

Foreword

Isaiah 53 contains the great prophecy concerning the Suffering Servant of God. As one reads this section of Scripture it appears that the prophet Isaiah is standing underneath the cross beholding Christ's great sacrifice. Here the substitutionary atonement of our Savior is clearly enunciated in the Old Testament: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5) The essay entitled *The Suffering Servant of Isaiah 52:13-53:12* is an excellent exegetical study of this section of Scripture. It's author is the Rev. Joseph Abrahamson of the Clearwater Parish in northern Minnesota.

The year 2004 marked the 475th anniversary of the printing of Luther's Large and Small Catechisms. Luther's Catechisms are among the most important handbooks of the Christian faith ever written. In his essay entitled *The Visitation Articles: Their History and Impact on Luther's Catechisms* the Rev. Tim Bartels shows the connection between the Visitation Articles and Luther's Catechisms. The Rev. Bartels is the pastor at Saved By Grace Lutheran Church, Gresham, Oregon.

In response to a congregation's memorial requesting reaffirmation of its position on the sanctity of marriage, the 2004 Synod Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod unanimously issued the following statement: "We confess that Scripture condemns homosexuality and extra-marital relations (fornication and adultery) as sin. Nevertheless, when an individual caught up in such sins truly repents, the forgiveness of the Gospel is to be fully applied. We confess that the divine institution of marriage is to be heterosexual, in which, according to God's design, a man and a woman may enjoy a life-long companionship in mutual love. We teach on the basis of Holy Scripture that marriage is the only proper context for the expression of sexual intimacy and for the procreation of children. See Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9, 18 and 7:2-9, John 4:17-18, 1 John 1:9, Genesis 1:27-28 and 2:18-24, and Matthew 19:4-6." The essay *Dealing with the Bombardment of the Homosexual Agenda* by the Rev. Robert A. Harting explains the Biblical position

on homosexuality. The Rev. Harting is the pastor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Indianola, Iowa.

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The Suffering Servant of Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Joseph Abrahamson

Introduction

ואנחנו חשבנוהו נגוע מוכה אלוהים ומעונה

The goals of this paper are:

- 1) To review and appreciate the text in its canonical setting and use.
- 2) To engender a greater love for and knowledge of the text and its message.
- 3) And to help the reader apply the text and its message to himself and others in our own contexts of life: liturgically, confessionally, personally, and as soul-care for the flocks of God.

† is used to show which texts are part of the regular reading cycle in the Historic Pericope as found in the ELH.

Reading Isaiah: The General Context

Isaiah lived 700 years before the birth of the Messiah. The book is a collection of prophecies—both sermonic and predictive. The arrangement of the utterances is important, for there are thematic arrangements within the text. These are especially noticeable when the text is read with an understanding of the proper distinction between the Law and the Gospel as it is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Servant In Isaiah: The Context of the Servant

Is the Servant always the same person? No, much of the debate concerning the meaning of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 centers around who the servant is. Blenkinsopp gives a 9 page bibliography of books and articles specifically addressing the interpretation of the Servant in Isaiah chapters 40 to 55 from a mostly historical-

critical perspective.¹ Explicitly anti-Christian interpretations² make an effort to point out that the servant is Israel by means of a very selective use of passages—for example, Shlomo Ishtov for the “The Messiah Truth Project, Inc. ... a non-profit organization established to combat the deceptive missionary techniques of evangelical Christian denominations and the Messianic movements”³ writes of Isaiah 53:

This is the only place in all of the Hebrew bible that a prophecy of a messiah who is to die for the sins of others is attempted. ...[M]essianic prophecies never appear alone, and are always spoken by more than one prophet, which makes this claim highly suspect. Indeed even if this is the case, the verses speak nothing of the requirement to believe in Jesus’ atonement in order to receive it. In fact, the Christian notion that Jesus died to save people from their sins is based solely on belief. There is no proof that this actually happened. This verse is so important as a “proof text” for the messiahship of Jesus, that Christian translators have been willing to change the original language to make it better fit their concept...⁴

There are three main contentions in this statement:

- 1) That Isaiah 53 is “the only place in all of the Hebrew bible that a prophecy of a messiah who is to die for the sins of others is attempted.”

In order to make this claim Mr. Ishtov must ignore many passages which both in the New Testament and in Rabbinic tradition are understood as referring to a Messiah who would die for the sins of others. Some of these passages are: Psalms 16:8-11, 22, 40, 109, Gen. 3:15, Isaiah 50:6-8

- 2) That “There is no proof” that Jesus actually died to save people from sin.

In order to make this claim Mr. Ishtov must dismiss the New Testament off hand as if it were fiction. This is simply stating that he does not believe what the New Testament says.

- 3) That “Christian translators have been willing to change the original language to make it better fit their concept.”

It is true that there are some Christians who have done this. But it is more common among non-Christians. The whole movement of Historical Criticism with all its hypothetical

sources for the Bible, its emendations of the Biblical text, and creation of hypothetical layers of redaction does not come from the orthodox Christian Church.

The passages Mr. Ishtov gives as proof that the Servant is the Nation of Israel in ch. 53 are these:

Isaiah 41:8-9 But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham, my friend; You whom I have called from its remotest parts, and said to you, you are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you.

Isaiah 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I shall uphold; My chosen one, whom My soul desired; I have placed My spirit upon him so he can bring forth justice to the nations.

Isaiah 43:10 You are my witnesses, declares Hashem, and my servant whom I have chosen: that you may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no god formed, neither shall there be after me.

Isaiah 44:1-2 But now listen, O Jacob my servant, and Israel whom I have chosen: Thus says Hashem, who made you, and formed you from the womb, who will help you, “Do not fear O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen.”

Isaiah 44:21 Remember these things O Jacob, and Israel, for you are My servant, I have formed you, you are My servant, O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me.

Isaiah 45:4 For the sake of Jacob my servant, and Israel, my chosen one, I have even called you by your name.

Isaiah 48:20 Go forth out of Babylon, flee from the Kasdim with a voice of singing declare, tell this, say it even to the ends of the earth; say “Hashem has redeemed His servant Jacob.”

Isaiah 49:3 And said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.”⁵

While it is true that עֶבֶר does often refer to Israel in the book of Isaiah, it does not always do so. In fact, Mr. Ishtov has included 42:1, which explicitly does not name Israel as the servant. This is an interesting inclusion, given his claim that “Christian translators have been willing to change the original language to make it better fit their concept.”⁶ It is also interesting to note in what sense Israel is the Servant in the passages cited by Mr. Ishtov. These will be marked with an asterisk * as they are discussed below.

Mr. Ishtov’s interpretation is not accepted by all Jews, neither

at present, nor through history. Rabbi Mosheh Kohen Ibn Crispin (14th century) was a rabbi who denied that the Servant of Isaiah 53 was national Israel. He rejected such an interpretation and such false interpreters as those:

having forsaken the knowledge of our Teachers, and inclined after the “stubbornness of their own hearts,” and of their own opinion, I am pleased to interpret it, in accordance with the teaching of our Rabbis, of the King Messiah....This prophecy was delivered by Isaiah at the divine command for the purpose of making known to us something about the nature of the future Messiah, who is to come and deliver Israel, and his life from the day when he arrives at discretion until his advent as a redeemer, in order that if anyone should arise claiming to be himself the Messiah, we may reflect, and look to see whether we can observe in him any resemblance to the traits described here; if there is any such resemblance, then we may believe that he is the Messiah our righteousness; but if not, we cannot do so.⁷

Often עֶבֶד is used to refer to Israel as an unfaithful Servant made up of unrepentant sinners. In some contexts עֶבֶד is limited to refer to the remnant of unfaithful Israel who are repentant and redeemed. But it is also used in the oracles to refer to others. A full examination of the use of עֶבֶד in these contexts is essential to prevent the exegete from misapplying the usage of עֶבֶד in one context upon another.⁸ In order to clarify how the word is used I have included a summary of its uses in Isaiah. The following discussion looks only at uses of עֶבֶד in the singular.

The uses of עֶבֶד in the singular

These may be categorized as follows:

Passages in which עֶבֶד refers to special servants named in Isaiah

Isaiah 20:3

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה כִּאֲשֶׁר הָלַךְ עַבְדִּי יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ

*And the Lord said “Just as Isaiah, **My Servant** walked.”*

Isaiah is called the Lord’s Servant as a figure of the unfaithful nation of Egypt. Isaiah walked naked and barefoot for three years to show that sinful Egypt will be led away naked and barefoot by the king of Assyria. Isaiah is an object lesson in how the Law of God applies to sinful Egypt.

Isaiah 22:20

וְקָרָאתִי לְעַבְדִּי לְאֵלְיָקִים בֶּן־חִלְקִיָּהוּ

*And I called to **My Servant**, to Eliakim ben Hilkiyah.*

Sennacherib laid siege against Jerusalem during King Hezekiah’s reign. Eliakim was one of the Jewish leaders who spoke with the Assyrians on behalf of King Hezekiah (see 2 Kings 18:18,26,37; Isaiah 36:3,11,22). Hezekiah sent Eliakim to Isaiah in sackcloth to pray for God’s mercy. (2 Kings 19:2; Isaiah 37:2).

Isaiah 37:35

לְמַעַן דָּוִד עַבְדִּי

*For the sake of David, **My Servant**.*

Hezekiah humbled himself and prayed to God for deliverance from Sennacherib. Isaiah spoke the Word of the Lord against Sennacherib’s army because God looked favorably on Hezekiah’s repentance and for the sake of His promise to His servant David.

Passages where עַבְדִּי refers generically to a servant or worker:

Isaiah 24:2

וְהָיָה כָּעַם כַּהֵן כַּעַבְדִּי כַּאֲדֹנָיו

*and the people will be like the priest,
the servant like his master.*

a servant in contrast to rulers

In this context every class of citizen in Israel will be severely judged by the Lord for their idolatry, whether servant or lord, etc.

Isaiah 36:9

וְאִיךָ תִשָּׁיב אֶת פְּנֵי פַחַת אֶחָד עֲבָדֵי אֲדֹנָי הַקְּטָנִים
וְתִבְטַח לָךְ עַל-מִצְרַיִם לְרֶכֶב וּלְפָרָשִׁים

How then can you repulse one official of the least of my master's servants and rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

Sennacherib's cupbearer speaking of a soldier

In this speech from Sennacherib's cupbearer to Eliakim, the cupbearer refers to one of the least of his master's servants as being stronger than Israel's army.

Passages where עַבְד refers to Israel the Unfaithful Servant: The External Church.

Isaiah 42:19

This is the second עַבְד in this chapter. As we will see below this usage is an unfavorable comparison between the Faithful Servant in the first half of the chapter and the unfaithful servant Israel in this second half of the chapter.

This is a passage that should have been listed as an example that the Servant does in some contexts mean Israel. However, this reference is unflattering to Israel and to the External Church. God begins in v. 18 with a reprimand to the people in the 2nd person plural. He then speaks of them as His unfaithful Servant.

מִי עוֹר כִּי אִם-עֲבָדִי וְחָרַשׁ כְּמִלְאָכֵי אֲשַׁלַּח
מִי עוֹר כְּמוֹשְׁלָם וְעוֹר כְּעֶבֶד יְהוָה

*Who is blind but My servant?
Or deaf, as my messenger whom I sent?
Who is blind as he who is perfect,
and blind as the LORD's servant?*

The point of the comparison is harsh. Where the faithful Servant in the first half of the chapter shares God's glory, the unfaithful Servant Israel receives the full preaching of the Law for its unwillingness to hear this message. Indeed this is as explicit as it can get in the verses following v. 19:

²⁰You see many things, but do not pay attention. Your ears are open, but not any hears. ²¹The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness sake; He will magnify the Law and make it honorable. ²²But this is a people robbed and spoiled; all of them snared in holes, and they are hidden in prison-houses; they have been taken, and none delivers them; a prize, and none says, Give back. ²³Who among you will hear this? He will listen and hear for the time to come? ²⁴Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to robbers? Did not the LORD, against whom we have sinned? For they would not walk in His ways, nor did they obey His law. ²⁵So He has poured on him the fury of His anger, and the strength of battle. And it has set him on fire all around, yet he did not know; and it burned him, yet he did not lay it to heart.

Isaiah 43*

Israel is the Unfaithful Servant who is redeemed not for his own sake, but for God's sake. They are called as witnesses to their own unworthiness. They are called to repent.

Isaiah 43:10

אַתֶּם עֲדֵי נְאֻם־יְהוָה וְעַבְדֵי אֲשֶׁר בָּחַרְתִּי לְמַעַן
תִּדְעוּ וְתִאֱמִינּוּ לִי וְתִבְיֵנוּ כִּי־אֲנִי הוּא
לְפָנַי לֹא־נֹצֵר אֵל וְאַחֲרַי לֹא יְהִיָּה

*You are My witnesses, says the LORD,
and My servant whom I have chosen
that you may know and believe Me,*

*and understand that I am He.
Before Me no God was formed,
nor shall there be after Me.*

The context states what Israel is redeemed from and how pathetic their position before God is. They are unable to save themselves or anyone else, as the context clearly states:

²¹ This people that I formed for Myself; they shall declare My praise. ²² But you have not called on Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel. ²³ You have not brought Me the lamb of your burnt offerings; nor have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense. ²⁴ You have bought Me no sweet cane with silver, nor have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices; but you have burdened Me with your sins; you have wearied Me with your iniquities. ²⁵ I, I am He who blots out your sins for My own sake, and will not remember your sins. ²⁶ Cause Me to remember; let us enter into judgment; declare yourself, that you may be justified. ²⁷ Your first father has sinned, and your teachers have sinned against Me. ²⁸ And I will defile rulers of the sanctuary, and will give Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.

Isaiah 44*

In Isaiah 44 עבד occurs 5 different times. Mostly it is used of Israel, including the unbelievers in her midst. In verse 26, however, עבד contextually refers to the prophets of God in distinction from Israel.

Isaiah 44:1-2

וְעַתָּה שְׁמַע יַעֲקֹב עַבְדֵי וְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּחַרְתִּי בּוֹ

*Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant,
and Israel whom I have chosen.*

כִּהְרָאָמַר יְהוָה עֲשֹׂף וְיִצְרָף מִבְּטֶן יְעֻזְרָךְ

אֶל־תִּירָא עַבְדֵי יַעֲקֹב וַיִּשְׁרוּן בְּחַרְתִּי בּוֹ

*Thus says the LORD who made you,
and formed you from the womb,
He will help you;
Fear not, O Jacob **My servant**,
and Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.*

Verses 2-8 speak of God alone being the source of their redemption and salvation. He calls for their repentance. Verses 9-20 speak of Israel's idolatry and its forgetting of God. But even though Israel forgets God, God does not forget His promise. Israel is an unfaithful servant, but God calls Israel to repent on the basis of His redemption.

Isaiah 44:21-22

זְכֹר־אֱלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל כִּי עַבְדֵי־אֲתָהּ
יִצְרְתִּיךָ עַבְדֵי־לִי אֲתָהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא תִנְשְׁנִי

*Remember these, O Jacob and Israel;
for you are **My servant**;
I have formed you;
you are **My servant**; O Israel,
you shall not be forgotten by Me.*

מְחִיתִי כְעָב פְּשָׁעֶיךָ וְכַעֲנָן
חֹטְאוֹתֶיךָ שׁוֹבָה אֵלַי כִּי גִאלְתִּיךָ

*I have blotted out, as a thick cloud,
your transgressions,
and, as a cloud, your sins;
return to Me; for I have redeemed you.*
†(1st Series, Trinity 19)

Verses 23-28 are a song praising the Lord's greatness in all His works, especially His redemption of His people. One of the

things which shows forth His greatness is how He makes His word known and confounds the false prophets. The teaching of this song is “It is the Lord Who does these things.” The final use of עֶבֶד in this chapter is not a reference to the people of Israel as above, but contextually it speaks of a special Servant.

Isaiah 45*

In Isaiah 45 the specific messiah spoken of is Cyrus. Cyrus would issue an edict to rebuild Jerusalem. (II Chr. 36:22-23; Ezra 1) Israel is the servant mentioned in this passage. Israel is, however, passive in its redemption from the Babylonian Captivity. The context of Israel’s idolatry in vv. 9-11 and v. 20 makes clear the undeserved nature of this rescue from the Babylonian Captivity. Even with reference to the return from Captivity, Israel is an unfaithful and undeserving servant. The closing words of chapter 45 emphasize the undeserving situation of Israel.

Isaiah 45:4

לְמַעַן עֲבָדִי יַעֲקֹב וְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּחִירִי
וְאֶקְרָא לְךָ בְּשֵׁםִי אֲכַנֶּדֶ וְלֹא יִדְעֹתַנִּי

*For the sake of My servant Jacob,
and Israel My chosen,
I have even called you by your name;
I have named you,
though you have not known me.*

Isaiah 48*

Isaiah 48 is highly uncomplimentary toward the people of Israel. God castigates them for their unfaithfulness as His servant. He calls them to repentance, to follow His Word.⁹ In this call to repentance God gives the consequence in verses 20ff. In verse 20 the unfaithful servant is named.

Isaiah 48:20

צָאוּ מִבָּבֶל בְּרַחֲוֵי מִכְשָׁדִים בְּקוֹל הַנָּה הַגִּידוּ הַשְּׁמִיעוּ
 זֹאת הוֹצִיאוּהָ עַד־קֶצֶה הָאָרֶץ אָמְרוּ נֹאֵל יְהוָה
 עֲבְדוּ יַעֲקֹב

Go out of Babylon; flee from the Chaldeans.

In a singing voice let it be told!

*Let this be heard! Let it go out to the end of the earth;
 say, "The Lord has redeemed **His servant Jacob.**"*

Jacob is in need of redemption, and the prophecy puts forward the hope that this song can be sung in spite of Israel's unfaithfulness.

**Passages where עבד refers to Israel Excluding Unbelievers:
 The Hidden Church**

Isaiah 41*

Isaiah 41 is a prophecy of comfort to the believers in the Northern Exile. Unfaithful and undeserving, they are penitent and awaiting God's final redemption.

Isaiah 41:8-9

וְאַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדִּי יַעֲקֹב
 אֲשֶׁר בְּחַרְתִּיךָ זָרַע אֲבֹרָהֶם אֶהְיֶי

*But you, Israel, are My servant,
 Jacob whom I have chosen
 the seed of Abraham, My friend;*

אֲשֶׁר הִחַזְקְתִּיךָ מִקְצוֹת הָאָרֶץ וּמֵאֲצִילֶיהָ
 קָרָאתִיךָ וְאָמַר לְךָ עַבְדִּי-אַתָּה
 בְּחַרְתִּיךָ וְלֹא מֵאֲסֻתִּיךָ

*whom I have taken from the ends of the earth
and called you from its sides.*

*And I said to you, You are **My servant**;*

I have chosen you, and not cast you away.

The closing verses 21-29 show that the loss of people who were external Israel, the visible Church, during the exile was a purging of the unfaithful.

Passages where עבד refers to the the One Who will Redeem Israel: The Savior.

Isaiah 42*

Isaiah 42:1

הֵן עַבְדִּי אֶתְמַדְּבֹר בְּחִירִי רְצֵתָה
נַפְשִׁי נִתְחַי רִוּחִי עָלָיו מִשְׁפָּט לְגוֹיִם יוֹצֵיא

*Behold **My Servant**, whom I uphold;*

My Elect, in whom My soul delights.

I have put My Spirit on Him;

He shall bring out judgment to the nations.

‡(1st Series, Baptism of Jesus)

Of all the passages Mr. Ishtov selected as evidence that the Servant refers to Israel, this one was not a good choice. Although the second use of the word in v. 19 is in reference to Israel, this one is not. The context clearly defines this Servant. In verses 1-5 God describes the Servant in the 3rd person singular.

In verses 6-7 He speaks to the Servant in the 2nd person singular. And here God is sharing His glory with His Servant. His Servant is given as the covenant, His Servant is given as the Light.

⁶I the LORD have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand, and will keep You, and give You for a covenant of the people, for a Light of the nations;⁷ to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness out of the prison house.

In verses 8-12 God addresses Israel and the Nations about what His faithful Servant will accomplish. Here we note that God says that His glory belongs to Himself alone, He “will not give it to another.” And we have just seen God giving glory to His Servant in verses 6-7 in contrast with the people of Israel in v. 12.

Isaiah 44

The word עֵבֶר is used one more time in this chapter. Above we saw how עֵבֶר was used in reference to the Unfaithful Servant Israel. In these verses its use is contextually separated from the previous passages.

Isaiah 44:25-26

מִפֶּר אֲחֹת בְּדִים וְקִסְמִים יְהוּלֵל
 מוֹשִׁיב חֲכָמִים אָחֹר וְדַעְתָּם יִשְׁכַּל

*He brings to nothing the signs of the liars,
 and makes diviners mad;
 He turns the wise backward,
 and makes their knowledge foolish;*

מִקִּים דְּבַר עֲבָדוֹ וְעֵצַת מְלֹאכָיו יְשֻׁלֵּם הָאָמֵר לִירוּשָׁלַם
 תּוֹשֵׁב וְלְעָרֵי יְהוּדָה תִּבְנֶינָה וְחָרְבוֹתֶיהָ אֶקְוִימ

*He establishes the word of **His Servant**,
 and makes good the counsel of His messengers;
 He says to Jerusalem, She shall have people;
 and to the cities of Judah, You shall be built,
 and I will raise up the waste places of it.*

In these two passages the Lord is the one who confounds false prophecy, establishes the particular word of His particular Servant, and validates the messages of his prophets. This is the essence of the contrast. The Servant and His (God’s/the Servant’s) messengers give this word to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah—that is, they

give it to National Israel. Compare the way the Servant is spoken of here in v. 26 to that of the Prophet in Deuteronomy 18:18f:

Deuteronomy 18:18-19

נְבִיא אֲקִים לָהֶם מִקֶּרֶב אֶחָיִהֶם כְּמוֹדִי
וְנִתְּתִי דְבָרֵי בְּפִי וְדִבֶּר אֵלֵיהֶם אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר אֶצְוֶנּוּ

*I will raise them up a Prophet
from among their brothers, one like you,
and will put My words in His mouth.
And He shall speak to them
all that I shall command Him.*

וְהָיָה הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִשְׁמַע אֶל־דְּבָרֵי
אֲשֶׁר יְדַבֵּר בְּשֵׁמִי אֲנֹכִי אֲדַרְשׁ מֵעַמּוֹ

*And it shall be, the man who does not listen to My words
which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him.*
†(1st Series, Epiphany 2)

In view of this Deuteronomy passage consider the following ironic anti-Christian claim on the Christian use of Isaiah 53:

Let us ask ourselves, “Why doesn’t our Bible ever tell us that we will face dire consequences if we do not accept our messiah?” The answer is simple: when the messiah really comes, he will be accepted. There is no need for a command to believe in him. The very fact that I deny that Jesus is the messiah proves that he isn’t our messiah.¹⁰

Yes, there is a simple answer, but it is not the one they wish to hear. Besides the obvious refusal to admit Dt. 18:19 and many other passages which do make such a demand or face the consequences there is another irony about this quotation. The circular logic of the last sentence in the quotation follows a section (not included here) which claims Christians must use circular reasoning to prove Jesus is the Messiah.

Isaiah 49*

Mr. Ishtov refers to v. 3 as support for the identity of Israel with the Servant. And, yes! The passage does name Israel as the servant. But the context requires an accurate interpretation of what the word “Israel” means in this chapter. “Israel” is not National Israel, nor is it Judaism. The actual man whom God named Israel is used as a figure of the coming Messiah.

Isaiah 49:3

וַיֹּאמֶר לִי עַבְדֵי-אֲתָהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר-בָּדַד אֶתְפָּאֵר

*and said to Me, You are **My servant**,
O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.*

†(3rd Series, Epiphany)

Why should the Servant be understood as not referring to National Israel? Because the rest of the chapter defines exactly who this Servant is. Verse 5 shows us that the Servant and God Himself cannot be easily distinguished from each other, but that the Servant and National Israel are distinct from each other.

Isaiah 49:5

וַעֲתָה אֹמַר יְהוָה יִצְרֵי מִבְטֵן לְעַבְדִּי
לוֹ לְשׁוֹבֵב יַעֲקֹב אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא [לֹן]
וְאֶסְפֶּה וְאֶכְבֹּד בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וְאֱלֹהֵי הָיָה עִזִּי

*And now, says the LORD
who formed Me from the womb to be **His servant**,
to bring Jacob again to Him,
Though Israel is not gathered,
yet I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD,
and My God shall be **My strength**.*

†(3rd Series, Epiphany)

The Servant will gather Jacob “to Him.” The “to Him” could be either the Servant or God in this construction. We know that God

does not give His glory to any other. But this servant is “glorious in the eyes of the Lord.”

