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REDEMPTIVE LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL: ISAIAH 42:1-4 AND ITS QUOTATION IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

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Introduction

As he begins his letter to the Roman church, the Apostle Paul describes the gospel as "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom 1:16).[1] God's salvific plan is truly global in scope, yet as Paul notes there is a certain order to it. The gospel comes through the Jews and goes to them first, then out to the Gentile world. Paul is not innovating when he says so, but is in fact drawing off Old Testament precedent in making this point. Many passages in the Hebrew Scriptures point to this salvific order of Jew then Gentile, but one often overlooked is Isa 42:1-4. By exegeting Isa 42:1-4 in its historical and literary context, we will find that the pericope presents YHWH's servant as someone who will bring redemptive justice first for Israel, second for all nations. Matthew, in quoting Isa 42:1-4, applies this particular aspect of the pericope to Jesus' Galilean ministry – first for Israel, second for the Gentiles.

Authorship of Isaiah

Our exegesis of 42:1-4 will be deeply affected by our understanding of the authorship of the book of Isaiah, so to this issue we turn first. If, as so many scholars have claimed, Isaiah's prophecy is a composite document from a number of authors over multiple centuries,[2] then we would be justified in confining our exegesis of 42:1-4 to a much smaller unit of the book.[3] If, on

[1] All quotations taken from the ESV unless otherwise noted.

[2] The literature here is so vast as to preclude the necessity of specific citations. For an example of this critical scholarly view in more recent scholarly work, see Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 83–92.

[3] Even if multiple authors are allowed, this does not necessarily preclude all exegesis in light of the entire book of Isaiah. One could, in this case, exegete 42:1-4 in light of the whole work based on how the author of 42:1-4 sees this pericope fitting into the book as a whole. Watts, for instance, writes that his approach, accepting the critical consensus, attempts "to trace the intent of those who produced this book at that time, the shape they gave it at that

the other hand, the entire prophecy was written by one man, then our exegesis would only be complete by considering the pericope in light of the whole work. We shall therefore first contend for a single authorship of the book of Isaiah by the 8th century prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz (Isa 1:1). This argument shall proceed in two steps: first, the theological argument for Isaianic authorship and second the textual argument for Isaianic authorship. Implications for the exegesis of 42:1-4 will then be considered.

Before proceeding to the text of Isaiah itself, we will first consider the implications of an evangelical doctrine of Scripture for the authorship of Isaiah.[4] Though it may seem counterintuitive, this step is fundamental to the question of the authorship of Isaiah. What *kind* of text one considers Scripture to be will necessarily include or preclude a number of possibilities. Take predictive prophecy as just one example. Isaiah 44:28 specifically mentions Cyrus (כּוֹרֶשׁ) by name, thus making what could be considered a predictive prophecy. If Scripture is divinely inspired, then this opens up the possibility of a genuine anticipation hundreds of years in advance of a man named Cyrus by a singular prophet named Isaiah. If, however, the book of Isaiah has no divine authorship behind it, then it seems nearly impossible for such a specific prediction to occur. Predictive prophecy is almost *de facto* ruled out; much of its fulfillment must be explained as

time, and the extent to which they brought consistency and unity to its purpose and teaching." John D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1985), xli.

[4] That is not to make a sharp divide between a theological and a textual argument. The two are in fact interrelated, the theological argument being based on the text and the exegesis of the text being performed within the hermeneutical framework established by an evangelical doctrine of Scripture, both informing each other through a "hermeneutical spiral." See Richard L. Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student's Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1993), 32–41.

vaticinium ex eventu,[5] or interpreted to make the prophecy less specific.[6] We would be forced to admit the much higher possibility of multiple authors of the book of Isaiah.

An evangelical doctrine of Scripture most fundamentally considers the Bible to be a book written by men who wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This inspiration was both negative and positive. It was negative in the sense of the Holy Spirit's restraining them from all error and positive in the sense of the Holy Spirit's prompting the authors with an impulse to write while giving both matter and the words to communicate those matters.[7] Scripture, therefore, is free from error in all matters upon which it touches, not simply matters directly related to faith. According to this doctrine, whatever Scripture claims to be true must be true.[8]

The key claim of an evangelical doctrine of Scripture is, for our purposes, that the Scripture is perfectly truthful in all that it *claims* to be true.[9] We must therefore ask whether the book of Isaiah makes any claims to authorship, and if so, what are those claims? Two aspects of the book are relevant. First, Isa 1:1 acts as a superscription and refers to what follows as "The vision of

[5] A classic example of this is the critical consensus noted by Blenkinsopp, among others, that prophecies concerning Cyrus were written in the sixth century BC at the earliest. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 82.

[6] A helpful summary of critical methods for downplaying the predictive element of prophecy can be found in Oswald T. Allis, *The Unity of Isaiah: A Study in Prophecy* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1950), 20. The entire chapter provides a number of examples which show that Scripture makes claims of specific, far-off future predictive prophecies and even understands many to be fulfilled before the close of the Old Testament.

[7] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 1:415.

[8] For more on the evangelical view of the inspiration and authority of Scripture, see Bavinck, *RD*, 1:387–448; J.I. Packer, *"Fundamentalism" and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 41–114; Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1992), 1:62–69; Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, repr., The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003).

[9] Oswalt elaborates this claim in four points: 1) biblical writers do not knowingly falsify statements of fact, 2) authorship claims must be taken at face value, 3) statements are perfectly reliable when understood in the context of their genre and usage, and 4) all discrepancies are only apparent and would disappear if we had all relevant data. John N. Oswalt, "The Implications of an Evangelical View of Scripture for the Authorship of the Book of Isaiah," in *Bind Up the Testimony: Explorations in the Genesis of the Book of Isaiah*, ed. Daniel I. Block and Richard L. Schultz (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2015), 276.

Isaiah the son of Amoz." Second, no other such inscriptions can be found in the rest of the book.[10] In fact, the text doubles down in multiple instances on its assertion that Isaiah is the one delivering the oracles of this book (2:1; 13:1; 37:6; 37:21; 38:1; 38:4; 39:5).The plain assertion of 1:1 is that what follows is the vision of a *single* prophet, not a guild or "school" or any other form of multiple authorship.[11] Furthermore, that single prophet is the 8th century Hebrew prophet Isaiah, not some anonymous redactor or some other author who lived well after Isaiah. If, therefore, we admit an evangelical doctrine of Scripture, then the implication would be that Isaiah son of Amoz is the author of the book bearing his name.

This does not mean that every jot and tittle of the book as we now have it was written by Isaiah himself. Rather, it is to say that Isaiah is the source of the substance behind each prophecy.[12] A number of evangelicals have attempted to draw parallels with later editorial material in the Pentateuch such as Deuteronomy 34 to argue that claims of authorship (in this case Mosaic) do not preclude later editing by a variety of authors.[13] If New Testament authors can speak of Moses as the author of the Pentateuch when the Pentateuch itself contains material that had to have been later edited, then surely Isaiah could have later editors to his own prophecy as well. The problem with this argument is that it confuses the genres of the Pentateuch and Isaiah's prophetic work. It

[10] Richard L. Schultz, "How Many Isaiahs Were There and What Does It Matter?: Prophetic Inspiration in Recent Evangelical Scholarship," in *Evangelicals & Scripture: Tradition, Authority, and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 153.

[11] Although he does not call it a "school," Baltzer does argue that the author of "Deutero-Isaiah" must have belonged to a literary group of some kind. See *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40-55*, ed. Peter Machinist, trans. Margaret Kohl, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 25–26.

