

Impulses to Mission in Isaiah: An Intertextual Exploration

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How Israel is to relate to nations is a subject still under discussion in Isaiah studies. One position is that Israel has a mediating but essentially passive role as witness. This essay supports that position but argues that the “mission texts” in Isaiah also call for Israel to take the initiative in sharing God’s good news. The argument is made using the method of innerbiblical interpretation or intertextuality and shows thereby how dominant the mission theme in Isaiah is. Sample texts are taken from each of the three so-called Isaiahs.

Key Words: mission, nations, intertextuality, church; Isa 2, 42, 49, 52, 55, 61

When students select the topic of “Mission in Isaiah,” they amaze me with the abundance of material they discover. The topic has also been worked diligently by scholars. A conventional position is that Isaiah envisions God’s salvation coming to the nations; in that process, Israel has a mediating role. An extreme opposite claim is that “there is not a missionary view in this oracle [Isa 66:18–21] nor, in fact, in any other one from the book of Isaiah.”¹ However, missional nuances and emphases emerge—even beyond the conventional position—and the nature of Israel’s role is clarified when these texts are investigated using the method of intertextuality. This article will examine six pertinent Isaiah texts on mission in the context of their precursor and successor texts in order to contribute to missional thinking and praxis. A major result of the investigation, apart from indirectly refuting J. S. Croatto, is that the impulse for aggressive missionizing is stronger than has often been allowed.

The theory behind intertextuality is that texts are rarely *de novo*. Rather, almost any text is a reuse of other texts. In biblical studies, the method of intertextuality allows, even calls for investigation in two directions.² If an

1. J. Severino Croatto, “The ‘Nations’ in the Salvific Oracles of Isaiah,” *VT* 55 (2005): 156. He contends that “nations” refers to geography and hence to those scattered in the Diaspora. His study seeks to deconstruct the view that stresses universal salvation for the foreign nations in the book of Isaiah.

2. Literature on intertextuality and biblical study is extensive. See now Paul E. Koptak, “Intertextuality,” *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (ed. K. J. Vanhoozer et al.;

author draws on a precursor text, which is it? and how precisely does that precursor text function in the focus text? Or, one may ask, how has the focus text been used in subsequent writing? B. S. Childs notes, "One of the most important recent insights of interpretation has been the recognition of the role of intertextuality." He adds, "The great theological significance is that it reveals how the editors conceived of their task as forming a chorus of different voices and fresh interpretations, but all addressing in different ways, different issues, and different ages a part of the selfsame truthful witness to God's salvific purpose for his people."³

Certain texts in Isaiah have long been interpreted as having a missional dimension. *Mission*, understood from within the OT, means making available the good news of God, as Israel knew it, to peoples outside of Israel.⁴ In a sense, mission has to do with the "beyond Israel" factor.⁵

The six Isaiah texts investigated here treat Israel's mission to nations: Isa 2:1–5, 42:1–4, 42:6, 49:6, 52:13–53:12, 55:1–9, 61:1–11.⁶ In each instance,

London: SPCK / Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 332–34 and the bibliography there; also W. M. Schniedewind, "Innerbiblical Exegesis," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* (ed. B. T. Arnold and H. G. M. Williamson; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 502–9. Some works relevant to our subject are: Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Robert L. Brawley, *Text to Text Pours Forth Speech: Voices of Scripture in Luke–Acts* (Indiana Studies in Biblical Literature; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Patricia Tull Willey, *Remember the Former Things: The Recollection of Previous Texts in Second Isaiah* (SBLDS 161; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997); J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul "in Concert" in the Letter to the Romans* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); and Craig Evans, "From Gospel to Gospel: The Function of Isaiah in the New Testament," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah* (ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 2:651–91. Benjamin D. Sommer (*A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998], 6–31) distinguishes between intertextuality and innerbiblical allusion. For what I am about, he would use the term "inner-biblical allusion." But the more umbrella term, *intertextuality*, serves well until a consensus on definitions is reached.

3. Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 4.

4. See Eckhard Schnabel (*Early Christian Mission*, vol. 1: *Jesus and the Twelve* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004], 11) for whom *mission* is "the activity of a community of faith that distinguishes itself from its environment in terms of both religious belief (theology) and social behavior (ethics), that is convinced of the truth claims of its faith, and that actively works to win other people to the content of faith and to the way of life of whose truth and necessity the members of that community are convinced."

5. For recent literature about God's missionary intent within the OT, see Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000); Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Israel, the People of God, and the Nations," *JETS* 45 (2002): 35–57; C. H. H. Scobie, "Israel and the Nations: An Essay in Biblical Theology," *TynBul* 43 (1992): 283–305; Schnabel, *Jesus and the Twelve*; J. C. Okoye, *Israel and the Nations: A Mission Theology of the Old Testament* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006).

6. Ben Ollenburger ("Peace as the Visionary Mission of God's Reign: Zechariah 1–8," in *Beautiful upon the Mountains: Biblical Essays on Mission, Peace, and the Reign of God* [ed. Mary H. Schertz and Ivan Friesen; Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2003], 98, 99) has an engaging discussion of the hermeneutical circle. He holds that, in "epistemic circularity," "certain preinterpretive or noninterpretive understandings" basically precede explorations. These investigations then lead to "acquiring new or better or more certain knowledge in that domain" and also lead the interpreter to be more self-critical of the knowledge he had.

the objective is to trace echoes of these texts in other parts of the canon and thereby sketch more clearly the mission impulses in the book of Isaiah, noting especially the overtones of active outreach. As R. B. Hays explains, "The reader, signaled by the echoes, is required to grasp together old text and new." Or again, "Both texts take on a new resonance."⁷

NATIONS STREAMING TO ZION (ISAIAH 2:1-5)

In this well-known text, interest is often centered in its climactic statement about beating swords into plowshares.⁸ However, another theme is that of "nations," "many people."

The pericope opens with a description of Zion elevated above all mountains; nations are streaming to it (v. 2).

. . . all the nations shall stream to it [mountain of the Lord's house].
 Many peoples shall come and say,
 "Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord . . .
 that he may teach us his ways
 and that we may walk in his paths." (Isa 2:2d-3c, NRSV)

This international procession is quoted as inviting others to come with them. The trek's purpose is to learn the ways of Yahweh (v. 3a-c). There follow announcements about Yahweh's promulgation of his teaching, his arbitration (vv. 3d-4b), and the resulting dismantling of weapons by the nations (v. 4c-f), who will now follow pacifist policies (v. 5).

Given our subject, we single out the image of peoples streaming to Mount Zion. Some have seen difficulty in a people "streaming" (*nhr* = water flowing) uphill and have offered an optional reading of "gaze."⁹ In response, Wilma Bailey notes that metaphors are often illogical (for example, trees clap their hands, Isa 55:12). Moreover, as she rightly says, it is a big leap from the noun "light" (*nēhārā*) and the verb "shine" to the translation "see."¹⁰

Bailey notes that the oracle envisions a motion inward as nations converge on Zion, but it also envisions a movement outward as the teaching

7. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 38, 226.

8. See James Limburg, "Swords into Plowshares: Text and Contexts," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah* (ed. C. C. Broyles and C. A. Evans; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1:279-93, and bibliography there. In the same volume, see John T. Willis, "Isaiah 2:1-5 and the Psalms of Zion," 295-316.

9. A recent translation of Isa 2:2 reads, "all nations shall gaze on it with joy." *The Jewish Study Bible: Jewish Publication Society Tanakh Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Baruch J. Schwartz ("Torah from Zion: Isaiah's Temple Vision [Isaiah 2:1-4]," in *Sanctity of Time and Space in Tradition and Modernity* [ed. A. Houtman, M. J. H. M. Poorthuis, and J. Schwartz; Leiden: Brill, 1998]) supports this translation by proposing that *nhr* is derived alternatively from *nēhārā* ("light") and that the verbal form is "shine" (so BDB and HALOT); hence the translation "see" or "gaze." The summary of Schwartz's argument is given by Wilma Bailey, "Isaiah 2:2-5 and Micah 4:1-4: Learning the Ways of the God of Jacob," in *Beautiful upon the Mountains* (ed. M. H. Schertz and I. Friesen; Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2003), 51-61.

10. Bailey, "Isaiah 2:2-5 and Micah 4:1-4," 59-60.

(*tôrâ*) goes forth from Jerusalem. It is clear that Israel, represented in the figure "Zion," has an intermediary function. Israel has a mission to the nations. The nature of that mission is that Israel be the transmitter of the divine teaching (*tôrâ*). At a minimum, *tôrâ* here refers to the teachings in the Pentateuch. G. T. Sheppard, as noted by B. S. Childs, thinks that *tôrâ* signifies Mosaic instruction and its expansion in Isaiah. Broadening the definition, Childs holds instead that here *tôrâ* is a wide-ranging term and that one needs to think here of the "deepening grasp of God's reality" portrayed by both Mosaic Law and all the prophets.¹¹

The manner in which this mission is implemented is not in this instance for Israel to take the initiative in reaching out to nations. Rather, like a magnet, it draws nations to itself. In missiological lingo, the movement is centripetal.