Isaiah 49:6

וַיֹּאמֶר נְקַל מִהַיּוֹתֶךָ לִי עֲבֹד לַהֲקִים אֶת־שְׂבָטֵי
 יַעֲקֹב וּנְצִיחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהָשִׁיב וּנְתַתִּיךָ
 לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם לְהַיּוֹת יְשׁוּעָתִי עַד־קְצֵה הָאָרֶץ

*And He said, “It is but a little thing that
 You should be **My servant** to raise up
 the tribes of Jacob, and to bring back
 the preserved ones of Israel;
 I will also give You for a light to the nations,
 to be My salvation to the end of the earth.”*
 †(3rd Series, Epiphany)

Attributes of God are given to the Servant. He is light to the nations, He is salvation. He, however, is not Jacob nor Israel, but the One who will restore Jacob and Israel.

Isaiah 49:7

כֹּה אָמַר־יְהוָה גֹּאֲלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל קְדוֹשׁוֹ
 לְבִזְהַת־נַפְשׁ לְמַתְעֵב גּוֹי לְעֹבֵד מַשְׁלִיִּם מְלָכִים
 יִרְאוּ וְקָמוּ שָׂרִים וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְמַעַן יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר
 יִבְחָרְךָ

*So says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel,
 His Holy One, to Him whom man despises,
 to Him whom the nation hates,
the servant of rulers:
 Kings shall see and arise,
 rulers also shall worship,
 because of the LORD who is faithful,
 the Holy One of Israel,
 and He shall choose You.*

Further attributes of God are credited to the Servant. This One redeems Israel. Though the nations hate Him, though He is despised, though He is the servant of rulers, Kings and rulers shall worship Him.

Isaiah 50

The very idea of a suffering Messiah seems repugnant to many of the modern anti-Christian missionary groups. In this chapter we find that the Servant who is named in verse 10 is described in verses 4-9 as suffering at the hands of those around Him. So, obviously, in their minds, this must not be the Messiah. But note how v. 10 echoes Deuteronomy 18:19 and repeats the themes about the Messianic Servant we have noted above concerning chs. 44 and 49.

Isaiah 50:10

מִי בְכֶם יִרְאֵהוּהָ שְׁמַע בְּקוֹל עַבְדּוֹ
 אֲשֶׁר הִלְךְ חֲשָׁכִים וְאֵין נֹגַהּ
 לוֹ יִבְטַח בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה
 וַיִּשְׁעַן בְּאֱלֹהָיו

*Who among you fears the LORD,
 who obeys the voice of **His servant**,
 who walks in darkness and has no light?
 Let him trust in the name of the LORD
 and rest on his God.*

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

This leads to the final occurrences of עַבְד in the singular. Remember, the claim is that “My Servant” in this context is supposed to mean National Israel. However, Isaiah says in verse 8 of this passage “for the transgression of My people He was stricken.” There is a direct contrast between the Servant and those named by Isaiah as “My people.”

Isaiah 52:13

הִנֵּה יִשְׁכַּל עַבְדֵי יְרוּם וְנִשְׂא וְנִבְּה מְאֹד

*Behold, My Servant shall rule well;
He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.*

Isaiah 53:11

מֵעֵמֶל נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה יְשֻׁבַע בְּדַעְתּוֹ יִצְדִיק
צְדִיק עַבְדֵי לְרַבִּים וְעֹונֹתָם הוּא יִסְבֵּל

*He shall see the fruit of the travail of His soul.
He shall be fully satisfied.
By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant
justify for many;
and He shall bear their iniquities.*

†(1st Series, Good Friday)

General Structure of the Text

A. Pieper suggested that Isaiah 40-66 is highly structured as a trio of triads, with each triad containing three discourses. In his own commentary, E. Young adapts Pieper's outline minimally modified, albeit in Calvinistic terminology. Pieper's three main parts are:¹¹

Part 1: Chapters 40-48 The Glory of God's Power Is the Guarantee of Israel's Deliverance.

Part 2: Chapters 49-57 The Redemption from the Guilt of Sin.

Part 3: Chapters 58-66 The Spiritual, Eternal Deliverance.

Pieper sees part 2 structured as follows:

First Triad: Chapters 49-51: The Faithfulness of the Lord Accomplishes the Salvation of Israel.

Second Triad: Chapters 52-54: The Lord's Zealous Love Leads His Servant Safely through His Vicarious Suffering and together with Him His Afflicted Congregations to Sublime Glory.

Third Triad: Chapters 55-57: An Appealing Invitation to Accept the Lord's Salvation; Renunciation of Those Who Despise the Call.

Focusing in on the Second Triad, Pieper distinguishes these three discourses:

First Discourse: Chapters 52:1-12. Because of the triumphant howling of the tyrannical enemies, and because of their blasphemies against His holy Name, the Lord will glorify the newly sanctified Jerusalem and reveal His holy arm by redeeming His people and leading them safely home.

Second Discourse: Chapters 52:13-53:12. The Lord exalts to divine glory the Servant who had been sent to humble Himself and take upon Himself the guilt of all as their substitute.

Third Discourse: Chapter 54. The glorification of the afflicted congregation.

Within this Second Discourse Pieper discerns 5 strophes:

First Strophe 52:13-15: The Servant of the Lord, who was humbled beneath what is human, is exalted far above what is human.¹²

Second Strophe: 53:1-3: The inhuman degradation of the Servant.¹³

Third Strophe: 53:4-6: He bore our chastisement.¹⁴

Fourth Strophe: 53:7-9: Patiently He suffered every wrong, although He was innocent.¹⁵

Fifth Strophe: 53:10-12: The more than human exaltation of the Servant.¹⁶

Our text is the middle discourse in the middle triad of the middle part. The central passages of this middle part are:

⁴Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:
yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions,
he was bruised for our iniquities:
the chastisement of our peace was on him;
and with his stripes we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned every one to his own way;
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

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‡(Is. 52:13-53:12, Good Friday)

Is. 52:13-53:12 is not a narrative outlining a specific order of events. It is a meditation on the significance of one particular event. This text is focused on the the sacrifice of God's Servant on Good Friday as if it had been accomplished already in the memory of Isaiah. This meditation, this sermon, asks the hearer to consider

1. who the Servant is;
2. what is sinful humanity's reaction to the Servant;
3. what He has done for the world, for Israel, and for the hearer;
4. what this cost the Servant;
5. whether God wanted this to happen;
6. and what greatness belongs to the Servant because of this work.

Isaiah Chapter 52 ישעיהו פרק כב

First Strophe 52:13-15: The Servant of the Lord, who was humbled beneath what is human, is exalted far above what is human.¹⁷

Isaiah 52:13a

הִנֵּה יִשְׁכַּל עַבְדִּי

Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently;

Verse 13 presents an action and its consequence. Both the action and the consequence in this context can refer only to the Messiah. The first part of the verse presents the action. In the contexts where God names National Israel as His servant there is always an emphasis on their unfaithfulness, their unworthiness, their sin and defilement of His name. The opening line of this passage stands in stark contrast to those other contexts. Here God names

His Servant who will deal prudently, one who acts according to God's instruction. The choice of the word יִשְׁכִּיל "deal prudently" is significant. King David's action under Saul is the example:

I Samuel 18:12-15 ¹² And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him and had departed from Saul. ¹³ And Saul moved him away from himself, and made him his commander over a thousand. And he went out and came in before the people. ¹⁴ And David מְשָׁכִיל **dealt prudently** in all his ways. And the LORD was with him. ¹⁵ And when Saul saw that he מְשָׁכִיל **dealt** very **prudently**, he was afraid of him.

Similarly King Hezekiah's submission to God's Will is shown by this word:

2 Kings 18: 7 And the Lord has been with him [King Hezekiah], in every place where he goes out he יִשְׁכִּיל **dealt prudently**, and he rebelleth against the king of Asshur, and hath not served him;

Both of these uses of יִשְׁכִּיל rest on the promise in Deuteronomy 29:8:

Therefore, keep the words of this covenant and do them, so that you may תִּשְׁכִּילי **act prudently** in all that you do.

Psalm 2 emphasizes that sinful humans deal prudently by faith in the Messiah:

¹⁰ And now be wise, O kings; הַשְׁכִּילוּ **deal prudently**, O judges of the earth. ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled in but a little time. Blessed are all who put their trust in Him.
✠ (1st Series, Christmas Vigil)

How does the rest of the Old Testament speak of a special, specific man who would come and do prudently according to God's will? Here are a few examples:

Deuteronomy 18:18-19 ¹⁸I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brothers, one like you, and will put My words in

His mouth. And He shall speak to them all that I shall command Him. ¹⁹And it shall happen, whatever man will not listen to My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require it of him.
 †(1st Series, Epiphany 2)

Psalms 40:7-10 ⁷Then I said, Lo, I come, in the volume of the Book it is written of Me; ⁸ I delight to do Your will, O My God; and Your law is within My heart. ⁹ I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; lo, I have not kept back My lips, O LORD, You know. ¹⁰ I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not hidden Your loving-kindness and Your truth from the great congregation.
 †(Annunciation)

Note that the other passages which speak of the Servant not as Israel, but as God's special chosen individual emphasize that that Servant will do the will of the Father:

Isaiah 42:1 Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; My Elect, in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit on Him; He shall bring out judgment to the nations.
 †(1st Series, Baptism of Jesus; 2nd Series, Lent 2)

Isaiah 49:1-6 ¹ Listen, O coastlands, to Me; and listen, lend your ear, peoples from afar; the LORD has called Me from the womb; He has made mention of My name from My mother's bowels. ² And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, and made Me a polished shaft. He has hidden Me in His quiver, ³ and said to Me, You are My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. ⁴ Then I said, I have labored in vain; I have spent My strength for nothing, and in vain; yet surely My judgment is with the LORD, and My work with My God. ⁵ And now, says the LORD who formed Me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, Though Israel is not gathered, yet I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and My God shall be My strength. ⁶ And He said, It is but a little thing that You should be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to bring back the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You for a light to the nations, to be My salvation to the end of the earth.
 †(3rd Series, Epiphany)

Isaiah 50:4-7 ⁴ The Lord Yahweh has given Me the tongue of the learned, to know to help the weary with a word. He wakens morning by morning, He wakens the ear to hear as the learned. ⁵

The Lord Yahweh has opened My ear, and I was not rebellious, nor turned away backwards. ⁶ I gave My back to the strikers, and My cheeks to pluckers; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting. ⁷ For the Lord Yahweh will help Me; therefore I have not been ashamed. On account of this I have set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.

Isaiah is not the only prophet to make explicit reference to the Servant and His role in forgiving the sins of the world.

Zechariah 3:9 ⁹ For behold! I will bring forth My Servant the Branch. For behold the stone that I have set before Joshua: On one stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave its engraving, says the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

The New Testament is explicit about Jesus' nature as the Servant of the Father and the Servant of Humanity.

Matthew 20:25-28 ²⁵ But Jesus called them and said, You know that the rulers of the nations exercise dominion over them, and they who are great exercise authority over them. ²⁶ However, it shall not be so among you. But whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your servant. ²⁷ And whoever desires to be chief among you, let him be your servant; ²⁸ even as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Mk 10:42-45)

The New Testament is explicit about Who's will Jesus came to do. He dealt prudently according to the Will of the Father:

John 4:34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.
†(2nd Series, Epiphany 3)

John 5:30 I can do nothing of My own self. As I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of the Father who has sent Me.

John 6:36-40 ³⁶ But I said to you that you also have seen Me and do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will in no way cast out. ³⁸ For I came down from Heaven, not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ And this is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all which He has given

Me I should lose nothing but should raise it up again at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes on Him should have everlasting life. And I will raise him up at the last day.
 †(2nd Series, Trinity 24)

John 8:21-30 ²¹ Then Jesus said again to them, I go away, and you shall seek Me and shall die in your sins. Where I go, you cannot come.²² Then the Jews said, Will he kill himself? Because he says, Where I go you cannot come. ²³ And He said to them, You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴ Therefore I said to you that you shall die in your sins, for if you do not believe that I AM, you shall die in your sins. ²⁵ Then they said to Him, Who are you? And Jesus said to them, Even the same which I also say to you. ²⁶ I have many things to say and to judge of you, but He who sent Me is true, and I speak to the world those things what I heard of Him. ²⁷ They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father. ²⁸ Then Jesus said to them, When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you shall know that I AM, and that I do nothing of Myself, but as My Father has taught Me, I speak these things. ²⁹ And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things which please Him. ³⁰ As He spoke these words, many believed upon Him.

John 9:4 “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.”

John 14:31 “But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.”

†(1st Series, Pentecost: 1st service)

Matthew 26:42 He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.

One of the chief objections to interpreting this chapter as referring to the Messiah is the following:

Isaiah 53 is vague. A servant is mentioned, but not identified. Isaiah does not say “Behold, my Servant the messiah shall deal prudently...” and if you read this chapter very carefully, you will see no reference to a “messiah”, a “king of the Jews”, or a “Branch of Jesse”. There is nothing in Isaiah 53 that suggests that it’s about the messiah. (To say that it must be about the messiah because only the messiah will do these things is again, circular reasoning)¹⁸

This claim goes against context and history. Only recently have teachers in Judaism denied that Jews ever believed the Messiah is the subject of this text. While there are early rabbinic interpretations claiming that the Servant in this chapter is National Israel, there were also those in Judaism who recognized that this passage is speaking of the Messiah. This will become more and more evident as quotations from the rabbinic sources are included in this paper under the relevant passages.

First, *Targum Jonathan* is an Aramaic paraphrase of the Old Testament done by Jews and for Jews in the early 2nd century A.D. It states:

‘Behold my servant *Messiah* shall prosper; he shall be high, and increase, and be exceeding strong: as the house of Israel looked to him through many days, because their countenance was darkened among the peoples, and their complexion beyond the sons of men.’” (*Targum Jonathan* on Isaiah 53, ad locum, emphasis added.)

Isaiah 52:13b

יְרוּם וְנִשְׂאָ וְנִבְּהָ מְאֹד

He shall be high and lifted up and be very high.

The second half of verse 13 tells us of the consequence of the Servant dealing prudently. As a result of the Servant’s following the Will of the Father He shall be exalted. Again, this does not fit with National Israel. The Old Testament contains many references to the exaltation of the Messiah.¹⁹

I Samuel 2:10 The foes of the LORD shall be broken to pieces. He thunders in the heavens upon them. The LORD shall judge the ends of the earth. And He shall give strength to His king, and exalts the horn of His anointed. †(1st Series, Trinity 17)

I Chronicles 17:11-14 ¹¹ And it will be, when your days have ended so that you must go to be with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you, who shall be from your sons. And I will make his kingdom sure. ¹² He shall build Me a house, and I will

establish his throne forever. ¹³ I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. And I will not take My mercy away from him as I took it from him who was before you. ¹⁴ And I will settle him in My house, and in My kingdom forever. And his throne shall be established forever.

Psalm 2:7-8 ⁷ I will declare the decree of the LORD. He has said to Me, You are My Son; today I have begotten You. ⁸ Ask of Me, and I shall give the nations for Your inheritance; and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.
 †(1st Series, Christmas Vigil, Easter Day-2nd Service)

Psalm 8:6 You made him rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet.

†(1st Series, Name of Jesus, Trinity Sunday)

Psalm 16:11 You will make Me know the way of life; in Your presence is fullness of joys. At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 110:1, 5 ¹ The LORD said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand until I place Your enemies as Your footstool. ... ⁵ The Lord at Your right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath.

Daniel 7:13-14 ¹³ I saw in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. ¹⁴ And dominion and glory was given Him, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages, should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

The New Testament is explicit about the exaltation of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority is given to Me in Heaven and in earth.

John 17:4-5 ⁴ I have glorified You upon the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵ And now Father, glorify Me with Yourself with the glory which I had with You before the world was. (and see vv 20-24)
 †(2nd Series, Easter 4)

Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God made this same Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

†(3rd Series, Pentecost)

Ephesians 1:20-23 ²⁰ which He worked in Christ in raising Him from the dead, and He seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly

places,²¹ far above all principality and authority and power and dominion, and every name being named, not only in this world, but also in the coming age. ²²And He has put all things under His feet and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.
 †(3rd Series, Easter)

Philippians 2:9-11 ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted Him, and has given Him a name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly ones, and of earthly ones, and of ones under the earth; ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

†(1st Series, Palm Sunday)

I Peter 3:21-22 ²¹ which figure now also saves us, baptism; not a putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ; ²²who is at the right hand of God, having gone into Heaven, where the angels and authorities and powers are being subjected to Him.
 †(1st Series, Easter 3)

Revelation 5:9-13 ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, You are worthy to take the book and to open its seals, for You were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. ¹⁰ And You made us kings and priests to our God, and we will reign over the earth. ¹¹ And I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, and the living creatures and the elders. And the number of them was myriads and myriads, and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. ¹³ And I heard every creature which is in the Heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, and those that are in the sea, and all who are in them, saying, Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him sitting on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever.

Also consider that the rabbinic *Midrash Tanhuma*, parasha Toldot, pereq 14, interprets Psalm 121 based on the understanding that the Servant in Isaiah 52-53 is the Messiah Who will be exalted.

שיר לזמירות אשא עיני אל ההרים וגוי (תהלים קכא)
 זשהייב (זכריה ד) מי אתה הר הגדול לפני זרובבל למישור
 זה משיה בן דוד ולמה נקרא שמו הר הגדול

שהוא גדול מן האבות שנאמר (ישעיה נב)

הנה ישכיל עבדי ירום ונשא וגבה מאד²⁰

“Song of ascents, I will lift up my eyes unto the mountains,” etc. (Psalm 121) This is referring to what was written (Zechariah 4:7) “Who are you o Great Mountain? Before Zerubabel you become a plain.” This is the Messiah the son of David, And why does it call His name “Great Mountain”? Because He is greater than the fathers, as it is said (Isaiah 52) “Behold My Servant shall deal prudently. He will be exalted, and lifted up, and very high.”

Verses 14-15 are a complex comparative/contrastive construction. Verse 14 is a comparison between “You” and “Him.” The “Him” is the Servant. Verse 14 starts the comparison/contrast with “at you.” Verse 15 picks up the contrast, “but at Him.”

But who is the “You” in this passage? The Syriac and Targum read “Him” instead of “You.” That is one way to answer who is “You.” The Septuagint keeps the second person throughout the passage. In each case these versions understood the first clause as referring to the Messiah. Similarly, Pieper believed that the second person pronominal suffix (“You”) was used because “the Lord intimately addresses the Servant in the second person..., whereas in the following clause and in the next sentence the more impersonal third person is again employed.”(Pieper, p. 431) But this ignores the Hebrew comparative construction using כאשר followed by two separate כן clauses.²¹

Other commentators, who respect their own faculty of reason more than they respect the text itself, offer suggestions of emendation or redaction. For example, in BHS, D. Winton Thomas in his notes to the text of Isaiah prefers to eliminate the comparison between “you” and “Him” by following the reading of the Syriac and the Targum. He then suggests that the first comparison about the Servant’s disfigurement should be read after verse 53:2.²²

However, I believe that the “You” makes perfect sense in the context of the book of Isaiah as being Isaiah himself. In chapter 20, Isaiah is commanded to walk around barefoot and naked as a shameful sign of how Assyria would lead away the captives of Egypt and Cush. God provokes a reaction of shock and dismay from those

who see Isaiah. Their reaction to this shame is to teach them what the reaction will be of those who trust in Egypt.

Isaiah 52:14-15

כְּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמְמוּ עָלֶיךָ רַבִּים כִּן־מִשָּׁחַת מְאִישׁ מִרְאֵהוּ וְתֹארוֹ מִבְּנֵי
אֲדָם כִּן יִזָּה גּוֹיִם רַבִּים עָלָיו יִקְפְּצוּ מְלָכִים פִּיהֶם
כִּי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־סָפַר לָהֶם רָאוּ וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ הִתְבּוֹנְנוּ

JUST AS ASTONISHED AT YOU were many, so His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men; so shall He sprinkle many nations. **AT HIM** Kings shall shut their mouths; for what had not been told them they shall see, and what they had not heard they shall consider.

The comparison between Isaiah and the Messiah is built in two steps. The first step is contained in verse 14 to the first line of verse 15. It is the comparison between the shame Isaiah endured and its purpose, with the shame of the Messiah and His purpose.

Many people were astonished at you, Isaiah, You appeared to them in a shameful way But He will be marred more than any man. And His body will be marred more than any who will ever be born. And while You served as a sign, He will actually cleanse many nations from sin.

The second step is the major contrast between who will see and benefit from this sign. The major contrast is indicated by UPPERCASE LETTERS in the text above. Isaiah's shame was a sign to those who could see and hear him. It was a sign for just a few peoples. The Messiah's shame was not revealed to the multitude of nations before it happened. But in contrast to the size of Isaiah's audience, the Messiah shall impress the kings of the nations. It is a sign for all languages, nations, and peoples.

Isaiah 52:14

כְּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמְמוּ עָלֶיךָ רַבִּים כִּן־מִשָּׁחַת מְאִישׁ מִרְאֵהוּ וְתֹארוֹ מִבְּנֵי אֲדָם

Just as many were astonished at you, so His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men;

The Messiah's shame and marring will be worse than Isaiah's and worse than any other man who will ever live. How does the rest of the Old Testament speak of the marring of the Messiah? The very first word about the Messiah mentions His wounds.

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He will bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.
 †(1st Series, Lent 1)

There are many explicit prophecies of the wounding and marring of the Messiah. But as this is the theme of other passages in this text, a couple will be given here and more given later where appropriate.

Psalms 22:6-8 ⁶ But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people. ⁷All who see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip; they shake the head, saying, ⁸ He trusted on the LORD; let Him deliver him; let Him rescue him, since He delights in him!
 †(1st Series, Palm Sunday)

Isaiah 50:6 I gave My back to the strikers, and My cheeks to pluckers; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.

The Passion narratives of the Gospels show explicit fulfillment of the prophecies upon Jesus Christ:

Matthew 26:67-68 ⁶⁷ Then they spat in His face and beat Him with the fist. And others struck Him with the palms of their hands, ⁶⁸ saying, Prophecy to us, Christ; who is the one who struck you?

Matthew 27:26-30 ²⁶ Then he released Barabbas to them. And when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified. ²⁷ Then taking Jesus into the praetorium, the soldiers of the governor gathered the cohort against Him. ²⁸ And stripping Him, they put a scarlet robe around Him. ²⁹ And plaiting a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying,

Hail, King of the Jews! ³⁰ And spitting at Him, they took the reed and struck at His head.

Isaiah 52:15a

כֵּן יִזֶה גּוֹיִם רַבִּים

So shall He sprinkle many nations.

The simple verb יזה “to sprinkle” has been rewritten by many commentators.²³ Blenkinsopp, for instance, believes that the verb יזה needs to be followed by על.²⁴ But change is not necessary. The word is used without על nine other times out of a total twenty-four times the verb is used. Twenty four uses is not enough to establish a hard and fast prescriptive rule on its use. And emendation is reckless at best when 10 out of those 24 occurrences do not fit the mold shaped for that rule.

The sprinkling of this passage is a summary of the work of the Servant. That atonement purchased by the blood of the Servant’s suffering is described explicitly at the climax of verse 53:6, and verse 53:8. The sprinkling is the application of the forgiveness won by the Servant. Where the Servant is the Sacrifice, His sprinkling is sacramental. The sacramental sprinkling has always been significant before God.

The blood is sprinkled because by God’s decree it makes atonement with God:

Leviticus 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood. And I have given it to you on the altar to make an atonement for your souls. For it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul. Sprinkling is a ceremonial expression for cleansing from sin. It is used to initiate or sign a covenant:

Exodus 24:8 And Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you concerning all these words.

The sprinkling by blood and its significance corresponds to the establishing of the New Covenant in Holy Communion:

Matthew 26:28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

‡(2nd Series, Maundy Thursday)

The New Testament is clear about the purchase price for the forgiveness of sins. It is the blood of the Lamb of God.

Hebrews 9:13-14 ¹³For if the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more shall the blood of Christ (who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself with unblemished spot to God) purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?
✠(1st series, Lent 5, Judica)

1 Peter 1:2 According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

1 Peter 1:18-19 ¹⁸Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.
✠(1st Series, John the Apostle, 2nd Series, Ash Wednesday)

Revelation 1:5 Even from Jesus Christ the faithful Witness, the First-born from the dead and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood...

Sprinkling as a cleansing from sin is used not only with blood but also with water:

Ezekiel 36:22-26 ²² Therefore say to the house of Israel, So says the Lord Yahweh: I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. ²³ And I will sanctify My great name, which was profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst. And the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord Yahweh, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. ²⁴For I will take you from among the nations and gather you out of all lands, and will gather you into your own land. ²⁵ And I will sprinkle clean waters on you, and you shall be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from your idols. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.