[12] "Furthermore, later inspired editors could have done some minor editing of Isaiah's prophecies. But the conceptual essence of each prophecy should be seen as stemming from what the historical Isaiah said or wrote in his lifetime; each prophecy is like a footprint left by Isaiah, even if later scribes or editors may have filled in a little tread here and there." G.K. Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 157. There is no problem with understanding these later minor editors as also being under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

[13] Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 275; John Halsey Wood, "Oswald T. Allis and the Question of Isaianic Authorship," *JETS* 48 (2005): 256–57.

makes good sense that Moses in writing narratives would draw on earlier materials or that later inspired authors would add editorial comments or narratives (such as Moses' death). Isaiah, as someone pronouncing oracles directly from God, gives us no reason to expect such editing.[14]

Having theologically established Isaianic authorship we should also consider the textual evidence. The first question in this regard is which view of authorship the manuscript evidence most clearly supports. Our oldest manuscript of the book of Isaiah is the "Great Isaiah Scroll" (1QIsa[a]), found in the caves of Qumran in 1947.[15] This scroll is remarkable for its age (ca. 100 BC) and its closeness to the Masoretic Text. The primary differences between the two are in matters of spelling and grammatical forms, which is all the more remarkable considering the next oldest manuscript was copied over one thousand years later (Codex Leningrad, ca. AD 1000).[16] It is an attestation to the incredible care the Masoretes took in copying biblical manuscripts in general and Isaiah in particular.[17]

Besides the obvious value for text critical issues, the Great Isaiah Scroll has important implications for the authorship of Isaiah. In light of these findings and the great care in copying within the Masoretic tradition, Richard Hess asks a fair question: "cannot a scholar extrapolate the same scribal care to the earlier periods, where no manuscripts are preserved?"[18] To this we should answer in the affirmative. The Qumran community is pulling from a proto-Masoretic tradition,

[14] Richard L. Schultz, "Isaiah, Isaiahs, and Current Scholarship," in *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith? A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 244–45.

[15] For a brief overview of the Qumran findings, see Ellis R. Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism: A Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 36–43.

[16] For an overview of the variants in the Great Isaiah Scroll, see John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 30–31.

[17] Millar Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Viking, 1955), 304.

[18] Richard S. Hess, *The Old Testament: A Historical, Theological, and Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 514.

which we may naturally assume was copied with the same care evidenced by 1QIsa[a].[19] The picture given by this scroll is one of a scrupulously careful copying process which admits of no significant changes even over 1000 years. When extrapolated backward this picture comes into sharp conflict with that required by the multiple authorship view. Instead of multitudinous alterations to the text and editions of the book, the more natural assumption is consistent, reverent copying of what has been passed down for generations. The manuscript evidence therefore strongly suggests that Isaiah was formalized to its present form centuries prior to Qumran, which in turn strongly suggests a single author who composed it in that form. The burden of proof lies on those who would affirm multiple authorship through a long editing process.

Besides the manuscript evidence the book of Isaiah as we have it provides ample support for a single author. This is seen in the internal consistency of the book on a variety of levels.[20] The phrase "the Holy One of Israel" occurs only 5 times outside Isaiah, but 12 times in chs. 1-39 and 14 times in chs.40-66. This makes sense in light of Isaiah's paradigmatic vision of the thrice holy God in chapter 6.[21] On a broader level, the opening and closing sections serve as bookends by utilizing common themes (e.g. the desolation and restoration of Zion in 1:7-8, 26-27 and 64:10-12; 65:19-25), common vocabulary (e.g. "heaven and earth" in 1:2 and 65:17), and by images of Israel (e.g. a father-child relationship in 1:2 and 63:16).[22] Scholars have posited a "school of

[19] By Emmanuel Tov's count, roughly 60% of the Qumran texts reflect a proto-Masoretic tradition. See "The History and Significance of a Standard Text of the Hebrew Bible," in *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, ed. Magne Sæbø (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 64.

[20] Only the briefest of surveys can be offered here on the literary unity of Isaiah. For more, see J. Barton Payne, "The Unity of Isaiah: Evidence from Chapters 36-39," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 6 (1963): 50–56; Allis, *The Unity of Isaiah*; Christopher R. Seitz, *Reading and Preaching the Book of Isaiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988), 105–26; E.J. Young, *Who Wrote Isaiah?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958); Willem VanGemeren, "Isaiah," in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament*, ed. Miles V. Van Pelt (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 250–54.

[21] Young, *Who Wrote Isaiah?*, 57.

[22] VanGemeren, "Isaiah," 250.

Isaiah" to account for this unity,[23] but evidence for such a "school" is woefully lacking.[24] Such literary unity naturally suggests a single author.

Isaianic authorship carries with it significant exegetical implications.[25] First, the pericope of 42:1-4 is not an inserted afterthought.[26] Rather, it is integrally related to its surrounding context. Chapters 40 and 41 intentionally lead to 42:1-4, while the rest of chapter 42 assumes it and builds on it. Second, 42:1-4 is properly understood in the context of Isaiah as a whole. We should expect 42:1-4 to fit into the larger picture of 40-66 as well as the whole book.[27] In fact, if we do not consider this pericope in light of the whole book, we will have failed to thoroughly exegete it, having not considered how the single author fits this part into the whole. Our exegesis of 42:1-4 will therefore proceed on an interpretation of the pericope in and of itself, in its immediate context (40-41; 42:5-9), in the context of "Deutero-Isaiah" (40-66), and in the context of the whole book.

[23] E.g. Douglas Jones, following Mowinckel and others, in "Tradition of the Oracles of Isaiah of Jerusalem," *ZAW* 67 (1955): 226–27.

[24] Schultz summarizes the issues with this theory: 1) it lacks textual support (being based on a dubious interpretation of Isa 8:16 and supposed parallels with Baruch in Jer 36), 2) it lacks logical cogency, 3) it lack historical plausibility. "How Many Isaiahs Were There," 167. Oswalt further notes that it is shocking that someone with a supposedly small prophetic output like the historical Isaiah (something akin to Amos or Hosea in bulk of writing) would spark a movement so influential that centuries of disciples would write under his name and produce a work five or six times greater than the original author's. Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 20. See also R. E. Clements, *Old Testament Prophecy: From Oracles to Canon* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 94–95. Clements's primary issue with this view is the assumption of unity based on authorship, whereas he proposes a unity based on editing into thematic groups (e.g. Babylon prophecies in 13:1-14:23). While certainly plausible, this view shares the same issues of the "school" theory related to a diversity of authors over many multiple centuries.

[25] The theological implications of rejecting Isaianic authorship are exemplified by Schultz's observation that scholars who attempt to maintain an evangelical view of Scripture while allowing for multiple authorship of Isaiah, "stretch the doctrine of inspiration to cover what they have just proposed." "How Many Isaiahs Were There," 158–59. A change in the authorship of Isaiah necessitates a change in one's view of inspiration as a whole. .

[26] Westermann claims the servant songs "represent a special strand within the book of Deutero-Isaiah, and therefore they did not come into being at the same time as their contexts." *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary*, trans. David M.G. Stalker, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 92.

[27] While the division of the book into two sections (1-39 and 40-66) has traditionally been carried out by those who reject single authorship, even evangelical scholars can admit that Isaiah's prophecy does significantly shift in tone at chapter 40.

Exposition

The Presentation of the Servant

The pericope of 42:1-4 follows immediately on the heels of a trial in the heavenly courtroom in 41:21-29. In this legal disputation, YHWH sits alongside Israel against the false gods of the nations.[28] YHWH's challenge to the gods is simple: tell the future (vv.22-23a), just as YHWH can, and prove that they indeed are gods (v.23b). The result of this trial is presented with a resounding הֵן: "Behold, they are all a delusion; their works are nothing, their metal images are empty wind" (41:29).

Isaiah begins 42:1-4 with a strong declaration of הֵן. This stands in contrast to how he similarly began 41:29 with הֵן while also connecting the two.[29] In 41:29 הֵן was a declaration of the nothingness (אֶפֶס) of the false gods of the nations who were unable to predict the future like YHWH and thus prove their legitimacy. In contrast to these false gods, our attention is now strikingly turned not to YHWH himself, but to his servant (עַבְדִּי), the subject of the following pericope.