An obvious intertext is Mic 4:1–5. The wording of Isa 2:1–4 and Mic 4:1–4 is virtually identical, especially as it pertains to the image of nations (*gôyîm/ammîm*) streaming to Zion, and so, because it contributes nothing new to our subject, can be set aside. A scene of nations searching out Israel, as in Isa 2 and Mic 4, is pictured in Isa 11:10, a passage that functions in the nature of an inclusio to Isa 2:1: "On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious" (Isa 11:10).

It is not a hilltop temple that is now central but a hoisted banner signifying the root of Jesse that elicits the interest of nations. "The nations shall inquire (*drš*) of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious" (Isa 11:10b). As in Isa 2:1–5, mention is made of both peoples (*ammîm*) and nations (*gôyîm*; Isa 2:2–3, 11:10). In both texts, the nations gravitate toward Israel to make inquiry. In both, there is a metaphor signaling Israel's unique role. In one, the picture image is of an elevated "mountain of the Lord's house" (2:2); in the other of a standing banner (11:10). The further announcement of Isa 11:10 describes his dwelling ("his resting place") as "glorious" (*kābôd*). The glory aspect is also stressed in an intermediate inclusio in Isa 4:5, where once again the reference is to Mount Zion and "its places of assembly," over the whole of which will be a "glory" (*kābôd*). The theme of glory with the same motif of nations heading toward Zion appears elsewhere: "See, you shall call nations that do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you." In that text "glory" is part of the semantic field: "for he has glorified (root *pʿr* rather than *kbd*) you" (55:5). So one picture given by Isaiah is of nations moving toward Zion (Jerusalem, Israel), this glory-filled place, where they anticipate hearing the word of Yahweh.

Is there a precursor text for the Isaiah vision of a prominent Israel to which nations stream? Deuteronomy 26:17–19, it is proposed, is such a text: "Today the Lord has obtained your agreement: to be his treasured people, as he promised you, and to keep his commandments; for him to set you high

11. Childs, *Isaiah*, 30.

above all nations that he has made, in praise and in fame and in honor" (Deut 26:18–19b).

Here the vision held before God's people is that, if they will be obedient, they will be "set high above all nations." That vision is reinforced in the subsequent litany of blessings issuing from Mount Gerizim: "You will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow. The Lord will make you the head, and not the tail; you shall be only at the top and not at the bottom—if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God" (Deut 28:12b–13a; cf. 28:1 with its expansion: "set you high above all the nations of the earth").

Isaiah's vision echoes the Deuteronomy statement, especially when it is noted that in both texts reference is made to "all nations." Israel, set high above all nations (so Deuteronomy) is concretely located in Zion (so Isaiah) elevated over the nations. The reason for nations coming to Zion, says Isaiah, is to be taught "his ways" (*děřākāyw*), a term found also in Deut 26:17. Further, Isaiah declares that from Mt. Zion will come instruction (*tôřâ*). Deuteronomy speaks instead of "decrees" (*ħuqqîm*) and "laws" (*mišpāřîm*; 26:17), terms that verbally link to the beginning of the Deuteronomic Code (Deut 12:1) and that can generally be subsumed under the word "instruction" (*tôřâ*; cf. Deut 27:3, 26).

Besides sharing the conceptual motifs of "headship over nations" and "to-rah," Isaiah shares with Deuteronomy the theology of mission—namely, a centripetal view of Israel in which the nations, witnessing the preferred place given to Israel, will seek out Israel's God. To establish this claim for Deuteronomy, it is necessary to deal with an ambiguity in Deuteronomy 26:19—an ambiguity as to whose "glory," Israel's or God's, is in view. The NRSV reads: "for him to set you high above all nations that he has made, in praise and in fame and in honor." This reading leaves open whether "praise," "fame," and "honor" are credited to Israel (so NIV, and explicitly in NLT: "Then you will receive praise, honor, and renown") or whether it is God, who because he has caused Israel to prosper will receive praise, honor, and renown. Daniel Block argues on three grounds that it is God who should receive praise, as in "to bring him praise and fame and glory" (NEB). Block observes that Israel's standing was never a source of national pride (compare 7:7, 9:4–24, 8:17–18); that the only other occurrence of "praise" (*těhillâ*) in Deuteronomy (10:21) is reserved for Yahweh; and that Jer 13:11 and 33:9, which echo the present text, describe how "Israel's fortunes brought praise and honor to the Lord among the nations."¹² That is, to Israel's God, more than to Israel itself belongs glory (see "to bring him praise and fame and glory," NEB). It is this theme of glory in Deuteronomy that is echoed in Isa 2:1–5 and its related passages (Isa 4:5, 11:10, and 55:5).

So on the basis of lexical connections ("way," *derek*; "all nations," *kol-haggôyîm*) and motifs such as Israel's being the head of nations, a centripetal move toward Israel, and a subtheme of glory and praise to Yahweh,

12. Daniel I. Block, "The Mosaic Paradigm for Missions (Deuteronomy 26:16–19)," *BSac* 162 (2005): 400.

one may posit that the Deuteronomy text generated a vision that was fleshed out by Isaiah. The fundamental idea is that Israel, as the locus for God's glory and his *tôrâ*, becomes a key attraction to which other nations are drawn.

To move forward from Isa 2 is to discover that Zech 8:20–23 is a successor text.¹³

People shall yet come, the inhabitants of many cities; the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, "Come, let us go to entreat the favor of the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I myself am going." Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of the Lord. . . . In those days ten men from nations of every language shall take hold of a Jew, grasping his garment and saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." (Zech 8:20–23)

This pericope concludes a sermon begun in Zech 7:1.¹⁴ Zechariah pictures foreigners coming to Jerusalem to seek out individual Jews. These representatives from many nations will accost the pious Jews with the request, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech 8:23). Apart from a scene that recalls Isaiah's depiction of nations streaming to Jerusalem (Isa 2:1–5), there are several vocabulary tracers that signal Zechariah's reuse of the Isaiah (or Micah) text. Zechariah, like Isaiah, designates Jerusalem as the nations' destination. (Zech 8:22, Isa 2:3). Peoples (*ammîm*) will come. Both the Isaiah and the Zechariah texts employ the verb *hlk* ("go, come"; Isa 2:3, Zech 8:21) though Zechariah also uses *bôʾ* ("come," 8:22). "Many" is associated in Isaiah with "peoples"; in Zechariah, "many" is the adjective for "cities." Most striking are the quotations from the nations found in both passages, namely, the invitation "Come, let us go . . ." (Isa 2:3, Zech 8:21).

The expansions/modifications that Zechariah makes to the Isaiah text should be noted. Isaiah describes the purpose of the international procession as being cognitive: nations wish to learn Yahweh's Torah. For Zechariah, however, the purpose of the nations' trek is that they might "seek (*bqš*) Yahweh." Given the nuances of "conversion" in the word "seek" (*bqš*),¹⁵ Ze-

13. Benjamin Sommer ("Inner-biblical Interpretation," in *The Jewish Study Bible: Jewish Publication Society Tanakh Translation* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], 1829–30) cites Isa 51:3–6 as a successor text that draws on Isa 2:2–4. Two other texts could qualify as successor texts echoing the Isaiah vocabulary. The vision of nations coming toward Israel in centripetal fashion is featured in Third Isaiah. "Nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn" (Isa 60:3). They will come, not for instruction (Isa 2:3) but to bring wealth to Jerusalem. Jeremiah 51:44 depicts a similar image of nations streaming (*nāhār*) though to a different deity. In an announcement against Babylon, the deity Bel is in focus. "I will punish Bel in Babylon and make him disgorge what he has swallowed. The nations shall no longer stream (*nhr*) to him; the wall of Babylon has fallen."

14. So Ollenburger, "Peace as the Visionary Mission," 97–120.

15. See "[s]eeking God,' therefore, is a call to repentance and conversion" (Chitra Chhetri, "*bqš*," *NIDOTTE* 1:725).

chariah envisions nations becoming converted, a notion perhaps implicit but not explicit in Isaiah.¹⁶ Moreover, while Isaiah speaks of “all nations” (*kol-haggôyîm*, Isa 2:2), Zechariah is more conservative: “Many people and strong (*‘ăšûmîm*) nations shall come” (Zech 8:22). Ollenburger notes that *‘ăšûmîm*, translated by the NRSV “strong,” can also mean “countless” and that in parallel with *rab* (“many,” as here) can also mean “all.”¹⁷ It is not that evident that “all” is appropriate here (though that would neatly parallel Isa 2:2) because Zechariah directly follows with a note of “ten men” from other nations. Is this aversion to “all” already indicated in the Micah text, where the word “all” is avoided and “many” (*rab*) is used (Mic 4:2)?