As the Old Testament prophet spoke of sprinkling with water which cleanses from sin, in the New Testament Baptism is directly tied together with this atonement made with the purchase price of Christ's blood:

Romans 6:3 Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?
 †(1st Series, Easter Vigil, Trinity 6)

And a conjecture on my own part: the sprinkling of both blood and water in the Old Testament may be prefigurements by analogy of how significant the piercing of Christ's side would be:

John 19:34 But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.
 †(1st Series, Good Friday)

Isaiah 52:15b

עָלְיוּ יִקְפְּצוּ מְלָכִים פִּיהֶם כִּי אֲשֶׁר לֹא־סִפְּרוּ
 לָהֶם רָאוּ וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא־שָׁמְעוּ הִתְבּוֹנְנוּ

*Because of Him kings shall shut their mouths;
 for what had not been told them
 they shall see,
 And what they had not heard
 they shall consider.*

Who will benefit from the work of the Servant? This passage is not alone in the Old Testament. Throughout the OT God proclaims the benefits of Salvation through His Servant to the World. God's promise to Abraham was that all the families and nations of the earth would be blessed through the promised Seed, the promised Child:

Genesis 12:3 And in you [Abraham] shall all families of the earth be blessed.
 †(1st Series, Lent 1)

Genesis 22:18 And in your Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 26:4 And in your Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Galatians 3:16 And to Abraham and to his Seed the promises were spoken. It does not say, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, "And to your Seed," which is Christ.
✠(1st Series, Trinity 13)

Isaiah is emphatic that the Servant will be a Light to the nations who have not seen or heard.

Isaiah 42:6 I the LORD have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand, and will keep You, and give You for a covenant of the people, for a Light of the nations.
✠(1st Series, Christmas 2, Baptism of Jesus; 2nd Series Lent 2)

Isaiah 49:6 And He said, It is but a little thing that You should be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to bring back the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You for a light to the nations, to be My salvation to the end of the earth.
✠(3rd Series, Epiphany)

Isaiah 66:19 And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those who escape from them to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, drawers of the bow; to Tubal, and Javan, to the far away coasts that have not heard My fame, nor have seen My glory. And they will declare My glory among the nations.

The winning of the Nations by the Messiah is taught in Daniel and Zechariah:

Daniel 7: 13-14 ¹³ I saw in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.¹⁴And dominion and glory was given Him, and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages, should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Zechariah 9:10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem. And the battle bow shall be cut off, and He shall speak peace to the nations; and His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.
✠(1st Series, Palm Sunday)

The New Testament is permeated with emphasis on the fulfillment of this prophecy in Christ:

Matthew 12:18 “Behold My Child whom I have chosen; My Beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased. I will put My Spirit on Him, and He shall declare judgment to the nations.
 †(3rd Series, Epiphany)

Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in all the world as a witness to all nations. And then the end shall come.

Mark 13:10 And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations.

Luke 2:30-32 ³⁰For my eyes have seen Your Salvation ³¹ which You have prepared before the face of all the peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the nations, and the glory of Your people Israel.
 †(2nd Series, Christmas 1)

Acts 11:18 When they heard these things, they were silent and glorified God, saying, Then God has also granted repentance to life to the nations.

Acts 13:47 For so the Lord has commanded us, saying , “I have set You to be a light of the nations, for salvation to the end of the earth.”

Acts 14:27 And having arrived, and gathering the church they related all that God had done with them, and how He had opened the door of faith to the nations.

Acts 15:7 And after much disputing, Peter rose up and said to them, Men, brothers, you recognize that from ancient days God chose among us that through my mouth the nations should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

Acts 26:23 that Christ should suffer, that by a resurrection of the dead, He would be the first, going to proclaim light to the people and to the nations.

Acts 28:28 Therefore be it known to you that the salvation of God is sent to the nations, and they will hear.

Romans 11:11 I say then, Did they not stumble that they fall? Let it not be! But by their slipping away came salvation to the nations, to provoke them to jealousy.
 †(2nd Series, Trinity 20)

Galatians 3:8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations through faith, preached the gospel before to Abraham, saying , “In you shall all nations be blessed.”

Galatians 3:14 so that the blessing of Abraham might be to the nations in Jesus Christ, and that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Ephesians 3:6 that the nations should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.

Revelation 21:24 And the nations of those who are saved will

walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.

In helping to debunk the idea that real Jews do not believe that this text is about the Messiah, we turn to one of the most respected and most significant of all the medieval rabbis, Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, also called Maimonides or Rambam. Maimonides (1135-1204) wrote the *Mishnah Torah*, a guide for Jews in observing the Law, which forms the basis for Orthodox Judaism today. He is considered by many Jews to be the most influential and significant Jewish writer since the biblical Moses.²⁵ Contrary to the anti-Christian claims about what Jews believe, Maimonides describes the advent of the Messiah using our text as a basis:

What is the manner of Messiah's advent...there shall rise up one of whom none have known before, and signs and wonders which they shall see performed by him will be the proofs of his true origin; for the Almighty, where he declares to us his mind upon this matter, says, 'Behold a man whose name is the Branch, and he shall branch forth out of his place' (Zech. 6:12). And Isaiah speaks similarly of the time when he shall appear, without father or mother or family being known, 'He came up as a sucker before him, and as a root out of dry earth, etc.' [Is. 53:2]...in the words of Isaiah, when describing the manner in which kings will harken to him, 'At him kings will shut their mouth; for that which had not been told them have they seen, and that which they had not heard they have perceived.' [Is. 52:15]²⁶

Second Strophe: 53:1-3: The inhuman degradation of the Servant.²⁷

‡(Is. 53:1-7, 3rd Series, Baptism of Jesus)

פרק נג Chapter 53

Israel's Rejection of the Messiah

Isaiah 53:1

מִי הָאֲמִין לְשִׁמְעַתְנוּ וְזָרוּעַ יְהוָה עַל-מִי נִגְלָתָה

Who has believed our preaching? And the arm of the Lord, to whom has it been revealed?

לְשִׁמְעָתֵנוּ emphasizes the nature of the message, it is preached, it is to be heard. This is how the Word is revealed. While the Messiah gave his life as a ransom for all nations, it is of greatest sadness that the descendants of Jacob have in large part rejected him. They rejected the message. Christ's sacrifice is for all, Jew and Gentile. But from the time of the Incarnation of the Son of God, most of Jacob's descendants have refused the Messiah. Paul's 10th chapter in Romans not only details this rejection, but points out that this rejection was foretold by Isaiah in this passage:

Romans 10:16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?"
✠(St. Andrew)

Many other passages preached that the children of Israel would by-and-large reject the Messiah:

Psalms 69:8 I have become a stranger to My brothers, and a foreigner to My mother's children.

Psalms 118:22 The Stone which the builders refused has become the Head of the corner.

✠(Easter Day 1st)

Isaiah 6:9-10 ⁹ And He said, Go, and tell this people, You hear indeed, but do not understand; and seeing you see, but do not know. ¹⁰ Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn back, and be healed.

Isaiah 8:14 And He shall be a sanctuary for you, but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of falling to both the houses of Israel, for a trap and for a snare to the people of Jerusalem.

The Shepherds of Israel were preached about beforehand as the ones who would arrange a price to betray the Messiah:

Zechariah 11:8-13 ⁸ I also cut off three shepherds in one month; and my soul was impatient with them, and their soul also despised me. ⁹ And I said, I will not feed you; that which

dies, let it die; and that which is to be cut off, let it be cut off. And those left, let them eat, each woman her neighbor's flesh. ¹⁰ And I took my staff Kindness, and broke it apart, to break My covenant which I had made with all the peoples. ¹¹ And it was broken in that day; and so the poor of the flock who were watching Me knew that it was the word of the LORD. ¹² And I said to them, If it is good, give My price; and if not, let it go. So they weighed My price thirty pieces of silver. ¹³ And the LORD said to me, Throw it to the potter, the magnificent price at which I was valued by them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD.

Matthew 26:14-15 ¹⁴ Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests. ¹⁵ And he said to them, What will you give me, and I will betray Him to you? And they appointed to him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.

During the earthly ministry of the Messiah the rejection He experienced by His own people grew greater and greater. The rejection of His preaching is equated with rejecting Him.

John 1:10-11 ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and His own received Him not. †(1st Series, Christmas Day 1st)

John 12:37-38 ³⁷ But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they did not believe on Him, ³⁸ so that the saying of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" †(1st Series, Tuesday of Holy Week)

Matthew 13:53-58 ⁵³ And it happened when Jesus finished these parables, He departed from there. ⁵⁴ And when He had come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so much so that they were astonished and said, From where does this man have this wisdom and these mighty works? ⁵⁵ Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brothers, James and Joses and Simon and Judas, ⁵⁶ and his sisters, are they not all with us? Then from where does this man have all these things? ⁵⁷ And they were offended in Him. But Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country and in his own house. ⁵⁸ And He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

Matthew 21:42-44 ⁴² Jesus said to them, Did you never read

in the Scriptures, “The stone which the builders rejected, this One has become the head of the corner; this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?”⁴³ Therefore I say to you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing out its fruits.⁴⁴ And he who falls on this Stone shall be broken, but on whomever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

Matthew 26:65 Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard his blasphemy.

Matthew 27:21-23²¹ The governor answered and said to them, Which of the two do you desire that I release to you? They said, Barabbas.²² Pilate said to them, What then shall I do with Jesus, who is called Christ? They all said to him, Let Him be crucified.²³ And the governor said, Why? What evil has He done? But they cried out the more, saying, let Him be crucified!

John 5:37-43³⁷ And He sending Me, the Father Himself, has borne witness of Me. Neither have you heard His voice at any time nor seen His shape.³⁸ And you do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He has sent.³⁹ You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life. And they are the ones witnessing of Me,⁴⁰ and you will not come to Me that you might have life.⁴¹ I do not receive honor from men.⁴² But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you.⁴³ I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me. If another shall come in his own name, him you will receive.
✠(3rd Series, Advent 4)

Acts 4:25-28²⁵ who by the mouth of Your servant David has said, “Why did the nations rage and the people imagine vain things?”²⁶ The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.²⁷ For truly, against Your holy child Jesus, whom You have anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the nations, and the people of Israel, were gathered together²⁸ in order to do whatever Your hand and Your counsel determined before to be done.

His own family rejected Him:

John 7:3-5³ Therefore His brothers said to Him, Move away from here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see the works that You do.⁴ For no one does anything in secret, while he himself seeks to be in public. If you do these things, reveal yourself to the world.⁵ For His brothers did not believe in Him.

His own disciples fell and rejected Him for a time:

Matthew 26:31-35 ³¹ Then Jesus said to them, All of you will be offended because of Me this night. For it is written, “I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.” ³² But after I have risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. ³³ Peter answered and said to Him, though all shall be offended because of You, I will never be offended. ³⁴ Jesus said to him, Truly I say to you that this night, before the cock crows, you shall deny Me three times. ³⁵ Peter said to Him, though I should die with You, yet I will not deny You. All the disciples also said the same.

Isaiah 53:2a

וַיַּעַל כִּיּוֹנֵק לְפָנָיו וְכַשְׂרֵשׁ מֵאֲרֶץ צְיָה

*For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,
And as a root out of dry ground.*

The picture in this passage is of humble, weak origins. As we have just read “The Arm of the Lord has been revealed.” The “Him” before whom the child will grow is God the Father.

The “dry ground” out of which the Messiah grows can be rightly understood as a general statement about the many different and unique circumstances of the Messiah’s birth. Every disadvantage for his conception, birth, nurture, livelihood, and birthright. These include:

1. The “dry ground” encompasses the nature of the Messiah’s conception—the fact that the Messiah is born of a Virgin, without human father. The conception is miraculous. He is the seed of the woman, not the male.

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He will bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.
†(1st Series, Lent 1)

Psalms 22:9 For You are He who took me out of the womb, causing me to trust when I was on my mother’s breasts.
†(1st Series, Good Friday)

Isaiah 7:14 So, the Lord Himself shall give you a sign. Behold, the virgin will conceive and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel. †(1st Series, Christmas Vigil)

Jeremiah 31:22 How long will you turn to and fro, O faithless daughter? For the LORD has created a new thing in the land; a woman shall enclose a man.

Matthew 1:18-23 ¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was this way (for His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph) before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ But Joseph, her husband to be, being just, and not willing to make her a public example, he purposed to put her away secretly. ²⁰ And as he thought upon these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take to you Mary as your wife. For that in her is fathered of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she shall bear a son, and you shall call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins. ²² Now all this happened so that might be fulfilled that was spoken of the LORD by the prophet, saying, ²³ “Behold, the virgin shall conceive in her womb, and will bear a son. And they will call His name Emmanuel,” which being interpreted is, God with us.

Luke 1:30-35 ³⁰ And the angel said to her, Do not fear, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold! You shall conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name JESUS. ³² He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest. And the Lord God shall give Him the throne of His father David. ³³ And He shall reign over the house of David forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. ³⁴ Then Mary said to the angel, How shall this be, since I do not know a man? ³⁵ And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit shall come on you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you. Therefore also that Holy One which will be born of you shall be called Son of God.

Luke 2:22-24 ²² And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were fulfilled, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord) ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice according to that said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

2. The “dry ground” encompasses the harsh nature of the Messiah’s birth. No luxury was afforded the Messiah at his birth.

Luke 2:7 And she brought forth her son, the First-born, and wrapped Him, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

†(1st Series, Christmas Vigil)

3. The “dry ground” encompasses places where the child resided. Indeed he was treated as a weed that Herod tried to uproot. He went from the dry ground of a stable, to the dry ground of Egypt, to the dry ground of Nazareth.

Matthew 2:13-15 ¹³ And when they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise and take the young child and His mother and flee into Egypt. And be there until I bring you word, for Herod is about to seek the child to destroy Him. ¹⁴ And he arose and took the young child and his mother by night and departed into Egypt. ¹⁵ And he was there until the death of Herod; so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the LORD through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called My Son.”

†(1st Series, Christmas 2)

John 1:46 And Nathanael said to him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said to him, Come and see.

4. The “dry ground” encompasses the lack of a place that the Messiah had to call His own during His earthly ministry.

Matthew 8:20 And Jesus said to him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head.

5. The “dry ground” also encompasses the house of David, from whom there had been no king since before the fall of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 11:1 And a Shoot goes out from the stump of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

†(1st Series, Christmas 1)

Matthew 2:1-2 ¹ Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men came from the east to Jerusalem, ² saying, Where is He who is born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east and have come to worship Him.

†(1st Series, Epiphany)

See also the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew 1 and Luke 3.

6. And “dry ground” encompasses the people who should have been his own, but rejected Him, as discussed under the previous verse.

This poverty of origins experienced by the Messiah is called “the Humiliation of Christ” in theological writings. The study of the Humiliation of Christ in Scripture teaches us why the Messiah chose to come from such poverty.

2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, for your sakes He became poor, in order that you might be made rich through His poverty.

Isaiah 53:2b

לֹא-תֵאָר לוֹ וְלֹא הָדָר וְנִרְאָהוּ וְלֹא-מְרָאָה וְנִתְמַדְהוּ

He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.

Looking at the Servant’s outward appearance gives no human an advantage to discovering His true nature or mission. “Who has believed our preaching?” While the Servant provided great signs, these were to testify to the preaching. Outward signs were chosen because of their relation to the Prophecy of God, even the details of Holy Week and the Great Passion of Good Friday. Each of these was chosen beforehand to make the Messiah recognizable—but only grasped through the benefit of the preached Word.

Consider Palm Sunday and the prophecy of Zechariah:

Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, your King comes to you. He is righteous and victorious, meek and riding on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
✠(1st Series, Palm Sunday)

Though many walked about singing “Hosannah to the Son of David” yet still rejection met these cries, as it is written:

Luke 19:39 And some of the Pharisees from the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.”
✠(2nd Series, Advent 2)

Consider the reaction to Jesus' preaching in the synagogue:

Matthew 13:54-57 ⁵⁴ And when He had come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so much so that they were astonished and said, From where does this man have this wisdom and these mighty works? ⁵⁵ Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brothers, James and Joses and Simon and Judas, ⁵⁶ and his sisters, are they not all with us? Then from where does this man have all these things? ⁵⁷ And they were offended in Him. But Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor, except in his own country and in his own house.

Luke 4:28-30 ²⁸ And hearing these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. ²⁹ And they rose up and thrust Him outside the city, and led Him up to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, in order to throw Him down. ³⁰ But passing through the midst of them, He went away.

Isaiah 53:3

נְבִיָּה וְחָרַל אִישִׁים אִישׁ מִכָּאֲבוֹת וַיְדוּעַ הָלִי
וּכְמִסְתָּר פָּנִים מִמֶּנּוּ נְבִיָּה וְלֹא חֲשַׁבְנָהוּ

He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him.

He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

So far the argument of this passage from 53:1 to the present has been built in this way:

1. The Question of "Who has believed our preaching" contrasted with "to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"
2. The lowly origins of the Servant: the Servant's lack of any visibly distinct feature to attract people to Him.

At this point the text moves to consider the reaction of the people to the Servant. We may interpret it this way: "Not only was there nothing to attract, humanity went further and despised Him."

Perhaps it should be interpreted, "*Because* there was nothing flashy about him to prove that he was something special, the world

despised him.” This is in harmony with Paul’s explanation in I Corinthians:

I Cor. 1:22-23 ²² For the Jews ask for a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.
 †(2nd Series, Sexagesima)

Throughout the Old Testament there are witnesses to the fact of the Messiah’s persecution and rejection. We have seen many above, others include:

Psalms 2:2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers plot together, against the LORD and against His anointed
 †(Christmas Vigil, Easter Day 2nd)

Psalms 22:6 But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people.

†(Palm Sunday, Good Friday)

Psalms 69:4 They who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; they who would destroy me are mighty, my lying enemies. Then I restored what I did not take away.

Isaiah 49:7 So says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, His Holy One, to Him whom man despises, to Him whom the nation hates, the servant of rulers: Kings shall see and arise, rulers also shall worship, because of the LORD who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose You.

Zechariah 11:8 and their soul also despised me.

We see the fulfillment of these words in the New Testament:

Matthew 27:21-23 ²¹ The governor answered and said to them, Which of the two do you desire that I release to you? They said, Barabbas. ²² Pilate said to them, What then shall I do with Jesus, who is called Christ? They all said to him, Let Him be crucified. ²³ And the governor said, Why? What evil has He done? But they cried out the more, saying, let Him be crucified!

Mark 6:3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at Him.

Luke 6:11 And they were filled with madness, and talked with one another as to what they might do to Jesus.

John 5:16 And therefore the Jews persecuted Jesus and sought

to kill Him, because He had done these things on the sabbath day.

John 7:7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.

John 8:52 Then the Jews said to Him, Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham and the prophets are dead, and you say, If a man keeps my Word, he shall never taste of death.
 †(1st Series, Lent 5)

John 10:20 And many of them said, He has a demon and is insane. Why do you hear him?

**“Third Strophe: 53:4-6: He bore our chastisement.”²⁸
 The Servant as Substitute.**

Isaiah 53:4

אָכֵן חָלֵנוּ הוּא נָשָׂא וּמַכָּאֲבֵינוּ סְבָלָם וְאַנְחָנוּ
 חֲשַׁבְנָהּוּ נְגוּעַ מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים וּמַעֲנָהּ

*Surely our sicknesses He has borne
 and our sorrows He has carried them;
 And we esteemed Him
 Stricken, smitten by God,
 and afflicted.*

The Servant is a substitute for those who rightly deserved punishment. This passage is a transition from considering humanity’s rejection of the Servant to consideration of the Servant’s real work. As outlined above, verses 4-6 are structurally the central passages of the whole of Isaiah 40-66. The Vicarious Atonement of the Servant and His Objective Justification of sinners stands as the structural center as well as the Theological Center of Christianity.

It is significant that Isaiah reveals the Theological center here between the lowly origin of the Servant and His general rejection by Israel and the world in the previous section (vv. 1-3) and the description of the Great Passion where this was carried out on the Servant in the section following (vv. 7-9).

A Substitute was necessary because the people God wants to save are unwilling and unable to come to Him. We have seen the

rejection by the world and by Israel in passages above. Here we see examples of God's lamenting that rejection.

Matthew 23:37 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to her, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not!

Luke 19:41f ⁴¹ And as He drew near, He beheld the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying, If you had known, even you, even at least in this day of yours, the things for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.

It is also significant for us to realize that teachers in Judaism have recognized not only the fact that the Messiah is the Servant in this chapter, but that the Messiah's afflictions and death would be substitutionary for the sin of humanity.

The Babylonian Talmud was assembled around 500 A.D. The word "smitten" can be used in reference to leprosy. So the Messiah is also known in the Talmud as "the leper scholar." About the identity of the divine Substitute the Talmud states:

ורבי יוחנן אמר למשיח מזה שמו דבי רבי שילא אמרי
 שילא שמו שנאמר (בראשית מט) עד כי יבא שילא דבי רבי
 ינאי אמרי ינון שמו שנאמר (תהילים עב) יהי שמו
 לעולם לפני שמש ינון שמו דבי רבי חנינה אמר חנינה
 שמו שנאמר (ירמיהו טז) אשר לא אתן לכם חנינה
 ויש אומרים מנחם בן חזקיה שמו שנאמר (איכה א) כי רחק
 ממני מנחם משיב נפשי ורבנן אמרי חיוורא דבי רבי
 שמו שנאמר (ישעיהו נג) אכן חלינו הוא נשא ומכאובינו
 סבלם ואנחנו חשבנוהו ננוע מוכה אלהים ומעונה²⁹

Rabbi Johanan said of the Messiah "What is his name?" The School of R. Shila said: "His name is Shiloh, for it is written, 'until Shiloh come.'" [Gen. XLIX, 10] The School of R. Yannai said: "His name is Yinnon, for it is written, 'His name shall endure forever: [E.V. 'shall be continued'] e'er the sun was, his name is Yinnon.'" [Ps. LXXII, 17] The School of R. Haninah maintained: "His name is Haninah, as it is written, 'Where I will not give you Haninah.'" [Jer. XVI, 13] Others say: "His name is Menahem the son of Hezekiah, for

it is written, 'Because Menahem ['the comforter'], that would relieve my soul, is far.'"[Lam. I, 16] The Rabbis said: "His name is 'the leper scholar,' as it is written, 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God, and afflicted.'"[Isa. LIII, 4] (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 98b)³⁰

The Gospel of Matthew reveals that in fulfillment of this prophecy Jesus healed the sick.

Matthew 8:16-17 ¹⁶ And evening coming on, they brought to Him many who had been possessed with demons. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick ¹⁷ so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, "He took on Himself our weaknesses and bore our sicknesses."

The healings that Jesus accomplished during His earthly ministry were part of the Substitutionary Atonement. He took their infirmities from them at that time. Then He suffered them at His passion and death.

This Substitution was also important to Jewish mysticism. The *Zohar* is a multi-volume set of Jewish Kabbalah. The work was put together around 1200 A.D.

In the hour in which they tell the Messiah about the sufferings of Israel in exile, and about the sinful among them who seek not the knowledge of their Master, the Messiah lifts up his voice and weeps over the sinful among them. This is what is written: He was wounded because of our transgressions, he was crushed because of our iniquities (Isaiah 53:5). Those souls then return to their places. In the Garden of Eden there is a Hall which is called the Hall of the Sons of Illness. The Messiah enters that Hall and summons all the disease and all the pains and all the suffering of Israel that they should come upon him, and all of them come upon him.³² And were it not that he had thus lightened them off Israel and taken them upon himself, there had been no man able to bear Israel's chastisements for the transgression of the law: and this is that which is written, 'Surely our sicknesses he hath carried.'³³ (The Zohar 2:212a)

Isaiah 53:5a

וְהוּא מְחַלֵּל מִפְּשָׁעֵנוּ מִדְּכָא מִעֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ מוֹסֵר שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ עָלָיו

*But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him.*

This theological center of the Vicarious Atonement is tied in with specific acts of punishment carried out on the Servant. Vicarious Atonement—Substitution for punishment—is not merely a philosophical or academic musing. It was an actual thing carried out on the real, physical Servant of God.

Daniel 9:24 Seventy weeks are decreed as to your people and as to your holy city, to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins, and to make atonement for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.

Daniel 9:26 And after sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself.

The New Covenant was cut not into rock, but carved into the flesh of the Son of God. And we are made partakers of the flesh of the Servant and therefore His covenant through His Means of Grace.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 ³¹ Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will cut a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, ³² not according to the covenant that I cut with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which covenant of Mine they broke, although I was a husband to them, says the LORD; ³³ but this shall be the covenant that I will cut with the house of Israel: After those days, says the LORD, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ And they shall no more teach each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, Know the LORD; for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more.