One of the main issues interpreters wrestle with is the identity of the servant.[30] Proposals include Moses,[31] Cyrus,[32] Israel,[33] and even the author himself,[34] while others either doubt our ability to discern the servant's identity or consider it irrelevant to exegesis.[35] Some go so far as to

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[28] Wim Beuken, "Mišpāt: The First Servant Song and Its Context," *VT* 22 (1972): 15.

[29] For more, see Gene R. Smillie, "Isaiah 42:1-4 in Its Rhetorical Context," *BSac* 162 (2005): 52–54.

[30] For a helpful bibliography on this issue, see John D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1987), 115–16.

[31] Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 125.

[32] Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 117–19. He argues that Cyrus is representative of Persian authority in general. Darius and Artaxerxes would therefore be included as well.

[33] LXX; Craig Blomberg, "Matthew," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 42; Peter Fiedler, "'The Servant of the Lord': Israel (Isaiah 42:1-4) and Jesus (Matthew 12:18-21)," *The Covenant Quarterly* 55 (1997): 120.

[34] R.N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 71.

[35] Robert W Bertram, "A Baptismal Crossing, Isaiah 42:1-9," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 9 (1982): 344; Kristin De Troyer, "An Exploration of the Wisdom of Solomon as the Missing Link Between Isaiah and Matthew," in *Isaiah in Context: Studies in Honor of Arie van Der Kooij on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*,

say the servant is not even a literal figure at all.[36] Identifying the servant as Moses takes the Mosaic and Exodus imagery too far by concluding the servant must therefore be Moses.[37] Cyrus, while a promising possibility, is a conqueror, not the gentle figure of 42:2-3.[38] Israel would seem to be a natural choice since Isaiah already refers to Israel as God's servant (עַבְדִּי) in 41:8, not mention multiple verbal connections between 41:10 and 42:1-4.[39] However, 42:4 speaks of the *servant's* תּוֹרָה. Furthermore, 42:4 strongly echoes 2:3, where the nations are seen going up to the mountain of YHWH so that he will teach them his ways. The servant appears to be speaking for and representing YHWH in a place of authority.[40] This would seem to preclude Israel.

The best understanding of this passage is that the servant is intentionally presented vaguely. We are not meant to clearly identify him. Several reasons lead us to this conclusion. First are the above mentioned reasons for rejecting the various common options given for the servant's identity. Second, and more importantly, Isaiah himself does not clearly identify the servant, so efforts to do so seem to go beyond his intent.[41] Instead of asking who the servant is, we should be asking what the text makes known about him.[42]

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ed. Michael N. van der Meer et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 219; Ulrika Margareta Lindblad, "A Note on the Nameless Servant in Isaiah xlii 1-4," *VT* 43 (1993): 115; Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 93.

[36] Wilshire calls the servant of the servant songs a metaphor for Jerusalem. See Leland E. Wilshire, "Servant-City: A New Interpretation of the Servant of the Lord in the Servant Songs of Deutero-Isaiah," *JBL* 94 (1975): 357, 367.

[37] Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 125. Baltzer rejects identifying Israel as the servant because a previous oracle (41:8-16) has already given an installation account of Israel as YHWH's servant. It is not apparent, however, that 41:8-16 is in any sense an installation account like 42:1-4.

[38] John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 111; John Goldingay and David F. Payne, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 40-55*, ICC (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 212.

[39] Both describe God's עבד as "chosen" (בחר) and "upheld" (תמך). Lindblad, "Nameless Servant," 116.

[40] Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 112.

[41] Bertram, "A Baptismal Crossing," 344; De Troyer, "Missing Link," 219–20 (De Troyer does allow that Cyrus is a possibility).

[42] Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 93.

Broadly speaking, in 42:1-4 YHWH presents his servant, speaking about him in the third person, while in vv.5-9 YHWH directly addresses and commissions his servant.[43] Our concern is with vv.1-4 and how YHWH presents his servant. The first thing to note is this servant's standing with YHWH. He is "upheld" by YHWH (תמך). That is to say that YHWH personally supports his servant, holding him by the hand and keeping him upright throughout his servant's mission.[44] Furthermore, YHWH shows a particular affinity for this servant. He was personally chosen by YHWH (בָּחִירִי). Just as YHWH delights in those who bring acceptable sacrifices before him (Lev 1:3), so he delights in his servant.[45] By the time we reach the end of v.1ab, the trifold repetition of the *i* ending (נַפְשִׁי…בְּחִירִי…עַבְדִּי) tonally reinforces YHWH's words – that this servant is specially chosen and beloved by him.[46]

Having established the special relationship his servant has to himself, YHWH proceeds in v.1cd to delineate his mission. First, YHWH endows him with his spirit (v.1c). This phrase (נתן רוּחַ) is found elsewhere in Num 11:25, 29 (11:17 uses שִׂים instead of נתן). There YHWH takes some of his spirit which he had already put on Moses and places it upon the 70 elders who were to help Moses in "bear[ing] the burden of the people" (Num 11:17), thereby equipping these men for the task of helping Moses. This endowment with the spirit of YHWH was similarly carried out for kings, most notably David in 1 Sam 8:13.[47] The idea of YHWH placing his spirit upon someone is that of equipping for office and function. The servant is being equipped to carry out his mission.[48]

[43] Following Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 107, 115. Likewise Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 124–25.
[44] See Ruppert, "תָּמַךְ," *TDOT* 15:698.
[45] "My soul" simply being a way YHWH refers to himself.
[46] Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 127.
[47] Cf. 2 Chron 15:1; 20:14; 24:20.
[48] Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 127; Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, NAC (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2009), 161.

Bringing Forth משפט

The servant's mission is to "bring justice (מִשְׁפָּט) to the nations" (v.1d). This raises the critical issue of how מִשְׁפָּט should be understood. The word appears 32 times in the book of Isaiah, with three occurrences clustered together here in four verses. Word count alone indicates it is a concept central to both the servant's mission and the book of Isaiah as a whole. The term can legitimately be translated "judgment" or "justice," depending on the context. Therefore, to more fully explicate the term and thus the servant's mission, we need to understand the context of chs.40-41.

Isaiah uses מִשְׁפָּט three times in chs.40-41: 40:14, 27; and 41:1. The first of these instances comes in the context of a series of rhetorical questions to Israel (40:12-14). In v.13, the MT reads "Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD?" The LXX (rightly) translates this interpretively as "who has known the *mind* (νοῦς) of the Lord?"[49] To "measure the Spirit of the LORD" (Isa 40:13 [MT]) is to comprehend the mind of God. Isaiah then asks in v.14 "Who taught him [YHWH] the path of מִשְׁפָּט, and taught him knowledge?" The question implies that מִשְׁפָּט is something YHWH knows, something innate to him which he receives from no one. As such it is bound up with and comes from the spirit of YHWH, who comprehends the mind of YHWH.[50] This is significant because it shows that the spirit of YHWH is necessary for the servant of YHWH to know מִשְׁפָּט. It is because YHWH has placed his spirit upon his servant that his servant can carry out his mission.

In 40:27 we encounter a direct complaint from the people of Israel, namely that YHWH has disregarded its מִשְׁפָּט. This complaint comes in the context of Exile (40:1-5) and dominance by

[49] Mark A. Seifrid, "Romans," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. D.A. Carson and G.K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 679. Cf. also Paul's use of Isa 40:13 LXX in 1 Cor 2:10-16.

