

ABSTRACT

Four Interpretations of Isaiah 53: An Historical Excursus

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Historically, Christians have interpreted Isaiah 53 as a Christological prophecy and, consequently, have drawn from this passage to develop accounts of Christ's suffering. In this thesis, I argue that affective, imaginative treatments of Isaiah 53 offer unique, necessary insight into the passage and allow Christians to respond correctly to Christ's suffering. In order to demonstrate this, I analyze treatments of the passage from different historical periods. I first analyze early Christian treatments of the text, demonstrating that early Christians viewed Isaiah 53 as an important Christological prophecy. Next I turn to medieval treatments of the passage, demonstrating that Franciscan meditations on the passage offer necessary insight into Christ's suffering that contemporary, analytical treatments fail to offer. I then turn to the poetry of John Donne and George Herbert, arguing that these two writer's poetic treatments of Isaiah 53 guide readers to correct emotional responses to Christ's suffering. Finally, I turn to Georges Rouault's treatment of Isaiah 53 in his series of etchings, *Miserere*. I argue that Rouault's artistic treatment of the passage helps viewers to understand the relationship between Christ's suffering and human suffering.

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FOUR INTERPRETATIONS OF ISAIAH 53: AN HISTORICAL EXCURSUS

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Dedicated to my parents, who first taught me to read and love Scripture;

To Anna, Emily, and Tuck whose support and encouraging presence made writing a more joyful experience;

To Wylie and Amy, whose hospitality and prayers are sources of constant encouragement;

To David Jeffrey, who has taught me how to be a faithful student of the Scriptures and has shown me what it means to be a kind and gracious teacher.

Who has believed our report?
 And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?
² For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,
 And as a root out of dry ground.
 He has no form or comeliness;
 And when we see Him,
 There is no beauty that we should desire Him.
³ He is despised and rejected by men,
 A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
 And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;
 He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.
⁴ Surely He has borne our griefs
 And carried our sorrows;
 Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
 Smitten by God, and afflicted.
⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions,
 He was bruised for our iniquities;
 The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
 And by His stripes we are healed.
⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
 We have turned, every one, to his own way;
 And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.
⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
 Yet He opened not His mouth;
 He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
 And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
 So He opened not His mouth.
⁸ He was taken from prison and from judgment,
 And who will declare His generation?
 For He was cut off from the land of the living;
 For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.
⁹ And they made His grave with the wicked—
 But with the rich at His death,
 Because He had done no violence,
 Nor was any deceit in His mouth.
¹⁰ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;
 He has put Him to grief.
 When You make His soul an offering for sin,
 He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days,
 And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.
¹¹ He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied.
 By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many,
 For He shall bear their iniquities.
¹² Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great,
 And He shall divide the spoil with the strong,
 Because He poured out His soul unto death,
 And He was numbered with the transgressors,
 And He bore the sin of many,
 And made intercession for the transgressors.

-Isaiah 53, NKJV

“God had one Son on earth without sin, but never one without suffering.”

-St. Augustine

“In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33

PREFACE

Nearly two thousand years ago, Jerome wrote that Isaiah “was more of an evangelist than a prophet, because he described all of the mysteries of the Church of Christ.” The saint is not alone in his understanding of the Christological nature of this prophetic book. Since the time of Christ’s life, Christians have understood much of Isaiah’s writings to be prophetic descriptions of Christ’s character, life, and death. For many Christians, Isaiah 53, with its description of the Suffering Servant, stands out as a particularly obvious description of Christ’s suffering and Passion. Interpreted Christologically, this passage has been used to develop accounts of Christ’s suffering and to direct Christians to constructive responses to this suffering. Specifically, Christians have historically drawn from this passage to develop affective, imaginative reflections on Christ’s suffering. Such affective works include prayerful meditations, poetry, and artwork. My purpose in this thesis is to engage such affective, imaginative treatments of Christ’s passion and to demonstrate that these treatments offer unique and necessary insight into Christ’s suffering. In order to do this, I first consider formal exegesis of the passage from the early Christian and medieval period, establishing that by the medieval period a precedent for treating the passage in an affective, imaginative way had been established by the Franciscans. I then turn to two specific artistic treatments of Isaiah 53, demonstrating how these artistic commentaries reflect the Franciscan affective tradition and, by so doing, provide the reader with a way of entering emotionally into Christ’s suffering.