Matthew 26:28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Romans 4:25 who was delivered because of our offenses and was raised for our justification.

‡(2nd Series, Trinity 8)

1 Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures,

‡(1st Series, Trinity 11)

Galatians 1:4 who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world according to the will of God and our Father,

Colossians 1:20 And through Him having made peace through the blood of His cross, it pleased the Father to reconcile all things to Himself through Him, whether the things on earth or the things in Heaven.

Titus 2:13-14 ¹³ looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify to Himself a special people, zealous of good works.

‡(1st Series, Christmas Vigil)

Hebrews 9:28 Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many. And to those who look for Him He shall appear the second time without sin to salvation

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, indeed being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit;

‡(1st Series, Baptism of Jesus)

The Substitutionary punishment of the Servant as taught in this passage of Isaiah was so important to many early Jews that they found ways to teach it even when the text they were explaining didn't relate to the Vicarious Atonement. *Midrash Ruth Rabbah* is part of a collection of Rabbinic commentaries on the Books of Moses and the Five Megilloth.³⁴ The collection was assembled in the 6th century A.D. It speaks specifically of the punishment of the Messiah for the sins of mankind as relevant to understanding Boaz in Ruth 2:

Another explanation (of Ruth ii,14): -- He [Boaz] is speaking of king Messiah; "Come hither," draw near to the throne; "and eat of the bread," that is, the bread of the kingdom; "and dip thy morsel in the vinegar," this refers to his chastisements, as it is said, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities" *Midrash Ruth Rabbah* 5:6.

Isaiah 53:5b

וּבַחֲבֵרְתּוֹ נִרְפָּא לָנוּ

And by His stripes we are healed.

This particular punishment of the Servant is named explicitly in prophecy many times. In Deuteronomy 25:3 whipping is given as a punishment for sin. Nathan the prophet spoke the Word of God to David concerning David's desire to build a temple for the Lord. In that prophecy God said He would establish the throne of David forever. The Substitute as the Son of David, the Servant takes the guilt of David and the people upon Himself by taking the stripes that David earned through his own sin.

II Samuel 7:14 I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the sons of men.

The nature of this punishment as an ultimate punishment for those who reject God is found in Proverbs.

Proverbs 19:29 Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the backs of fools.

Proverbs 20:30 The stripes of a wound cleanse away evil, and strokes the inward parts of the belly.

The Prophecy in Psalm 89 speaks of the sin of the people and how they will be cleansed so that God will not remember their sin anymore. Again, this teaches about a Substitute who will take the punishment.

Psalms 89:32 then I will visit their wickedness with the rod, and their sin with stripes.

†(Baptism of Jesus)

Isaiah describes the Messiah in chapter 50 as receiving this punishment of whipping, having His beard plucked, and being shamed and spat upon.

Isaiah 50:6 I gave My back to the strikers, and My cheeks to pluckers; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.

And, of course, the New Testament bears witness to the whipping of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

Matthew 27:26 Then he released Barabbas to them. And when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.

I Peter 2:24 He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that dying to sins, we might live to righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed.
‡(1st Series, Baptism of Jesus)

In the Jewish Prayerbook, called the *Machsor*, Eleazar ha Kalir (date uncertain) wrote of the stripes as the payment for sin upon the Messiah's shoulder:

Our righteous anointed is departed from us: horror hath seized us, and we have none to justify us. He hath borne the yoke of our iniquities and our transgression, and is wounded because of our transgression. He beareth our sins on his shoulder, that he may find pardon for our iniquities. We shall be healed by his wound, at the time that the Eternal will create Him [the Messiah] as a new creature.³⁶

Isaiah 53: 6

כָּלֵנוּ כְּצֹאֵן תָּעִינוּ אִישׁ לְדַרְכּוֹ פָּנֵינוּ וַיְהִיָּה הַפְּגִיעַ בּוֹ אֶת עוֹן כָּלֵנוּ

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Here is the great climax of the Servant's work, and the greatest contrast between the Servant and all the rest of humanity; including Israel, the gentiles, and the people in the Christian Church. We turn to do our own will, the Servant does the Father's will. We go astray, the Lord lays on the Servant the sins of all.

This shows that it was not men who had the upper hand on the Messiah, but rather that it was the will of the Lord that the Servant should suffer thus for the world. This is the essence behind

John 3:16. It is why Jesus tells the people that He came to do the Father's will (John 6:38). Even as the Servant was betrayed into the hands of sinful men He said:

John 18:11 Then Jesus said to Peter, Put up your sword into the sheath. The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?

✠(1st Series, Good Friday)

Again, it is the concrete, real acts of punishment carried out on the real man, the Servant, Jesus Christ, which won the real forgiveness from real sins from the real God, and enables us to live in a real heaven forever in real bodies of flesh and bone free from sin.

Romans 8:3-4³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; ⁴ so that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

✠(3rd Series, Trinity 14)

1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 9 For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we watch or sleep we should live together with Him.

✠(1st Series, Last Sunday of the Church Year)

1 John 2:2 And He is the propitiation concerning our sins, and not concerning ours only, but also concerning the sins of all the world.

✠(3rd Series, Trinity 11)

“Fourth Strophe 53:7-9: Patiently He suffered every wrong, although He was innocent.”³⁷

Isaiah 53:7

נִגַּשׁ וְהוּא נִעְנָה וְלֹא יִפְתַּח-פִּיּוֹ כִּשְׂשָׁה לְטָבַח יוֹבֵל
וּכְרָחֵל לִפְנֵי נֹזְזִיָּה נֶאֱלָמָה וְלֹא יִפְתַּח פִּיּוֹ

*He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
 Yet He opened not His mouth;
 He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
 and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
 so He opened not His mouth.*

In this passage we turn from what was accomplished by the Servant as our Substitute for God's wrath against sin to the humble behavior of the Servant while He was undergoing this trial. In verses 7-9 specific and explicit examples of the Servant's very real suffering are given whereby the people of God would recognize Him when He came to fulfill God's Law. This passage (v. 7) says that the Servant must die. There are two essential characteristics of the Servant revealed here.

1. In order for the Servant to die, He must be true man.
2. And central to this picture is a right understanding of the Lamb as a sacrifice for sin.

The life and death of a lamb was used as a substitute for Isaac when God provided it.

Gen 22:9-14 ⁹ And they came to the place which God had told him of. And Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. And he bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on the wood. ¹⁰ And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ And the Angel of Yahweh called to him from the heavens and said, Abraham! Abraham! And he said, Here am I. ¹² And He said, Do not lay your hand on the lad, nor do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from Me. ¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked. And, behold, a ram behind him was entangled in a thicket by its horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham called the name of that place Yahweh Will See; so that it is said until this day, In the mount of Yahweh it will be seen.

The death of the lamb and its blood sprinkled upon the door posts and lintel of a house in Egypt was the sign that the Angel of Death should pass over a house and spare the firstborn from death.

Exodus 12.³ Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth of this month they shall take to them each man a lamb for a father's house, a lamb for a house.⁴ And if the household is too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take according to the number of the souls, each one, according to the eating of his mouth, you shall count concerning the lamb.⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You shall take from the sheep or from the goats.⁶ And you shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month. And the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.⁷ And they shall take of the blood and strike it on the two side posts and upon the upper door post of the houses in which they shall eat it.⁸ And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roasted with fire, and unleavened bread. They shall eat it with bitter herbs.⁹ Do not eat of it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted with fire, its head with its legs, and with its inward parts.¹⁰ And you shall not let any of it remain until the morning. And that which remains of it until the morning you shall burn with fire.¹¹ And you shall eat of it this way, with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in a hurry. It is the LORD's passover.¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And I will execute judgments against all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD.¹³ And the blood shall be a sign to you upon the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you. And the plague shall not be upon you for a destruction when I smite in the land of Egypt.¹⁴ And this day shall be a memorial to you. And you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by a law forever.
 †(1st Series, Maundy Thursday)

This meal was to be kept annually in perpetuity (which the Israelites failed to do and now cannot do because the temple is destroyed).

Exodus 12:26-28²⁶ And it will be, when your sons shall say to you, What is this service to you?²⁷ Then you shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD's passover, who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt, when He struck the Egyptians and delivered our houses. And the people bowed and worshiped.²⁸ And the sons of Israel went away and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron; so they did.

There are nearly 100 different passages in the Books of Moses that describe the sacrifice of the Lamb both for Passover and for sin, most significantly the perpetual offering of a lamb morning and night so that the priests could be purified and be in the presence of God (Exodus 29:38-46). There are nearly 200 passages in the Old Testament which deal with the lamb as an offering to God for sin. With this background we are able to understand how John the Baptizer applied this passage from Isaiah to Jesus Christ. He was speaking of the shedding of the Blood of Jesus Christ:

John 1:29 The next day John sees Jesus coming to him and says, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!
 †(3rd Series, Baptism of Jesus)

Every abuse that was heaped upon the Lamb of God, and His willingness to die for our sins forms the basis of our confession and hymn we call the *Agnus Dei*. Consider how appropriate this hymn is as a reflection of the teaching of Isaiah.

O Christ, the Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world;
 Have mercy upon us.
 O Christ, the Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world;
 Have mercy upon us.
 O Christ, the Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world;
 Grant us Your peace. Amen.

The *Agnus Dei* is sung during the Lord's Supper. It is a confession of the real presence of Jesus Christ under the bread and wine—"that the Body and Blood of Christ are truly present, and are distributed to those who eat in the Supper of the Lord." (Augsburg Confession, article X) The *Agnus Dei* is sung after the Words of Institution either before or during the distribution. It looks back to the Old Testament sacrificial system as it pointed toward Christ. It is a remembrance of Christ's suffering and death in the Lord's Supper and a confession of the value of the Body and Blood present and distributed for the forgiveness of our sins.

I Peter 1:18-19 ¹⁸ For you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious

blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;

And the *Agnus Dei* looks forward to our reunion with the Lamb on the last day—as portrayed more than thirty different times in the book of Revelation.³⁸

It was contemplation on this passage and Who the Lamb of God might be that was at the center of the Ethiopian Eunuch's conversion by God through Philip (Acts 8:32ff).

The recognition of the abuse the Lamb of God suffered is essential to understanding how the Servant functions as the sacrificial lamb:

Matthew 26:67-68 ⁶⁷ Then they spat in His face and beat Him with the fist. And others struck Him with the palms of their hands, ⁶⁸ saying, Prophecy to us, Christ; who is the one who struck you?

Matthew 27:27-31 ²⁷ Then taking Jesus into the praetorium, the soldiers of the governor gathered the cohort against Him. ²⁸ And stripping Him, they put a scarlet robe around Him. ²⁹ And plaiting a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! ³⁰ And spitting at Him, they took the reed and struck at His head. ³¹ And after they had mocked Him, they took the robe off of Him and put His own clothing on Him and led Him away to crucify Him. (parallel Mark 15:16-20)

The Lamb's Silence ³⁹ is symbolical, real, and significant. He submitted in every way to the judgment against sin.

Psalm 109:2-5 ² for the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me; they spoke against me with a lying tongue. ³ And they surrounded me with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. ⁴ For my love they are my foes; but I am in prayer. ⁵ And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

Matthew 26:62-63 ⁶² And standing up, the high priest said to Him, Do you answer nothing? What is it that these witness against you? ⁶³ But Jesus was silent.

Peter makes clear, in no uncertain terms, that Christ's silence

and all the events portrayed in this section of Isaiah refer to the Christ:

1 Peter 2:21-22 ²² He who did no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth, ²³ who when He was reviled did not revile in return. When He suffered, He did not threaten, but gave Himself up to Him who judges righteously. ²⁴ He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that dying to sins, we might live to righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed.
 †(1st Series, Easter 43)

Now, some will make the accusation that Jesus isn't the Messiah, or the Servant of this chapter because He spoke to the Chief Priest, and to Pilate. "Aha! Aha! See, he doesn't do it right!" "He can't be the Messiah. The Scriptures prove it! There! you smarty-smarty Christian!"

In response, let us point out that while Jesus did talk to people during His arrest and judgment, He did not refuse any punishment or abuse. There is one slap that Jesus spoke about in John 18. "Well, Mr. Smarty-Smarty Christian, please explain to me how this is not a contradiction!"

Easily done. Jesus was asked what He taught. Jesus replied that He didn't teach anything in private, they should just ask the people. Their word should be enough.

John 18:22-23 ²² And when He had spoken this way, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Do you answer the high priest so? ²³ Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?
 †(1st Series, Good Friday)

Was Jesus being insubordinate? No. Jesus was reminding them that the testimony of one man is not enough. If they wanted proof they had to have two or more witnesses. The question to Jesus was illegitimate according to Biblical Law.

Deuteronomy 17:6 At the mouth of two witnesses or three witnesses shall he that is worthy of death be put to death. At the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.

Even so, He still submitted to their judgment, though they wrongly condemned Him to death. So, did the Jews after Christ's ascension ever teach that the Messiah would die? Yes. They had understood about a dying Messiah and a triumphant Messiah. The dying Messiah they called the "son of Joseph," the triumphant Messiah was the "son of David." In many places they are treated as two different individuals. Occasionally they are treated as the same individual. The distinction they made between these two Messiahs is basically a misunderstanding about the Humiliation and the Exaltation of the Christ. Here is a sample about the dying Messiah the son of Joseph in the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Sokkah:

R. Dosa and the rabbis differ: One rabbi holds that it [mourning in the temple] was for the Messiah the son of Joseph, who was killed; and another holds that it was for the evil angel, who was killed. It would be right according to one who holds that it was for the Messiah the son of Joseph, because he explains as supporting him the passage [Zech. xii. 10]: "And they will look up toward me whom they have pierced, and they will lament for him, as one laments for an only son."

Isaiah 53:8

מַעֲזָר וּמִמְשַׁפֵּט לָקַח וְאֶת־דִּדְרוֹ מִי יְשׁוּחֶחַ
כִּי נִגְזַר מֵאֶרֶץ חַיִּים מִפֶּשַׁע עַמִּי נִגַּע לְמוֹ

*He was taken from prison and from judgment,
and who will declare His generation?
For He was cut off from the land of the living;
for the transgressions of My people He was stricken.*

There are three issues in this passage which come to bear on how the Servant paid for the transgressions of "My people." His being judged, His lack of progeny, and His death. With regard to his being judged, Jesus was judged before mankind 6 times:

- 1) Before Annas (John 18:13-22)
- 2) Before Caiaphas (Matthew 26:57-66)
- 3) Before the Sanhedrin (Matthew 27:1)

- 4) Before Pilate (Matthew 27:2-11)
- 5) Before Herod (Luke 23:11)
- 6) Before the People (Matthew 27:22)

The Seventh Judgment came from the Father.

- 7) **Matthew 27:46** And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” That is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?”

“Who shall declare His generation?” Not only did Jesus not get married or have children via biological means, He made explicit to His mother and His beloved disciple that He was no longer counted as Mary’s or Joseph’s heir:

John 19:26-27²⁶ Then when Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, Woman, behold your son! ²⁷ Then He said to the disciple, Behold your mother! And from that hour that disciple took her into his own home .
 †(1st Series, Good Friday, St. Thomas’ Day)

His final obligation then, was to die. That is the sentence upon sin.

John 19:30 Then when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, It is finished! And He bowed His head and gave up the spirit.
 †(1st Series, Good Friday, St. Thomas’ Day)

Isaiah 53:9

וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־רִשְׁעֵי־ם קִבְרוֹ וְאֶת־עֲשִׂיר בְּמִתּוֹ עַל
 לֹא־חָמָס עָשָׂה וְלֹא מְרִמָּה בִּפְּוֹ

*And they made His grave--
 but with the rich at His death,
 because He had done no violence,
 nor was any deceit in His mouth.*

The Wicked:

Luke 23:32 And two others, two criminals, were led with Him to be put to death. (and Matthew 27:38)

Psalm 22:16 and You have brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have circled around me; the band of spoilers have hemmed me in, piercers of my hands and my feet.

The Rich:

Matthew 27:57-60 ⁵⁷ When the evening had come, a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, came, who also himself was Jesus' disciple. ⁵⁸ He went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. ⁵⁹ When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in clean linen, ⁶⁰ and laid it in his new tomb, which he had cut out of the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and departed.

The fact of His death is not to be left without eyewitness testimony. The significance of this rests in the fact of the resurrection which is spoken of in verses 10-12. Therefore there is need for prophetic description of the death and New Testament eyewitness proof of death in conformance with the Scriptures. As examples we look at the breaking of the bones of the crucified on that day. The Old Testament says that the Servant would not have His bones broken:

Bones

Psalm 22:17 I can count all my bones; they look and stare at me.
‡(Palm Sunday, Good Friday)

Psalm 34:20 He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.
‡(Trinity 7)

John 19:31-33 ³¹ Then the Jews, because it was Preparation, begged Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the sabbath. For that sabbath was a high day. ³² Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who was crucified with Him. ³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.
‡(1st Series, Good Friday)

But it also says that He would be pierced. As He was pierced blood and water flowed, the blood already beginning to congeal and separate from the water.

Zechariah 12:10 And I will pour on the house of David, and on the people of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of prayers. And they shall look on Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son and shall be bitter over Him, as the bitterness over the first-born.

John 19:34-37 ³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a lance, and instantly there came out blood and water. ³⁵ And he who saw bore record, and his record is true. And he knows that he speaks true, so that you might believe. ³⁶ For these things were done so that the Scripture might be fulfilled, “Not a bone of Him shall be broken.” ³⁷ And again another Scripture says, “They shall look upon Him whom they pierced.”
 †(1st Series, Good Friday)

Fifth Strophe 53:10-12: The more than human exaltation of the Servant.⁴¹

†(Is. 53:10-12, Historic Pericope, 3rd Series, Palm Sunday)

Isaiah 53:10a

וַיְהִיָּה חֶפְזָא דְּכַאֵוּ הַחֲלִי אִם־תְּשִׂים אֶשֶׁם נִפְשׁוֹ

*Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief.
 When You make His soul an offering for sin.*

The Fact that it was God’s will to afflict His Servant in this way has several implications. The fact that it is *God’s will* and not merely a deed done by Jews or Romans at the time of the crucifixion is established not only by this passage but also by the way the plan of salvation has been revealed from the beginning. In Gen. 3:15 it was God’s plan, not man’s, to have the son of a woman crush the serpent’s head. Many of the passages cited above demonstrate the details of God’s plan and the Servant’s single purpose to follow this will of the Father. The arrest in the garden of Gethsemane was plotted by the Lord:

Zechariah 13:7 Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man who is My companion, says the LORD of hosts; strike the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. And I will turn My hand on the little ones.

Indeed, the whole will of the Father concerning the Son's sacrifice for sinners as it is presented in these last three verses is the basis for Paul's statement to the Philippians:

Philippians 2:5-11 ⁵ For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted Him, and has given Him a name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly ones, and of earthly ones, and of ones under the earth; ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
 †(1st Series, Palm Sunday)

This same will of the Father to punish the Son for the sin of mankind and then to exalt the Son is found repeatedly throughout the New Testament. Jesus' High Priestly prayer in John 17 is one of the more elaborate expansions on Is. 52:13-53:12 which focuses on the Son's submission to the Father's will.

Jesus' explanation of this Suffering Servant relationship between Himself and the Father is one of the central focuses in His dialog with the religious authorities:

John 6:38-40 ³⁸For I came down from Heaven, not to do My own will but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ And this is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all which He has given Me I should lose nothing but should raise it up again at the last day. ⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes on Him should have everlasting life. And I will raise him up at the last day.
 †(2nd Series, Lent 4)

His submission to the Father's will, even to having the Father reject Him for a time, was the cause of His great suffering:

Matthew 26:42 He went away again the second time and prayed, saying, My Father, if this cup may not pass away from

Me unless I drink it, Your will be done. (Also Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42)

John 18:11 Then Jesus said to Peter, Put up your sword into the sheath. The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?
 †(1st Series, Good Friday)

This cycle of Humiliation to Exaltation is central to the understanding of Christ's Office as Savior and is the explicit basis for much soul care in the New Testament:

Romans 8:32 Truly He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

†(St. James, the Elder)

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He has made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

†(1st Series, Ash Wednesday)

1 John 3:5 And you know that He was revealed that He might take away our sins, and in Him is no sin.

†(2nd Series, Trinity Sunday)

Hebrews 10:12-18 ¹² But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right of God, ¹³ from then on waiting until His enemies are made His footstool. ¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified. ¹⁵ The Holy Spirit also is a witness to us; for after He had said before, ¹⁶ "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord; I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them," ¹⁷ also He adds, "their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more." ¹⁸ Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

†(1st Series, Good Friday, Annunciation)

Romans 3:23-26 ²³ for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness through the passing by of the sins that had taken place before, in the forbearance of God; ²⁶ for the display of His righteousness at this time, for Him to be just and forgiving the one being of the faith of Jesus.

1 John 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation concerning our sins.

†(1st Series, Epiphany)

And since the Ascension there remains a great and serious question in our day that overshadows and threatens to engulf the real cause of Christ's death. That question is "Who killed Jesus Christ?" For centuries Christians have blamed the Jews for killing the Christ. And at times people who call themselves Christians have used the Gospels, Acts, and some of Paul's writings as justification for economic punishment, vandalism, terrorism, and murder of Jews. What has been left out of consideration by many Christians is the fact that John, Peter, Paul, and Jesus Himself were Jews. When Peter, a Jew, says:

Acts 2:23 this One given to you by the before-determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken and by lawless hands, crucifying Him, you put Him to death;

He is speaking to his fellow Jews. The other Jews recognize this. Christians who are not Jews focus on the phrase "you put him to death." Peter's hearers, on the other hand, focus on the phrase "this One given to you by the before-determined counsel and foreknowledge of God" and realize that they have been unwitting partakers, sinners who have been outwitted by God's plan to send His Suffering Servant for their redemption.

Now it is not all that simple today. Throughout time there have been attacks by Jews upon Christians both literary and real, just as there have been literary and real attacks by Christians upon Jews. It has come to a point now where the New Testament, a collection of Semitic documents, written by pre-Talmudic Jews is viewed as anti-Semitic. And in the midst of this debate the central point of Isaiah 53:10 is missed. It was God's will that this happen to His Servant:

John 10:17-18 ¹⁷ Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I might take it again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down from Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. I have received this commandment from My Father.
 †(1st Series, Context for Easter 3)

Isaiah 53:10b

יִרְאֶה זֶרַע יִאֲרִיךְ יָמִים וְחַפְזָה יְהוָה בְּיָדוֹ יִצְלַח

*He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days,
and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.*

Here Isaiah moves from the Humiliation of the Servant to His Exaltation. Even though the Servant has clearly been put to death by these various tortures and by the Father's rejection (verse 9), yet the Servant will live again. This passage speaks of the Resurrection of Christ. Many readers of the Old Testament claim that the physical Resurrection of the Dead in general is not taught in the Old Testament. But it is. The physical Resurrection of the Servant is specifically taught and the general Resurrection of the Dead is taught:

Job 19:25-27²⁵ For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall rise on the earth at the last; ²⁶ and even after they corrupt my skin, yet this: in my flesh I shall see God, ²⁷ whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not a stranger's; though My heart be exhausted in my bosom.
✠(1st Series, Good Friday)

Psalms 16:8-10⁸ I have set the LORD always before Me; because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved. ⁹ Therefore My heart is glad, and My glory rejoices; My flesh also shall rest in hope; ¹⁰ For You will not leave My soul in hell; You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

Isaiah 25:8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord Yahweh will wipe away tears from all faces. And He shall take away from all the earth the rebuke of His people. For the LORD has spoken.

✠(1st Series, All Saints' Day)

Isaiah 55:3 Bow down your ear, and come to Me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.
✠(1st Series, Name of Jesus)

Hosea 13:14 I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, where are your plagues; O Grave, where is your ruin! Repentance shall be hidden from My eyes.

✠(1st Series, Trinity 21 and Easter Day 2nd Service)

John's Revelation is exquisite in its use of imagery from Isaiah 53 (and other chapters) and the life of Christ, especially with reference to Christ as the Lamb and His Resurrection:

Revelation 5:6 And I looked, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, amidst the elders, a Lamb stood, as if it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

Revelation 5:12 saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.

Isaiah 53:11

מַעֲמֹל נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה יִשְׁבַּע בְּדַעְתּוֹ יִצְדִּיק
 צְדִיק עֲבָדֵי לְרַבִּים וְעֹנֹתָם הוּא יִסְבֵּל

He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied.

*By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many,
 for He shall bear their iniquities.*

The doctrine of Objective Justification is a summary of Scripture passages such as this one. The Resurrected Christ has justified the world because of His own self-sacrifice.