The Isaiah text is further tweaked by Zechariah. In Isaiah, the law goes forth from Jerusalem, viewed no doubt as an “institution.” However, according to Zechariah, that which was reserved for a corporate entity is now to be true of each Israelite. In Zechariah, it is not the larger group as much as the single individual who now becomes a witness. And yet this distinction must not be overplayed because the question by the “foreigners” is “let us go with you [plural]” (Zech 8:23). So the communal nature of the Israelite witness is retained (as in Isaiah), but a nuance about the individual is added.

Attention to the intertextual usage means that the Isa 2 text can be (re)read, among other things, with a stronger stress on the eagerness with which peoples/nations will seek out the divine way. The centripetal nature of the movement of nations to Israel remains central, but an intertextual reading emphasizes more strongly that it is Israel who is clearly the intermediary between nations and God. Israel’s religious orientation by means of the Torah is crucial. Moreover, the intermediary, while still the community, also includes the individual.

THE SERVANT AS JUSTICE-BRINGER TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH (ISAIAH 42:1–4)

The missional focus of the first servant song in Isa 40–55 is encapsulated in the climactic statement, “and the coastlands wait for his [the servant’s] teaching” (42:1–4). The Hebrew *‘iyyîm* (“coastlands”), while it refers strictly to “a land whose boundaries are determined by water,” is a customary way of specifying territories outside Israel. Daniel Block explains the significance of the term by noting its pairing with *gôyîm* (Isa 40:15, 66:19; and Jer 31:10) and concludes, “The expression is especially significant in Isaiah, where ‘islands’ functions as a designation for foreign nations.”¹⁸ Stephen G.

16. Schwartz observes that the Isa 2:1–4 text does not explicitly state that Gentiles will be converted, according to the summary provided by Bailey, “Isaiah 2:1–5 and Micah 4:1–4,” 59.

17. Ollenburger, “Peace as the Missionary Vision,” 116.

18. Daniel I. Block, “Nations/Nationality,” *NIDOTTE* 4:967; compare J. Alec Motyer, “Islands is significant here, indicating ‘earth’s remotest bounds’ (cf. 40:15),” *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 320. Similarly Ivan Friesen, “Wherever ‘nations’ appear in the servant songs, they refer to the wider scope of

Dempster notes that with the word *coastlands* the Isaiah text links up with the Table of Nations in Gen 10 (see vv. 4–5).¹⁹ K. Baltzer asserts, “That the Servant is also sent to the foreign peoples is not in dispute.”²⁰

The “beyond-Israel” emphasis is also obvious in the preceding poetic line: “until he [the servant] has established justice in the earth” (42:4). The poem speaks to the identity (v. 1b–c), style (vv. 2–3b; 4a–b), and task of the servant (vv. 1b, 3c, 4b). A frequent discussion point from this text is the identity of the servant.²¹ But on this matter the text is silent, for the servant is without a name, a no-name servant.²² Anyone claiming to be God’s servant can find here a self-assessment yardstick. The thrust of the passage should not be dulled by the agenda of identity, unless it is to make the point that here is a description of God’s ideal servant, possibly an individual or a group such as Israel (49:3) or even the church.²³

Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
He will not cry or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
He will not grow faint or be crushed
until he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his teaching. (Isa 42:1–4)

The text’s major agenda is to delineate the servant’s task. Three times that task is specified as “bringing justice” (vv. 1d, 3c, 4a–b). Twice in this job description the justice the servant brings is “beyond Israel.” Specifically,

Yahweh’s concern for the earth. In particular, they refer to earth’s peoples outside ‘the great nation’ [i.e., Israel]. ‘The nations’ refers to those on whom Yahweh intends to extend his blessing,” in “Light to the Nations in Isaiah’s Servant Songs,” in *Beautiful upon the Mountains* (ed. M. H. Schertz and I. Friesen; Scottdale, PA: Herald, 2003), 74. Note how “islands” appear in the NT: Cyprus (Acts 11:19–20, 13:4, 15:39), Malta (Acts 28:1–10), Crete (Titus 1:5). “In the mission of the early church Isaiah’s vision of Yahweh’s heralds to the islands (Isa 66:19) is enacted, and islands become images of spiritual awakening, fertile soil for the planting of the gospel” (Ben Byerly, in a student presentation at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, June 14, 2006).

19. Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 176.

20. Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40–55* (Hermeneia; trans. Margaret Kohl; ed. Peter Machinist; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 132.

21. *Ibid.*, 125–26 and bibliography there.

22. The use of *‘ebed* recalls antecedent texts that designate Moses, David, and the prophets as God’s servants. The NT identifies the servant with Jesus (Matt 12:15–21).

23. Taking into account the context of Isa 41 (intertextual approach), Brevard Childs (*Isaiah*, 325) notes: “For anyone who takes the larger literary context seriously, there can be no avoiding of the obvious implication that *in some way* Israel is the servant who is named in 42:1.”

the servant brings justice to the nations (v. 3); the servant establishes justice on the earth (v. 4). The final line for a third time casts the glance beyond Israel: “and the coastlands (*ʿiyyîm*) wait for his teaching” (v. 4). Regarding “justice” (*mišpāt*), B. S. Childs supplies a shorthand definition: “the restoration of God’s order in the world.”²⁴ This order, as I see it, has to do with “honorable relations,” a term that entails the proper, reconciled relationships between God and humans, humans in their interaction with each other, and humans and nature. Israel’s mission is to make the teaching about “honorable relationships,” biblically defined with high overtones of “gospel,” available to nations.

The vocabulary of “servant,” “justice,” and “nations” points to Ps 72, a royal psalm, as precursor text.²⁵ One lexical clue, apart from the word “justice” (*mišpāt*), is the use of the word *ʿiyyîm* (“coastlands”) both in Ps 72:10 and Isa 42:4. The term “coastlands” as a word for “nations” is found in the OT only 36x, 2 occurrences of which are in our two passages.²⁶ H. G. M. Williamson sees the “servant” of Isa 42 to be a royal figure; this reading would lend further support to Ps 72 as a precursor text.²⁷ The function of a king is to be occupied with the bringing of justice (Ps 72:1–3, 12–14; cf. Jer 21:11–12, 22:2–3). Justice-bringing is also the servant’s work (Isa 42:1, 3, 4). While in Ps 72 the “nations” are in view as bringing tribute to the Israelite king (72:10–11), there is a second sense in which the reign of a justice-bringing servant intersects with nations: “May all nations (*gôyîm*) be blessed in him” (72:17c),²⁸ a point implied also in Isa 42:1–4.

Moreover, conceptually, both the king in Psalms and the servant in Isaiah deal compassionately with the weak: “He has pity on the weak” (Ps 72:13); “a bruised reed he will not break” (Isa 42:3). Conceptually also, both passages envision all the earth as being affected by the royal rule/servant’s

24. Childs, *Isaiah*, 30. Compare with R. J. Clifford (*Psalms 1–72* [Nashville: Abingdon, 2002], 332), who says, “Biblical justice is interventionist, in contrast to the modern Western notion of justice as disinterested decisions.” Justice in the OT sense is to be defined as “honorable relations” and has both a soft edge, that of compassion, especially to the poor and victimized (Jer 22:3, 15–17), and a hard edge, that of punishing evil doers. Thomas L. Leclerc (*Yahweh Is Exalted in Justice: Solidarity and Conflict in Isaiah* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001], 103–11) has a wide-ranging discussion on *mišpāt* for this text. Taking into account the foregoing chapters, he concludes, “the mission of the Servant is to bring forth to the world YHWH’s justice, that is, his just and unrivaled sovereignty” (p. 110).

25. Dating of the Psalms is problematic. Some credence can be given to the heading “Of Solomon” as pointing to an early-monarchy date. While dating issues arise when using terms such as “precursor” and “successor,” the *fact* of allusion and the resulting interplays is the significant point, granting, of course, a certain tentativeness about chronology.

26. By contrast, the usual word for “nation” (*gôy*) is found in the OT 556x.

27. H. G. M. Williamson (*Variations on a Theme: King, Messiah and Servant in the Book of Isaiah* [Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998], 132) states, “There is a considerable degree of agreement nowadays that, whatever else is to be said about the servant in Isaiah 42:1–4, he is presented to us in royal guise.” Williamson offers five evidences for this conclusion.

28. The translation of the Niphal form of *brk* in Ps 72:17, as in Gen 12:3, can be either passive, “May all nations be blessed in him,” or reflexive, “bless themselves by him” (see NRSV, footnote).

ministry (Ps 72:8, Isa 42:4). In both vocabulary and conceptualization, Isaiah leans on Ps 72, especially regarding the justice-bringing mandate. But Isaiah alters the portrait in Ps 72, which is of a triumphalist ruler establishing justice, to a portrait of a meek servant who “will not cry or lift up his voice.” The “difference” introduced by the servant song is one of (1) style (mild), (2) authorization (Spirit-empowered and divinely-chosen), and (3) focus (from an individual in Ps 72 to a community, though the Isaiah text may oscillate between the two). The volume of echo from Ps 72 in Isa 42 is loudest on the note of justice.