In my first chapter, I survey the way in which early Christian writers, including,

the Gospel writers, Justin Martyr, Melito of Sardis, and Isidore of Seville treated Isaiah 53 in their works. This survey indicates that, from the very beginning of Christianity, Christians have understood Isaiah 53 to be a Christological prophecy and have drawn from the passage to develop descriptions of Christ's sufferings. Although use of the passage was primarily limited to apologetics and biblical commentaries during this time, early affective treatments of the passage, such as the account of Polycarp's martyrdom, presaged later affective treatments of the passage.

In the second chapter, I turn to treatments of Isaiah 53 from the medieval period. Specifically, I engage two types of treatments of the passage: analytical rational treatments of Christ's suffering, including Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* and Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, and affective, imaginative treatments of Christ's suffering, specifically those from the Franciscan tradition. By comparing these two sorts of treatments of Christ's suffering, I demonstrate that affective, imaginative treatments of Christ's suffering are a necessary component of Christian thought.

Building on this conclusion, in the third chapter, I turn to poetic treatments of the passage. Specifically, I analyze the work of two metaphysical poets: John Donne and George Herbert. Through careful analysis of several of each writer's poems, I demonstrate the way in which poetry can enable people to partake emotionally and imaginatively in Christ's suffering. By allowing such participation, this poetry can guide Christians to a right response to Christ's suffering.

Finally, I conclude with a study of Georges Rouault's series of etchings, *Miserere et Guerre*. By looking at the way in which Rouault depicts Christ's suffering and human suffering in the series, I demonstrate that affective, imaginative treatments of Isaiah 53

enable Christians to understand the ways in which human suffering reflects Christ's suffering. By helping Christians to understand this connection, such treatments enable Christians to make sense of their own suffering and to understand properly the brokenness of their world.

Taken together, these chapters demonstrate that affective, imaginative treatments of Isaiah 53 enable Christians to understand Christ's suffering in a way that analytical treatments of the passage fail to do. By allowing Christians to enter imaginatively and emotionally into Christ's suffering, these treatments help Christians to grasp the truth of this prophecy and to apply this truth to their lives. As such, these artistic, poetic, imaginative treatments of Isaiah 53 transform the way in which people understand and engage with the passage. When it is represented imaginatively, people are able to understand that this passage is not merely an ancient Hebrew poem. They see that is also a powerful prophecy for today's world that offers hope that transcends temporal suffering.

FORMAL EXEGESIS

CHAPTER ONE

Use of Isaiah 53 in Early Christian Sources

Christians have traditionally interpreted Isaiah 53, with its reference to the Suffering Servant, as a Christological prophecy that refers specifically to Jesus' suffering and Passion. Interpreted in this way, the passage contains one of the most paradigmatic treatments of Christ's suffering in Scripture. Consequently, Christians have historically drawn from this passage to develop accounts of Christ's suffering. In my thesis, I analyze the ways in which Christians have used this passage to develop accounts of Christ's suffering and to frame discussions of what it means for Christ to be the Suffering Servant. I look particularly at affective, imaginative treatments of Christ's suffering, including meditative works, poetry, and artwork. In this chapter, I outline the patristic use of this passage in order to establish the patristic precedent for understanding this passage in Christological terms.¹ I begin by analyzing the way that Isaiah 53 is used in the New Testament in order to demonstrate that both Christ and his earliest followers understood Isaiah 53 to refer to Jesus, his ministry, and his Passion.² I then consider a number of early Christian writers, including the writer of First Clement, Justin Martyr,

¹ In this thesis, I assume that the term "Patristic" refers to the time period that began after the completion of the New Testament and ended near the end of the eighth century A.D.

² I assume, along with most ancient Church authors and modern Old Testament Scholars, that Isaiah 52:13-15 belongs to the same unit as Isaiah 53, Christoph Marksches, "Jesus Christ as a Man before God: Two Interpretive Models for Isaiah 53 in the Patristic literature and Their Development," in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, eds. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 229.

Irenaeus of Lyons, Melito of Sardis, Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, Theodoret of Cyrus, Cyril of Alexandria, Augustine of Hippo, Hilary of Poitiers, and Isidore of Seville. I will analyze each writer's use of Isaiah 53. Through this study, I arrive at a description of the way that the early Church interpreted and utilized Isaiah 53.