[50] Beuken, "The First Servant Song," 30.

pagan nations, their leaders, and their false gods (40:15-26). In the wake of such suffering, God appears to have violated מִשְׁפָּט; it is in fact a strike against his character (cf.40:14; Gen 18:25).[51] The fact that Israel calls it "my מִשְׁפָּט" shows a sense of some obligation YHWH owes to them. Because of the covenantal language used in this passage (40:1-2, 9-11), Israel's complaint may be understood as YHWH violating מִשְׁפָּט by disregarding his covenant. When foreign powers and gods have conquered Israel, she has no true מִשְׁפָּט.

YHWH's initial response to this complaint is found in vv.28-31, but a deeper response is given in the person of the servant in 42:1-4. Israel has complained of YHWH neglecting מִשְׁפָּט, and now in the person of his servant YHWH will bring about מִשְׁפָּט. However, we should not think that מִשְׁפָּט is restricted to Israel; it has regard for the nations as well, as seen in 41:1. There the coastlands (אִיִּים) gather together with YHWH and "draw near for מִשְׁפָּט." When YHWH's מִשְׁפָּט was declared in 40:14, it was placed in the context of the insignificance of the coastlands (אִיִּים, 40:15). Again in chapter 41 when the coastlands encounter YHWH's מִשְׁפָּט it has a highly negative connotation: "The coastlands (אִיִּים) have seen and are afraid" (41:5). When the coastlands draw near for מִשְׁפָּט, it is a fearful thing.[52]

As a number of commentators have noted, the notion of מִשְׁפָּט in 42:1-4 must also be understood in the context of the heavenly courtroom scene in 41:21-29, especially considering the legal connotations מִשְׁפָּט often carries.[53] This trial ends with the verdict that the gods of the nations are nothing, and that YHWH alone is the true God. In light of this verdict, several scholars argue

[51] Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 72.

[52] Beuken notes that in the context of ch.41 מִשְׁפָּט has the same meaning as ch.40, but with the nuance of a "suit of Yhwh against the nations." "The First Servant Song," 14.

[53] See R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2:948-949.

that bringing forth מִשְׁפָּט makes the most sense as delivering the verdict of the heavenly court.[54] However, restricting מִשְׁפָּט to the verdict of 41:21-29 is too constricting, considering the broader use of the term in the context of chs.40-41. Nevertheless the point does stand that מִשְׁפָּט should at least encompass this idea. Part of what the servant will do in bringing forth מִשְׁפָּט is proclaiming the truth that YHWH alone is God and is therefore alone to be worshiped.

The broader connotations of מִשְׁפָּט are reinforced by its usage in 42:1-4. It is for all nations (vv.1, 4) and thus universal in scope. The servant himself is developed in general terms in vv.1-4, so it would make sense to understand his mission in general terms as well. Furthermore, the use of הֵן, while not totally disconnecting 42:1-4 from the preceding pericope, does indicate a new idea. Specifying מִשְׁפָּט as the heavenly verdict of 41:21-29 fails to account for the newness of what is being presented in 42:1-4.

To summarize, מִשְׁפָּט in Isa 40:1-42:4 is known by YHWH, and original to himself (40:14). At the same time, Israel can lay claim to it in light of perceived covenant violations (40:27). It is not restricted to Israel, however, but also relates to the nations in a trial scene (41:1). It includes the verdict that all the gods of the nations are nothing (41:29). Furthermore, it is something which YHWH's servant will bring about in a broad sense for all peoples. All these factors being considered, מִשְׁפָּט is best translated "justice" and understood in a broad sense as social order, in accordance with YHWH's law. Oswalt puts it well: "In its broadest sense it [מִשְׁפָּט] involves societal order in which the concerns of all are addressed."[55] It includes just judgments in society

[54] Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 119; Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 95. Turretin agrees with this assessment and notes that in a fully revealed, New Testament context this would entail the proclamation of the gospel and the right worship of the one true God. *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1992), 2:398.

[55] Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 110. See also Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 127–28; Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 324–25; Fiedler, "'The Servant of the Lord': Israel (Isaiah 42:1-4) and Jesus (Matthew 12:18-21)," 121.

and merciful treatment of the weak and downtrodden (42:2-3, 7), redemption for Israel (cf.40:2, 27-31), and the right worship of YHWH as the only true God (41:21-29).

Two aspects of מִשְׁפָּט are startlingly transformed in 42:1-4. First is the one carrying it out. Kennedy rightly notes that in Isaiah such universal order is the prerogative of YHWH as cosmic monarch.[56] Yet he fails to note in rejecting the view of מִשְׁפָּט as "justice" that the idea is taking a dramatic turn in 42:1-4. On a cosmic level YHWH is going to bring about מִשְׁפָּט, but he will do so through his servant. Furthermore, the relation of the nations to מִשְׁפָּט has now changed as well. Formerly the coastlands were fearful when they approached YHWH for justice (41:5). Now, they eagerly anticipate justice (42:4) and the instruction (תּוֹרָה) that comes along with it.[57] The salvific connotations that justice carried for Israel are now applied to the nations as well.[58] This makes the structure of 42:1d all the more significant. By fronting מִשְׁפָּט Isaiah creates a slight sense of suspense. The expected next word would be לישׂראל, but instead it is לגים, adding to the surprise of מִשְׁפָּט transformation.

A Quiet and Gentle Servant

YHWH, having presented his servant and described his mission, now proceeds in vv.2-3 to describe the manner in which he will carry out that mission. To do so, he first gives three negative descriptors – the servant will not cry aloud, lift up his voice, or make his voice heard in the street (v.2). The repetition serves to emphasize the single idea that YHWH's servant will carry

[56] James M. Kennedy, "Consider the Source: A Reading of the Servant's Identity and Task in Isaiah 42:1-9," in *The Desert Will Bloom: Poetic Visions in Isaiah*, ed. A. Joseph Everson and Hyun Chul Paul Kim (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 191–92.

[57] What has changed is not so much *that* the nations have a relation to YHWH's justice but *how* they relate to it. For translation of תּוֹרָה as "instruction," see Appendix A.

[58] Beuken, "The First Servant Song," 28.

out his task quietly, not drawing attention to himself.[59] The text piles on close terms to emphasize the quietness of the servant. Unlike other authority figures who loudly proclaim laws and decrees, this servant will go about his work quietly.[60]

Verse 3 presents the puzzle of what Isaiah means by a "broken reed" and a "faint wick."[61] The imagery of a broken reed conveys the idea of something that is weak and useless. Likewise the "faint wick" is one which barely gives any light and is on the verge of going out. It is, like the broken reed, weak and all but useless. Because the servant is being presented in generic terms in this song, Oswalt is correct when he notes that "It is not necessary to press these figures so far as to define who the reed and the flax are intended to represent."[62] It is enough to say that they convey images of weak and downtrodden people. The point is that as the servant carries out his mission he will do so in a way that shows mercy to the weak and downtrodden, not oppression. Combined with the imagery of v.2, the picture conveyed is of a servant who quietly and gently brings justice to bear, showing particular concern for the weak and downtrodden.

Simply because this servant is gentle and quiet does not mean he will fail to accomplish his task. YHWH in vv.3c-4c assures the reader that his servant will definitively accomplish his divine mission. He will carry out his mission faithfully (לֶאֱמֶת), surely doing that which has been

[59] Identifying a specific type of cry based on connotations of the individual verbs in other contexts is unwarranted here. Goldingay and Payne, for instance, identify it as a cry of anguish based on the verb צעק. *Isaiah 40-55,* 217.

[60] Smith understands the imagery as contrasting with overly passionate prophets. *Isaiah 40-66,* 162; Baltzer understands it to pertain to good judges who do not need to raise their voice. *Deutero-Isaiah,* 128; Oswalt thinks it is in contrast to proud kings loudly giving proclamations. *Isaiah 40-66,* 111. McKenzie strikes a good balance between these opinions and notes that the servant is generally contrasted with "officers of public authority." *Second Isaiah,* AB (New York: Doubleday, 1968), 37. This opinion best accounts for the prophetic and kingly imagery present here.

