servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression." These who have thus been made righteous cannot make others righteous, for outside of the fact that the Bible says, that "none of them can by any means redeem his brother nor give to God a ransom for them, for the redemption of their souls is precious and it ceaseth forever," they simply live by the pardoning grace of God. They sin, but God forgives. These pious Jews, we note, likewise had to enter into the captivity. But this was just punishment for their sins, for they too daily sinned much. Besides this, Hengstenberg points out the following: \*\*\* "How little an absolute righteousness existed in the elect, sufficiently appears from the fact, that, in the second part, it forms a main object of the prophet to oppose their want of courage, their despair and distrust of God." In short, how could these righteous ones offer themselves as a vicarious satisfaction, when they themselves were sinners?

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\* Psalm 51, 5.

\*\* Ps. 19, 13.

\*\*\* Cf. Christology, Vol. II, pg. 339.

We attack this interpretation on historical grounds. It is claimed that the godly suffered more than the ungodly. There is, however, no historical basis for this assertion, and furthermore, this assertion cannot be proven, for it is false. This being the case, that both the godly and the ungodly suffered in like degree it is very unlikely that the ungodly would look upon the sufferings of the righteous as vicarious. The facts of the case speak against this supposition, and moreover, it is against Jewish pride to do this.

And finally, such a division between the godly and the ungodly is simply a fabrication, a myth, for the text knows nothing of it. The text does not place one portion, the godly, over against another portion, the ungodly. We defy anyone to demonstrate this too. The text places the entire people, without making any distinction between them, and the "Servant" into one picture. Isaiah looks upon all Israel as ungodly, as having sinned. We see this from verse six, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Various arguments which were used against the interpretation given in the preceding section also apply here. And considering the evidence, there can be no doubt that the better portion of the Jewish people, in spite of the righteousness, cannot fulfill what is expected of him who is to be the "Servant of Jehovah."

VI. THE INTERPRETATION WHICH MAKES THE COLLECTIVE  
BODY OF THE PROPHETS THE SUBJECT OF THIS PROPHECY

Another interpretation is the one which refers the subject to the collective body of prophets. Hengstenberg points out that this idea was first advanced by Rosenmueller \*. De Witte also took up this interpretation. \*\* Shenkel says: "The prophetic order was the quiet, hidden blossom, which early storms broke" \*\*\*. Umbreit likewise falls into this group, holding that the "Servant of the Lord" is the collective body of prophets here represented as a sacrificial beast taking upon itself the sins of the people. \*\*\*\* Hofmann is another of the critics who holds this view. Hengstenberg quotes his opinion from the "Schriftbeweis"\*\*\*\*\*.

The people as a people are called to be the "Servant of God"; but they do not fulfill their vocation as a congregation of the faithful; and it is, therefore, the work of the prophets to restore that congregation, and hence also the fulfillment of its vocation.

This interpretation in its very nature is forced. It appears that those critics who favor this view have been groping about in darkness unable to find firm ground on which to anchor this prophecy. Having rejected the Messianic interpretation they are blind. In their blindness they come upon this deceptive harbor, enter it, but find that it does not offer much shelter. The interpretation, to say the least, has very

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\* Cf. His treatise, "Leiden u. Hoffnungen der Propheten Jehovas", in Gabler's Neuestes theol. Journal, Vol. II. S. 4, pp. 333 f.

\*\* Hengstenberg refers to de morte Jes. Chr. expiatoria, p. 28 sqq.

\*\*\* Hengstenberg, Christology, Vol. II. pg. 324 quotes from "Studien u. Kritiken" 36.

\*\*\*\* Cf. Hengstenberg, Christology, Vol. II. pg. 324.

\*\*\*\*\* Vol. II. I. S. 89 ff.

little evidence. But we shall also view this attack against Christianity.

In the first place, the idea of substituting the prophetic order for the "Servant of Jehovah" is very strange, since there are no analagous cases in favor of such a personification of the prophetic order.

In the second place, a prophetic order cannot be spoken of at this time. Hengstenberg points out that prophetism was on the decline. Jeremiah himself, during the last days of the Jewish kingdom, stood alone against the mass of false prophets. And if we read the book, we receive the impression that these false prophets were very many in number. How could Isaiah then be speaking of a great corporation of prophets, when prophecy was on the decline?