Throughout the history of their faith, Christians have interpreted Isaiah 53 as an important messianic passage that refers to Jesus and his sufferings upon the cross. Specifically, the passage has been instrumental in understanding the relationship between Judaism and Christianity and in describing Christ's Atonement as an expiatory sacrifice.³ The identification of Christ as the Suffering Servant is not a modern phenomena but rather one that was established with the very beginnings of Christianity.⁴ E. Rembaum writes, "from the Patristic age, Isaiah 53 [has been] interpreted so as to provide a rationale for Jesus' suffering upon the cross."⁵ In fact, Jerome, Augustine, and Isidore of Seville all referred to Isaiah, and this passage specifically, as the fifth Gospel.⁶ However, the precedent for understanding Christ, his ministry, and Passion in light of Isaiah 53 was established even earlier, in the New Testament itself.

New Testament

³ Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1989), 76.

⁴ Mitch Glaser, introduction to, *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2012), 21.

⁵ Joel E. Rembaum, "The Development of a Jewish Exegetical Tradition regarding Isaiah 53," *The Harvard Theological Review* 75, no 3 (1982): 289.

⁶ John F. A. Sawyer, *The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 86.

The passage is explicitly quoted three times in the Gospels - in Matthew 8:17, in Luke 22:37, and in John 12:38. Each of these Gospel verses references a different section of Isaiah 53, which suggests that the influence of the passage was not restricted to one aspect of the prophetic passage.⁷ Matthew 8:17 quotes Isaiah 53:4 and claims that by casting out demons and healing the sick Christ fulfilled this prophecy. Generally, Isaiah's reference to the Suffering Servant's role in bearing others' infirmities is interpreted as a reference to Christ's substitutive and redemptive role on the cross. Matthew's use of Isaiah 53 here suggests that the passage was understood by early Christians to relate to the whole person and ministry of Christ and not just to his atoning activity upon the cross. Even Jesus' messianic healings should be understood as the work of Isaiah's Servant.⁸

Luke 22:37 contains a quote from Isaiah 53:12. This quotation is Christ's only formal Scriptural citation from the night of his betrayal.⁹ The verse reads, "that this which is written must still be accomplished in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.'"¹⁰ Christ quotes Isaiah 53 in order to establish that he will suffer the inglorious death of Isaiah's Suffering Servant. His quotation of the prophecy suggests that Christ viewed himself as Isaiah's Suffering Servant. Walter G. Kaiser corroborates

⁷ Michael J. Wilkins, "Isaiah 53 and the message of Salvation in the Four Gospels," in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2012), 113.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁹ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "The Identity and Mission of the 'Servant of the Lord,'" in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2012), 94.

¹⁰ All Scriptural references in this thesis are from the New King James version.

this fact, writing that, in light of Luke 22:37, “we can say that Jesus believed that he was fulfilling the redemptive work of the servant of the Lord.”¹¹

The Gospels’ third formal quotation of Isaiah 53 is John 12:38. In the verse, John quotes Isaiah 53:1. He uses the verse to explain why some of the Jews do not believe Christ even though he “had done so many signs before them.”¹² This use of the passage again suggests that Christ is Isaiah’s Suffering Servant. Just as some people did not believe Isaiah’s report about the Lord’s Suffering Servant, the people to whom Jesus preaches do not believe the report given by the Lord’s true Suffering Servant, Jesus.

In addition to these explicit quotes, the Gospels allude to Isaiah 53 in passages that describe the substitutive nature of Christ’s death. For example, Mark 10:45 clearly references Isaiah 53:11-12 in that the verse echoes the passage’s description of the Suffering Servant as the one who will “give his life as a ransom for many.”¹³ Similarly John the Baptist’s reference to Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” in John 1:29 echoes the themes of expiation found in Isaiah 53. The verse’s reference to Christ as the “Lamb of God” is foremost a reference to the Paschal lamb. However, because the idea of Christ’s “taking away the sins of the world” can best be explained by Isaiah 53:4 and 11-12, one can assume that John had Isaiah’s prophesy in

¹¹ Kaiser, “The Identity and Mission of the ‘Servant of the Lord,’” 95.

¹² John 12:37.