[61] A survey of scholarly opinions can be found in Hyun Chul Paul Kim, "An Intertextual Reading of 'A Crushed Reed' and 'A Dim Wick' in Isaiah 42.3," *JSOT* 24 (1999): 115–16. Kim's contention that "reed" and "wick" are a double entendre for Egypt and Babylon, while interpreted consistently with the thrust of the passage, is unconvincing. It imports specific uses of "reed" and "wick" imagery into a context where the terms are clearly used in a generic sense.

[62] Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66,* 111.

assigned to him.[63] As he goes about it, the servant will not grow faint (יִכְהֶה לֹא) or discouraged (יָרוּץ לֹא), but endure until justice has been established in all the earth. Strengthened by YHWH himself and endowed with his spirit (v.1), this servant cannot fail in bringing justice to the nations.

Placing 42:1-4 in Its Broader Context

Isaiah 42:1-4 is the first of four "servant songs" (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12), initially identified by Bernhard Duhm in 1875.[64] What we have in these servant songs is the development of a single figure, who is introduced by 42:1-4.[65] Thus, as we progress through Isaiah's prophecy, we should expect aspects of the servant in 42:1-4 to develop, which is precisely what occurs. For our purposes, two aspects are most noteworthy. First, whereas salvation for all nations is only implied in 42:1-4, it is made explicit in 49:6: "I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (cf. 49:1; 52:15). Second, 52:13-53:12 shows that the method by which the servant will bring about justice is through his own substitutionary, sacrificial death. This further strengthens the fact that the servant's mission in bringing about justice is also redemptive. To carry out his fundamental mission of bringing forth justice the servant must redeem. The justice he brings is a redemptive justice.

More parallels can be shown with earlier sections of the book. In the broader context of Isaiah as a whole, the servant appears to be a messianic figure like the ideal Davidic king in chs.6-11.[66] This king focuses on the people of Israel, being a Davidic king. At the same time he will be

[63] A few interpreters understand לֶאֱמֶת to indicate the end for which the servant works, e.g. LXX; Beuken, "The First Servant Song," 25. For the adopted interpretation as לְ of manner, see Appendix A.

[64] Bernhard Duhm, *Die Theologie Der Propheten Als Grundlage Für Die Innere Entwicklungsgeschichte Der Israelitischen Religion* (Bonn: Verlag von Adolph Marcus, 1875), 289.

[65] Literature on the servant and the servant songs is vast. For a good bibliography, see Oswalt, *Isaiah 40-66*, 113–15.

[66] We will operate from the understanding that the Messiah is a royal figure who will establish God's kingdom. See Andrew T. Abernethy and Greg Goswell, *God's Messiah in the Old Testament: Expectations of a Coming King* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 1.

a king who brings about justice and righteousness to all nations (11:9-10). A number of commentators have rejected any sort of messianic connection to the servant of 42:1-4 because they do not consider the servant to be a royal figure.[67]Abernethy and Goswell argue that Isaiah's prophecy presents three lead actors: a messianic figure in chs.1-39, a priestly prophetic servant in chs.40-55, and an eschatological messenger in chs.56-66. They argue that conflating the servant of chs.40-55 with the messianic figure of chs.1-39 confuses the lead agents' unique vocations and they are therefore better kept separate.[68] The issue with these arguments is that the servant figure of chs.40-55 does indeed exhibit royal characteristics and may therefore be considered a messianic figure. Several factors lead to this conclusion.

First, the servant's depiction parallels that of the ideal Davidic king in 11:1-9. Both are endowed with the spirit of YHWH (11:2; 42:1) and both work justice in the land (11:3-5; 42:1, 3, 4).[69] Second, the description of one who brings forth מִשְׁפָּט matches the summary description of David's reign in 2 Sam 8:15 as עֹשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט. David himself receives the designation עַבְדִּי in Isa 37:35.[70] Third, larger themes link the servant to earlier portions of the book. To take one example, in 42:6 he is said to be a "light for the nations." At the end of chapter 5 Israel is said to be plunged into darkness (5:30), a problem which immediately precedes chs.6-11 that emphasize Israel's king.[71] Fourth, early Judaism interpreted the passage messianically, as seen in Targum Jonathan's עבדי משיחא.[72] Fifth, Chrisholm has noted how the language of "establishing justice in the land" and

[67] Abernethy and Goswell, *God's Messiah in the Old Testament*, 86; McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, xlix–l.
[68] Abernethy and Goswell, *God's Messiah in the Old Testament*, 86.
[69] Robert B. Chrisholm, "The Christological Fulfillment of Isaiah's Servant Songs," *BSac* 163 (2006): 395.
[70] Noted by Richard L. Schultz, "The King in the Book of Isaiah," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 157.
[71] Schultz, "The King in the Book of Isaiah," 156.
[72] Cited in Lamar Cope, *Matthew, a Scribe Trained for the Kingdom of Heaven*, CBQMS (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1976), 36. Cf. Blomberg, "Matthew," 42–43.

"liberating the oppressed" (cf. 42:7) has parallels to royal inscriptions in the ANE.[73] Taken collectively these factors point toward a messianic figure.

Whether or not the servant is the same person as the ideal Davidic king in chs.1-39 is not yet made clear, although the parallels between the two already suggest so.[74] What is clear is that the servant of 42:1-4 has royal characteristics and carries out royal functions. The figure anticipated in 42:1-4 may therefore be considered a future king who will be YHWH's means of bringing about the kingly prerogatives of מִשְׁפָּט and תּוֹרָה, first for Israel then to all nations.

New Testament Usage

The obvious context of Matthew's quotation of Isa 42:1-4 is Jesus' healing of the man with the withered hand (12:9-14), withdrawing from the Pharisees (v.15), and subsequent healings accompanied by instructions to keep silent about him (v.16). Matthew introduces the purpose of these activities in v.17 with ἵνα. It is these activities specifically (healing, withdraw from conflict with Pharisees, commands to be silent) that fulfill what follows in vv.19-20.[75] Traditionally this is how the quote has been understood.[76] However, just because Matthew primarily has vv.14-16 in mind does not mean that his quote cannot be connected to other aspects of an even broader context.

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[73] Chrisholm, "Christological Fulfillment," 395.

[74] The messianic reading in Targum Jonathan at the least suggests that strands of Judaism understood both figures to be the same.

[75] Matthew's notion of "fulfillment" (πληρόω and related terms) makes for a rich study in and of itself, particularly his formula citations. See R.T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1989), 166–205; G.K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 56–59; Brandon D Crowe, "Fulfillment in Matthew as Eschatological Reversal," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 75.1 (2013): 111–27; George M. Soares-Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew: An Enquiry into the Tradition History of Mt 1-2* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976); F.P. Viljoen, "The Fulfilment in Matthew," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 28 (2007): 301–24. For the history behind the terminology of "formula citations," see Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 43–44.

[76] E.g. Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, WBC (Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1993), 337–38; William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 519–21; Alan Hugh M'Neile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (London: MacMillan, 1938), 172–73; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 493; David L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 316.

Here we need to distinguish between Matthew's primary and secondary concerns with the quote. His primary concern is straightforward enough: to show how Jesus's activities in vv.14-16 fulfill Isa 42:1-4. Secondarily, however, Matthew sets up a much broader fulfillment in a much broader context.