For successor texts to Is 42:1–4, one can go at once to the NT. Matthew quotes Isa 42 in conjunction with an argument Jesus has with the religious leaders following his healing on the Sabbath of a man with a withered hand (Matt 12:18–21). The quotation from Isaiah includes “He will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.” Matthew’s quotation using the word “Gentiles” (εθνῆ) corresponds to the LXX rendering of the MT *gôyîm* (“nations,” Isa 42:2). But the LXX also translates *ʾiyîm* (“islands, coastlands” = “nations”) as “Gentiles” (εθνῆ), thus homogenizing the two Hebrew synonyms (*gôyîm* and *ʾiyîm*) with the use of the generic εθνῆ.²⁹

How is fulfillment language in Matthew to be understood? Matthew does not specify which part of the quotation is in focus or whether all of it applies. One could reason that by “fulfillment” Matthew had in mind a servant (Jesus) who (1) withdrew from the Pharisees, an action in keeping with the Isaiah portrait of one who “will not wrangle” (Matt 12:19, Isa 42:2); (2) cured the sick, an action that corresponds to Isaiah’s description of the servant’s not breaking the bruised reed (Matt 12:20, Isa 42:3); and (3) ordered people not to publicize these matters, an action that “fulfills” the Isaianic portrait of the servant who will not self-advertise, “cry aloud,” make his voice heard in the streets (Matt 12:19, Isa 42:2).³⁰

Does the “fulfillment” of which Matthew speaks also include “Gentiles”? The answer, not immediately obvious, is “Yes.” In an incident immediately following, the theme of Gentiles is front and center. When challenged to give a sign, Jesus mentions Nineveh and the “queen of the South” (Matt 12:41–42). One should not miss the additional phrase in the mouth of our Lord about the Queen of Sheba: “she came from the ends of the earth” (Matt 12:42; compare “until he has established justice in the earth,” Isa 42:4). The suggestion made here is that the quotation from Isaiah should be seen within Matthew’s larger presentation, one that looks

29. More complicated is the rendering by Matthew of the last line of the servant song as “and in his name the Gentiles will hope.” The MT *yěyakhêlû* (“wait” or “hope”) has *tôrâ* as an object and makes no reference to “name,” though the LXX does. Richard Gardner (*Matthew* [Believers Church Bible Commentary; Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1991], 197) notes that “[t]he form of the text found here [in Matthew] does not agree with either the Hebrew text or the LXX,” adding that the Matthew rendering is “more like a Christian targum, a paraphrase that interprets the text of Isaiah in the process of quoting it.” Clearly in Matthew’s reuse of the Isaiah text there is some tweaking of it; “Messiah Jesus” seems to be substituted for Isaiah’s *tôrâ*.

30. This summary leans heavily on Richard Gardner, *Matthew*, 197.

not only back reflectively to the pericope of the healing of the man with a withered hand but forward to the next episodes in the life of Jesus. The Gentiles, collectively at Nineveh, and individually in the Queen of Sheba, trusted in God. And they would again: “And in his name the Gentiles will hope” (Matt 12:21).

An intertextual reading illuminates the Isaiah text by putting the spotlight on “justice,” and equally significant, highlighting the dynamic of mission. Comparing the two events—Nineveh’s repentance and the Queen of Sheba’s visit—one may detect both centrifugal (Jonah going to Nineveh) and centripetal (a foreign queen visiting Jerusalem) aspects of an OT theology of mission. Attentiveness to intertextuality, which brings together old and new, shows that Matthew construed the first servant song as having a decided “beyond-Israel” dimension that entailed “justice” and that he saw Jesus (and possibly the Christian community) as having a mediating (that is, missional) role.³¹ This mediating role included an active reaching out.

THE SERVANT AS A COVENANT AND LIGHT TO THE PEOPLES (ISAIAH 42:6, 49:6)

Two servant songs (or their extension) in speaking of Gentiles (“coastlands”) make use of the image of light (Isa 42:4, 49:1). In what J. Alec Motyer calls the “confirmatory comment” or “tailpiece” of the first servant song, the poet shifts from speaking in third person to second person: “I have given you as a covenant to the people (*‘ām*); / a light to the nations (*gōyīm*)” (Isa 42:6).³² Commentators have rightly noted the parallelism: peoples (*‘ām*) and nations (*gōyīm*). I follow K. Baltzer’s interpretation, which rejects the suggestion of some that “people” (*‘ām*) refers to Israel, and “nations” (*gōyīm*) refers to the Gentiles. Baltzer assumes that “light to (of) the nations” is an objective genitive, in the sense of “in order to bring light to the nations.” The preceding parallel, “covenant to (of) the people” should also be an objective genitive and is to be understood as “the one who brings the

31. A second possible successor text to Isa 42 is Rom 15:12: “And again Isaiah says, ‘The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope.’” Paul stresses in this section that the fulfillment of God’s promise entails a horizon wider than that of the Jews, a point that becomes the warrant for his mission. His concluding Isaiah quotation is part of a catenae of OT quotations drawn from the three divisions of the Hebrew canon: Pentateuch, Writings and Prophets, in each of which the word εθνῆ (“Gentiles”) appears. His Isaiah quotation is likely from Isa 11:10 (LXX). However the final line of 11:10, “in him the Gentiles shall hope,” echoes 42:4 (LXX), “and in his name the Gentiles will hope.” For a detailed discussion, see Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 317–28.

32. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 321, 443. Already earlier, F. F. Bruce observed that three of the servant songs have a core stanza followed by a connecting link, for example, 42:1–4[5–9], 49:1–6[7–13] (*This Is That: The New Testament Development of Some Old Testament Themes* [Exeter: Paternoster, 1968], 84). Both covenant and the metaphor of light occur elsewhere in so-called Second Isaiah (Isa 55:3, 49:6).

covenant to the people.”³³ Agreed. The servant, apparently in his own person, and not just as proclaimer, mediates the covenant to the Gentiles.

How is “light” to be understood? The nuances of the “light” metaphor are multiple. In the first servant song, the mention of light is followed by the “salvific” features: eyes of the blind are opened, and prisoners are released from the darkness (Isa 42:7).³⁴ In the second servant song, “salvation” stands in poetic parallelism to “light” (Isa 49:6). An intriguing intertext is Prov 6:23, where the law is associated with light: “For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching (*tôrâ*) a light (*’ôr*).” Moreover, light “is also a common metaphor for ‘wisdom’ and ‘insight.’”³⁵ In an Isaiah intertext, it is Yahweh’s justice that constitutes “light”: “For a teaching (*tôrâ*) will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples” (Isa 51:4). Klaus Baltzer, commenting on Isa 49, can say: “‘Light’ (*’ôr*) is the quintessence of justice.”³⁶

Further, there is strong association, even identification of the servant with “light.” The text reads, “I have given [*ntn*] you . . . a light to the nations (*gôyîm*)” (42:6). “The climax and conclusion of the Servant’s address to the foreign peoples is . . . that he himself is to be a ‘light of nations.’”³⁷ Here the servant “personif[ies] the light of salvation.”³⁸ It is the servant himself (or understood as a collective) that constitutes the illumination, the recipients of which are the nations. In sum, the Isaianic references to light in the two servant songs conjure up (1) an individual/group marked as “servant”; (2) salvation; (3) teaching/torah; and (4) justice. It is this cluster of understandings wrapped in the figure of “light” that is to reach to the end of the earth.

In what manner does “light” extend to the nations? With reference to these two “light” texts (Isa 42:6, 49:6), Adrian Leske says: “The people

33. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 131–32. B. S. Childs writes in a similar vein, “‘People’ stands in parallel to ‘nations’ and is not a reference specifically to Israel, but one that carries a universal scope” (*Isaiah*, 327). It has been claimed that in Biblical Hebrew where *bêrit* is in a bound phrase and the free member is a person that the free member is always the party with whom the covenant is made (for example, “owners of a treaty with Abram,” Gen 14:13). Here the servant himself, in his own person and in a mediatorial role, is the treaty with Gentiles. Contrast J. N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 117–18.

34. Ronald Clements notes that the metaphor of light is “a counterpart to the imagery of blindness” (“A Light to the Nations: A Central Theme of the Book of Isaiah,” in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts* [JSOTSup 235; ed. James W. Watts and Paul R. House; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996], 65). “Light,” Clements explains, refers to the Gentile nations’ sharing in Israel’s salvation (p. 67).

35. Rikk E. Watts, “Echoes from the Past: Israel’s Ancient Traditions and the Destiny of the Nations in Isaiah 40–55,” *JSOT* 28 (2004): 504. Watts refers to the discussion in Sverre Aalen, “אור *’ôr*,” in *TDOT* 1:160–63 and, elsewhere in the article, calls attention to Israel’s calling of being a light, as in Isa 49:6b, “again probably understood in terms of the tradition reflected, for example, in Deut. 4:4–8” (p. 498).

36. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 310. See Isa 51:4 and Leclerc, *Yahweh is Exalted*, 118–22.

37. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 311.

38. *NIDOTTE* 1:327.

were . . . to be God's witnesses to the nations. . . . As the nations watched, they too would be drawn to seek the same kind of relationship with Yahweh and to acknowledge him as the universal and only true God."³⁹ Such an assumption draws on Isa 60:3: "Nations shall come to your light." That is, like a coastal lighthouse, the light is there *for* the nations as orientation. Or, to use the language of H. M. Orlinsky, the sense of "light to the nations" is that "Israel will dazzle the nations with her God-given triumph and restoration."⁴⁰ Israel, some claim, is a testimony and witness but is not active in "missionary work."⁴¹

Differently understood, the meaning is that light is offered *to* the nations like a torch or flashlight in the sense of pointing the way. J. C. Okoye concludes that "the full meaning of 'light to the nations,' when interpreted in relation to 60:13, and the focus of the final editing of the book of Isaiah on a transformed Zion from which both justice and righteousness radiate, is that of *missionary evangelization* among the nations."⁴² It is this latter meaning, that of light *to* the nations, that is highlighted in a NT intertext. Paul capitalizes on the Isaiah text in a synagogue sermon at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:47).⁴³ Citing the rejection of his message by the Jews, Paul announces that he is turning to the Gentiles. His scriptural justification for this move is a quotation from the servant song, "I have set you to be a light to the Gentiles." As noted, the image in Isaiah seems to be one of peoples' gravitating toward the source of light. But Paul "tweaks" the OT text to mean light going out to the nations: Paul is moving out to the Gentiles with his message. Of interest also is Paul's reapplication of the Isaiah text to himself, for in quoting the OT text Paul says, "For so the Lord has commanded *us*." Already Paul is on a missionary journey promulgating the good news. He sees further warrant for his action in the Isaiah text about light, which he (re)reads as a "sending" and a consequent "going." For Paul, being a light to the Gentiles (εθνη) entailed active outward movement beyond Israel to peoples other than Israel.⁴⁴ Using the vocabulary of Paul

39. Adrian Leske, "Isaiah and Matthew: The Prophetic Influence in the First Gospel," in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* (ed. W. H. Bellinger Jr. and W. R. Farmer; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 156.

40. H. M. Orlinsky, *Essays in Biblical Culture and Bible Translation* (New York: KTAV, 1974), 186.

41. A helpful survey on how scholars over the past century have argued for or against Israel's having an active missionizing role is offered by Michael A. Grisanti, "Israel's Mission to the Nations in Isaiah 40–55: An Update," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 9 (1998): 39–61.

42. Okoye, *Israel and the Nations*, 142–43. Italics added.

43. Another successor text to the Isaiah texts is Simeon's speech (Luke 2:32). As he holds the Christ-child in his arms, he extols God's salvation, which he describes as a "light for revelation to the Gentiles." Simeon's prayer envisions the mission of Jesus, in accordance with OT intention, to extend beyond the Israelite people to the Gentiles.

44. In Paul's speech before King Agrippa, Paul explains his Damascus road vision in terms of light: "I [Jesus] will rescue you from . . . the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light" (Acts 26:17–18).

Bowers, we can see that the Apostle Paul was not a “stationary witness but a mobile witness.”⁴⁵ The dynamic that Paul saw in the text was centrifugal.

The radical nature of this move toward the Gentiles, despite its being based on OT Scripture, can be appreciated in view of Peter’s reluctance to move toward the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10). So also the Jerusalem conference had largely to do with coming to terms with Gentile inclusion (Acts 15). It may be, as W. Swartley has suggested, that Mark’s departure from the missionary team was due to his unwillingness to follow Paul’s new initiative of gospel preaching to the Gentiles.⁴⁶

Thus, to summarize, the phrase “light to the Gentiles” is given content through the intertexts in Isaiah and elsewhere in the OT. Light is about salvation, teaching, justice. It is about orientation. But in an enlightening move, Paul enlists the metaphor to urge the active dissemination of light to the nations by way of a programmed ministry. Paul reads Isaiah as entailing Israel’s active outreach to the nations.

THE SERVANT AS MEDIUM OF REVELATION TO THE NATIONS (ISAIAH 52:13–53:12)

The notion of illuminating the nations is reiterated but without the image of light in a direction-setting text in the fourth servant song.

So he [my servant] shall startle many nations;
kings shall shut their mouths because of him;
for that which had not been told them they shall see,
and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate. (Isa 52:15)

The introduction highlights nations: “So he (the servant) shall startle many nations.”⁴⁷ The servant’s activity is immediately explained. That of which the nations were ignorant will be disclosed to them. Moreover, “that which they had not heard, they shall contemplate.” One is justified in taking the subject matter, “that,” as being the detailed description of the servant’s sacrificial role, his being “wounded for . . . transgressions, crushed for . . . iniquities” (53:5), the result of which is that “many” (including nations) will be made righteous (53:11).⁴⁸ If in previous passages the implications

45. W. P. Bowers, *Paul’s Understanding of His Mission* (Ph.D. Diss., Cambridge, 1976), 116. Quoted in Peter T. O’Brien, *Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul: An Exegetical and Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993), 126. Kenton L. Sparks supplies three lines of evidence that already in the OT context “light to the nations” means an activity of extending the Yahweh message beyond Israel: (1) the blindness motif, which has nations in mind (49:6); (2) a connection with Gen 12:1–3; and (3) the notion of assimilating proselytes (Isa 44:5; *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998], 309–13).

46. Willard Swartley, *Mark: The Way for All Nations* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1981), 29–30.

47. “Startle” as in the NRSV is to be preferred over “sprinkle” (NIV). See commentaries for the debate. I thank the BBR editorial board for helpful comments in pointing me to this Isaiah passage.

48. “Numerous commentators are agreed on the basis of the structural correspondences between 52:13–15 and 53:11b–21 and the parallelism between ‘many nations’ and ‘mighty,’

of Israel as a “light” were somewhat indeterminate (centripetal or centrifugal), this ambiguity is dispelled in the final servant song. The nations will be told. Someone will tell them of the redemptive work of the servant. Isaiah sees missionizing activity as part of the servant’s work.

It is the successor text in the NT that clinches the above interpretation. Paul, explaining and in part defending his missionizing activity in far-off regions, seizes on the Isaiah text for justification: “As it is written, ‘Those who have never been told of him shall see, and those who have never heard of him shall understand’ (Rom 15:21). Referring to the context, Rom 15:14–21, John E. Toews asserts, “Nowhere does he [Paul] outline his missionary self-understanding more clearly than here.”⁴⁹ For Paul the subject matter is the gospel of Christ. That is, Paul reads Isa 53 as pointing to Messiah Jesus and explicates the Messiah’s work as the good news that is to be told to the nations. More could be said about the content of the gospel, none other than centered in Christ, but the immediate reason for adducing this NT text is to argue that Isaiah’s fourth servant passage is to be interpreted as warranting aggressive proclamation, even hinting at proselytizing.⁵⁰

ISRAEL AS WITNESS; NATIONS RUNNING TO ISRAEL (ISAIAH 55:1–13)

Like the servant passages, Isa 55 has the Gentiles in view. The final verses of the chapter, about the exiles’ going out in joy, form an inclusio with Isa 40:1, where the note of comfort for exiled Israel, now ready to return home, is sounded. In the intervening chapters, the agenda has been that of Israel’s identity, its task and its relationship to surrounding nations. The servant songs speak to all three issues, as does Isa 55.

In Isa 55, God invites the spiritually famished to come to him. He will make with them (“you,” plural) an everlasting covenant, in accordance with his steadfast love, his “sure love for David” (55:3). That allusion to Israel’s identity is followed at once with a statement of mission: “See, I made him a witness to the peoples (*ʿummîm*)” (v. 4). The reference (“him”) is to David, but David has been democratized to refer to all Israel, which is now to be a witness to the peoples. “It is most important to see . . . that the

that ‘the many’ in this so-called ‘fourth song’ includes Gentiles” (Watts, “Echoes from the Past,” 495 n. 45). Watts calls attention to A. Wilson, *The Nations in Deutero-Isaiah: A Study in Composition and Structure* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1986), 301–15.

49. J. E. Toews, *Romans* (Believers Church Bible Commentary; Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 2004), 352. Toews ends the paragraph: “He [Paul] is fulfilling the mission of Israel—he is being a priest to the nations.”