In the third place, there is nothing in Isaiah 53 which is especially characteristic of prophets. On the contrary, almost everything that is said there is in direct opposition to the vocation and destiny of the prophets. The central thought of Isaiah 53 is vicarious satisfaction. But was that a part of the prophetic office? By no means. In fact Isaiah exclaims to the contrary: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of the people of unclean lips." \* The great question in our minds is this, 'How could there be in the mind of one expressing such humble feelings, an idea of vicarious satisfaction for others?' But someone might suggest that the prophets did

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\* Is. 6, 6.

suffer unusually, did undergo tortures of prison, judgment, and even death; and in this respect their office agrees with the stipulations laid down in Isaiah 53. In answer to this contention Lange \* says:

Granting all this, there is yet one thing that cannot be said of the prophets, namely, that God laid on them the transgressions of the people, that they through their wounds and stripes should heal the sin-sick world.

In the fourth place, such a hope on the part of the prophets is in direct contradiction to the reason why the prophetic order was instituted. The prophets were, by divine command, to speak to the people concerning the word of God, to bring His will to them. They were the preachers of the day. Their office, though not a humble one, yet would not lift them to heights of glory among men. But how does this compare with the requirements of the "Servant" in Isaiah 53? We read that he was to be very high, that he was to be exalted and extolled, that he was to have a portion with the great, and that he was to divide the spoil with the strong. Could the prophetic order realize these prophecies? It was against the very nature of the prophetic order that they should be exalted and celebrate great triumphs. It seems that when the critics advanced this interpretation, they forgot that the power and glory of the Jewish kingdom had been given to the house of David and not to the prophetic order.

There is a fifth argument which speaks against the prophetic order as the subject of the prophecy. We read in the

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\* Lange, Bibelwerk, Jesaja, S. 608.

chapter, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.....and he bare the sin of many." These two words stress the universal application of his redemption. It is to be for all, for both Jew and Gentiles; his message of salvation is to be carried to the ends of the earth. \* That was the official duty of the "Servant of the Lord." Now, compare the ministry of the prophetic order. To whom were they sent? They were sent primarily to the Jews. They were to deal with God's chosen people. Only in certain exceptional cases were they to go to the Gentiles and preach the revealed Word. The two cases differ. How then can the prophetic order be meant, when they were not to go to the heathen, that being, however, one of the duties of the "Servant."?

A sixth argument has been voiced by Cook, when he asks what collective body of prophets ever made their grave with the wicked, as did the "Servant of the Lord."? The idea in itself is absurd!

And finally, we ask the question, 'Were the prophets afflicted to any greater degree than were the people'? Chapter 53 shows that the "Servant" was to suffer more than anyone else; that he, though innocent was to be afflicted beyond the ordinary degree in which men are afflicted. The prophets were not afflicted over and beyond others. At times they were exalted, elevated to honorable positions. Jeremiah was offered an honorable position by Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel, for instance, became one of the rulers of the land. How then

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\* Cf. Is. 41, 9.

could they be despised of the people because of their sufferings? How could the people then later imagine that the sufferings of their prophets had a vicarious character? And history tells us that they did not. They rather heaped disgrace and scorn upon them, wagging their heads at them. Moreover, their sufferings could not be vicarious, because they too were natural men, born in sin and shapen in iniquity. To say that the prophetic order is the subject of the prophecy is a rank denial of Christianity and a blindness to the Truth.

VII. THE INTERPRETATION WHICH MAKES SOME INDIVIDUAL THE SUBJECT OF THE PROPHECY

And now we come to that interpretation which makes some individual, other than Christ, the subject of Isaiah fifty-three. This interpretation is not very popular, for it suggests too many individuals as possibilities. For instance, King Uzziah is suggested by Augusti.\* We note that King Hezekiah is suggested. He had already been advanced as a possibility by the Jews. This theory is here advanced by Konynenburg \*\* and Bahrdt \*\*\*. Staudlein \*\*\*\* says that it is the prophet Isaiah himself. Voltaire \*\*\*\*\* also held this view. Besides these suggestions, we have this one, that the subject of the prophecy is some unknown prophet supposed to have been killed by the Jews in captivity. Another inter-

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\* Augusti ueber den Koenig Usia, nebst einer Erlaeuterung von Jes. 53, in Henke's Magazin, III. S. 282.