More recent studies have taken issue with limiting the appropriate exegetical context to vv.14-16 while also demonstrating that the Isaiah quote has a number of connections to the rest of chapter 12 and even beyond. Neyrey has noted that if Matthew only intended his readers to see vv.19-20b fulfilled, his quote is superfluously long. Furthermore, the connection with vv.14-16 seems primarily thematic. More explicit verbal connections are desirable.[77] A few of these connections may be noted. Jesus claims that it is by the Spirit (πνεῦμα) of God that he casts out demons (v.28), drawing a connection between v.18 and vv.22-32.[78] The servant's mission is largely concerned with κρίσις (vv.18, 20), which Jesus declares to the Pharisees in vv.33-42.[79] This mission is concerned with the nations, to which Matthew has already hinted (cf. 2:1-2; 8:5-13; see more below). From this we may conclude that Matthew has in mind more than the explicit fulfillment of vv.14-16.

In the immediate context his primary concern is with the people of Israel. This is evident first in the fact that Jesus's ministry in 12:9-16 and 22 is directed to the Jews. They are the objects of his healings (vv.9-16) and his exorcisms (v.22). The order of creation is being restored through a removal of the effects of sin.[80] Furthermore, when Jesus comes into conflict it is with Jewish

[77] Jerome H. Neyrey, "The Thematic Use of Isaiah 42:1-4 in Matthew 12," *Bib* 63 (1982): 458. His contention that the connections between vv.14-16 and the Isaiah quote are mainly thematic seems overplayed. There is clearly a logical connection being made in Matthew's mind, as evidenced by the ἵνα in v.17 (see below). Nevertheless, Neyrey's main point that more explicit connections should be sought still stands.

[78] Neyrey, "The Thematic Use of Isaiah 42:1-4," 459–60.

[79] Neyrey, "The Thematic Use of Isaiah 42:1-4," 464–65.

[80] Hendriksen, *Matthew*, 522.

religious leaders. The quotation of Isa 42 is sandwiched between a pair of these accounts (12:1-15, 22-42). Here and elsewhere there is little doubt that Matthew consistently portrays the Pharisees as evil.[81] Throughout his Gospel this is specifically manifested in their zealous attempts to maintain halakha (cf. 15:1-14; 23:23), exemplified here in their refusal to allow healing for a man on the Sabbath (12:9-14). Beaton has shown that this may be considered a form of injustice; the Pharisees are treating the people of Israel unjustly by placing their own traditions over the just laws of God.[82] By coming into conflict with the Pharisees and refusing to conform to their halakhic standards, Jesus is bringing true justice to the people of Israel.

Nor is this justice unconcerned with sin. Like the servant in Isa 42, Jesus is bringing about a redemptive justice, a restoration of order which includes the forgiveness of sins. This particular aspect is not as prominent in Matthew's use of Isa 42, but by no means should be left out. Jesus's ministry is from the beginning characterized by preaching repentance (4:17). His model prayer couples the fullness of God's kingdom with forgiveness of debts and deliverance from temptation (6:10-13). He pronounces harsh woes upon Chorazin and Bethsaida for their lack of repentance (11:21-22). His physical healings also picture the spiritual healing he gives to spiritually dead sinners.[83] Jesus is bringing to Israel an order of redemptive justice, as prophesied in Isa 42:1-4.

Although the immediate context is concerned with the Jews, the quote itself remarkably shows more concern for the Gentiles, and it is to the quotation itself we now turn. Matthew's text of Isaiah 42:1-4 has attracted much scholarly attention.[84] One of the first items of note is that he

[81] Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Developing Conflict between Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew's Gospel: A Literary-Critical Study," *CBQ* 49 (1987): 60.

[82] Richard Beaton, "Messiah and Justice: A Key to Matthew's Use of Isaiah 42.1-4?," *JSNT* 22 (2000): 15–17. Note especially Jesus's dialogue in 15:1-14.

[83] Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible: Vol V. Matthew to John* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, n.d.), 165–66.

[84] For an overview of the history of recent scholarship on Matthew's use of Isaiah 42:1-4 in chapter 12, see Alicia D. Myers, "Isaiah 42 and the Characterization of Jesus in Matthew 12:17-21," in *What Does the Scripture Say:*

does not quote any particular known text form *in toto*.[85] At times Matthew's text agrees with the MT over the LXX, as when he omits the names Ιακωβ and Ισραηλ in v.18a, while in the same line he differs from the LXX, Theodotion, and MT.[86] In other words, Matthew's quotation is quite intentional; he is not binding himself to one particular (known) text form. A few exegetically significant aspects may be noted.

The first is that Matthew's quotation, unlike the LXX, does not explicitly identify the servant. Like the original MT, he leaves the servant's identity veiled in generic language. This allows him to apply the servant song to Jesus. Whereas once the servant was shrouded in mystery, he is now revealed, by Matthew, as Jesus. In this same verse, Matthew also uses ὁ ἀγαπητός μου where the MT has "my chosen" and the LXX and Theodotion have ὁ ἐκλεκτός μου. By following Theodotion at the end of v.18a and using ὅν εὐδόκησεν ἡ ψυχή μου,[87] Matthew draws a double connection to both Jesus baptism (3:17) and transfiguration (17:5), reinforcing Jesus' identity as the servant of Isa 42.[88] Jesus's mission is therefore, like the servant, to "proclaim justice to the Gentiles."[89]

Studies in the Function of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity, ed. Craig Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 72–75.

[85] For a comparison of Matthew's quote with possible textual influences, see Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 107–8. See also his detailed analysis on pp.109-115. The literature on Matthew's text in 12:18-21 is vast and far more detailed than anything that can be thoroughly explored in the confines of this paper. See De Troyer, "Missing Link"; Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 125–28; John A Grindel, "Matthew 12:18-21," *CBQMS* 29 (1967): 110–15; Maarten J.J. Menken, *Matthew's Bible: The Old Testament Text of the Evangelist* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 67–87, esp. 70 for further bibliography; Arie van der Kooij, "The Septuagint, the Recension of Theodotion, and Beyond: Comments on the Quotation from Isaiah 42 in Matthew 12," in *Textual History and the Reception of Scripture in Early Christianity*, ed. Johannes de Vries and Martin Karrer (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013). A helpful summary can be found in Blomberg, "Matthew," 43.

[86] Although the omission of Jacob and Israel does agree with Theodotion. van der Kooij, "Isaiah 42 in Matthew 12," 204–6.

[87] Cf. LXX "προσεδέξατο αὐτὸν ἡ ψυχὴ μου."

[88] A point noted by many scholars, e.g. van der Kooij, "Isaiah 42 in Matthew 12," 210.

[89] On the interpretation of יוֹצִיא as ἀπαγγελεῖ, see Menken, *Matthew's Bible*, 74–75.

The last line of the quotation follows the LXX almost exactly, omitting only the preposition ἐπί. The most curious feature of this line is that whereas the MT has לתורתו, Matthew has τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ. Replacing "law" with "name" is likely due to theological reasoning – YHWH's name and indeed his person are bound up with his law, so that waiting for one is waiting for the other (cf. Isa 26:8; Ps. 119:55).[90] Matthew makes a number of connections by using this specific language.

First, he highlights the connection between the servant of Isa 42 and the royal messianic branch of Isa 11. The language in the LXX of Isa 11:10 (ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἔθνη ἐλπιοῦσιν) is almost exactly the same as that used to describe the servant in 42:4.[91] By drawing this connection, Matthew further highlights Jesus's kingly role in bringing justice and doing so for the nations, just as the messianic king of Isa 11. Second, Matthew is expanding the idea of salvation in Jesus' name already propounded in his Gospel. Up to this point Matthew's Gospel has filled the name of Jesus with salvific significance. He is named "Jesus" because he will be a savior for his people (1:21). In the final judgment, many will (falsely) appeal to the name of Jesus for their salvation (7:22). His disciples are in this life hated for Jesus's name's sake, but saved if they endure to the end (10:22).