50. Richard Hays summarizes: “His [Paul’s] extensive allusions to Isa 40–55 suggest that he has pondered this text repeatedly and found in it a prefiguration of his own apostolic mission to announce God’s good news to the Gentile world” (“Who Has Believed Our Message?: Paul’s Reading of Isaiah,” *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel’s Scripture* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 48; repr. from *New Testament Writers in the Old Testament: An Introduction* [London: SPCK, 2002]; this essay contains Hays’s updated criteria for intertextuality).

promise to David . . . [has been] extended and transferred to the mission of the servant of the Lord in the new world order depicted by the prophet.”⁵¹ Even if the mention of “peoples” (*ʿummîm*) as the target of the witness is interpreted to mean “Israel” (a possibility because *ʿummîm* is generic), the following statement is about nations: “See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you” (Isa 55:5).

See, I made him [David] a witness to the peoples (*ʿummîm*),
 a leader and commander for the peoples (*ʿummîm*).
 See, you shall call nations (*gôyîm*) that you do not know,
 and nations (*gôyîm*) that do not know you shall run to you. (Isa 55:4–5b)

Three comments are in order, the first of which is about the term “witness.” The root for witness (*ʿd*) occurs in Second Isaiah trial scenes where Israel is called to be a witness to God’s sovereignty. Allison Trites, drawing heavily on these Isaiah texts, establishes the meaning of “witness.” He notes: “It is the task of witnesses not only to attest the facts but also to convince the opposite side of the truth of them (Isa 41:22, 26; 43:9; 51:22; cf. Gen 38:24–26).”⁵²

The second comment on Isa 55 has to do with nations converging on Jerusalem. “See, you shall call nations (*gôyîm*) that you do not know, and nations (*gôyîm*) shall run (*rûṣ*) to you” (55:5). This image of foreigners seeking out Israel is comparable to the scene of nations streaming up the mountain (Isa 2:2–3).⁵³ There the incentive for nations converging on Israel was to learn Torah. In Isa 55, the reason for the surge of nations is “on account of” (*lěmaʿan*) Yahweh who has glorified Israel. So Israel’s glory, possibly its return to the land (Isa 55:12), seen as an act of Yahweh, becomes the occasion for the nations’ eagerness to run to Israel. As a later intertext puts it: “Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord on that day” (Zech 2:11[MT 2:15]). Nations ultimately root themselves in Zion, a theme in other prophets and also in the Psalms.⁵⁴ The stories of the Gibeonites, Rahab, Hiram, and the Queen of Sheba are suggested as background to the nations’ “running” to Israel/Jerusalem.⁵⁵

51. Childs, *Isaiah*, 437. For a similar view of “David” transmuted to “Israel,” see Williamson, *Variations*, 116–29. Childs’s comment follows his reference to O. Eissfeldt’s essay (1962), in which Eissfeldt showed how the “promise of grace to David” was shaped by the intertext of Ps 89.

52. Allison Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 46.

53. “The tradition about the pilgrimage of the peoples to Zion that we find in Isa 2:1–5 seems to be the tradition that is most closely related to this passage [Isa 55]” (Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 473).

54. The motif of nations finding their rootage in Zion is the subject of Erich Zenger’s essay, “Zion as Mother of the Nations in Psalm 87,” in *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms* (ed. N. Lohfink and E. Zenger; trans. E. R. Kallin; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 123–60 (esp. pp. 134–35; cf. 128–29)].

55. Watts, “Echoes from the Past,” 500, 506.

The nations' interest in Yahweh may also arise from the direct summons extended to them, "Seek the Lord," (Isa 55:6), a summons that can be understood as a universal call to all peoples rather than only a call to Israel. J. A. Motyer supports such a view by suggesting that Isa 54:1–55:13 be titled, "Good news for the whole world: universal proclamation and invitation." These two chapters, in Motyer's view, are a "tailpiece" to the servant song of Isa 52:13–53:12, just as 42:6ff. and 49:6 with their statements of a "light to the nations" are tailpieces to the first two servant songs.⁵⁶ A claim of this sort welds the servant passages to a worldwide mission and would also link "mission" to suffering. Further support for the notion that nations are the addressee in the summons to seek the Lord (Isa 55:6) arises from two observations. First, the immediately preceding discussion is about nations (vv. 4–5). Second, the word "seek" (*drš*) is associated with nations in Isa 11:10, where nations are said to "seek" out the banner, an intertext as we noted with Isa 2:4 and now also with Isa 55. For different reasons—Israel's glory and Yahweh's summons to the nations for them to seek him—the nations rush toward Israel.

The third comment about nations is to note that God says: "My thoughts are not your thoughts" (55:8–9). Customarily, the statement about God's higher thoughts is explained, quite apart from context, as providence in the face of mishaps. Considering context, one could point to forgiveness (55:6–7): humans might calculate that forgiveness is out of reach for them, but God's "calculations" are on a different order.⁵⁷ But another explanation of the divine higher thoughts is plausible. God's thoughts are higher in that his are about a universal outreach for which Israel is to be a catalyst and instrument. This perspective differs from Israel's self-absorption (e.g., Isa 40:27). A reorientation of Israel to its mission has surfaced often in Isa 40–55 and now concludes this entire text block. So, in this view, the divine orientation as different from human orientation applies not only to vv. 6–7 about "seeking Yahweh" but also to the earlier unusual scenario of nations rushing toward Israel (55:5). Klaus Baltzer seems to be in agreement when he comments: "Verse 9 ["my thoughts (are) higher than your thoughts"] is the heading for vv. 10–11, in the question about God's plan for the world."⁵⁸

The three specific overtones of Isa 55—witness, nations running to "David" (Israel), and the divine more-than-human "thoughts"—are gathered up both in terminology and concept in Jesus' farewell words to the disciples: "and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The echoes from Isaiah are several: (1) *mission*: "you shall be witnesses" (compare "you are witnesses" [μάρτυς, Isa 43:10, 12, LXX]); (2) *identity*: in Isaiah as in Acts 1:8 the

56. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 443.

57. So Baltzer (*Deutero-Isaiah*, 476–80), who sees Jer 29:10–14 with its similar vocabulary as intertext for Isa 55:6–8.

58. *Ibid.*, 480.

witnesses are identified as “my witnesses”; (3) *sphere*: in Isaiah the “witness” is to the nations, as also in Acts; and (4) *setting*: in the Acts narrative the disciples are self-absorbed, wondering when the kingdom will be restored to Israel. Jesus says in effect, “Your thoughts (about a national kingdom) are not my thoughts” (namely, a gospel that reaches to the end of the world). In sum, the successor text for Isa 55 in Acts 1:8 profiles the highly missional nature of Isa 55 more sharply than at first noticed. And more: the Acts text, which describes Christians on the move toward nations, sets the Isaiah text, which speaks of nations running to Israel, on its head. It is not nations running to God’s people (as in Isaiah), but God’s people running to the nations (Acts).

A SPIRIT-ANOINTED MINISTRY REACHING TO THE NATIONS (ISAIAH 61:1–11)

The “mission” text in so-called Third Isaiah that claims our attention is Isa 61, which at first glance has Israel sharply in view. The text mentions Zion (v. 3), the repair of ruined cities (v. 4), priests (v. 6), and an everlasting covenant (v. 8). But toward the end of this unit, “nations” come into view. God’s “inreach” will result in a community of which the nations will take notice (vv. 8–9). Righteousness will be the hallmark of this community (v. 11). Even more so when read intertextually, this chapter elaborates on the nature of the missionary role that Israel is to fulfill to other peoples.

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me. . . .
He has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed. . . .
For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
And as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
So the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise
To spring up before all the nations. (Isa 61:1, 11)

The subject of nations appears three times in the chapter. The first instance, not germane to our topic, is of nations bringing wealth to Israel (v. 6; cf. 60:10).⁵⁹ The second instance employs two terms (*gôyîm*, *‘ammîm*) for “foreigners”: “Their [Israel’s] descendants shall be known among the nations (*gôyîm*), and their offspring among the peoples (*‘ammîm*); all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed” (61:9). In the third instance, the poem climaxes with the vision of righteousness and praise springing up “before all the nations (*gôyîm*)” (61:11).

The gist of the poem is that a restored Israel will have an impact on “nations.” The scenario of a transformed people of God will get other

59. On this subject of the nations’ submission to Israel, often said to contrast, if not contradict the vision of nations experiencing salvation, see the excellent essay by Watts, “Echoes from the Past.” Watts explains how Isaiah appropriated relevant earlier traditions about nations (patriarch, exodus, conquest, and David/Solomon) and shows how both visions—of Israel as a servant and Israel as being served—can coexist.

peoples' attention (v. 9), so much so that nations will witness "a new order of righteousness with the growth of a community of faith."⁶⁰ When one notes that the speaker's account (vv. 1–7, 10–11) is interrupted by a Yahweh word about his love for justice (v. 8), the question arises: how is this justice related to the two parts of the poem? Looking to the poem's beginning, the answer is that the mission of the "sent one" to the oppressed includes justice-bringing (a tie-in with Isa 42:3). The theme of justice reappears at the poem's end; righteousness (a synonym for justice) will spring up before all nations. The poem then pivots on "justice" (61:8) both as at the heart of good news, which includes assistance to the poor (word-deed combination), *and* justice as represented in a community with its consequent impact on nations.