\*\* "Untersuchung ueber die Natur der alttestamentl. Weisagungen vom Messias." A.d. Hollaend. Lingen 1795. S. 97 ff.

\*\*\* in der kleinen Bibel. S. 435. Allgem. deutsche Bibel LVII. S. 46. "Freymuethige Versuche ueber verschiedene in Theol. u. biblische Kritik ein. Materien." Berlin 1788. S. 136 ff.

\*\*\*\* in dessen Neuen Beitragen zur Erlaeuterung der bibl.



pretation refers it to the royal house of David, which suffered innocently when the children of the unhappy king Zedekiah were killed at the command of Nebuchadnezzar.

Hengstenberg \* quotes Schenkel, who says:

The chapter under consideration may, perhaps, belong to the period of the real Isaiah, whose language equals that of the description of the Servant of God now under consideration, in conciseness and harshness, and may have been originally a Psalm of consolation in sufferings, which was composed with a view to the hopeful progeny of some pious man or prophet innocently killed, and which was rewritten and interpreted by the author of the book, and embodied in it.

The high-handed methods of these interpreters are so noticeable as to be offensive. Such a theory is nothing short of revolting to the mind which accepts the integrity of Scripture.

Ewald says concerning the point at hand: \*\*

Further, the description of the "Servant of God" is here altogether very strange, especially verse 8 f., inasmuch as notwithstanding all the liveliness with which the author of the book conceives of him, he is nowhere else so much and so obviously viewed as an historical person, as a single individual of the past. How little soever the author may have intended it, it was very obvious that the later generations imagined that they would here find the historical Messiah. We are, therefore, of the opinion, that the author here inserted a passage, which appeared to him to be suitable, from an older book where really a single martyr was spoken of. - It is not unlikely that the modern controversy on chapter fifty-three will ever cease as long as this truth is not acknowledged; a truth which quite spontaneously suggested itself, and impressed itself more and more strongly upon my mind.

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Propheten. S. 12 ff. theol. Biblioth. B. I. st. 4.5.  
S. 320 ff. St. 6. S. 412 ff.

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Oeuvres XLVI. S. 267 der Zweibruecker Ausg.  
Hengstenberg in his Christology, Vol. II. pg. 325 -  
324 quotes from Ewald, Proph. II. S. 407.

We see the biased judgment, which is also unfair and untruthful, of this man. He theorizes and calls his deduction "truth". By what right, may we ask. He states a hypothesis which has germinated in his own rationalistic mind, and states, that unless we accept his opinion, his theory, the controversy will never end. What a unique procedure and demand!

A few strong arguments against this interpretation should be noted. It makes no difference to whom they refer the prophecy, be it Uzziah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Job, Hezekiah, Moses, or anyone else, the arguments refer to all.

In the first place, when the prophecy is referred to one of these men, or to any individual other than Christ, the entire chapter is torn out of its context, and this is not permissible. Gesenius points this out.\* Neither this chapter, nor any of the preceding, nor any of the following speak about any of the individuals mentioned. Why then lay aside all natural hermeneutical rules, and force an unnatural meaning into the text?

In the second place, the history of the individuals speak against the case. Many of them cannot be fitted into this prophecy by any method.

And in the third place, there are many passages which will not fit either of the prophets or kings or individuals suggested. For instance, verse 2 will not fit: "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we

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\* Commentary on Isaiah, Vol. II. pg. 170.

shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." Again verse 3 is out of place: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." Verse 6 especially will not fit: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Verse 7, being contrary to human nature, will not fit: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." And finally, verse ten is a strong passage against the interpretation, because it speaks of a vicarious satisfaction: "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

No, this interpretation will not fit, nor will any of the others which have been suggested. They are all contrary to Truth. All of them violate against the doctrine of vicarious satisfaction. None of them can be the correct one. There is only one person who will fit into this prophecy, only one who fills it in every detail, even the minutest, and this is the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, "who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell, the third day He arose from the dead;

He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father almighty." He is the only one upon whom we may bestow the honored title "Servant of Jehovah." He is truly the "Righteous Servant", sent by God to take away our sins, as Isaiah foretells in this his fifty-third chapter. And with all the evidence in favor of this Messianic interpretation, the internal testimony of the chapter itself, the testimony of the New Testament, the testimony of the Ancient Jewish tradition, the testimony of the Ancient Christian tradition, who can justly deny it?