In each of these instances there is a particular concern for the people of Israel. Each context certainly has Jews in mind. Salvation for Gentiles in the name of Jesus is not yet explicit, but neither is it denied. He will save "his people" from their sins (1:21), but "his people" is not explicitly defined. Those appealing to his name on the judgment day are simply called "many" (πολλοί), but who these many are is not further specified. Matthew has left room open for identifying those who receive salvation through Jesus' name. In 12:21, he expands the concept

[90] See Menken, *Matthew's Bible*, 80.
[91] Hagner, *Matthew*, 338.

from referring primarily to Israel to now including Gentiles. Matthew has already hinted at the expansion of Jesus' mission to the Gentiles through the wise men (2:1-2) and the faith of the centurion (8:5-13).[92] As Jesus' ministry progresses, this will continue to expand. A notable example is the daughter of the Canaanite woman (15:21-28), who like the Israelite in 12:22 is oppressed by a demon and healed by Jesus (15:28). The conclusion of Matthew's Gospel brings this expansion to a conclusion when Jesus explicitly commands his disciples to go make disciples of all nations (28:18-20). When Matthew quotes Isa 42, particularly vv.1 and 4, he is continuing to expand the concept of salvation for the Gentiles by making the implicit more explicit and anticipating its fullest explication in the Great Commission.

To summarize, by quoting Isa 42:1-4 in the context that he does, Matthew identifies the servant of YHWH with Jesus. Its fulfillment is primarily concerned with the Jews, to whom Jesus is bringing redemptive justice through healing, exorcism, freedom from unjust religious rulers, and the preaching of repentance. By quoting from the entire servant song he makes more explicit the idea that while Jesus has come first for the Jews, he will bring the same order of redemptive justice to the Gentiles.

Conclusion

Isa 42:1-4 presents a paradigm-shifting picture of the servant of YHWH. He is a kingly figure, fitted for office by the spirit of YHWH, divinely sustained by YHWH, and holding a special relationship to YHWH. Unlike other kings he is quiet and gentle. His prerogative is to bring about redemptive justice, a societal order according to YHWH's law and brought about through forgiveness of sins. While this concern originates with the Jews, Isa 42:1-4 shows that it is also for

[92] Hendriksen, *Matthew*, 522.

the Gentiles. Matthew, by quoting the full servant song, shows that this is fulfilled in Jesus's Galilean ministry to the Jews and anticipates the same kind of ministry to the Gentiles. Both exhibit the same basic principle – God's order of redemptive justice is first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Appendix A: Translation of Isaiah 42:1-4

1 Behold![93] My servant, I uphold[94] him;[95]

my chosen,[96] in whom my soul delights.[97]

I have placed[98] my Spirit upon him,

justice[99] he will bring forth for[100] the nations.

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[93] **Behold!** (v.1): Here הֵן functions as a presentative particle, functionally equivalent to הִנֵּה (Waltke/O'Connor, 675). The author draws attention to the dramatic change in subject matter from Jerusalem in 41:29 to עַבְדִּי in 42:1. LXX adds Ιακωβ here and Ισραηλ after "my chosen." The translator was possibly working from a different source text than our current MT, or simply drawing a more explicit connection to 41:8 (יִשְׂרָאֵל עַבְדִּי יַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר בְּחַרְתִּיךָ). Considering the lack of significant textual variants here, the latter option seems more likely. Matthew appears to offer his own translation of the MT in Matt 12:18-20 (Carson/Beale, 43).

[94] **I uphold** (v.1): The basic idea of the root is "grasping securely" (*TWOT*, 973). With a divine subject the verb is used only in the Psalms (e.g. Ps 16:5) and the so-called "Deutero-Isaiah" (this verse and 41:10) (*TDOT*, 697). In 41:10, תמך is strewn together with the verbs אמץ ("to strengthen") and עזר ("to help"), suggesting an idea of not just grasping but support. In the pericope 41:8-13 YHWH likewise refers to "my servant" (in the context Israel) and "choosing" (בחר, v.8), which strengthens the semantic connection between the use of תמך in 41:10 and 42:1 (see Lindblad, 116). Elliger suggests that the idea is that of YHWH holding his servant by the hand and supporting him throughout the subsequent speech (see quotation in *TDOT*, 698).

[95] **him** (v.1): The retrospective pronoun is dependent on the preposition בְּ to signal the direct object (*GCK*, §155i).

[96] **my chosen** (v.1): בְּחִירִי functions as the accusative of person for the verb רצה. It is fronted here to match the word order in the Hebrew.

[97] **in whom my soul delights** (v.1): נַפְשִׁי is the subject of the verb רָצְתָה. The verb רצה denotes to "be pleased (with), delight in, be favourable (to)" (Clines, 7:540). It is used elsewhere with an accusative of person to describe a father delighting in his son (Prov 3:12) or governors toward their people (Mal 1:8). *TWOT* notes it is frequently used (as is the case here) with YHWH's pleasure toward his servants (13:859). "in whom" is added for fluidity of reading in English.

[98] **have placed** (v.1): The prophet uses the prophetic perfect. Though the chosen servant's work is future, his anointing with the Spirit of YHWH is portrayed as having already been accomplished (see *J-M*, §112h).

[99] **justice** (v.1): מִשְׁפָּט could legitimately be translated "judgment" or "justice" (Carson/Beale, 43). The LXX opts for κρίσις, a term which in the LXX of Isaiah has strong ties with δικαιοσύνη, νόμος, σωτήριον, and ἔλεος (Beaton, 12-13). Furthermore, a sharp divide between the concepts of "judgment" and "justice" seems artificial, especially in messianic texts (Beaton, 13-14). *TWOT* notes that the term שׁפט, the root of מִשְׁפָּט, refers "to all functions of government" and must not be "restricted to judicial processes only" (948). It is an attribute of YHWH himself (Isa 30:18). Nothing in this passage suggests restricting מִשְׁפָּט to judicial processes. In fact, the prophet portrays the servant as giving tender care to the weak and downtrodden. All these factors considered, the translation "justice" seems to capture the more full-orbed use of the term in this pericope (cf. Watts, 119, who sees a more specific judicial reference in מִשְׁפָּט).

1QIs[a] has ומשפטו, which does match וּלְתוֹרָתוֹ in v.4. The other two uses of מִשְׁפָּט in this pericope, however, are identical in form (משפט), with no significant variants. Thus, the BHS reading (משפט) is to be preferred. The translation provided here reflects the marked word order of the Hebrew which fronts the object מִשְׁפָּט in this clause for emphasis (see Arnold/Choi, 183; Moshavi, 10-17).

[100] **for** (v.1): The לְ preposition is best taken as a לְ of advantage (see Arnold/Choi, 125), "*for* the nations" instead of "*to* the nations" (or even "*against* the nations"). There are several reasons to prefer this translation. First, the chosen servant is portrayed here is one who is gentle and compassionate (vv.2-3), so a לְ of disadvantage would seem out of place. The chosen servant's work is positive toward the nations. Second, in v.4 the servant's setting up of justice in the earth is paralleled with the coastlands waiting for his law. It would seem that from the perspective of the nations (or coastlands) the setting up of מִשְׁפָּט is indeed to their advantage.

2 He will not cry aloud,[101]

nor lift up, nor[102] make heard in the street, his voice.[103]

3 A broken[104] reed he will not shatter,

a faint[105] wick[106] he will not quench,[107]

faithfully[108] he will bring forth justice.

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[101] **cry aloud** (v.2): Normally, the verb זעק/צעק carries the nuance of a loud cry of anguish (*TDOT* 4:115). However, Oswalt notes that this is not always necessarily the case, such as in 1 Sam 10:17 where צעק is used describe Samuel calling together the assembly of God's people. The point here seems to be that unlike the grandiose pronouncements of mighty kings, this servant of YHWH will not so much as raise his voice (Oswalt, 111).

[102] **nor…nor** (v.2): The repeated וְלֹא connecting these clauses takes on a negative alternative force (Waltke/O'Connor, 648).