¹³ Peter Stuhlmacher, “Isaiah 53 in the Gospels and Acts,” in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, eds. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids: Wim. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 151.

mind when making this statement about Christ.¹⁴ Additionally Jesus' words in Matthew 26:28 – “for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” - hark back to Isaiah 53:12's description of the servant's expiatory, redemptive suffering.¹⁵ These Gospel quotations and allusions indicate that Christ and his earliest followers believed that Christ fulfilled the prophetic passage through his ministry of healing, through the way that he was rejected by men, and through his humiliating, redemptive death. As Peter Stuhlmacher writes, by looking to these Gospel references to Isaiah 53, the reader comes to see that “the Christological interpretation of Isaiah 53 . . . was not first and foremost the fruit of post-Easter faith; its roots lie rather in Jesus' own understanding of his mission and death.”¹⁶

Isaiah 53 is directly quoted three other times in the New Testament. The most extensive of these quotations is found in Acts 8:26-40. The passage relates a scene in which Philip is directed by the Holy Spirit to approach an Ethiopian eunuch who is reading Isaiah 53:7-8. The eunuch asks Philip “of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?”¹⁷ Phillip then “beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.”¹⁸ Although it is unclear what exactly Phillip says to the eunuch, it is clear that he applies “the text to Jesus and thus interprets it Christologically.”¹⁹ This quotation

¹⁴ Ibid., 160.

¹⁵ Wilkins, “Isaiah 53 and the Message of Salvation in the Gospels,” 128.

¹⁶ Stuhlmacher, “Isaiah 53 in the Gospels and Acts,” 149.

¹⁷ Acts 8:34.

¹⁸ Acts 8:35.

¹⁹ Stuhlmacher, “Isaiah 53 in the Gospels and Acts,” 157.

is an especially significant use of Isaiah 53 because it clearly identifies Christ as the Suffering Servant. Darrell Bock writes, “the Acts 8 text makes explicit what the Luke 22 text had made implicit, that is, the clear identification of Jesus as the Suffering Servant.”²⁰ This short quotation from Isaiah 53 about the Suffering Servant’s meek humility and unjust death is a clear enough reference to Christ for Phillip to preach Jesus to the eunuch. This suggests that the prophetic passage offers a crucial insight into the humble nature and sacrificial mission of Christ, “who took the very form of a servant.”²¹

Isaiah 53 is also quoted in Romans 10:16 and I Peter 2:22-25. Romans 10:16 echoes John 12:37’s use of Isaiah 53:1. In the verse, Paul references Isaiah in order to explain why some who have heard the Gospel have not believed the message of Christ. This again suggests that Christ is the Suffering Servant. Just as those who heard the message regarding the Suffering Servant did not believe this report, so too those who heard Christ’s message did not believe it. In his I Peter 2:22, Peter quotes Isaiah 53:9 to establish Christ’s perfect righteousness. Peter writes that Christians ought to follow Christ’s example because he “who suffered for us . . . committed no sin, nor was deceit found in his mouth.” Here, Peter uses the Isaiah passage to emphasize Christ’s righteousness in the face of his redemptive sufferings. He also claims that by suffering righteously Christ set an example that Christians should follow as they suffer. In 1 Peter 2:24-25, Peter writes “he himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For

²⁰ Darrell Bock, “Isaiah 53 in Acts 8,” in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2012), 141.

²¹ Philippians 2:7.

you were like sheep going astray.” This is an unmistakable allusion to Isaiah 53:5-6. Here the prophecy is used to describe not only man’s sinful nature but also redemptive nature of Christ’s suffering.²²

In addition to these explicit quotes, Isaiah 53 is referenced throughout the New Testament in allusions to Christ’s substitutive suffering. In Acts 3:18, Paul says “but those things which God foretold by the mouth of all his prophets, that the Christ would suffer, he has thus fulfilled.” It seems that the prophecy that Paul likely refers to is Isaiah 53 because it is one of the only prophecies that explicitly identifies the Messiah with suffering.²³ In Romans 4:25, Paul writes that Christ “was delivered up because of our offenses.”²⁴ This again is an allusion to Isaiah 53:11-12 in that it suggests that Christ’s death was in the place of sinful man. Similarly 1 John 3:5 reads “and you know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him there is no sin.”²⁵ This passage alludes to Isaiah 53 in that it references Christ’s unblemished nature and the fact that he takes away sins.

The early Church inherited this tradition of reading Isaiah 53 as a passage about Christ’s nature and Atonement. Although the text is not central in the writings of the

²² Bock, “Isaiah 53 in Acts 8,” 158-159.

²³ Craig A. Evans, “Isaiah 53 in the Letters of Peter, Paul, Hebrews, and John,” in *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2012), 150.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 160.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 163.

early Church fathers, it is nevertheless an important text.²⁶ Some fathers interpreted the text as an exemplary model that provided ethical instruction, while others interpreted the text as a Christological model that revealed important aspects of Christ's unique Atonement.²⁷ In the following portion of this chapter, I will analyze several different Church fathers' treatment of Isaiah 53. Specifically I will examine the insight that each writer provides into the early Church's understanding of the meaning and significance of the passage.