Romans 3:21-26 ²¹ But now a righteousness of God has been revealed apart from Law, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets; ²² even the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ, toward all and upon all those who believe. For there is no difference, ²³ for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness through the passing by of the sins that had taken place before, in the forbearance of God; ²⁶ for the display of His righteousness at this time, for Him to be just and forgiving the one being of the faith of Jesus.
 †(1st Series, Epiphany)

II Corinthians 5:19 God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and having placed the word of reconciliation in us.

Revelation 7:14 And I said to him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are the ones who came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes, and have whited them in the blood of the Lamb.
 †(2nd Series, All Saints' Day)

Revelation 12:11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony. And they did not love their soul to the death.
 †(1st Series, Michaelmas)

Isaiah 53:12

לְכֵן אֶחְלַק־לוֹ בְּרַבִּים וְאֶת־עֲצוּמִים יַחְלַק שָׁלַל תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱרָה
 לְמֹות נַפְשׁוֹ וְאֶת־פְּשָׁעִים נִמְנָה וְהוּא חֲטָא־רַבִּים נָשָׂא
 וְלַפְשָׁעִים יִפְגִּיעַ

*Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great,
 and He shall divide the spoil with the strong,
 because He has poured out His soul unto death,
 and He was numbered with the transgressors,
 and He bore the sin of many,
 and made intercession for the transgressors.*

Because the Servant has humbled himself to the point of death on behalf of sinners He will be exalted, as St. Paul wrote in Philippians 2:5-11. Something that might be missed by a casual reading is the implicit assumption of the text that the Servant is Himself sinless. He didn't commit sin, "there was no guile in His mouth," "He had done no violence," yet "He was numbered with the transgressors."

Luke 23:33 And when they came to the place which is called Calvary, they crucified Him and the criminals there, one on the right, and one on the left.

It does not say: "He bore His own sins," nor even: "He bore His sins and the sins of many." Rather the text states: "He bore the sins of many." The logic of the verse shows that the Servant has no sin of His own. Christ understood this passage as referring to

Himself and His work. The night He was betrayed he said:

Luke 22:37 For I say to you that this which is written must yet be accomplished in Me, “And he was reckoned among the transgressors”; for the things concerning Me have an end.

We have seen many passages from both the Old Testament and the New Testament throughout this paper that testify about the nature of the Messiah and His Vicarious Satisfaction for the sin of humanity.

One more example of how the Suffering Messiah of Isaiah 52-53 was taught by ancient Jews. Again, the purpose of these examples is to show how unfounded anti-Christian claims are. Notice the imagery from Isaiah, especially chapter 52:13-53:12. The Dead Sea Scrolls on the suffering Messiah:

1. [... w]isdom [will be great.] He will atone for all the sons of his generation. And He will be sent to all the sons
2. of his [generation]. His word is like a word of heaven. And his teaching is according to the will of God. His eternal sun will shine brightly.
3. And his fire will spring forth to all the ends of the earth, and will shine over the darkness. The darkness will pass away
4. [from] the land, and deep darkness from the dry ground. They will utter many words against him and many
5. [lie]s. They will invent stories about him, and will utter everything dishonorable against him. Evil will overturn his generation
6. [because ...] will be, and because lies and violence will (fill) his existence, and the people will go astray in his days and will become perplexed. (4Q541, fr.9)⁴³

The Servant in His Church

The Servant in the Liturgy

The following is a list of liturgical items which are based upon (at least in part) the Suffering Servant text of Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

In the Ordinary there are two canticles which echo John the Baptist's reference to Isaiah 53:7 “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter.”

The Gloria in Excelsis Deo (Rite II, p. 64-66):

P: Glory be to God on high;

C: And on earth peace, good will toward men.

We praise You, we bless You, we worship You, we glorify
You, we give thanks to You, for Your great glory.

O Lord God, heav'nly King, God the Father Almighty,

O Lord, the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ;

O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,

You take away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.

You take away the sin of the world, receive our prayer.

You are seated at the right hand of God the Father,
have mercy upon us.

For You only are holy. You only are the Lord.

You only, O Christ, with the Holy Spirit,

are most high in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Gloria in Excelsis Deo of Rite III (p. 90-92) is a different arrangement of this same confession.

The second is the *Agnus Dei*, which focuses on the meaning of Isaiah 53:7 in the context of the real presence in the Lord's Supper.

O Christ, the Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world;
Have mercy upon us.

O Christ, the Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world;
Have mercy upon us.

O Christ, the Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world;
Grant us Your peace. Amen.

Through the Church Year, the Propers for the day teach of the Suffering Servant in Is. 52:13-53:12 during Lent and Holy Week.

ELH Advent 1, and St. John's Day Proper Preface:

... through Jesus Christ our Lord, whose way John the Baptist prepared, proclaiming Him the Messiah, the very Lamb of God, and calling sinners to repentance that they might escape the wrath to be revealed when He comes again in glory...

ELH Easter Proper Preface:

... but chiefly are we bound to praise You for the glorious

resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord; for He is the very Paschal Lamb, which was offered for us and has taken away the sins of the world. By His death He has destroyed death, and by His rising to life again He has restored to us everlasting life...

ELH Lenten Gradual:

Christ humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

ELH Good Friday Introit:

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. All we like sheep have gone astray: and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Hear my prayer, O Lord: and let my cry come to You.

The Lessons in the Historic Series in the ELH use Is. 52:13-53:12 on the following days:

- Series 1 Good Friday 52:13-53:12
- Series 1 Easter Day 52:13-15
- Series 3 Baptism of Jesus 53:1-7
- Series 3 Palm Sunday 53:10-12

The Lessons in the ILCW series A, B, and C use the text 52:13-53:12 on Good Friday. And series B uses 53:10-12 on Pentecost 22

The Servant in the Hymns of the Church

Many hymns use the image of Christ as the Lamb of God in one verse or another. Here I list those hymns in the *ELH* which explicitly use images or phrases from Isaiah 52:13-53:12 as a basis for the lyrics. Actually, there are many more which make allusion to the Suffering Servant passages in Isaiah 52:13-53:12. But this list taken mainly from Lent through Easter gives a good example of how significant this text is for Lutheran Hymnody.

A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth (ELH 331)
Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed (ELH 282)
At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing (ELH 310)
Behold the Lamb of God (ELH 235)
Beneath the Cross of Jesus Kneeling (ELH 288)
Christ the Lord Is Risen Today; Alleluia! (ELH 345)
Christ, the Life of All the Living (ELH 333)
Go to Dark Gethsemane (ELH 284)
Hail, Thou Once-Despised Jesus (ELH 270)
I Lay My Sins on Jesus (ELH 239)
Jesus, I Will Ponder Now (ELH 287)
Just as I Am (ELH 319)
Lamb of God, Pure and Holy (ELH 41)
Lord Jesus Christ, My Life, My Light (ELH 291)
Near the Cross Was Mary Weeping (ELH 294)
Not All the Blood of Beasts (ELH 305)
O Dearest Jesus (ELH 292)
O Jesus, at Your Altar Now (ELH 324)
O Jesus, Lamb of God, Thou Art (ELH 271)
O Love, How Deep (ELH 281)
O Sacred Head, Now Wounded (ELH 334, 335)
O Sinner, Come Thy Sin to Mourn (ELH 272)
Of My Life the Life (ELH 336)
Sing, My Tongue, How Glorious Battle (ELH 298)
Stricken, Smitten and Afflicted (ELH 297)
The Death of Jesus Christ, Our Lord (ELH 329)
There Is A Fountain Filled with Blood (ELH 301)
Thou to Whom the Sick and Dying (ELH 237)
Thy Soul, O Jesus, Hallow Me (ELH 290)
Upon the Cross Extended (ELH 304)
What Wondrous Love is This (ELH 306)
When O'er My Sins I Sorrow (ELH 276)

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- 2 “Isaiah 52:13-53:12”
- 3 “Notes on Isaiah 53:12”
- 4 “O.T.X: Some help on the vocabulary of Isaiah 53”
- 5 “Some help on the vocabulary of Isaiah 52:13-53:12”

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Chaim: A Reformed Ministry to Jewish People

<http://www.chaim.org>

Very useful pages on Isaiah 53

Jews for Jesus

<http://www.jewsforjesus.org>

Some good papers available there from their periodical title

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“The Rabbis’ Dilemma: A Look at Isaiah 53” by Rachmiel Frydland, *Issues* 2:5

<http://www.jewsforjesus.org/library/issues/02-05/Isaiah53.htm>

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¹ Blenkinsopp, 166-174.

² “The Suffering Servant: By The Verses—An Introduction to Isaiah 53” Shlomo Ishtov, 2002 for <http://www.MessiahTruth.com>, page at <http://www.messiahtruth.com/isa53intro.html>

³ The Messiah Truth, Inc. “Who We Are” page at <http://www.messiahtruth.com/howeare.html>

⁴ Shlomo Ishtov, op. cit.

⁵ Shlomo Ishtov, op. cit.

⁶ Shlomo Ishtov, op. cit.

⁷ From his commentary on Isaiah, quoted in The Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters, Ktav Publishing House, 1969, Volume 2, pages 99-114. Citation found at Chaim.org <http://www.chaim.org/rabbis.htm>

⁸ Prof. Rudy Honsey’s handouts from his seminary course on Old Testament Exegesis: Isaiah, included a single page titled “Passages in the Book of Isaiah Containing the Expression ‘Servant’ in the Singular Only” which served as the impetus for this section.

⁹ Most translations following KJV and Luther in taking vv. 18ff. as a lament about past action. A. Pieper construes the passages as a call to repentance. For discussion on the issue see A Pieper (337f.), GKC (§159 l,m,p). BDB (530a), Jouon (§163c, §167f).

¹⁰ Refuting Missionaries.Org page at <http://www.refutingmissionaries.org/isaiah53b.html> The site is now undergoing revision in format.

¹¹ A. Pieper, pp. 64-67.

¹² Pieper, 430.

¹³ Pieper, 433.

¹⁴ Pieper, 438.

¹⁵ Pieper, 443.

¹⁶ Pieper, 449.

¹⁷ Pieper, 430.

¹⁸ Refuting Missionaries.Org page at <http://www.refutingmissionaries.org/isaiah53b.html>

¹⁹ Note that in the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament the editors at John 3:13 take Jesus’ saying that he will be lifted up like Moses lifted up the serpent as a reference to this passage.

²⁰ ספריית האתר "חסידות בשפה הרוסית" מדרש תנחומא תולדות פרק יד <http://chassidus.ru/midrash/index.php?midrashid=2&parshaid=6&level1=14&search=archmode=page&search=>

²¹ GKC §161b, Jouon §174a-b, The same syntactic construction of כִּאֲשֶׁר with כִּן can be found in Is. 33:4.

²² BHS ad loc. Blenkinsopp follows this suggestion in his commentary (p. 345, 346 note e.).

²³ See the discussion in Honsey “Isaiah 52:13-53:12” p. 4.

²⁴ Blenkinsopp, p. 346-347.

²⁵ Maimonides/Rambam from the *Jewish Virtual Library* at <http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/biography/Maimonides.html>

²⁶ From the “Letter to the South” (Yemen), quoted in *The Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters*, Ktav Publishing House, 1969, Volume 2, pages 374-5, as cited by Chaim Org at <http://www.chaim.org/rabbis.htm>

²⁷ Pieper, 433.

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³² Issues 7:9 at <http://www.jewsforjesus.org/library/issues/07-09/prophetrabbis.htm>

³³ Issues 13:6 at <http://www.jewsforjesus.org/library/issues/13-06dec00/isaiah53.htm>

³⁴ Megiloth= “Scrolls”, these are Esther, Lamentations, Ruth, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes.

³⁵ ספריית האחר "חסידות בשפה הרוסית" מדרש רבה רות פרשה ה פסקה ו available at <http://chassidus.ru/midrash/index.php?midrashid=1&chumashid=33&level1=5&level2=6&searchmode=page&search=>

³⁶ *Issues 7:9* <http://www.jewsforjesus.org/library/issues/07-09/prophetrabbis.htm>

³⁷ Pieper, 443.

³⁸ Revelation 7:8 “the Lamb that was slain from the beginning of the world”; 7:2 “the blood of the Lamb”; 21:27 “they that are written in the book of life of the Lamb” and 5:6,8,12,13; 6:1,16; 7:9,10,14,17; 14:1,4,10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7,9; 21:9,14,22,23,27; 22:1,3, 14

³⁹The title *The Silence of the Lambs*, by Thomas Harris causes an unfortunate distraction from the Biblical significance of Jesus’ silence before the sinful judgments of humanity. There are useful points of contrast between the victims of Hannibal Lector and Jesus, if one happens to get distracted by this pulp fiction while talking with someone about Isaiah 53.

⁴⁰ א/ ספריית האחר "חסידות בשפה הרוסית" תלמוד בבלי מסכת סוכה נב א/ <http://chassidus.ru/bavli/index.php?masechetid=7&daf=52&searchmode=page&search=>

⁴¹ Pieper, 449.

⁴² Eisenman and Wise pl 144f

⁴³ Vermes, 527.

The Visitation Articles

Their History and Impact on Luther's Catechism

Timothy Bartels

Regarding the *Visitation Articles*, Martin Brecht states that they are “one of the problematic documents of Reformation theology.”¹ This paper will attempt to look at part of why the *Articles* are considered problematic. The central issue will revolve around the question of the proper relation of repentance to faith, how that is understood in the *Articles*, and how that understanding impacted the writing of catechisms – this being the 475th anniversary of Luther's catechisms. To do so this paper will look at the background of the *Articles*, the *Articles* themselves, some of the reactions to the *Articles*, and finally some lessons to consider for today.

Chronology of Events

One thing that will be helpful before getting into the matter at hand will be to have something of a chronology of events as a reference point. It will also identify some of the key people involved. The essential, dates, events, and key people are as follows:

- 1523** Requests for visitations and requests for catechisms
- 1527, February** *Christian Discipline for Children in God's Word and Doctrine*, a catechism, is published by John Agricola.
- 1527, July** Initial visitations of which Melancthon was a part
- 1527, August** Melancthon prepares the *Visitation Articles*. Quarrel between Melancthon and Agricola becomes apparent.
- 1527, September** *Articles* approved by visitors in consultation with Luther and Bugenhagen
- 1527, November** Torgau conference to settle dispute
- 1527, Fall** *One Hundred Thirty Common Questions*, a second catechism written by John Agricola
- 1528, March** Official publication of the *Visitation Articles*
- 1528, July** Visitation resumed and Luther one of the visitors
- 1529, April and May** *Luther's Large Catechism* and *Small Catechism* published
- 1530, June** Presentation of the *Augsburg Confession*²

From this outline, two names become key in the discussion

at hand. The one is John Agricola, who wrote the two catechisms cited and Melancthon, who wrote the *Visitation Articles*.

I. Background to the Visitation Articles

Two events are important for understanding the background to the *Visitation Articles*. One of them has to do with requests for a visitation and the conditions of the church in Saxony that led to these requests. The other event has to do with requests for good evangelical catechisms to instruct and establish the parishioners in the Reformation gospel.

A. Requests for a Visitation

Requests for a visitation began in 1523 with a certain parish pastor in Zwickau named Nicholas Hausmann. Hausmann was an associate of the Wittenberg theologians, namely, Luther, Melancthon, Bugenhagen, et. al. As such, Hausmann requested the Elector to conduct a visitation of the churches in Saxony. When the Elector delayed, Hausmann again turned to Wittenberg and reiterated the need for a visitation in early 1524.³ Hausmann was not alone in requesting a visitation, but others as well joined in the request, including Luther.⁴

Of course, the requests for visitations did not come without reason. The churches in Saxony were in disarray after the Reformation message had taken hold there. Arand describes the situation: “The collapse of the old church structures in the wake of the Reformation had several unintended consequences. The nobility plundered the assets and property of monasteries. Church property began to fall into ruin. The laity had stopped paying their church obligations . . . pastors now went unpaid . . . In addition . . . the Reformation unintentionally left a swath of religious indifference in its wake.”⁵

After having taken part in the 1528 visitation, Luther gives a glimpse into this disarray. He observed regarding pastors, “Many pastors are completely unskilled and incompetent teachers.”⁶ In some cases the pastors could not recite as much as the Creed or the Lord’s Prayer. In other cases they did not administer the sacrament for long periods of time.⁷ Regarding the nobility, Luther stated, “There are

also some louts and skinflints who declare that they can do without pastors and preachers now because we now have everything in books and can learn it all by ourselves. So they blithely let parishes fall into decay and brazenly allow both pastors and preachers to suffer distress and hunger.”⁸ Obviously, Luther held the government largely accountable for the church’s dire financial situation. Finally, regarding the laity he wrote to Spalatin, “Moreover, conditions in the congregations everywhere are pitiable, inasmuch as the peasants learn nothing, know nothing, never pray, do nothing but *abuse their liberty*, make no confession, receive no communion, as if they had been altogether *emancipated* from religion” (italics added).⁹

It is this abuse of liberty, part of which alarmed the Wittenberg theologians and part of which they were somewhat aware before the visitation actually took place. When Melanchthon undertakes the writing of the *Articles*, it becomes apparent that this abuse is a large part of his concern. With respect to Melanchthon’s concerns Luther later observed, “Some pervert (the freedom of the Spirit) into the security of the flesh.”¹⁰

On account of this disarray in the churches the visitation was arranged. The visitation was needed if the church of the Reformation was going to survive. Provisions needed to be made in order that pastors receive regular income.¹¹ New church orders needed to be established for the governance of the church.¹² The church’s catechesis needed to be evaluated on account of the license among the parishioners and the ill-educated pastors. What’s more, because of the serious nature of the problems, the condition of the church was considered to be in an emergency. For that reason Luther appealed to the Elector to arrange for the visitation, though he was aware of the fact that this was not a normal use of governmental authority.¹³ He “pointedly told the Elector that . . . the taking over of former church property obligated the government to support the schools and churches which formerly had been supported by this property. He wanted a team of four visitors, two to examine the economic; two, the religious affairs of the parishes.”¹⁴ Melanchthon was chosen to be one of the four visitors.¹⁵

B. Requests for Catechisms

One other item needs to be discussed as background. At the same time that there was a request for a visitation, there was also a request for catechisms. Again, the initial request came from Nicholas Hausmann. Hausmann desired that Luther prepare a book of instruction for children. Luther agreed with the request but, initially, delegated the writing of a catechism to two others, Justus Jonas and John Agricola.¹⁶ Luther, as well as Hausmann, began issuing requests for catechisms. In his preface to the *German Mass*, he sounded this appeal, “What we need most in our German worship is a plain, simple, clear and succinct catechism.”¹⁷ In that same preface Luther suggested that his “Prayer Booklet” could be used as a resource for writing a catechism.¹⁸

The reason for this request was the need to instill the Reformation message in the parishes. What’s more, the existing prayer-booklets and catechisms harkened back to Rome’s theology. While many of them had the three chief parts of the catechism – the Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer, the traditional ordering initiated by Augustine was faith first (the Creed), then hope (the Lord’s Prayer), followed by love (the Ten Commandments). The result with this traditional ordering was that love emerged as the essence and goal of the Christian life.¹⁹ By the time of the Middle Ages Arand observes, “The way of salvation . . . was often characterized with the expression, *fides caritate formata*, faith activated and perfected by acts of love. Faith alone, by contrast, was only an intellectual assent to the data or revelation made by one who was still far from pure and godly . . . Love not faith, was the religious glue that held the entire system together.”²⁰

Over time, then, the question whether or not one had the love required for salvation became the measure of one’s Christianity, and it fell under the light of rigorous examination in the penitential system.²¹ Because love became the measure, ultimately consciences were left in a state of despair. One example of how this was the case comes from the *Hortulus Animae*, a medieval prayer-booklet widely circulated at the turn of the sixteenth century. Bente remarks, “The *Hortulus Animae* contains very complete rosters of sins and

catalogues of virtues for ‘confessing and enumerating sins’ . . . If these catalogues were employed for self-examination, confusion, *endless torment*, or complete externalization of the consciousness of sin was bound to result” (italics added).²² Another example comes from Dietrich Kolde’s *A Fruitful Mirror or Small Handbook for Christians*. In discussing the penitence required at one’s deathbed Kolde had this less than comforting advice, “Take my good will for the works (I lack).”²³ Arand reflects on Kolde’s advice, “The layman *is haunted* to his last breath by a short supply of good works! Kolde focuses on the ‘how’ of faith, reducing it to biblical legalism and to obedience to the Decalogue and Canon Law, and the Creed is placed into this system of works-righteousness and strict obedience to the church’s practices” (italics added).²⁴

It is this system of works-righteousness from which the church was liberated in the Reformation. Instead of a works oriented system, the Scriptural doctrine of faith alone in Jesus’ merits alone described the essence of the Christian. This was John Agricola’s concern when he contributed to the requests for catechisms. He did not want to see the Reformation return to works-righteousness. Regarding Agricola’s concern, Luther wrote that some “pervert the (fear of God) into desperation or fear of punishment.”²⁵ In writing his catechism, Agricola was going to avoid any attempt to strike fear and terror into the hearts of sinners that left the hearers despairing of God’s grace. In order to do that, he was going to avoid using the condemning aspect of the law for he feared that would be a return to Rome.

The request for catechisms then went out. Within a relatively short period of time, 1522 – 1529, about thirty catechisms appeared. Many of them were published in a number of editions.²⁶ Among them was John Agricola’s *Christian Discipline for Children in God’s Word and Doctrine*, and, later on, his *One Hundred Thirty Common Questions*. As will be seen, the writing of Agricola’s first catechism, *Christian Discipline*, which predated the Articles, had a direct impact on the *Articles*.

II. Into the Visitation Articles

The reader may recall from the time-line that the *Visitation Articles* were not written before the initial visitation took place. After the initial visitation had occurred, it was recognized that there was a need to “improve and revise previous methods and procedures for conducting the visitations and educating the pastors.”²⁷ It was Melanchthon who took up the task of writing a series of articles to aid in the theological instruction and examination of the clergy.²⁸ Those writings became the *Visitation Articles*. Melanchthon himself expressed how he viewed the *Articles* in this way. “They contain nothing except some children’s catechesis, as I call it, of the Christian religion . . . And in that catechesis, itself, what else did I strive for while omitting many controversies.”²⁹ While Melanchthon omits many controversies, his catechetical approach does deal with the first controversy brewing within the fledgling Lutheran Church.

A. A Brewing Controversy

It becomes apparent in the opening paragraphs of the *Visitation Articles* that Melanchthon is addressing a controversy. For example, Melanchthon writes, “*Many* now talk about the forgiveness of sins and say little or nothing about repentance. There is neither forgiveness of sins without repentance nor can forgiveness be understood without repentance” (italics added).³⁰ As he does throughout the *Articles*, Melanchthon does not name his opponents. Be that as it may, it is obvious in these opening lines that Melanchthon is seeking to correct Agricola’s understanding of the law as well as the understanding of those influenced by him. In order to understand what Agricola taught about the law, it is important to get an overview of his thought.

In July of 1525 Agricola, a capable theologian, became the rector of a new Latin school in Eisleben.³¹ During his first two years there he began writing a commentary on Luke, preached sermons on Colossians, and translated Melanchthon’s works on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians.³² Agricola’s translations of Melanchthon’s works were edited to reflect his own understanding of the law. Wengert

summarizes the content of Agricola's three works: "In his three major writings just prior to the controversy he consistently expressed a low estimation of the law and its function. Instead the gospel itself, as a promise, creates the basis for death and resurrection in the Christian's life . . . one does not move from an anxious conscience to absolution, but from the promise of God to sorrow over sin and, better still, to refraining from sin completely."³³ In other words, Agricola saw repentance solely as the result of the gospel, which in effect emptied the law of its condemnatory function.

These basic tenets of Agricola's thought are apparent in his catechism, *Christian Discipline*, written in early 1527, before the writing of the *Visitation Articles*. First of all, *Christian Discipline* maintained that the law is ineffective. While the catechism acknowledges that the law shows us our sins, it adds, "the law is, as the Germans say, 'a cudgel by the dog,' so that it does not become too excited but rather, against its own ideas, remains *a little tame*" (italics added).³⁴ That is, the law exposes sin so as to function as a curb, keeping the flesh in check. While our flesh is kept in check, though, *Christian Discipline* failed to teach that the law does strikes terror in the heart of the sinner before God. It does not kill.³⁵

Secondly when discussing faith, *Christian Doctrine* did not move from law to gospel. It could not because the "law does not kill." Instead the word of the gospel created faith. It was from faith that one, then, proceeded to a true knowledge of sin.³⁶

Thirdly, in discussing repentance *Christian Discipline* omitted any discussion of the law and gospel; of terror of the conscience and comfort in Christ. Rather, *Christian Discipline* spoke this way about repentance:

1. The person who is sorry for something is already free of sin. *Busse* (Repentance) is a new heart and a different way of thinking, as when the person who previously desired to be unchaste now hates it. Ephesians 4:28: *let the one who previously stole steal no longer*. In sum the highest *busse* is never to do it again.