Whatever the precursor texts,⁶¹ we move directly to the successor text, Luke's account of our Lord's quotation of Isa 61 in his first public appearance at the Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4:18–19). However, it is not a "clean" quotation. Inserted into the servant's description is the phrase "to recover the sight of the blind," a phrase taken from Isa 42:7a, which in turn explicates the preceding phrase, "light to the nations" (Isa 42:6d) and the larger servant song (Isa 42:1–9), with its stress on nations. Clearly with this inserted phrase, the Isa 61 text quoted in Luke has been tweaked. Though Isa 61 seems to be about Zion and its transformation, it is also about nations; the insertion of "blind receiving their sight," given its intertextual resonance, opens the way for a decided "beyond Israel" meaning to the text.

Luke's account of Jesus' experience at the Nazareth synagogue quite specifically validates this "beyond-Israel" reading of the Isa 61 text. Our Lord continued his homily at Nazareth by referring to the widow at Zarephath and to Naaman, both of whom came from outside Israel. After our Lord's initial exposition of the Isaiah text, all who heard the reading were amazed. His further comment about these Gentiles filled the hearers with rage to the point of wanting to hurl Jesus over the cliff. Why such a reversal and why an emotional response? The customary answer is that the hearers chafed at what they thought was Christ's advocacy for the observance of the jubilee: it grated on them that captives were to be freed, as in the jubilee year.⁶² But is this not to miss the point? It was the reference to the Gentiles that brought on the listeners' rage.

Luke Johnson, the NT scholar, agrees and explains, "They [Elijah and Elisha] were prophets through whom God worked salvation for those *outside* the historical people of Israel."⁶³ This answer, which highlights the Gentile factor as the reason for outrage, is borne out by attention to

60. Childs, *Isaiah*, 506.

61. These might include Exod 19:5 (compare with priests, Isa 61:6) and Amos 9:11 (compare with ruins, Isa 61:4), but further exploration does not bear on our thesis.

62. So John H. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), following Andrew Trocme.

63. Luke T. Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 215. Italics his.

intertextuality.⁶⁴ Isaiah's mention of nations may well have given rise to our Lord's illustration of the widow in Sidon and of Naaman, the Syrian leper. This connection between the text of Isa 61, with its interest in nations, and Jesus' parade examples of two Gentiles experiencing "salvation" best explains the violent reaction to Jesus' scripture reading and commentary. But the subject of "outsiders" and "nations" from Isa 61 is further echoed in Luke. Consider: (1) Isaiah pictures a community being formed: "They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory." Our Lord's discipling ministry as the foundation for the building of the church fulfills this part of the Isaiah text. (2) The opening statement about the commission with its "garments of praise," "crown of beauty," and "planting of the Lord" (v. 3)—all references to Israel—are matched at the end with "garments of salvation" (v. 10), "adorned with jewels" (v. 10e), but are extended at the close to nations. Jesus' ministry would reach beyond Israel. (3) As for the generic "nations" in Isa 61, Jesus' exposition cited the widow at Sidon and Naaman, the Syrian. Both were Gentiles and both came into contact with the God of Israel through a mediator from Israel, Elijah and the servant girl, respectively. Here are two instances of Israel's becoming the vehicle for the acknowledgment of Yahweh by representatives of the nations as described (Isa 61:9). Moreover, both are instances in which righteousness and praise sprang up among the nations (Isa 61:11).

It is this exposition about Gentile receptivity that angered the exclusive-minded Jewish listeners at Nazareth. Their theology had scarcely room for Gentile inclusion in the kingdom of God (compare Peter's experience, Acts 10). Our Lord's initial public appearance points the way toward this sort of inclusion and does so on the basis of a prophetic text (Isa 61) and two historical examples drawn from the book of Kings. Ralph Martin is right: "What is exceptional in the Nazareth pericope is the type of Messiah Jesus claimed to be: and that involves his function as *bringer of messianic salvation to the Gentiles*."⁶⁵

An intertextual reading brings to the fore what might otherwise have been missed in Isa 61: the receptivity of nations to the gospel message. First, the text can (perhaps must) be read as God's sending an ambassador not only to Zion but to nations beyond.⁶⁶ Second, so transformed is the

64. It is hardly likely that our Lord's reading stopped with Isa 61:2a. In the absence of chapter/verse specifications, Bible writers quoted an initial passage so as to bring to mind the larger unit.

65. Ralph Martin, "Salvation and Discipleship in Luke's Gospel," *Interpretation* 30 (1976): 369. Italics his. See James A. Sanders ("From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4," in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty. Part One, New Testament* [Leiden: Brill, 1975], 75–106), who, on the basis of comparative midrash, regards the offense at Nazareth to be that of prophetic critique, namely, the inversion of the ethic of election as illustrated from Kings in the stories of Elijah and Elisha.

66. Nor is Isa 61 alone in so-called Third Isaiah in announcing the inclusion of Gentiles in the kingdom. An oracle pictures foreigners joining themselves to the Lord (Isa 56:6). In the final chapter, the vision is of God's taking some from nations such as Tarshish, Put, and Lud

immediate faith community that nations cast their eyes on it and take note. Third, at the very heart of “mission” is transformation, not only of individuals but of communities, *including non-Israelite communities*, a transformation that results from divine action (v. 9d) but is mediated by a Spirit-anointed servant. Fourth, while the Isaiah text outlines a theology of mission, one must also see it as a mission of theology. That is, a theological understanding of the gospel, God’s intention in the world, propels toward mission.⁶⁷

It must be recognized that the impulse to seek converts to the biblical God not only is found in Isaiah but also has broad theological roots. For example, the very belief in One God demands missionizing activity on the order of, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19–20), as Rodney Stark argues. Stark also documents his claim that certain Jewish rabbis so understood their mandate. Demographics at the time of the Roman Empire support the conclusion that the Jews prior to Christ’s coming were active in proselytizing, as do the frequent references to God-fearers in the NT. Stark explores various monotheistic faiths, such as Akhenaten’s monotheism in Egypt, Judaism, and Islam and asserts, “Only One True God can generate great undertakings out of primarily religious motivations, and chief among these is the desire, indeed the duty, to spread the knowledge of the One True God: the duty to missionize is inherent in dualistic monotheism.”⁶⁸

CONCLUSION

The foray into Isaiah’s “missional” texts brings into sharper focus certain aspects relating to both the theology and praxis of “missions.”⁶⁹ These

and setting them as priests and as Levites (Isa 66:18–21). Childs (*Isaiah*, 507–8) refers to these texts and the NT use of Isa 61 as instances of intertextuality.

67. I owe this notion to my missiologist colleague, Hans Kasdorf. Expansion of this idea goes beyond the scope of this paper; some comments pertinent to the concept appear in my more-general article, “Impulses to Mission in Isaiah,” *Direction* 35 (2006): 59–69 (www.directionjournal.org).

68. Rodney Stark, *One True God: Historical Consequences of Monotheism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 35. I owe this reference to a philosopher friend, V. Athithan. Stark states: “What is far less known and sometimes denied, is that the Judaism of this era (OT) was a missionizing faith” (p. 52). He presents considerable evidence for his claim. One of those denying that Judaism was a “missionizing faith” is Scot McKnight (not mentioned by Stark). McKnight (*A Light among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], 116–17) states: “It is the conclusion of this work that Judaism never developed a clear mission to the Gentiles that had as its goal the conversion of the world.” Since I am dealing with texts and arguing for a theology, I set aside any discussion of the historical outworkings or the lack thereof.

69. A fuller discussion of the “missionary perspective” in Isaiah would call attention to the way in which Isaiah’s stress on God’s cosmic sovereignty provides an argument for missionizing activity. For the way in which this argument is made from the Psalms, see Gordon Matties, “God’s Reign and the Missional Impulse of the Psalms,” in *Beautiful upon the Mountains* (ed. M. H. Schertz and I. Friesen; Scottdale, PA: Herald, 2003), 17–49. Other considerations such

conclusions reinforce current missiology but also offer a corrective to current church practice.

First, on the theological side, Isaiah forcefully puts “nations” on Israel’s radar screen. God’s interest in the peoples of the world is clearly salvific. God invites them to receive his salvation (Isa 55:1, 45:22). Nations are envisioned streaming to the mountain of the Lord and embracing the God of Israel as their God (Isa 2:2–4, 55:5–6). Given the way both Jesus (Luke 4) and Paul (Acts 13) draw on Isaiah, the horizon of concern is extended beyond Israel to distant coastlands (Isa 42:4; cf. Isa 19:23–24). This view is a corrective to the myopia, parochialism, and self-absorption of many North American churches.