## ERRATA

- Pg. 1, L. 13: For 'Efficacious' read 'efficacious'.  
Pg. 2, L. 2: Read: 'Thus reads one of the loftiest'..  
Pg. 6, The footnote on pg. 6 refers to pg. 7  
and vice versa.  
Pg. 8, The footnote, Read 'Isaiah'.  
Pg. 13, L. 2: For 'fulfullment' read 'fulfillment'.  
(L. 8 the same.)  
22: For 'uninterrupted' read 'uninterrupted'.  
Pg. 14, The blank space is not to be filled in.  
L. 24: For 'multiplied' read 'multiplied'.  
Pg. 25, Footnote, Read: Cf. Chapter one, p.17.  
Pg. 27, L 1: Read; 'Isaiah describes his patient  
submissiveness'.....  
15: Read 'complaint' instead of 'complain'.  
Pg. 32, L 13: Read: 'be an exception to this three-  
fold lot of man....  
19: Read 'separate' instead of 'seapart'.  
Pg. 41, Footnote, Read: Cf. Angus... The Cyclopedic  
Pg. 45, L 11: Read 'stronger' instead of 'stranger'.  
22: Read 'eunuch' instead of 'eunich'.  
(Also L. 25).  
Footnote, Read: Cf. Hengstenberg's....  
Pg. 52, L 1: Read: Angus and Green ....  
Footnote, Read: The Cyclopedic..  
Pg. 56, " L.4, Read: Neubauer's....  
Pg. 57, L 3: Read: 'In the Talmud it is said of the!'.  
Footnote, L1: Read: 'From the original  
in Raimund Martini...  
Pg. 58, L 5: Read 'unanimously' instead of 'Unam-  
inously'.  
Pg. 60, L 20: Read: 'no created being in the world'..  
Pg. 63, L 12: Read: 'souls' instead of 'sould'.  
Pg. 65, L 18: Read 'Abarbanel' instead of 'Aborbanel'.  
Pg. 66, L 10: Read: 'But this view of Yonathan has  
been objected to'.  
Pg. 67, L 14: Read 'Qamhi' instead of 'Qanhi'.  
Pg. 69, Footnote, L.5, Read: 'Isaiah' instead of  
'Issaiah'.  
Pg. 70, L 22: Read 'confesses' instead of 'confesses'.  
Pg. 72, L 10: Read: 'Another interpretation refers  
the subject of Isaiah'.....  
20: Read: 'Ibn' instead of 'Ibu'.  
21: Read: Y'hudah' instead of YShudah.  
Pg. 73, L 10: Read: 'Senacharib' for 'Sauherib'.  
14: Read 'Hezekiah' for 'Hesehiah'.  
Footnote, L.5, Read, 'Commentar' for  
'Commentor'.  
Pg. 76, L 15: Read 'Theodoret' for 'Theodore'.  
32: Read: Hereupon Clement....  
Pg. 84, L 3: Footnote; insert a \* into the parenthesis.  
" : Read: Driver's work...

ERRATA (continued)

- Pg. 89, L. 15: Read: the Gentiles and the glory  
of my people Israel, directly...
- Pg. 91, L. 1: Footnote, Read 'Hengstenberg' in-  
stead of 'Hengstenger'.
- Pg. 97, L. 23: Read 'Bathsheba' instead of 'Bath-  
seba'.
- Pg.100, L. 1: Footnote: Commentar ueber Jesajah..  
L. 9: " : of Isalah.
- Pg.111, L. 22: Read, 'given in the preceding section'.
- Pg.118, L. 23: Read: 'will not fit either of the  
prophets or kings or individuals.

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