The First Letter of Clement

The first full citation of Isaiah 53 in an ancient Christian document outside of the New Testament is found in the *First Letter of Clement*.²⁸ The letter was written around the year 96 by a representative of the church in Rome to the church in Corinth.²⁹ In the letter, the writer addresses dissenters and factions within the Church in Corinth. The writer offers reproaches to the dissenters and commands them to be humbly obedient to their superiors.³⁰ The writer quotes Isaiah 53 to encourage the dissenters to follow Christ's example of obedience. He begins Chapter 16 by writing "for Christ is with them

²⁶ Markshcies, "Jesus Christ as a Man before God: Two Interpretive Models," 225.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 234.

²⁹ Cyril C. Richardson, introduction to *The Letter of the Church in Rome to the Church of Corinth, Commonly Called Clements First Letter*, in *Early Christian Fathers*, translated by Cyril C. Richardson (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 33.

³⁰ Ibid., 1.1, 2.1, 2.6, 63.1.

that are lowly of mind, not with them that exalt themselves over the flock.”³¹ He then quotes Isaiah 53 in its entirety as an example of Christ’s humble obedience. He concludes his quotation of Isaiah 53 by writing; this “is the pattern that hath been given unto us; for, if the Lord was thus lowly of mind, what should we do, who through Him have been brought under the yoke of His grace?”³² The writer of Clement assumes a Christological interpretation of the prophecy and, consequently, uses the passage as an example of Christ’s activity without offering any justification for doing so. His use of the text as a moral example of obedience that should be followed suggests that early Christians understood that they were meant to follow Christ’s example of humble obedience. Furthermore, if this obedience required, they must share in Christ’s suffering.

The Martyrdom of Polycarp

Isaiah 53 is not explicitly quoted in *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*. However, the account of Polycarp’s martyrdom provides insight into the way that the early Christian understanding of Christ’s sufferings, largely drawn from Isaiah 53, developed into a theory of meritorious mimetic suffering.³³ Polycarp’s martyrdom, which occurred around the year 156,³⁴ is the first Christian martyrdom recorded outside of the New Testament.³⁵

³¹ Ibid., 16.1.

³² Ibid., 16:17.

³³ Marksches, “Jesus Christ as a Man before God,” 241.

³⁴ Cyril C. Richardson, introduction to *The Martyrdom of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, as Told in the Letter of the Church of Smyrna to the Church of Philomelium*, in *Early Christian Fathers*, translated by Cyril C. Richardson (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 144.

³⁵ Ibid., 141.

In the account, the writer demonstrates that Polycarp desired to suffer so that he could imitate Christ's humiliation and suffering. The writer claims that Polycarp's martyrdom is one that is "conformable to the gospel."³⁶ This indicates that Christ's suffering, testified to by the Gospels, establishes an example that others should attempt to imitate. Like Christ's suffering, such humble suffering is redemptive. The writer indicates that this is the case by writing that those who imitate Christ's sufferings unto martyrdom "purchase for themselves in the space of one hour the life eternal."³⁷ Furthermore, Polycarp is described as "a partaker with Christ" in his sufferings.³⁸ He partakes in Christ's sufferings in that his sufferings are similar to Christ's. Like Christ who "opened not his mouth" in protest, Polycarp suffers with "patient endurance."³⁹ Just as Christ is a lamb before his shearers and a substitutive, sacrifice in Isaiah 53, Polycarp is "like a noble ram . . . ready for sacrifice, a burnt offering ready and acceptable to God."⁴⁰ Although this description is clearly an allusion to the language of Isaiah 53, it is also a reference to the *akedah* typology of Genesis 22. This reference to the *akedah* suggests that Polycarp is also similar to Isaac. Not only do the martyrs in this account suffer in order to imitate Christ, they literally suffer with him. Christ is said to be with each of

³⁶ *The Martyrdom of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, as Told in the Letter of the Church of Smyrna to the Church of Philomelium*, in *Early Christian Fathers*, translated by Cyril C. Richardson (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 1.2.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.1.

them as they suffer. He “stood by them and conversed with them as they suffered.”⁴¹ Thus this account demonstrates that early Christians understood suffering to be not only an obedient imitation of Christ but also a way to have fellowship with Christ, the true Suffering Servant.

Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr, a gentile from Palestine who converted to Christianity and eventually taught the religion in Rome, is the next Christian writer significantly to cite Isaiah 53.⁴² Justin draws upon Isaiah 53 in his *First Apology*, circa 150-155, and in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, circa 155-160. In both of these works, Justin employs the prophetic passage to serve an apologetic purpose. He uses Isaiah 53 as a central part of his argument in both works and provides in them what Christoph Markshies calls “two of the most impressive examples of Christian interaction with this passage.”⁴³ Although Isaiah 53 is a more central part of Justin’s *Dialogue* than of his *Apology*, in the interest of chronology I will begin with an analysis of his *Apology*.

In this work, addressed to the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius and the Roman people, Justin offers a defense of Christianity, advocating that Christianity should be tolerated as a reasonable religion and ultimately that it should be embraced because it is

⁴¹ Ibid., 2.3.

⁴² Cyril C. Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 228-230.

⁴³ Markshies, “Jesus Christ as a Man before God,” 246.

true.⁴⁴ In order to prove the validity of Christian claims, Justin draws extensively from Old Testament prophecies, demonstrating that these prophecies refer to Christ.⁴⁵ He utilizes Isaiah 53 in such a way. He quotes Isaiah 53:8 in Chapter 43 of the *Apology* in order to prove the ineffable nature of Christ's birth. He claims that in these verses, "the spirit of prophecy . . . affirmed that that the generation of Him who was to die, that we sinful men might be healed by His stripes, was such as could not be declared."⁴⁶ His citation here shows both that Justin understood Isaiah 53 to be a revelation of Christ's divine origin and that he viewed Christ as the Suffering Servant, by whose stripes men are healed. Justin's most significant use of Isaiah 53 in the work is found in Chapter 50. In this chapter, Justin uses the passage to prove Christ's "Incarnate, expiatory suffering and his second advent."⁴⁷ Justin quotes Isaiah 53:13-15 and 1-8 in order to demonstrate that Christ, "having become man for our sakes . . . endured to suffer and to be dishonored, and that He shall come again with glory."⁴⁸ He claims "those who believed these things [the message of Christ's redemptive death and glorification] taught them to

⁴⁴ Justin, *I Apology*, in *Early Christian Fathers*, translated by Cyril C. Richardson (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 30, 32, 33, 35, 37, 44, 54, 59; Justin's use of prophecy as an authoritative source would have been accepted not only by his Christian audience but also by his pagan and Jewish audience. Prophecy was important both to Greco-Roman and to Jewish culture. Therefore, Justin's use of prophecy as an apologetic tool would have been accepted by these groups. See David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 17.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴⁷ D. Jeffrey Bingham, "Justin and Isaiah 53," *Vigiliae Christianae*, 54, no 3 (2000), 259.

⁴⁸ Justin, *I Apology*, 50.

all men and were called apostles.”⁴⁹ The “things” that these apostles taught are Isaiah 53’s teachings about Christ’s death and resurrection. Thus Justin connects the “history of Christian proclamation very closely with the apostle’s understanding of Isaiah 53.”⁵⁰ This passage indicates that the early church understood this Christological understanding of Isaiah 53 to be part of the Church tradition handed down from Christ to the apostles.⁵¹ Justin continues to draw from Isaiah 53 in the next chapter. He quotes Isaiah 53:8-12 to prove that Christ had an ineffable origin and that he will be raised to glory. Accordingly, in this work, Justin uses Isaiah 53 not only to show that Christ was the Suffering Servant but also that he was the divine servant of the Lord who would be redeemed to glory.

In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin presents his rhetorical dialogue with a Jewish Rabbi, Trypho over the validity of the Christian faith.⁵² In order to demonstrate the truth of Christianity, Justin draws from Old Testament prophecies to show that Jesus’ ministry and Passion fulfill Jewish Scripture and that, consequently, Christ is Israel’s Messiah. This dialogue is an important representation of the intersection between early Christianity and Judaism. As Bishop Demetrios Trakatellis writes, “Justin Martyr’s *Dialogue with Trypho* has been considered one of the basic documents for an understanding of the theological contacts and discussions between Christians and Jews in the second

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Markshcies, “Jesus Christ as a Man before God,” 251.

⁵¹ Bingham, “Justin and Isaiah 53,” 261.