2. Neither alms, works, fasts, nor our satisfaction bestows this new heart and different way of thinking. Instead, the Holy Spirit, whom Christ has given to us out of pure grace after he ascended into heaven, creates them.³⁷

Here one can see Agricola's fear of returning to the works-righteous system of Rome: "alms, works, fasts, satisfactions." Such a system truly left consciences in a state of despair not knowing if they had done enough for salvation. However, in that fear of returning to Rome Agricola also rejected the movement from law to gospel. Repentance had nothing to do with the law striking terror followed by the gospel that comforted the anxious conscience. Rather it was, as Wengert discusses, "only an inner transformation of the mind in which the believer had exchanged old desires for new thoughts. The goal of the Christian life, the highest *poenitentia*, become the exclusion of bad behavior."³⁸

B. Melancthon Addresses the Concern

When Melancthon wrote the *Visitation Articles*, he was familiar with *Christian Discipline*. It had been published and had immediate success. It is, therefore, Agricola's understanding of repentance and the law that Melancthon addresses in his opening paragraphs cited above, "There neither is forgiveness of sins without repentance nor can forgiveness of sins be understood without repentance." In order that the reader be clear as to what repentance is, the *Articles* define repentance in its *narrow* sense. Repentance "in reality is sincere contrition and sorrow over one's sins and sincere fear of the wrath and judgment of God. This is contrition and the acknowledgment of sin."³⁹ According to this definition, Melancthon sees the life of the believer going from sorrow over sins to faith, from law to gospel.

Not only do the opening paragraphs in the *Articles* strike this theme, but it is also a theme to which Melancthon continually returns. For example, under the article on the Decalogue Melancthon instructs that preachers are to use the law to condemn the sinner. Having done that, they are to follow with the preaching of the gospel in order that convicted consciences may be comforted in Christ. In this way faith is nurtured among the people. Then he strikes his theme, "We are to teach the people diligently that this *faith cannot exist without earnest and true contrition and fear of God*" (italics added).⁴⁰

Consider another example. Under the article on penance

Melanchthon divides penance into its two parts. The first part of penance consists of contrition and sorrow over sins. The second part consists of faith that trusts that God forgives sins for Jesus' sake. Then he adds, "But *as we have often said*, this faith cannot be there until there have been contrition and sorrow" (italics added).⁴¹ Notice how Melanchthon himself underscores the fact that this is his continual theme. Also noteworthy is the fact that unlike Agricola, who defined repentance as "an inner change of the mind in which old desires were exchanged for new thoughts," Melanchthon defines it as moving from law to gospel, from sorrow over sin to faith in Christ for the remission of sins.

Repeatedly, then, Melanchthon returns to this theme. He returns to this theme under the articles on doctrine, baptism, the Lord's Supper, penance, satisfaction, prayer, traditions, worship in the church, etc. Over and over again, after he discusses the subject at hand, he restates his theme, "there can be no faith without repentance," "contrition and faith go together," etc. Wengert says, "It seems as if Melanchthon could not repeat it enough."⁴² Clearly, then, Melanchthon taught that the law has to strike terror; it has to kill. When the law has done its work, then the sinner is ready for the gospel. The gospel comforts the terrified sinner with the forgiveness of sins in Christ.

Brecht mentions that the gospel could have been more clearly presented in the *Articles*, but he also adds that the doctrine of justification was presupposed.⁴³ That is, Melanchthon was dealing with the conditions of the church at that time. He was concerned, as mentioned above, that without the preaching of the law, sinners would abuse their freedom in Christ and would remain secure in their sins. Melanchthon addressed this concern in the *Articles*, as well. Again, under the article on penance, the *Articles* warned, "many who hear that they should believe, so that all their sins will be forgiven, fashion their own faith and think they are pure. Thus, they become *secure and arrogant* . . . for true faith cannot exist where there is not true contrition and true fear and terror before God" (italics added).⁴⁴ Here, the reader can see that Melanchthon leaves no room for Agricola's low estimation of the law. In fact, he condemns the preacher who does not convict his hearers to prepare

them to be comforted by the gospel.

III. Reactions to the Visitation Articles

When Agricola first saw the *Visitation Articles*, they came from an unofficial publication that Melanchthon had not approved. Needless to say, what Agricola saw in the *Articles* did not settle the contention between Agricola and Melanchthon. It only exacerbated matters. As the dispute became public, the Elector called for a meeting to settle it. Not only that, but the dispute also continued in subsequent writings, notably Agricola's reworking of *Christian Discipline*, a reworking of *The Visitation Articles* themselves, and Luther's catechisms.

A. Agricola's One Hundred Thirty Common Questions

Agricola responded to the *Articles* by simplifying and reworking his *Christian Discipline*. The resulting work was his *One Hundred Thirty Common Questions*. While the *One Hundred Thirty Common Questions* was a simplified version of his earlier work, it was also a direct attack on Melanchthon. The essence of his work was that he objected to the place that Melanchthon gave to the law in the *Visitation Articles*.⁴⁵

One can observe this from the way that Agricola begins the discussion of faith. Unlike Melanchthon, who begins with a discussion that moves from law to gospel, from repentance to faith, Agricola began with a discussion of word and faith. For example, in the opening questions Agricola divides the knowledge of God and salvation into two parts. He asks in Question 2, "What are they (the two parts) called? Answer, word and faith. 3. What does the Word do? Answer; the Word promises and pledges something to me. 4. What does faith do? Answer: Faith believes and trusts God, that God is true and will do it."⁴⁶ Then, when discussing how Christians come to faith, the answer is given, "A person listens to the preachers and believes their word. The believers see and recognize God's goodness, which is proclaimed to them, *see their errors and transgressions*, and call to God for help" (italics added).⁴⁷ Notice how repentance,

that is, “see their errors,” follows faith.

As in the cases cited, throughout his catechism Agricola consistently describes the Christian life as moving from the promises in God’s word to faith, and finally to repentance.⁴⁸ It represented his belief that repentance comes from the gospel and not the law. Regarding this ordering, Wengert comments, “Agricola had constructed a theological system that avoided the law. He derived everything, especially *poenitentia*, from the gospel promise alone. This promise reveals God’s goodness, then one recognizes one’s sins and repents . . . Agricola constructed a clear alternative to Melancthon’s approach.”⁴⁹

When *One Hundred Thirty Common Questions* did speak of the law, they did not do so in a way that taught that the law produced contrition. The law could only coerce people through fear of punishment. It had no ability to kill. The law, instead, was really no different from the moral laws one could learn from the classics.⁵⁰ Question 115 submits this answer regarding the use of the law for Christians, “As they might use Greek and Latin books and histories, so they use Moses and everything that he wrote, as long as he doesn’t bother our conscience or compel us.”⁵¹

B. The Torgau Conference

While this was Agricola’s catechetical response to the *Visitation Articles*, there were some favorable responses to it. The first response comes from the conference held at Torgau. It was called for in part because Agricola requested that the *Articles* not be officially published before there had been an opportunity to discuss the theology in them.⁵² The meeting called for by the Elector was held at Torgau in November of 1527. The only extant records of this meeting are from Luther and Melancthon. Wengert describes the content of Luther’s record. “Irritated by the rumor mill and by the waste of time, Luther huffed, ‘Our famous dissension at the Torgau was scarcely more than nothing’ . . . One thing . . . was proposed, immediately settled, and resulted in beautiful consensus: the way had been cleared for the publication of the *Visitation Articles*.”⁵³

While at first glance it appears that Luther did not think

much of the dispute, Melanchthon sheds more light on Luther's view of that "beautiful consensus." As Melanchthon sheds light, he discusses Luther's solution to the dispute. It had to do with clarifying the definition of faith. The clarification would help with the understanding of faith's relation to repentance. Again, Wengert summarizes, "When we speak of faith, Luther proposed, we usually mean justifying faith. But we can also talk about a general faith that could be said to include *poenitentia*."⁵⁴ This wider definition of faith could be said to recognize that there is a God who threatens. In that sense, faith could be said to precede sorrow over sin, but not in the sense of justifying faith.⁵⁵ Finally, Wengert observes, "Luther's solution was . . . to insist that the controversy was a war of words and could thus be solved with definitions. Then, he refused to accept any of Agricola's substantive argumentation and asserted that the Christian life moved from law to gospel or, in this case, from *poenitentia* to faith."⁵⁶ In short, while the Torgau conference was considered to be a consensus, it largely vindicated Melanchthon's *Visitation Articles*.

C. Revision of the Visitation Articles

After Melanchthon had first written the *Articles* in August of 1527, they underwent some revision. The revision was in part due to the Elector who offered his suggestions as well as discussion from the conference held at Torgau.⁵⁷ The revisions bear out that the *Articles* did concede one concern to Agricola. In the original *Articles* Melanchthon had stated that there can be "no faith without contrition." In the revision the clarification was made that neither can there be contrition without faith⁵⁸ for "contrition without faith . . . is despair."⁵⁹ This was meant to address the concern Agricola had of returning to Rome and using the law to leave souls in despair.

While the *Articles* did concede to Agricola on this point, for the most part they not only accepted Melanchthon's division of repentance and faith, but strengthened it as well. For example, teaching faith without repentance was called an error.⁶⁰ The *Articles* warn, "If we preach the forgiveness of sins without repentance . . . the people imagine that they have already obtained the forgiveness

of sins, becoming thereby secure and without compunction of conscience. This would be a *greater error than all the errors hitherto prevailing*” (italics added).⁶¹

In addition to the strong division of the Christian life into repentance and faith, the article on the Decalogue stood in stark contrast to the *One Hundred Thirty Questions*. The article, Wengert mentions, made clear that Agricola’s low estimation of the Ten Commandments had no place in the teaching of Saxony.⁶² The Ten Commandments are to

be proclaimed repeatedly so that the people do not entertain false notions and think they have faith when they are far from having it

. . . Without repentance theirs is an imagined faith. True faith brings comfort and joy in God and we do not feel such comfort and joy where there is no repentance or fearfulness, as Christ says in Matt. 11(:5): *The poor have the gospel preached to them* (italics added).⁶³

Finally, it was in the revision that the narrow definition of repentance was given. It defined repentance as “contrition and sorrow over sin and fear before God’s judgment. There was no hint of compromise here.”⁶⁴

D. Luther’s Catechisms

It is in the aftermath of this dispute that Luther’s catechisms are published in the spring of 1528. No doubt, a number of events contributed to the printing of his catechisms at this time. Over the years Luther had been working on a catechism. One could say that his work began before 1520 when he began preaching series of sermons on the catechism, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer. He did this repeatedly.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, a simple, universal, and evangelical catechism in booklet form for the common parishioner was not so easily produced. In addition to that, Luther’s own work on a catechism had been delayed.⁶⁶ Now, however, there was an urgent need to publish a catechism.

Part of what spurred Luther on to write a catechism were the dismal conditions of the parishes that he had just witnessed, having

taken part in the second visitation. The ignorance of the catechism and the abuse of liberty was cause for concern and needed to be addressed promptly.⁶⁷ There was more, though, that spurred on Luther. What also contributed to the writing of the catechisms was the dispute between Melancthon and Agricola. Arand comments, “Especially when considered within the context of the controversy with Agricola, the catechism must be seen as arising immediately out of the challenge posed by Agricola’s *One Hundred Thirty Common Questions* and, at the same time, as providing the most important correction to Agricola’s catechetical approach.”⁶⁸

Consider three ways that correction came. First of all, Luther’s approach in the catechisms recognizes the importance of the preaching of the law. Again Arand comments,

Luther readily received and incorporated the Ten Commandments into his catechism . . . Over and against the antinomians and libertines, who argued that the law must no longer be preached to the Christian who now “walks by the Spirit,” Luther stressed that the human being, as a creature and sinner, has an ongoing need for the Ten Commandments. These conclusions moved to the forefront in the debate with John Agricola over the matter of repentance. This explains why Luther devoted nearly one half of the entire Large Catechism to a discussion of the Ten Commandments.⁶⁹

Secondly, the Commandments are joined to the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. They are joined in such a way as to direct the Christian to get the help he needs to live in his vocation according to the Commandments. In this light the Large Catechism’s Conclusion of the Ten Commandments states, “No one is able to keep even one of the Ten Commandments as it ought to be kept. Both the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer must come to our aid.”⁷⁰ The same point is made at the beginning of the Creed⁷¹ and at the beginning of the Lord’s Prayer.⁷² Arand explains Luther’s rationale. “Luther makes it clear that the Christian life does not abandon the Ten Commandments but leads us back into them as setting forth the shape of the Christian life. This especially addressed the question of libertinism among the peasants and the antinomianism of Agricola.”⁷³

Finally, and most importantly, Luther’s ordering of both

catechisms begins with law and follows with gospel. This ordering of the catechism differs from Agricola's ordering of the catechism that began with the word and faith. Luther's ordering of the catechism demonstrates his conviction that law moves to gospel. In this regard, Arand cites a number of references from Luther regarding his ordering of the catechism. Then he points out, "Luther's statements about the relation of the chief parts of the catechism to one another make it clear that his sequence was deliberate and that it established a Law and Gospel rhythm for the Christian life."⁷⁴ In short, Luther's arrangement of law/gospel in his catechism concurs with Melancthon's catechism, the *Visitation Articles*. They instructed the pastors to first convict with the law and then comfort with the gospel; to preach repentance and then faith.

E. The Confessions and Scripture

Within three short years after this debate on law/gospel, the Wittenberg theologians would present their case before the Emperor and the Church at Augsburg. One cannot read "Article XII. Concerning Repentance" without seeing a parallel, and even a connection, to what transpired around the writing and adoption of the *Visitation Articles*. As in the *Articles*, the wide definition of repentance is divided into two parts, namely, fear and faith.

We have established two parts in repentance, namely, contrition and faith. We will not object if someone wants to add a third part, namely, the fruits worthy of repentance . . . We say that contrition is genuine terror of the conscience that feels God's wrath against sin and grieves that it has sinned. This contrition takes place when the Word of God denounces sins . . .

We therefore add faith in Christ as the second part of repentance, namely, that in the midst of these terrors, the gospel about Christ which freely promises the forgiveness of sins through Christ ought to be set forth to consciences. They should therefore believe that on account of Christ their sins are freely forgiven. This faith uplifts, sustains, and gives life to the contrite, according to the passage (Rom., 5:1): *Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God.*⁷⁵

After giving this definition, the *Apology* submits a number of Scripture passages in support. Among the numerous examples cited is Mark 1:15, *Repent and believe the gospel*. The *Apology* remarks, “Here you see that these two parts are joined; contrition, when sins are condemned, and faith, when it is said, *believe the gospel*.”⁷⁶ Later on, the *Apology* submits the examples of repentance from Adam and David. Regarding Adam it says, “These following examples similarly demonstrate these two parts. Adam was reprimanded after he sinned and became filled with terror. This was contrition. Afterward God promised grace and spoke of a future seed that would destroy the reign of the devil, death and sin! Here he offers the forgiveness of sins. These are the chief parts.”⁷⁷

One can readily see that this definition of repentance, as drawn from Scripture, became the confessed definition in the Evangelical Lutheran Church as the correct interpretation of Scripture. In addition to this definition in the *Augsburg Confession* and its *Apology*, the *Smalcald Articles*, written seven years later, has a very similar definition in its article “Concerning Repentance.”⁷⁸ Finally, when *The Book of Concord* was compiled, Luther’s *Small Catechism* and *Large Catechism*, which moved from law to gospel, were included as what the Evangelical Lutheran Church confesses.

All of these accepted confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church stood in contrast to Agricola’s *One Hundred Thirty Common Questions*. When one considers this consistent theological expression that moves from law to gospel in the *Book of Concord*, it’s not surprising that shortly after the publication of Luther’s catechisms, Agricola’s catechism quickly fell into disuse. Not only that, but also the catechism’s Latin version eventually came under Luther’s ban during the more well-known antinomian controversy that began in the late 1530s.⁷⁹

IV. Lessons for Today

The issues over which Melancthon and Agricola wrestled are issues to which we are not immune today. On the one hand, in today’s culture a low view of the law is prevalent within and without the church. On the other hand, there is a trend to go to the other

extreme and use the law in a way that leaves people's consciences in despair. Regarding these two extremes a couple of observations will be noted, as well as the *Visitation Articles*' recommendation to use catechetical instruction that instills the Lutheran paradigm of law/gospel distinction.

A. The Antinomian View of the Law Today

Today the prevailing philosophical thought of postmodernism takes the antinomian view of the law. Its basic tenet, that truth is not knowable, essentially makes the law irrelevant. This prevailing thought not only has permeated society, but has crept into the church as well. In this light, Gene Edward Veith says, "While people have always committed sins, they at least acknowledged they were sins. A century ago a person may have committed adultery flagrantly and in defiance of God and man, but he would have admitted that what he was doing was a sin. What we have today is not only immoral behavior, but a loss of moral criteria. This is true even in the church. We face not only moral collapse, but a collapse of meaning. 'There are no absolutes.'"⁸⁰

When sin no longer is seen as sin, any faith an individual has does not follow from a heart that has been convicted of its sin. It cannot be comforted in Christ's death for the sinners. Instead, the faith becomes an imagined faith, as the *Articles* pointed out. The individual is left to live in his sin, not having felt the terrors of the law. So he remains a secure sinner. On account of it, grace is abused and libertinism becomes the result. It is precisely this that Melancthon was concerned about and about which he warned in his *Visitation Articles*.

It reminds this writer of a class on Luther's *Large Catechism*, specifically on the *Close of the Commandments*. The class had been using *Luther's Large Catechism with Study Questions* by Janzow. The discussion questions by Janzow led one participant, who has experienced today's post modern antinomianism close to home, to make a good theological observation. The observation was simply this: "If you don't have fear of God, you can't have the other, trust in Jesus." This individual had come to this realization through continued

catechetical instruction in law and gospel. It is what is needed in the church today as it faces an ever increasingly antinomian view of the law both in culture and in the church.

B. The Legalistic View of the Law Today

While, on the one hand, there is an attempt by the postmodernist to discredit the law, on the other hand, there is the trend to go to the other extreme of legalism. Today Lutheran Christians are enticed away from the law/gospel distinction by the explosion of popular evangelical film and literature. In that light, a recent news segment on the “Jim Lehrer News Hour,” called “Christian Entertainment,” showed how popular Christian authors and film makers are commercializing and targeting large audiences of Christians with their attractive products. Many of those products, however, confuse law and gospel.

Consider how that is the case from a popular non-Lutheran Christian handbook today, *The Purpose Driven Life*. To his credit, on a number of occasions, the author does speak of the fact that the individual is saved by faith in Jesus alone. What is noticeably absent, though, is the movement from law to gospel. As a result, the very thing that happened in the medieval arrangement of the catechism becomes apparent. The emphasis becomes what the believer must do. It is obvious in a number of instances as, for example, when the believer is told to consider what he must do in the light of eternity. At the end of a chapter, entitled, “What Matters Most,” this is how the reader is left:

Knowing that one day you will stand before God, here are some questions you need to consider: How will you explain those times when projects or things were more important to you than people? Who do you need to start spending more time with? What do you need to cut out of your schedule to make that possible? What sacrifices do you need to make? The best use of life is love. The best expression of love is time. The best time to love is now.⁸¹

When the reader is left contemplating Judgement Day on the basis of how well he has loved, ultimately he is left in a state of uncertainty.

He is left exactly where Dietrich Kolde left him - “haunted to his last breath by a short supply of good works!”

This use of the law by the church to leave consciences in a state of despair was what Agricola was concerned about when he wrote his catechism. He did not want to leave the soul in despair. The solution, however, is not to abandon the condemning use the law. The solution is to comfort the terrified conscience with the gospel. It is the solution instilled in Luther’s catechisms.

C. Use of the Catechism Today

Regarding the trends observed above, Arand makes a noteworthy observation with respect to the use and place of Luther’s catechisms. He observes, “The catechism is losing the role that it has played during the past four centuries. Increasingly, the adults who enter the church today have little to no Christian memory . . . If they as parents have not been trained in the catechisms, the church cannot expect that the children of these adults will be formed in the faith at home. In the church, pastors themselves are using the catechism less and less as the primary text for catechetical instruction – especially for adults. Outlines of Christian doctrine or surveys of biblical theology have supplanted the catechism . . . It is no longer the working paradigm”⁸² Why is that important? The danger hinted at is that the church is losing a primary tool by which the average parishioner sees Scripture and is moved from law to gospel. Without a working knowledge of the catechism, the parishioner lacks this important tool in defense of antinomianism and legalism.

In order to guard against this trend, the church will do well to heed the recommendation of the *Visitation Articles* that pastors make regular use of the catechism in preaching and instruction. With respect to preaching the *Articles* advise, “We recommend that there be constant repetition, through preaching and exposition, of the Ten Commandments, the articles of the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer.”⁸³ While these recommendations were made to specific churches at a specific time, they are applicable to the church today, as well. In fact, that recommendation has regularly been sounded within the circles of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and it bears repeating.

Its pastors have regularly been urged to reference the catechism in their preaching. In addition to that, certain seasons of the church year can lend themselves to catechetical preaching, such as Advent and Lenten midweek services. Catechetical sermon series are also available that follow the church year.

The *Visitation Articles* also recommended instruction in the catechism. One day should be set aside where the catechumen “is instructed in the meaning of the Lord’s Prayer, at another time, the Creed, at another, the Ten Commandments.”⁸⁴ Throughout its brief pages, for example, the *Small Catechism* continually is doing what the *Articles* recommended and the church confesses. It is continually moving the student from law to gospel; from repentance to faith. It remains for the pastor to continue to hone his skills both in understanding its law and gospel rhythm and in teaching it to children and adults. That teaching involves not only going through the catechism as a book of instruction, but also helpful is instruction in how to use it as a prayer book. When an individual learns to use the catechism regularly as a prayer book, it continues to move the Christian from law to gospel throughout his or her life. As it does that, it will enable the Christian to address the influences in his private life and family life that seek to lead away from law/gospel to antinomianism or legalism.

Conclusion

The *Visitation Articles* were part of a serious discussion in the early days of the Lutheran Church that revolved around the proper ordering of repentance and faith; law and gospel. It led the confessors to address and teach the importance of convicting with the law and then comforting with the gospel – for, as the *Articles* mention, “without fear there is no faith.” It also led to Luther’s push to finish his catechisms that promote and reflect this movement from law to gospel. In the midst of popular philosophical trends and Christian literature which lacks this distinction, the church of today does well to continue to make use of Luther’s catechisms among both children and adults. As the church does that the Lutheran paradigm

of moving from law to gospel will be instilled for the edifying and salvation of many souls in this generation and future generations.

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Endnotes

¹Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther Shaping and Defining the Reformation 1521-1532*, (translated by James Schaff, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 268

²Brecht, pp. 263-266. Most of this chronology has been assembled from these pages. The chronology is meant to serve as a guideline, since some of the dates are hard to fix.

³Charles P. Arand, *That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 70-71.

⁴Conrad Bergendoff, trans & ed., *Luther's Works*, Volume 40 (Fortress Press, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958), 265.

⁵Arand, 72.

⁶Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, editors, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), SC, Preface 2.

⁷M. Reu, *Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism; A History of Its Origin, Its Distribution and Its Use*, (Chicago: Wartburg, 1929), 4. Reu cites official records of church visitations. "We mention only a few facts: The priest of Oberladlau in Saxony did not celebrate Mass for three years nor did he administer the sacrament. The peasants at Oberweirau refused to pay their church-dues because the priest did not read Mass . . . The priest at Elsnig could hardly pray the Paternoster and the Creed."

⁸Kolb and Wengert, LC, Preface 6.

⁹F. Bente, *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church; Historical Introductions to the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, (St. Louis: 1921), 67. Luther makes a similar comment in the *Small Catechism*, Preface 2.

¹⁰Timothy Wengert, *Law and Gospel: Philip Melancthon's Debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over Poenitentia*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books), 117.

¹¹Brecht, 259.

¹²Arand, 15.

¹³Brecht, 261.

¹⁴Luther's Works, Vol. 40, 265-266.

¹⁵Wengert, 95.

¹⁶Brecht, 273.

¹⁷Reu, 13.

¹⁸Wengert, 48. Luther's *Prayer Booklet*, published in 1522, "was made up of excerpts from Luther's previous sermons and translations work. Its forty leaves contained material already published separately in 1520 in "Eine kurze Form" of the Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, additions from 1522 on ways to pray and the Ave Maria, as well as selection of Psalms and a translation of Titus."

¹⁹Arand, 125.

²⁰Arand, 125.

²¹Arand, 126.

²²Bente, 66.

²³Arand, 128.