[103] **nor lift up, nor make heard in the street, his voice** (v.2): The writer expands on the idea expressed in לֹא יְצַעֵק. The phrase נָשָׂא קוֹל is a fairly common Hebrew idiom, and is even frequently paired with other verbs "delimiting more specific semantic areas" (*TDOT*, 10:38). Gen 21:16, for instance, pairs the idiom with בכה to denote the weeping of Hagar over Ishmael. Furthermore, קוֹלוֹ is the most natural object for יַשְׁמִיעַ. *TDOT* (15:259) notes that שׁמע קוֹל occurs 54 times in the Old Testament, and thus is a highly attested phrase. קוֹלוֹ is therefore most naturally taken as the object of both נשׂא and שׁמע. This in part explains why it would be placed at the end of the line, which also serves to build tension throughout the verse.

[104] **broken** (v.3): The passive participle of רצץ suggests the idea of being "bruised, be broken, be splintered" (Clines, 7:548). The participle could be translated as either "bruised" or "broken," although the basic idea does not change dramatically with either option. Either translation invokes the idea of a weak, downtrodden, useless reed. The same passive participle is also used with קָנֶה in Isa 36:6 (and 2 Kgs 18:21). There the context suggests a broken reed with a sharp tip that will pierce (נקב) the hand of whoever leans on it. The same idea of being broken (ירוץ) is used in v.4. Thus, the translation "broken" is opted for here (cf. LXX τεθλασμένον).

[105] **faint** (v.3): The adjective כֵּהָה is used attributively in Isa 61:3 to describe רוּחַ in contrast to a "garment of praise." In Lev 13:39 it describes a spot (בַּהֶרֶת) of a dull white (thus the suggested gloss of "colourless" by Köhler/Baumgartner, 2:461). In 1 Sam 3:2 it is used to describe Eli's eyes, i.e. his blindness. (לֹא יוּכַל לִרְאוֹת). The idea seems to be something generally weak. The image is of a wick barely keeping lit. The translation "faint" preserves the verbal connection with the verb כהה in v.4 used to describe the chosen servant.

[106] **a broken reed…a weak wick** (v.3): פִּשְׁתָּה denotes a "wick made from flax" (Köhler/Baumgartner, 3:983). Cf. LXX λίνον, "flax." The objects are fronted in their respective clauses for emphasis. Considering the poetic nature of the text and the brevity of these clauses, the emphasis should not be exaggerated (Arnold/Choi, 183). Nevertheless the word order does depart from the standard VSO and does shift the emphasis of thought to the fragile objects of the chosen servant's actions (or lack thereof). Thus, the word order is reflected in the translation.

[107] **quench** (v.3): The verb כבה "always relates to fire and to the act of putting a fire out" (*TWOT*, 428). כבה is used of both metaphorical fire (e.g. quenching of YHWH's wrath, 2 Kgs 22:17) and literal fire (as is the case here). It occurs here with the resumptive pronoun, left out for smoothness of translation.

[108] **faithfully** (v.3): The לְ preposition is here used to indicate manner, that is, a manner according to truth (אֱמֶת). This use of the לְ preposition has precedence in the Isaianic text already in 11:3 (וְלֹא־לְמַרְאֵה עֵינָיו יִשְׁפּוֹט וְלֹא־לְמִשְׁמַע אָזְנָיו יוֹכִיחַ), which also concerns Isaiah's messianic figure. For accusative of manner, see Williams, §274.

4 He will not grow faint[109] or[110] discouraged,[111]

until[112] he sets in the earth justice,

and for[113] his instruction[114] the coastlands[115] wait hopefully.[116]

Grammars Used:

Arnold/Choi: No page entry for Isaiah 42:1-4

GCK: v.1 §155i

J-M: No section entry for Isaiah 42:1-4

Waltke/O'Connor: No page entry for Isaiah 42:1-4

Williams: v.2 §589; v.3 §274

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[109] **grow faint** (v.4): Clines suggests the gloss "be dim, be weak" (4:363). The suggestion that the verb means "to become inexpressive" seems to specific (cf. Köhler/Baumgartner, 2:461). *TDOT* notes that the basic meaning seems to be to "grow weak," with several other metaphorical meanings (e.g. blindness, "weak eyes") stemming from this basic idea (7:58). The translation "*grow* faint" as opposed to "*be* faint" reflects the imperfective tense of the verb יִכְהֶה.

[110] **or** (v.4): וְלֹא carries a negative alternative force as in v.2.

[111] **discouraged** (v.4): Clines (7:455) and *TDOT* (13:421) both suggest the vocalization יְרוּץ, which would make the verbal root רצץ instead of רוּץ. This is supported by the LXX which translates the verb as θραυσθήσεται, "to break" (Lust et al., 207). Clines suggests the meaning of being "broken in spirit" (7:455). This is captured by the ESV's translation "discouraged" and therefore adopted here.

[112] **until** (v.4): עַד functions as a temporal marker indicating "the duration of the action" (Arnold/Choi, 133). That is, the chosen servant will not grow discouraged or faint until he reaches his goal of setting מִשְׁפָּט in the earth. This does not mean, as the translation might suggest, that upon reaching this goal the chosen servant *will* grow discouraged or faint (cf. Gen 49:10).

[113] **for** (v.4): The use of יחל suggests a לְ of advantage (see Arnold/Choi, 125) – תּוֹרָתוֹ is not simply an object of sight, but an object of hope, something the coastlands eagerly expect.

[114] **instruction** (v.4): תּוֹרָה parallels מִשְׁפָּט in v.4a (cf. Isa 51:4). Thus, we should probably not make a sharp distinction between the two. *TDOT* suggests תּוֹרָה be understood as the instruction that goes along with the servant's מִשְׁפָּט (627). This latter concept goes beyond mere judicial processes (see above), so the broader translation of תּוֹרָה as "instruction" instead of "law" is more appropriate.

[115] **coastlands** (v.4): אִי occurs 17 times in Isaiah and can mean "island" or "coastland" (*BDB*, 33). The idea of peoples from the very ends of the earth waiting expectantly on the תּוֹרָה of the servant seems to suggest translating אִי as the latter instead of the former.

[116] **wait** (v.4): יחל could be translated either "wait" or "hope" (*TWOT*, 373). It can reflect either simply waiting on the passing of time (e.g. Gen 8:12) or hopeful expectation (e.g. Ezek 13:6). In the context of the pericope, the תּוֹרָה of the servant in the context is portrayed as something good for the coastlands. יחל is best taken, then, as having the nuance of "hope." The LXX agrees, translating יחל with ἐλπίζω. This nuance is captured by translating יחל with the adverb "hopefully."

Appendix B: New Testament Citation of Isaiah 42:1-4 in Matthew 12:18-21

NA28

17 ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Ἠσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος·

18 ἰδοὺ ὁ παῖς μου ὅν ᾑρέτισα,
ὁ ἀγαητός μου εἰς ὅν εὐδόκησεν ἡ ψυχή μου·
θήσω τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπ᾽ αὐτόν,
καὶ κρίσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἀπαγγελεῖ.
19 οὐκ ἐρίσει οὐδὲ κραυγάσει,
οὐδὲ ἀκούσει τις ἐν ταῖς πλατείαις τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ.
20 κάλαμον συντετριμμένον οὐ κατεάξει
καὶ λίνον τυφόμενον οὐ σβέσει,
ἕως ἂν ἐκβάλῃ εἰς νῖκος τὴν κρίσιν.
21 καὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ ἔθνη ἐλπιοῦσιν.

ESV

17 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

18 "Behold, my servant whom I have chosen,
my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.
I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.
19 He will not quarrel or cry aloud,
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets;
20 a bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not quench,
until he brings justice to victory;
21 and in his name the Gentiles will hope."

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