⁵² Evans, “Isaiah 53 in the Letters of Peter, Paul, Hebrews, and John,” 167.

century.”⁵³ Most significantly to this study, in the *Dialogue* Justin “makes the greatest use of Isaiah 53 of any Christian work of the first two centuries.”⁵⁴ In the work, Justin quotes from the passage in at least twenty-seven different paragraphs, spread throughout twenty-five different chapters.⁵⁵ Given his extensive use, I will not be able to analyze each of Justin’s reference to the passage, but will provide only a brief overview of the way that Justin uses Isaiah 53.

In his *Dialogue*, Justin uses Isaiah 53 primarily to emphasize Christ’s sufferings.⁵⁶ However, he also uses the passage to describe other aspects of Christ’s life and ministry. For example, in Chapter 43, Justin quotes Isaiah 53:8 to describe Christ’s divine origin. Although the Septuagint, which Justin cites, uses the word γενεα, which usually denotes a generation of people, in interpreting this verse, Justin draws from his understanding of γενοζ, which has to do with one’s origin. Thus Justin specifically interprets the verse as a reference to Christ’s divine, miraculous birth.⁵⁷ Similarly in Chapter 63, Justin quotes Isaiah 53:8 to prove that Christ did not have descent from men. In this section Justin emphasizes the fact that Christ’s divine lineage makes him uniquely capable of being the expiatory sacrifice. He writes that God “would wash His garments in the blood of the

⁵³ Bishop Demetrios Trakatellis, “Justin Martyr’s Trypho,” *The Harvard Theological Review*, 79, no 1/3 (1986): 287.

⁵⁴ Daniel P. Bailey, “Our Suffering and Crucified Messiah (Dial. 111.2),” in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, eds. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids: Wim. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 324.

⁵⁵ Markschies, “Jesus Christ as a Man before God,” 251.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 328-329.

⁵⁷ Markschies, “Jesus Christ as a Man before God,” 262.

grape; since His blood did not spring from the seed of man, but from the will of God.”⁵⁸
Additionally, Justin quotes Isaiah 53:9 to show that Christ will rise again.⁵⁹

In Chapter 13 of the *Dialogue*, Justin presents an extensive quotation from Isaiah 53 to demonstrate that sins are forgiven through Christ’s blood. In this passage, Justin quotes Isaiah 52:10-54:6. He uses this lengthy quotation to demonstrate that men are no longer purified by the blood of animals but only “ by faith through the blood of Christ, and through His death.”⁶⁰ Directly after this quotation, Justin begins a discussion of baptism, writing, “that very baptism which he announced is alone able to purify those who have repented.”⁶¹ Justin’s structure indicates a link between Christ’s purifying suffering and death and the purification that comes through baptism. Justin’s link here between animal sacrifice, Christian baptism, and Christ’s expiatory sacrifice tells readers something about the way that early Christians understood Christ’s Passion. As D. Jeffrey Bingham writes, “Christian tradition, then, as Justin knew it, read Isaiah 53:7 within a particular conceptual context. This context expected the humiliating death of an innocent victim which found its fulfillment precisely in Christ’s crucifixion.”⁶² Early Christians understood that Christ’s suffering fulfilled and perfected the practice of animal sacrifices

⁵⁸ Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, trans Cleveland A. Coxe, vol. 1 of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: WM.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), 53.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁶² Bingham, “Justin and Isaiah 53,” 151.

and established the Christian practice of baptism, by which Christians are now purified through Christ.

In Chapters 89 and 90, Trypho asks Justin to demonstrate that it was necessary for Christ to die dishonorably upon the cross. In his response, Justin alludes to Isaiah 53. He claims that such dishonor and humiliation necessitated Christ dying dishonorably upon the cross. Justin claims that these things – Christ’s humiliation and crucifixion - are ‘characteristic’ of Christ and mark him out to all.⁶³ This suggests that the early Church understood that Isaiah 53 not only prophesied Christ’s suffering, a point that Trypho allows, but also that it prophecies his shameful death upon the cross. From Justin’s, *Dialogue*, we can gather that the early Church used Isaiah 53 to demonstrate Christ’s miraculous birth and resurrection, to explain the purifying nature of Christian baptism, and to prove the necessity of Christ’s crucifixion on the cross. Additionally Justin’s use of the passage in his two works indicates that the prophetic passage was an important apologetic tool for the early Church.