²⁴Arand, 128.

²⁵Wengert, 117.

²⁶Reu, 15.

²⁷Arand, 72.

²⁸Wengert, 95.

²⁹Wengert, 94.

³⁰Luther's Works, Vol. 40, 274.

³¹Wengert, 24. Wengert points out that Agricola and Melanchthon had been friends, Agricola becoming the rector of the new Latin school in Eisleben and Melanchthon becoming a professor at the University of Wittenberg. In spite of that, their friendship suffered as their theological positions became clear in their catechetical and exegetical writings.

³²Wengert, 25.

³³Wengert, 45.

³⁴Wengert, 72.

³⁵Arand, 74.

³⁶Arand, 74.

³⁷Wengert, 74. The Kolb and Wengert edition of the *Book of Concord* in footnote 65 on page 44 remarks concerning *Busse* and *poenitentia*. "These words, which long had been used to designate

the sacrament of penance, were consistently taken by the reformers to mean ‘repentance’ or ‘penitence.’”

³⁸Wengert, 74.

³⁹Luther’s Works, Vol. 40, 294.

⁴⁰Luther’s Works, Vol. 40, 276.

⁴¹Luther’s Works, Vol. 40, 295-296.

⁴²Wengert, 99.

⁴³Brecht, 268. Brecht mentions that on account of the *Articles* Luther was accused of return to Catholicism. A Latin pamphlet was published entitled *The Seven-headed Luther, Who Contradicts Himself Everywhere in His Writing, on the Visitation*. A caricature on the title page depicted Luther with seven heads, picturing him as Doctor, Martinus, Lutherus, Preacher, Enthusiast, Visitor, and the revolutionary Barabbas.”

⁴⁴Luther’s Works, Vol. 40. 294.

⁴⁵Arand, p. 74.

⁴⁶Robert Kolb and James A. Nestigen, editors, *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 16.

⁴⁷Kolb and Nestigen, 16.

⁴⁸Kolb and Nestigen, 14.

⁴⁹Wengert, 126-127.

⁵⁰Arand, 75.

⁵¹Kolb and Nestigen, 28.

⁵²Wengert, 141.

⁵³Wengert, 131.

⁵⁴Wengert, 134.

⁵⁵Bente, 163.

⁵⁶Wengert, 134-135.

⁵⁷Wengert, 141.

⁵⁸Wengert, 143.

⁵⁹Luther’s Works, Vol. 40, 296.

⁶⁰Wengert, 141-142.

⁶¹Luther’s Works, Vol 40, 274.

⁶²Wengert, 142.

⁶³Luther’s Works, 276-277.

⁶⁴Wengert, 142.

⁶⁵Brecht, 273. “Since 1516, as had been customary, he had

preached again and again on these subjects, primarily during Lent. Each time he began with the Decalogue; he usually finished by treating the sacrament during Holy Week.”

⁶⁶Wengert, 152.

⁶⁷Arand, 73.

⁶⁸Arand, 75.

⁶⁹Arand, 39-39.

⁷⁰Kolb and Wengert, LC, I, 316.

⁷¹Kolb and Wengert, LC, II, 1-2.

⁷²Kolb and Wengert, LC, III, 2.

⁷³Arand, 135.

⁷⁴Arand, 136.

⁷⁵Kolb and Wengert, *Apology*, XII, 28,29,35,36.

⁷⁶Kolb and Wengert, *Apology* XII, 45.

⁷⁷Kolb and Wengert, *Apology* XII, 55.

⁷⁸ It’s interesting to note that seven years later Agricola was one of the signers of the *Smalcald Articles*. In those articles a similar definition of repentance is given. Agricola’s signature is curious because after the Torgau conference he continued to have a low estimation of the law, borne out in his later exegetical writings. It also bears repeating that Agricola has also been a part of the consensus at Torgau where Melancthon was largely vindicated. Regarding these conflicting indicators, Wengert makes the comment that Agricola was either duplicitous or theologically unclear. *Law and Gospel*, p. 143.

⁷⁹Wengert, 153.

⁸⁰Mark Bartels, *The Truth Shall Set You Free*, Paper delivered at the 86th Regular Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Mankato, Minnesota, June 10-14, 2001, 6.

⁸¹Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 128.

⁸²Arand, 16.

⁸³Luther’s Works, Vol. 40, 308.

⁸⁴Luther’s Works, Vol. 40, 318.

Dealing with the Bombardment of the Homosexual Agenda

Robert A. Harting

Introduction

The homosexual issue has been publicly debated within our culture as never before. The debate even includes a discussion of “civil unions” and “marriages” of homosexuals. The time is critical, as there is a bombardment of a homosexual agenda that is squarely aimed to strike a “blow to the bedrock of civility and civilization.”¹ To deal with such a bombardment we must understand from God’s Word that homosexuality is a sin and it is also an attack upon God’s institutions of marriage and the family.

Our outline for “dealing with the homosexual agenda” shall be the three divinely instituted estates of men: the church, the home and the state. In these estates we are to...“beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.” (Colossians 2:8)² In all areas of life we must be aware of this sin and its attempt to demolish marriage and the family.

Think of some of the examples of the bombardment in each of the three estates of men. In the realm of the church we have recently seen the ordination of an openly gay bishop in the Episcopal Church on August 5, 2003. In the realms of the home and state we saw the Canadian Court of Appeals ruling on June 10, 2003 that it was unconstitutional to deny gay couples the same rights as heterosexual couples. In the kingdom of the left we saw New Jersey Governor James McGreevey resign from office in a “brilliant move” to deflect the many charges against him by using the “I am a gay American” defense.

We must first ask the basic question: Does God create people in such a way that God intends them to be homosexual? In other words, is the homosexual that way due to God’s creative work and

thus may marriage and family be freely redefined as any loving relationship among people? In Matthew 19:4 Jesus explicitly says, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female?...” God created all people heterosexual. Heterosexual marriage and the bearing of children in a family is God’s decreed will for man:

²⁶ Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...” ²⁷ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Genesis 1:26-28)

Referring to this text we read in the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, Article XXIII, part 7:

Gen. 1, 28 teaches that men were created to be fruitful, and that one sex in a proper way should desire the other. For we are speaking not of concupiscence, which is sin, but of that appetite which was to have been in nature in its integrity [which would have existed in nature even if it had remained uncorrupted], which they call physical love. And this love of one sex for the other is truly a divine ordinance.³

The creation of male and female for each other in marriage does not change over time. We were created heterosexual and heterosexual marriage is a divine institution:

¹⁸ And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” ...²¹ And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. ²² Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. ²³ And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” ²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:18, 21-24)

Again we read in the *Apology* concerning the immutability of the marriage institution:

And because this creation or divine ordinance in man is a natural right, jurists have accordingly said wisely and correctly that the union of male and female belongs to natural right. But since natural right is immutable, the right to contract marriage must always remain. For where nature does not change, that ordinance also with which God has endowed nature does not change, and cannot be removed by human laws. Therefore it is ridiculous for the adversaries to prate that marriage was commanded in the beginning, but is not now. This is the same as if they would say: Formerly, when men were born, they were brought with them sex; now they do not. Formerly, when they were born, they were brought with them natural right; now they do not. No craftsman (*Faber*) could produce anything more crafty than these absurdities, which were devised to elude a right nature. Therefore let this remain in the case which both Scripture teaches and the jurist says wisely, namely, that the union of male and female belongs to natural right. Moreover, a natural right is truly a divine right, because it is an ordinance divinely impressed upon nature. (AP XXIII, 9-12)⁴

Though we are all created heterosexual, there certainly are people who struggle with a temptation toward the sin of homosexuality. The devil, world, and our sinful nature desire for us to succumb to the temptations and commit the sins of homosexuality in thought, word or deed.

Those who claim a biological link in someone who is a homosexual may attempt to point to scientific proof. To my knowledge there is neither proof nor scientific consensus that one is ever “born homosexual.”⁵ More importantly, we must realize that this argument concerning a “biological link” means little for the Christian who understands that since the fall all men fall short of the glory of God. “There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.” (Romans 3:10-12) We are all born spiritually dead and enemies of God. That is why Jesus says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5)

How many people label themselves as homosexual and may attempt to promote elements of a homosexual agenda? (This is not to deny that even many heterosexuals may join homosexuals in promoting such an agenda.) In Alfred Kinsey's infamous study in 1948 he promoted the false idea that 10% of all people are homosexual. Without even challenging the erroneous methodology of the influential study, the popular number of 10 percent has been widely declared as factual by homosexual activists. In far more sophisticated studies, such as those of Dr. Milton Diamond of the John A. Burns School of Medicine at the University of Hawaii, the research suggests that "the largest figures available" we find to be 5-6 percent for males and 2-3 percent for females.⁶ The more realistic numbers are probably much lower, such as .6 to 2 percent for males and less than 1 percent for females.⁷

We have seen that God created all mankind to be heterosexual for the purpose of heterosexual marriage and for childbearing. Those who rebel against the Creator do so often with an agenda that has specific goals. We shall now look at some parts of the homosexual agenda.

I. The Homosexual Agenda

That there is a gay sub-culture with an agenda is no secret. Members in this sub-culture share a number of similar traits, behaviors and lifestyles, and utilize special symbols and language. There are various institutions which cater to such a population. There are bars and discos where homosexuals gather and find sex partners. There are homosexual "churches," publications, professional associations, prostitutes and those who fight for "homosexual marriage." There is the inverse pink triangle to show solidarity, and the Greek letter *lambda* worn as jewelry (even on religious vestments), which stands for liberation. One homosexual activist stated,

The ultimate goal of the gay liberation movement is the achievement of sexual freedom for all – not just equal rights for "lesbians and gay men," but also freedom of sexual expression for young people and children....The homoerotic capabilities

of the human species, in all their wonderful variety, are not something to be justified, but to be explored and assimilated.⁸

This represents one man's agenda of homosexual goals and may not represent everyone's gay agenda. We shall now look at a number of fronts where others may seek to gain legitimacy in society for homosexual behavior.

1. Sexual Orientation and Anti-Discrimination Laws – An example of this goal being advanced can be seen in a case dating back to February of 1993, where three Los Angeles police officers won a settlement after alleging they were discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation.⁹ Furthermore, the LAPD agreed to promote and recruit homosexual officers. Since the California governor signed into law AB 2601 to prevent “employment discrimination” against homosexuals, there has been a flood of lawsuits against employers.
2. Redefinition of the Family¹⁰ – An art display in the Koren Library lasted for months at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa and it had as its theme: “Love Makes a Family.” The college, students and staff openly promoted various perversions as acceptable to the definition of a family. Various courses in their academic catalogue promote homosexuality.¹¹
3. Public Education – Some public schools are being flooded with literature, videos, and testimonials advocating the gay agenda. The Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN) teaches students and staff that there is no alternative or possibility of overcoming homosexuality. Those who speak in any way against such a lifestyle are blamed for gay students committing suicide or dropping out of school.¹²
4. Military Service – In 1993 the military adopted the “Don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue” policy.
5. AIDS – Though heart disease claimed roughly 725,000 lives in 1990 and AIDS 24,000 American lives in 1990, funding for research, prevention and treatment of AIDS far outstrips the funding for the

nation's biggest killer: heart disease. Even funding for cancer can't top AIDS funding.¹³

6. Political Power – NGLTF (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force) member John D'Emilio pens in 1993, “We are reweaving the social, cultural and political fabric of this country....Coming out is no longer the sum total of our strategy; we are about power.”¹⁴ One of the main objectives for homosexuals is to gain minority status and get special protection from the government.

7. Social Acceptance – Former NGLTF director, Jeff Levi, is honest to say, “We are no longer seeking just a right to privacy and a right to protection from wrong. We also have a right....to see government and society affirm our lives.”¹⁵

8. Pedophilia and Age of Consent Laws – Studies indicate that around 35 percent of pedophiles are homosexual.¹⁶ This is significant when one realizes that male homosexuals make up only about 2 percent of the general population.¹⁷

9. The Gay “Christian” Movement – This movement attempts to promote misinterpretations of key Bible passages on homosexuality and to legitimize, embrace and promote the homosexual life within the Christian Church.

These are some of the major parts to a homosexual agenda. The second part of this paper is to learn how we may deal with the bombardment of this agenda in the three estates of the church, home, and state. In all areas of life we may know that homosexuality is a sin and subverts God's institutions of marriage and family. Because of this we must deal with it biblically.

II. Dealing with the Agenda in the Estate of the Church

A. The Ministry of the Word

The overarching concern for pastors is the ministry for each soul in their care. “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” (Acts 20:28). To all souls the minister must apply both the Law and the Gospel appropriately.

The pastor must be careful to distinguish between the temptation and the falling into sin. Jesus himself was tempted as we are, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)

In the explanations concerning the 5th Chief Part of *Luther’s Small Catechism* (1943 ed. page 185) we read, “According to God’s will the Christian congregation chooses and calls men as ministers, who in the name of Christ and in the name of the congregation publicly perform the functions of the Office of the Keys.” Our Lord has given the keys to “bind” the unrepentant and to “loose” the repentant sinner. “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” (John 20:22-23)

Sin must not be ignored, for the sake of the soul of the guilty and also for the sake of the entire flock. Paul dealt with it in Corinth, writing:

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles – that a man has his father’s wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. (1 Corinthians 5:1-2)

St. Paul now shows the extent to which the Church should deal with such a one who is impenitent:

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (1 Corinthians 5:4-5)

To everyone and especially the secure sinner the minister is to proclaim the full force of the Law. “But outside [of heaven] are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.” (Revelation 22:15) Though all of these sins are forgivable, the one who remains unrepentant in any sin is locked out of heaven and will join the five unbelieving virgins who, “...came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’” (Matthew 25:11-12)

The consequences of sexual sins are extensive in destruction to faith and an offense to others. Paul warns,

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh. ...Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s. (1 Corinthians 6:15-20)

Lest we think that only others who practice gross or crass adultery, fornication or homosexuality are committing sexual immorality, we must heed the full striking power of the law. “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:27-28) To engage in sexual lust is also a breaking of the 6th commandment, “We should fear and love God that we lead a chaste and decent life in word and deed and each love and honor his spouse.” (*Small Catechism*) Every one of us has the total need for the forgiveness of sins that Christ has purchased for us all.

The aim of the law is to crush and kill so that one may be made alive in Christ alone. To that end the repentant must know that even sexual sins such as homosexuality are forgiven by the cross of Christ. In C.F.W. Walther’s 24th thesis on the proper distinction of

Law and Gospel, he writes, "...the Word of God is not rightly divided when the unforgivable sin against the Holy Ghost is described in a manner as if it could not be forgiven because of its magnitude."¹⁸ When Jesus says, "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven." (Matthew 12:31) Walther says, "The blasphemy to which our text refers is directed against the office, or operation, of the Holy Spirit; whoever spurns the office of the Holy Spirit, his sin cannot be forgiven. The office of the Holy Spirit is to call men to Christ and to keep them with Him."¹⁹

When the person is terrified by his sin and repentant nothing less than the pure Gospel must be immediately proclaimed to his comfort. The minister of the Word of God must "...absolve those who repent of their sins and are willing to amend..." (*Small Catechism* – The Office of the Keys and Confession) Such a man in Corinth was to be forgiven and the congregation's love was to be confirmed toward him:

This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. (2 Corinthians 2:6-8)

Our gender, sexuality and marriage are a picture of the glorious marriage of Christ and His bride, the Church. The Savior has taken us to be his bride and has taken responsibility for our sin. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Ephesians 5:30-32)

The blood of Christ forgives all sin. "[Christ] Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed." (1 Peter 2:24.)

Jesus ministered to the woman at the well with Law and Gospel so that Jesus says to her: "You have had five husbands and the one whom you now have is not your husband." She was forgiven

and became one who heard these words of Jesus, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” (John 4:18, 14)

God’s rescue of man from the sin of homosexuality is possible; Paul makes the point immediately after the list which includes the sin of homosexuality within the Corinthian congregation: “And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11) “For with God nothing will be impossible.” (Luke 1:37)

B. The Gay “Christian” Agenda in the Estate of the Church

The Gay “Christian” Movement (GCM) seeks legitimization of homosexuality in the church. The GCM includes people who claim to be Christian and most even claim the support of the Bible.²⁰ The gay leadership knows it must attack the authority of the Bible by either trying to dismantle the authority of Scriptures or by misrepresenting the many passages concerning homosexuality.²¹ We must teach the truth concerning the sinfulness of homosexuality as well as proclaim the Gospel and the will of God for marriage and the family. We shall now take a survey of some of the passages related to the sin of homosexuality and give a few examples of how some may try to misrepresent Scripture by attempting to support homosexuality with the Bible. We shall also deal with such an attempt with a Biblical response.

1. Genesis 19:4-9

⁴ Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. ⁵ And they called to Lot and said to him, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally.” ⁶ So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, ⁷ and said, “Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! ⁸ See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come

under the shadow of my roof.”⁹ And they said, “Stand back!” Then they said, “This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them.”

The angels are sent to inquire about the state of the town. A gathering of young and old men demanded “to know” them. False teachers in the GCM say the sin of Sodom was not homosexuality but that they were inhospitable. The gay activist may say that the word “to know” means to “get acquainted” and does not imply sex.

In response to such a claim we know that Lot calls their desire “wicked” and then offers his daughters. Lot says, “Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with (*yadah*) a man.” Certainly these girls had in sometime in their lives been “acquainted” with a man. Clearly Lot tries to avert sin with sin. The daughters were being offered to appease the sexual passions of the men of the city and not to get to know them better. We also can note that the word “*yadah*” (to know) is used 12 times in Genesis and in ten of those times it can mean only sexual relations.

Ezekiel 16:50 also says of Sodom, “And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me.” That these abominations were sexual is suggested in Jude 7 where we read, “Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment.” Homosexuality is a sin and brings about the wrath of God.

2. Judges 19:22-25

²² As they were enjoying themselves, suddenly certain men of the city, perverted men, surrounded the house and beat on the door. They spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying, “Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know him carnally!”²³ But the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, “No, my brethren! I beg you, do not act so wickedly! Seeing this man has come into my house, do not commit this outrage.”²⁴ Look, here is my virgin daughter and the man’s concubine; let me bring them out now. Humble them, and do with them as you please; but to this man do not do such a vile thing!”²⁵ But the men would not heed him. So the man took his concubine and brought her out to them. And they

knew her and abused her all night until morning; and when the day began to break, they let her go.

The sin of Gibeah is the same sin as Sodom. The men wanted to know the visitor. These men are called worthless and demanded to sodomize the Levite. The word to describe the desires of the townsmen is called an outrage or rather “a vile thing.” The word is used to denote “shameful licentiousness and whoredom.”²²

3. Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13

²² You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.

If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.

The most common claim of the gay activist for this passage is to claim that this is just a ceremonial law that is not in force in the New Testament. We respond with the fact that the laws against homosexuality were not mere ceremonial laws. The Gentile Canaanites often committed these acts and the very acts of all homosexuals are an abomination to God.

The fact that the condemnation of the sin of homosexuality is not ceremonial law but moral law can be shown from 1 Corinthians. 6:9-10, “Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites... will inherit the kingdom of God.” God’s fury against homosexuality (such as in the destruction of Sodom in Genesis 19) raged long before there were ceremonial laws issued at Sinai (after the Exodus). Furthermore, the commands against homosexuality are repeated in the New Testament after ceremonial laws are repealed.

4. Romans 1:26-27

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. ²⁷ Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

Man has destroyed the natural relationship between himself and God. Man is perverted to the core. This fact is brought home to man in the perversion of man's sexual instincts. One of the greatest perversions is the horror of homosexuality. This horror is vividly before Paul's eyes in his travels and is part of the texture of the Roman culture and pagan religious life.²³

This false bent of man is an instrument of God's wrath. Man was created as heterosexual and now man uses his sexuality against another. Homosexuals now bear in themselves all the violence and consequences of the homosexual acts, "...receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due." (Romans 1:27)

Some gay agenda promoters argue that Paul is speaking only in a sociological sense and not a biological sense. In other words, it is fine for a homosexual to engage with another homosexual, for that is to them "natural." However, they argue, for a heterosexual to engage with a homosexual would be "unnatural" for the both of them since they are denying what or who they truly are. They say the real sin is to go against your nature.²⁴

In response to the gay activist we note that Paul never recognizes a "true" homosexual in contrast to a "false" one. One who commits this sin is simply a homosexual and it is unnatural no matter who does it. May one honestly argue that one may partake of the other sins, such as fornication and murder, if it comes naturally to him?

5. I Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10

⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

⁹ knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,¹⁰ for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine,¹¹ according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.

Many will try entering heaven and be locked out. They remain in their sin as they reject Christ's righteousness. What is so elementary and self-evident man tries to deny. Paul gives a representative list of many sins that man may try to embrace but such men will not be accepted because they commit and remain in such sins. The Law of God strikes all classes of sinners. The Greek word for "homosexuals" in 1 Corinthians 6:9 is *malakoi*. This is a "voluptuary": one who is given to sensual pleasures. It means "soft, effeminate" and "men and boys who allow themselves to be misused homosexually."²⁵

The Greek word in 1 Corinthians 6:9 translated "sodomites" is *arsenokoitai*. Such a one is an "abuser of themselves with men." In the early church it refers to "a male who practices homosexuality, a pederast, a sodomite."²⁶ This sin was prevalent in the highest social ranks and there were many open apologists for this vice.

The promoters of the gay agenda may argue that this word "*arsenokoite*" is coined by Paul and never used before. They reason that if Paul meant homosexuality by *arsenokoite* he would have used another more common word.

In response, it is acknowledged that Paul may have coined over 179 words in the NT. However, the word, "*arsenokoite*", is derived from the LXX translation of homosexuality in Leviticus 18 and 20. *Arsenos koiten* literally means "male layer." *Koite* is used twice in the NT and means bed or couch with a sexual context. *Koite* in Romans 13:13 is translated: "Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness (*koitais*) and lust, not in strife and envy." and in Hebrews 13:4: "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed (*koite*) undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge."

Another approach of the GCM is to say that Paul was condemning homosexual offenders and not the private act of two gay guys. However we know that Paul speaks about the very act of all homosexuality and nowhere does he distinguish offensive acts from "non-offensive" homosexual acts. Are the other acts in Paul's list of sins, such as adultery or idolatry, at times non-offensive?

These are a summary of the texts concerning homosexuality

that make it clear it is a sin and that it strikes at God's gifts of marriage and family. Additionally, we must know and teach in the church the real thing: marriage.

C. The doctrine of Marriage and family taught in the church

To deal with the homosexual agenda we must not just point out the sinfulness of sexual immorality. We must also proclaim the Gospel as well as the will of God for our marriages and families to the end that all will grow in sanctification and bear the good fruit in married and family life. For example:

Older women likewise, are to be teachers of good things – that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. (Titus 2:3-5)

Furthermore, the Scriptural doctrine of marriage and family must be taught for the sake of the children. In a study of Ephesians five, Rev. V.S. Grieger, in his book *He Her Honour and She His Glory*, tells us that the problem of homosexuality is a second-generation perversion of marriage.²⁷ In other words, homosexuality is often seen among children whose parents had an extremely distorted view of marriage. The father or the mother or both do not carry out their God-given roles and the little boy and girl can be confused in their sexual identity. Though this does not excuse the sin, it is true that sin has a way of leading to more sin.²⁸ *He Her Honour and She His Glory* is a study that is recommended for all members, especially the young men and women who are just entering their teen years.²⁹

Living together (*de facto* relationships) and divorce are also attacks upon God's design for marriage. Though homosexuality is one distortion of marriage, it can be rightly said that marriage is the issue and we must teach this doctrine diligently. In this way we deal with the bombardment of the homosexual agenda, especially in response to those goals that call for affirming such a "sexual

orientation” and for those who try to redefine marriage and the family.