Second, the intermediary role of God’s people (Israel, the Church) within the globalizing intention of Yahweh becomes clear. Isaiah’s answer is that Israel is not only itself an “end” but also the means to an end. Israel was to be a broker of the good news to the nations.⁷⁰ God’s ideal servant is the intermediary that brokers the word of God to peoples to the end of the earth (Isa 42:1–4). God’s agent is “the light to the nations” (Isa 42:6, 49:6) and a “witness to the peoples” (Isa 55:4). An intertextual study that emphasizes the role of God’s people as mediating the message addresses the postmodern ethos in which tolerance of the plurality of religions numbs the missional imperative.

Third, it is especially noteworthy that precisely the people as a corporate group becomes the agent of God’s message (compare Zion, “mountain of the Lord’s house,” Isa 2:1–5, the collective “David,” Isa 55). Isaiah’s servant can be understood as an entire peoplehood (Isa 42:1–4).⁷¹ The corporate group, like an exhibit, draws nations (Isa 61). This emphasis is a corrective to a missiology that is individual-centered. It is a community that is marked by righteousness and godliness that is the vehicle of evangelization. Thankfully, the communitarian aspect is increasingly recognized. True, the Zechariah intertext qualifies the corporate aspect by attention to the individual (Zech 8:20–23). Still, the stress on the individual participation in mission is recessive rather than dominant.⁷² So, while not

as God’s claim to be the only true God, his penchant for acting in new ways, and his “redeemer” nature, are presuppositions of, if not arguments for “mission.”

70. Christopher Seitz sees Second Isaiah building on First Isaiah. Roy F. Melugin (“The Book of Isaiah and the Construction of Meaning” in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah* [ed. C. C. Broyles and C. A. Evans; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1997], 1:43), summarizes Seitz’s position: “The language of [Isaiah] 37:26 is taken up by the chapters of Isa 40–55 to create a new understanding of Yahweh’s purposes for Zion in the context of the Babylonian exile.”

71. Such a conclusion follows from the designation of the servant as Israel (Isa 49:4) but especially from the context of the trial of the nations. Andrew Wilson (*The Nations in Deutero-Isaiah: A Study on Composition and Structure* [Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1986], 255–62) is helpful in stressing the trial of the nations as the context for Isa 42:1–14.

72. The overall scene is not unlike the picture represented in Pauline literature where, as has been observed, Paul does not exhort individuals to engage in witness, though as P. T. O’Brien (*Gospel and Mission*, 109–31) wants to argue, the role of the individual in evangelism can be inferred.

diminishing the witnessing activity of individual believers, the thrust in Isaiah is to see a believing community as witness.

Fourth, this study puts into sharper focus the place that “justice” has in Israel’s message for the nations. Justice-bringing is the task of Isaiah’s servant (42:1–4). Similarly, the metaphor of “light to the nations” (Isa 42:6, 49:6) entails “justice” even as it depicts salvation more generally. God’s love of justice is the hinge statement for Isa 61 and so points backward to the servant’s task and forward to the way the nations will be confronted with justice. Especially the lengthy quotation of Isa 42 in Matthew, made as it is in the context of Jesus’ ministry of healing, confrontation, teaching, and preaching, implicitly expands on what is entailed in justice-bringing. All of this emphasis on justice means that “mission” must be construed as having a very earthly as well as spiritual component—“holistic,” to use modern jargon. The emphasis on justice as part of mission is thus a corrective to a one-sided “soul-saving” understanding of “mission.”

Fifth, Isaiah’s mission texts not only speak to God’s intention and to Israel’s role but address, though more obliquely, a certain aura—that of glory—that is to be true of mission. Already the notion of God’s glory is noted in a seminal text in the Moses speech (Deut 26:19), the generative text for Isaiah’s vision of people streaming to Zion (see “his dwelling place shall be glorious,” Isa 11:1, an intertext of Isa 2:1–4). Similarly the comment about nations “running” to Israel (Isa 55:5) mentions the way God has glorified his people.⁷³ Even in Isa 61, the theme of “brightness” (“praise,” *tšhillā*) is brandished enthusiastically in the poem’s final line. The confident if not triumphalist note discerned in these intertexts is found also in their NT reuse (Rom 15:9–12). Mission is to be understood, not as some mandate to be laboriously implemented, but one that is suffused with strong elements of transcendence, hence glory. This stress on “glory” is a corrective to the statistic phobia evident in mission reports.

Finally, and specific to the immediate agenda of this article, the Isaiah texts highlight both a centripetal (“come” structure) and a centrifugal (“go” structure) dimension. This conclusion gainsays a common understanding, as represented for example by G. W. Peters, who generalized that missions in the OT was centripetal, whereas mission in the NT is centrifugal.⁷⁴ The centripetal dimension is illustrated in Isa 2:1–5. But as has been shown, several mission-oriented texts in Isaiah entail both dimensions. In Isa 42:1–4,

73. “Recognition of Yahweh’s glory is the central purpose of the divine activity as portrayed in Isaiah 40–55” (Roy F. Melugin, “Israel and the Nations in Isaiah 40–55,” in *Problems in Biblical Theology: Essays in Honor of Rolf Knierim* [ed. Henry T. C. Sun and Keith L. Eades; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 260).

74. “Centrifugal universality is in effect when a messenger of the gospel crosses frontiers and carries the good news to the people of no faith. Centripetal universality, often mistaken for particularism operates like a magnetic force, drawing distant peoples to a central place, people, or person. The latter is the methodology of the Old Testament with Israel and the temple as the center designed to draw people to themselves and to the Lord” (G. W. Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* [Chicago: Moody, 1972], 52).

God's servant moves unflinchingly further and further abroad in centrifugal fashion, so that the coastlands will know God's Torah. But at once in the "confirmatory comment" that follows, a reference is made to the servant's being the light to the nations (42:6). Paul reads this light metaphor to mean a centrifugal mandate for proclamation (Acts 13:46–47). Paul bases his aggressive missionizing work among the Gentiles on Isa 52:15, which envisions nations' "being told" about the servant's redemptive work. The dual approach in mission is also evident in Jesus' reuse of the Isa 61 text. Christ's missional statement notes that Elijah was sent to Sidon (the centrifugal version of mission) and that Naaman of Syria came to Israel (the centripetal version of mission). So I cannot concur with E. Schnabel, who says: "Isaiah contains the only two statements in Israel's prophetic tradition that portray a 'centrifugal' movement from Israel to the nations."⁷⁵ Attention to intertextuality shows that there are more than the two text clusters he cites (Isa 42:4, 6 / 49:6; 66:19–21) and would include in addition at least Isa 52:15 and Isa 61:1–11. Even were he to be technically correct, he fails to read the overall texture of active outreach in the texts we have noted.

Nor does an intertextual reading support John Oswalt's conclusion: "Israel's function is that of witness as opposed to proselytizer."⁷⁶ And clearly, apart from a method of deconstruction, J. S. Croatto's claim that in Isaiah the "missionary" motif of salvation to the nations is absent cannot be supported. Rather, for Isaiah, "mission" involves the people of God in a mediating role understood both as "being there" for the nations and also "going there" to the nations.

True, the importance of the centripetal, or "come" structure needs to be recognized.⁷⁷ The character and integrity of an alternative society is critical. God first takes pains to ready the exhibit before urging the sending of ambassadors. Mission as witness is first a matter of "being" and then "sending." This conclusion is a corrective to frenzied activism. Nevertheless, the "go" feature is more decidedly present in the Isaiah text than the current consensus allows.

To hear these intertexts on "mission" is to receive orientation in a post-modern age, where the watchword is plurality and tolerance, and where advocacy of one God and one salvation is often considered naïve. To hear these intertexts on mission should galvanize the church in its resolve first to be God's prime exhibit of his transformative power, but second to continue with confidence in actively brokering God's message. To hear these intertexts is in part to reconceptualize the task of the church, a task that

75. Schnabel, "Israel, the People of God, and the Nations," 41. Compare his discussion of Isaiah in *Jesus and the Twelve*, 76–86.

76. John Oswalt, "The Mission of Israel to the Nations" in *Through No Fault of Their Own?* (ed. William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 94–95. As one who earlier shared the same view, I have come to change my mind.

77. See George R. Hunsberger, "The church represents the divine reign as its *sign and foretaste*," in *Missional Church: A Vision of the Church in North America* (ed. D. L. Guder; The Gospel and Our Culture Series; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 101 (italics in original).

entails holistic mission, one that does not lose sight of “God’s glory.” To hear these intertexts is to validate the call for the church to be missional, a movement that reinterprets the witness of the church, not only in categories of centripetal and centrifugal, but also in categories of integrity and cultural penetration.⁷⁸

78. The essay is a revision of the inaugural lecture given at the International Reference Library for Biblical Research, Fort Worth, Texas, on March 3, 2006. I acknowledge with gratitude the comments and suggestions given there. My thanks go also to Stephen Dempster, Ben Byerly (Nairobi), V. Athithan, and to institutional colleagues Allen Guenther, J. E. Toews, Hans Kasdorf, Delbert Wiens, and Marjorie Wiens.