III. Dealing with the Homosexual Agenda in the Home

First, everything that was mentioned above about teaching the doctrines of marriage and family ought also to be taught in the home by the father and also the mother as his helpmeet. In Deuteronomy 6:6 we are told, “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” In Ephesians 6:4, which comes immediately after the *sedes doctrinae* chapter on marriage, Paul speaks to the fathers and says, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

Luther in the Large Catechism on the Sixth Commandment says,

Now, I speak of this in order that the young may be so guided that they conceive a liking for the married estate, and know that it is a blessed estate and pleasing to God. For in this way we might in the course of time bring it about that married life be restored to honor, and that there might be less of the filthy, dissolute, disorderly doings which now run riot the world over in open prostitution and other shameful vices arising from disregard of married life.³⁰

Second, children are to be raised in preparation for marriage and family. Toward this goal a child can learn to treat the opposite gender with respect, as a sister and brother. St. Timothy was told by St. Paul to treat “younger women as sisters, with all purity.” (1 Timothy 5:2) The child can learn to speak of sexuality, marriage and parenting with highest respect. “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled;” (Hebrews 13:4)

Many children in the world follow the example of most television shows and are able dispensers of sexual innuendo and jokes. “But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let

it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.” (Ephesians 5:3-4) Even the clothing of girls and boys can be a confession of the sanctity of marriage and the gender God gave them, “...in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation...which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.” (1 Timothy 2:9)

In preparation for marriage and family our children can avoid joining wholeheartedly in much of what our culture calls “normal” for boy/girl relationships. In 2 Timothy 2:22, St. Paul says, “Flee youthful lusts; pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” The whole concept of “dating” should be carefully thought through as to its relationship to marriage and family preparation. Young men and woman can learn to seek valuable input and guidance from their God-given parents in preparation for marriage. “Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’” (Ephesians 6:1)

During the latter stage of youth young men and women prepare for their vocations in the church, home, and state. Should their vocation include being a husband and father or wife and mother, they can look to St. Paul, who encourages serious preparation. Young widows were to prepare for further vocational service to God: “Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.” (1 Timothy 5:14)

Third, the father should closely evaluate the formal education of his children. Recall the homosexual agenda that calls for promoting homosexuality in public education. If the father elects to have someone else help him in his responsibility to educate his child he should be vigilant and know what worldview the school and teachers have. False worldviews that are gaining a greater hold in our public schools will also often include false teaching concerning marriage and family.³¹ All false teaching is to be avoided. “Note those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.” (Romans 16:17)

The father must be aware of the bombardment of the gay

agenda in the public schools.³² The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network is a fast growing and well-funded group that seeks to use the schools as its primary platform. GLSEN uses curriculum material, teacher training workshops, and after school homosexual clubs to promote its goals. GLSEN has the National Education Association as a strong ally. It celebrates every type of sexual practice, recommends the early sexualization of children and pro-homosexual books like *Growing Up Gay/Growing Up Lesbian* for 7th -12th grade students.

Ideally, the father will want to look elsewhere for his child's education. Home schooling is proven to be an excellent education for children.³³ As in any truly Lutheran School, God's Word is the foundation and the worldview, the thread that runs through all learning. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." (Proverbs 1:7) In the home school, the divinely instituted roles of men and women, the institution of marriage, and chaste living and thinking may be seamlessly woven into the child's education. The relationship of the child and parents can be made stronger and biblical marriage can be seen in real life by substantive time spent with the parents.³⁴

Another way, for a father who desires to secure a Christian education for his child, is to participate in a Lutheran Elementary School. A school that uses God's Word in all areas of child training has obvious advantages to promote marriage and family to our children. Luther writes, "Above all things, the principle and most general subject of study, both in the higher and the lower schools, should be the Holy Scriptures."³⁵ And elsewhere he says,

But where the Holy Scripture does not rule I certainly advise no one to send his child. Everyone not unceasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt; therefore we must see what people in the higher schools are and grow up to be... I greatly fear that schools for higher learning are wide gates to hell if they do not diligently teach the Holy Scriptures and impress them on the young folk.³⁶

In the home the parents can deal with the homosexual agenda bombardment by teaching marriage and the family, preparing their children for marriage and family, and by making sure their children's

education is for the blessing of their future marriage and family.

IV. Dealing with the Homosexual Agenda in the State

In dealing with the homosexual agenda in the realm of the state one also has to show that it is a sin against God and an attack against marriage and family, but how? It is easy to see how the Word of God can be used in the estates of the church and home but can Scripture be used in the debate in the kingdom of the left?

Because truth is truth the answer must be an unequivocal “Yes.” “...always be ready to give a defense...” (1 Peter 3:15) God created and rules above all three estates. The fact that God has also instituted the state is taught to Pilate by Jesus, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.” (John 19:11) It is appropriate to use every Biblical teaching thus far reviewed also in our debate in the sphere of the State. We can also speak the truth making use of the moral or natural God-given law.

Realistically and sadly, natural man will label the Word of God, and all things from the Holy Ghost, as foolish. “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him.” (1 Corinthians 2:14) Many will simply not listen to the Word of God. Jesus prays, “I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” (John 17:14) But do not despair. St. Paul points out the blessing of natural law and the God-given conscience in Romans 2:14-15:

¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them.

Holy Scripture and God’s natural law and morality are truth and all truth can be confessed and used at the places where these issues are debated. Such forums in society include a political party meeting, a city council session, school board meetings, and public policy meetings.

To deal with the homosexual agenda’s goal to have everyone

embrace this “sexual orientation,” to affirm the use of gays in the military or to increase social acceptance of homosexuality one must teach objective truths such as the medical facts concerning this sin.

The diseases that come with homosexuality must be brought to society’s attention. Kathleen Melonakos, M.A., R.N. of the Delaware Family Foundation has long been concerned about the serious medical consequences which result from the gay-affirming attitudes. She writes,

As far as I know, there is no other group of people in the United States that dies of infectious diseases in the mid-forties except practicing homosexuals. ... Can anyone refute that the increased morbidity and mortality is an unavoidable result of male-with-male sex – not to mention increased rates of alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, suicide and other maladies that so often accompany a homosexual lifestyle? People with this whole cluster of behavior are somehow “normal?”³⁷

One can point out the anatomical risk of many homosexual acts. As Brian Camenker of the Parents Right’s Coalition said on national TV, “A lifetime of anal sex does not do great things for the body.” The risk of anal cancer, according to one report, rises by 4000% and doubles again for those who are HIV positive.³⁸

Even the liberal APA (American Psychiatric Association) estimates that 900,000 people in the U.S. are infected with HIV, or 1 in 300 Americans! There has been a decrease of late of those dying from AIDS due to drug therapy, but note that the therapy costs an average of \$12,000 per patient per year. The rate of new infections of HIV is steady at 40,000 per year despite the 20 years of “safe-sex” campaigning.³⁹

One can point out the promiscuity statistics among homosexuals. Few gay relationships last longer than two years, with many men reporting hundreds of lifetime partners. Bell and Weinber’s 1978 extensive study of homosexuality revealed what only can be described as staggering statistics. Of 685 homosexual men, 569 (83 percent) had 50+ partners in their lifetime, 497 (73 percent) had 100+, 394 (58 percent) had 250+, 248 (41 percent) had 500+. One hundred and eighty-two of those surveyed reported sexual partners exceeding 1,000, which is an astonishing 26 percent.⁴⁰ Compare this

to heterosexual American adult males (18+) who average one or two sexual partners per year, and 12 over a lifetime.⁴¹ These numbers of partners and the types of acts in homosexual sex greatly increase the incidence of disease. Due to the natural law of God these medical facts and promiscuity statistics should turn anyone's stomach.

Finally, we can respond to efforts to promote the gay agenda, which demand more political power. False statements in this area may at first seem to carry public opinion. However, truth is a powerful light. Logical reasoning is part of truth. "Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. That You may be justified in your words, and may overcome when you are judged." (Romans 3:4)

For example we may hear gay demands for "sexual orientation" laws and a redefinition of marriage: "We're being denied the same rights as heterosexuals. This is unconstitutional discrimination!" No, any homosexual can marry in any state of the Union. He just cannot marry someone of the same sex. These are rights and restrictions all citizens share equally. That may be a disappointing response to the homosexual, but it is true.⁴²

Another example is: "We shouldn't be denied the freedom to love whom we want." Most of these remarks reflect a common misconception. Many are deluded into thinking that same sex marriages will give them new liberties. They will not. Homosexuals are free to do almost anything they want in any state. Gay "marriage" grants no new freedom. What they really want is social approval for their lifestyle. Gay marriage is not about civil rights but about validation and social respect. To call it "marriage" would be to degrade, to say the least, real marriage, which has been the basic building block of civilization since creation.

This paper has tried to give examples of the gay agenda and how to deal with it by applying both the Law and the Gospel. Clearly, homosexuality is a sin and bombards both marriage and the family. We have looked at our lives in the church, home and state as to how we may respond with the Word of God and His truth. Despite the devil's ranting and raving, he and his allies do not change one iota of what is marriage and family. God has ordained these.

We thank God for making us male and female and instituting marriage and the estate of the home. We thank God for instituting

the estate of government for the protection of the many families in the land. Most of all we are thankful that in the estate of the church we receive the Word and Sacrament and know that every male and female has been redeemed from sin, death, and hell through the Bridegroom who loved His bride enough to lay His life down for Her.

For, the archetype of all marriages is: Christ and His bride, the church.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. ³⁰ For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹ *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”* ³² This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. ³³ (Ephesians 5:25-32)

Endnotes

¹ Thompson, David, “Seek the Peace of the Land: Living in and Understanding Our “Babylon”, 2004 ELS Convention Essay, p. 27.

² All Scripture quotations are from: *The New King James Version*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1998, c1982.

³ *Triglotta*, (Concordia, Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, WI), p. 365.

⁴ *Triglotta*, p. 367.

⁵ Burtoft, Larry, Ph.D., *The Social Significance of Homosexuality: Questions and Answers* (Focus on the Family, 1994), p. 21. Family pedigree studies (the study of twins), genetic linkage studies (the study of genetic material), and hormonal studies (the study of hormonal activity prior to or during birth) demonstrate that there is no scientific support for the claim that homosexual orientation is biological. Though many studies claim a link to biological causes they do not prove such a physical determination. Serious errors in methodology or conclusions are found due to “unsubstantiated hypotheses regarding the relationship between animal and human sexuality, inadequate population samples and controls, lack of replication, contradictions in comparative studies, or other methodological and conceptual weaknesses...”

⁶ Diamond, Milton. “Homosexuality and Bisexuality in Different Populations,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 1993, vol. 22, no. 4, p. 29303.

⁷ Seidman, Stuart N. and Rieder, Ronald O. “A Review of Sexual Behavior in the United States,” *American Journal of Psychiatry*, March 1994, vol. 151, no. 3, pp. 330-341.

⁸ Burtoft, p. 56.

⁹ Burtoft, p. 57.

¹⁰ In a children’s book *Heather Has Two Mommies* the day care worker is to tell the children, “It doesn’t matter how many mommies or how many daddies your family has.” In *Daddy’s Roommate* the children are taught, “Being gay is just another kind of love.”

¹¹ www.luther.edu

¹² “Love Won Out” is a series of booklets from Focus on the Family, “Teaching Captivity? How the Pro-Gay Agenda Is Affecting Our Schools and How You Can Make a Difference,” p. 4.

¹³ Burtoft, p. 62.

¹⁴ D’Emilio, John. “The Irresistible Force of Gay Power,” *Out*, April/May 1993, p 69.

¹⁵ Rotondi, Richard. “The Gay ‘90s: A Response to the Gay Activist Movement,” *Critical Issues*, vol. 1, iss. 3, 6.

¹⁶ Burtoft, p. 64.

¹⁷ Burtoft, p. 56. The North America Man-Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) is a leader in this agenda. A child molester is 17 times more likely to be homosexual than heterosexual. Heterosexual pedophiles commit an average

of 20 acts of child molestation and homosexuals an average of 150. In 1972 the Gay Rights Platform made the following demands: "Repeal all state laws prohibiting private sexual acts involving consenting persons" (as opposed to consenting adults) and "Repeal all laws governing the age of sexual consent."

¹⁸ Walther, C.F.W. (1897), *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO), p. 393.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ The Gay Christian Movement came of age in 1984 when Rev. John Boswell wrote, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*. This made it easier for liberal churches to accept homosexuality. He taught that the church has not always disapproved of homosexuality and that the usual verses used against the sin are really about other forms of immorality. He was not a language expert and denied the inspiration of the Bible but he wrote what many wanted to hear and is held by liberals as an expert. Today in many denominations there are gay movements: Lutherans Concerned (ELCA) started in 1974, Affirmation is a Methodist group, Integrity-Episcopalian, Dignity-Roman Catholic, Kinship-7th Day Adventists.

²¹ Rev. Troy Perry is a leader in his denomination, the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC) with over 300 churches in eight countries. He wrote, *The Lord's My Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay* in 1972 and *Don't Be Afraid Anymore* in 1990.

²² Keil, D.F. and Delitzsch, F., *Commentary of the Old Testament*, Vol. II, (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI), p. 445.

²³ Franzmann, Martin H., *Romans - A Commentary*, (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO., 1968.), p. 42.

²⁴ Boswell, John, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1980) Homosexual promoter John Boswell says, "The persons Paul condemns are manifestly not homosexual: what he derogates are homosexual acts committed by heterosexual persons. The whole point of Romans 1, in fact, is to stigmatize persons who have rejected their calling, gotten off the true path they were once on." p. 109.

²⁵ Arndt, William and Gingrich, Wilber, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1958 p. 488.

²⁶ *ibid.* p. 109

²⁷ A critique of *He Her Honour and She His Glory* may be located in the June 2004 edition of the "Lutheran Sentinel" written by Rev. Erik Gernander, p. 13.

²⁸ Dr. Nicolosi says, "In 15 years, I have spoken with hundreds of homosexual men. I have never met one who said he has a loving, respectful relationship with his father." (CD of interview of Dr. James Dobson with Dr. Joseph Nicolosi "Preventing Homosexuality", CD 1.) Dr. Nicolosi is the Research Investigator of the National Association of Research and Therapy in Homosexuality (NARTH).

²⁹ Grieger, V.S., *He Her Honour and She His Glory*, (Printed Privately at 17 Edmond St. Marburg, Queensland, 1994) This book is available from the Bethany College Bookstore. There is a set of study questions available for this book from Rev. Hill (an LC-MS pastor in Plano, TX) that I found helpful.

³⁰ *Triglotta*, p. 642-643.

³¹ The following are helpful resources: Rev. David Thompson's 2004 ELS Convention Essay, "Seek the Peace of the Land," Allen Quist's *FedEd – The New Federal Curriculum and How It's Enforced* (Maple River Education Coalition, St. Paul, MN, 2002) and Allen Quist's *The Battle for America in the Schools*, 2004.

³² The approach of many gay activists in schools is to enter under the guise of "school safety." This may occur when it is reported that a gay boy is bullied in the hallways. Though this should never be tolerated by anyone it is used as the springboard to push a gay agenda in the school. The administration is pressured to implement programs, curriculum and clubs that embrace homosexuality. If someone resists, they are labeled as "homophobic." The argument for safe schools is further pressed so that if anyone speaks against homosexuality in general he is guilty of action that may lead a homosexual to commit suicide. The activist's handbooks encourage gay agenda promoters to make use of generic terms like "tolerance," or "diversity." They are to redefine these terms and use them to advance their goals.

³³ Recommended reading on why home schooling offers a better education in less time than public education as well as many other answers to home schooling questions is: *The Future of Home Schooling – A New Direction for Home Education* by Michael Farris, Regnery Publishing, Inc., Washington, D.C., 1997.

³⁴ For further information on the advantages, feasibility of home schooling and how to begin home schooling, go to www.hsld.org. (Home school Legal Defense Association, Purcellville, VA). A study on home schooling by Dr. Brian Ray entitled, "Home Education Across the United States" can be obtained by contacting National Home Education Research Institute (NHERI) at P.O. Box 13939; 925 Cottage Street N.C.; Salem, OR 97309; (503)364-1490. This study is collected data on 5,402 home school students from 1,657 families over two academic years. Even without parents who are certified as teachers in any way, the students' scores far surpass the scores of those learning under public school certified teachers. "This study demonstrates that home schooling works. Regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, parent educational level, teacher certification, or the degree of government regulation, the academic achievement scores of home educated students significantly exceed those of public school students. Home school students are fully engaged in society and experience a wide range of opportunities outside the home. They are smart users of both technology and their time." (Farris, pp. xxx-xxx)

³⁵ Luther, Martin, *What Luther Says* compiled by Plass, Ewald, (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis), p. 449.

³⁶ *ibid*.

³⁷ Melonakos, Kathleen, M.A., R.N., "Why Isn't Homosexuality Considered a Disorder On the Basis of Its Medical Consequences?" article at: www.narth.com/docs/consequences.

³⁸ Melonakos, p. 2. Here is a list of the diseases to which homosexuals are vulnerable: "Classical sexual transmitted diseases (gonorrhea, infections with

Chlamydia trachomatis, syphilis, herpes simplex infections, genital warts, pubic lice, scabies); enteric diseases (infections with *Shigella* species, *Campylobacter jejuni*, *Entamoeba histolytica*, *Giardia lamblia*, ["gay bowel disease"], Hepatitis A,B,C,D, and cytomegalovirus); trauma (related to and/or resulting in fecal incontinence, hemorrhoids, anal fissure, foreign bodies lodged in the rectum, retosigmoid tears, allergic proctitis, penile edema, chemical sinusitis, inhaled nitrate burns, and sexual assault of the male patient); and the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)."

³⁹ Melonakos, p. 4.

⁴⁰ Burtoft, p. 34.

⁴¹ Burtoft, p. 34.

⁴² The facts show that gays have not had a history of discrimination.

Homosexuals do not lack an ability to obtain income, an education, and access to the political process. The average gay household income is \$55,430 compared to the national average of \$32,144. 59.6 percent of gays are college graduates compared to 18 percent of all Americans. A majority of them have professional/managerial positions and travel overseas. They are 13 times more likely to be frequent flyers than heterosexuals. Burtoft, p. 70.

Confessional Lutherans Meet in the Land of the Rising Sun

Gaylin Schmeling

The land of Japan is known as the land of the rising sun and yet visitors soon realize that it is a land covered by pagan darkness. Shrines and temples are found everywhere. Japan is strongly influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism and Shintoism. Yet in this land, the light of the Gospel has arisen. A faithful confessional Lutheran church proclaims the forgiveness of Christ providing true light in the land of the rising sun. This church body is the Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church—Japan (LECC).

The LECC hosted the fifth triennial convention of the CELC held in Narita, Japan on May 31-June 2, 2005. What a wonderful time this was. Confessional Lutherans gathered here from the four corners of the earth. There were people from many nations present with many different passports. They spoke a plethora of languages and had a variety of customs. Still they had one thing in common—the most important thing, they were one in the Lord, one in faith, one in doctrine, one in the blessed hope of everlasting life in heaven.

The membership of the CELC includes twenty church bodies:

1. Bulgarian Lutheran Church
2. Christ the King Lutheran Church (Nigeria)
3. Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church (Mexico)
4. Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church (Puerto Rico)
5. Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church (Russia)
6. Confessional Lutheran Church in Latvia
7. Czech Evangelical Lutheran Church
8. Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Church (Finland)
9. Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (Germany)
10. Evangelical Lutheran Synod (USA)
11. Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia
12. Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Peru
13. Gereja Lutheran – Indonesia

14. Lutheran Church of Cameroon
15. Lutheran Church of Central Africa–Malawi
16. Lutheran Church of Central Africa–Zambia
17. Lutheran Confessional Church (Sweden and Norway)
18. Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church–Japan
19. Ukrainian Lutheran Church
20. Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Approximately eighty people gathered for the convention in excellent accommodations at the Holiday Inn in Tobu Narita, Japan. The delegation from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) included President John and Joslyn Moldstad, Vice-President Glenn and Lisa Obenberger, the Rev. Steven and Kathy Petersen, the Rev. Matthew Luttmann, Professor Adolph Harstad, and Professor Gaylin Schmeling.

The theme of the convention was “Eagerly Await the Savior,” based on Philippians 3:20-21. This topic was discussed in five essays presented by men from the various church bodies that make up the CELC. The first essayist was Pastor Mikhail Starikov of the Christian Evangelical Lutheran Church (Russia). The essay was read by Mr. Andrey Koizionov. In the essay “Eagerly Await the Savior as You Prepare for Death,” he spoke of the comfort that a Christian has even in the face of death. This comfort centers in the forgiveness of Christ and our heavenly home.

The second essay, delivered by the Rev. Frackson Chinyama of the Lutheran Church of Central Africa (Malawi), was entitled “Eagerly Await the Savior as You Anticipate Resurrection and Glorification.” After clearly presenting the doctrine of the resurrection and future glorification, the essayist reminded his hearers that the message of glorification comforts the believer so that he is able to endure all the troubles and difficulties of life with a firm confidence in the Savior.

The Rev. Gundars Bakulis of the Confessional Lutheran Church in Latvia presented the third essay entitled “Eagerly Await the Savior as You Look Forward to Christ’s Return.” The essayist pointed out the errors of millennialism in its various manifestations

and explicated a proper biblical view of eschatology. The Christian lives in the already and not yet. He has the eschatological hope already in foretaste through the means of grace but not yet in all its fullness.

The fourth essay was given by the Rev. Mitsuo Haga of the Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church—Japan. In his essay “Eagerly Await the Savior even though You Must Face Divine Judgment,” the Rev. Haga reminded the assembly that we must all stand before the Lord in the judgment. Yet the Christian dressed in the armor of God’s Word does not look to that day in fear and dismay but in joy for we will be forever with the Lord.

The Rev. Mario Dominguez of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Church (Mexico) presented the next essay entitled “Eagerly Await the Savior Waiting for Heaven with Joy.” This essay was written by the Rev. Ezequiel Sánchez of Mexico. The essay centered on the wonderful joy and happiness of heaven. We will behold forever the beatific vision in Jerusalem the golden with milk and honey blessed.

In addition to the main topic of the conference, “Early Await the Savior,” there was discussion of a dispute resolution plan, global theological education, and the work of the Theological Commission. The dispute resolution plan was adopted by the convention.

A highlight of the 2005 convention was the acceptance into membership of Gereja Lutheran—Indonesia. This church body is making a valiant stand for the Christian faith in a land that is dominated by Islam. The members of this church are facing persecution but they continue to proclaim forgiveness and hope in the Savior. The 2004 ELS convention resolved to declare fellowship with the Gereja Lutheran—Indonesia.

Professor Armin Panning ended his term as the second president of the CELC and he was sincerely thanked for all that he had done for the conference during his time in office. The newly elected officers of the CELC are: president, Steven Peterson; vice-president, Daniel Koelpin; secretary, Forest Bivens; planning committee, John Moldstad and Wayne Mueller.

The Ukrainian Lutheran Church offered to host the 2008 triennial meeting. Their gracious offer was accepted by the

convention. The 2008 meeting will be held in Kiev, Ukraine. This meeting will be the fifteenth anniversary of the CELC which is a major milestone in the life of confessional Lutheranism.

In order that the essays presented at the triennial meetings might become available to a wider audience than just the participants at the conventions, the Theological Commission has been given the assignment to edit the essays of the previous conventions into booklet form. The commission produced and presented to the convention Article III, "The Holy Spirit: His Person and Work" in the series of booklets entitled *The Eternal Word: A Lutheran Confession for the Twenty-First Century*. Article I is a study of the doctrine of Holy Scripture and Article II of the doctrine of Justification.

On Wednesday afternoon, June 1, the convention had the opportunity to visit the Lamp Lutheran Church in Sakura City Chiba-Ken, Japan. The tour also included a stop at the National Museum of Japanese History and a visit to the Naritasan Temple. Here the people at the convention experienced first-hand the darkness of paganism in the land of the rising sun.

The opening service of the convention was conducted by the Rev. Joshua Stahmann of Japan with Professor Gaylin Schmeling preaching. The sermon was based on Philippians 3:20-21 with the theme "Our Citizenship is in Heaven." At the closing service of the convention, the Rev. Paul Wendland, president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, preached a sermon based on Philippians 1:21-25 with the theme "For Me to Live is Christ." The liturgist at this service was the Rev. Brad Wordell.

The Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church of Japan began as a mission field of the WELS shortly after the second World War. The religious and cultural context in Japan is influenced by Confucianism, Buddhism and Shintoism. These are major obstacles for evangelism work in Japan. Some of the missionaries spent only a few years in Japan, while others stayed many years, for example the Rev. Kermit Habben has spent 38 years in Japan. The other missionaries in Japan are: the Rev. Glen Hieb, the Rev. Brad Wordell, and the Rev. Joshua Stahmann. There are five national pastors in the LECC: the Rev. Wakichi Akagami, the Rev. Mitsuo Haga, the Rev. Takeshi Nidaira, the Rev. Fukuichi Oshino, and

the Rev. Tadashi Yoshida. The LECC has 10 congregations and preaching stations with about 500 souls members. The church body is boldly proclaiming the light of the Gospel in the spiritual darkness of Japan.

The CELC is the third largest worldwide Lutheran fellowship following the larger Lutheran World Federation and the International Lutheran Council. It was organized in 1993 at Oberwesel, Germany, and has approximately 450,000 members in 20 church bodies. The conference accepts the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments (the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God) as sole authority for doctrine, faith, and life. The conference also accepts the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, not in so far as, but because they are a correct exposition of the pure doctrine of the Word of God. The CELC continues to strengthen each of its member churches through mutual encouragement and consultation. We praise and thank our Triune God who has permitted us to establish this confessional organization on the firm foundation of Jesus and His Word.

*For more information about the CELC, visit the website:
www.celc.info*