Melito of Sardis

Melito, the bishop of Sardis who died around 190 A.D., also incorporated Isaiah 53 into his theological writings.⁶⁴ Few of Melito’s writings are extant.⁶⁵ However, Eusebius of Caesarea did preserve a few extracts of Melito’s work. From these extracts, one can gain an idea of the way in which Melito incorporated Isaiah 53 into his theology.

⁶³ Justin, *Dialogue*, 89.

⁶⁴ Andrew MacErlean, "St. Melito," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 10 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911).

⁶⁵ Marksches, “Jesus Christ as a Man before God,” 274.

Melito's use of Isaiah 53 is unique in that he used the passage to interpret the typological significance of Old Testament figures. For example, in one of his catenae Melito provides a Christological interpretation of the sacrifice of Isaac.⁶⁶ In order to demonstrate the ways in which Isaac was a type of Christ, Melito quotes from Isaiah 53. He claims that just as Isaac "as a lamb . . . was shorn and as a sheep he was led to the slaughter . . . not opening his mouth nor uttering a word," so too was Christ shorn and led.⁶⁷ However, Melito is careful to clarify that, although both Isaac and Christ fulfill this portion of Isaiah's prophecy, only Christ suffered, whereas Isaac did not, "for he was a model of the Christ who was going to suffer."⁶⁸ Melito's use of the passage shows that he understood Isaiah 53's prophecy as a unique reference to Christ specifically. Although Isaac and Jesus were both meek and innocent before their coming sacrifices, only Christ actually suffered. Thus Christ fulfills the prophecy of which Isaac was but a type.

In his sermon *On Pascha*, Melito again alludes to Isaiah 53 in order to differentiate between types of Christ and Christ himself.⁶⁹ At the opening of his sermon, Melito claims, "although he was led to sacrifice as a sheep, yet he was not a sheep; and although he was as a lamb without voice, yet indeed he was not a lamb."⁷⁰ Through this

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Melito, *On Pascha and Fragments*, trans. S. G. Hall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 74-75.; Isaiah 53:7.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Marksches, "Jesus Christ as a Man before God," 277.

⁷⁰ Melito, *On Pascha*, 4.

allusion to Isaiah 53:7, Melito highlights both the ways in which Christ fulfils this prophecy and the limits of such allegorical language. Similarly, towards the conclusion of his sermon, Melito quotes Isaiah 53:7 in its entirety to demonstrate that Christ's suffering was prophesied in the Old Testament.⁷¹ This quotation is the culmination of a section dedicated to the Old Testament predictions of Christ's suffering. Just prior to this quotation, Melito lists the different Old Testament figures, including Isaac and Moses, whose sufferings were types of Christ's suffering.⁷² Melito's use of Isaiah 53 at this point again emphasizes the typological significance of the passage. Although very little of Melito's theological writings survive, by reference to those that do, one can see that Melito's use of Isaiah 53 emphasizes the typological insight that the passage provides.

Irenaeus of Lyons

Around the time that Melito of Sardis wrote, Irenaeus of Lyons also referenced Isaiah 53 in some of his texts, including *Against Heresies* and *The Apostolic Preaching*. In *Against Heresies*, written between the years 182 and 188 A.D., Irenaeus sought to protect "the sheep" from certain men who "outwardly are covered with sheep's clothing."⁷³ He offered this protection in the form of a systematic refutation of common, specifically Gnostic, heresies. In his second book, Irenaeus refutes the heresy that Christ

⁷¹ Ibid., 64.

⁷² Ibid., 57-64.

⁷³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, trans Cleveland A. Coxe, vol. 1 of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: WM.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), I. Preface.

was “simply a mere man, begotten by Joseph.”⁷⁴ In order to do this he quotes Isaiah 53:2 and Isaiah 53:8 to show that Christ was fully man and that his origin was divine. He claims that the fact that no one can shall “declare [Christ’s] generation” shows that Christ was divinely begotten. Furthermore, the fact that he was a “man without comeliness and liable to suffering” shows that he was fully human.⁷⁵ In book four, Irenaeus references Luke’s use of Isaiah 53 in Acts 8. He claims that the fact that Phillip used this prophecy to lead someone to believe in Christ shows that the prophets did truly predict Christ’s birth. He claims that just as Phillip did, members of the Church can draw from this witness in order to demonstrate the truth of Christianity.

Irenaeus’ purpose in his *Apostolic Preaching*, written around the year 190 A.D.,⁷⁶ is “to set out the main points of this Apostolic message, which . . . [had] been handed down in the Church . . . and to demonstrate its truth more especially from the sacred scripture of the Old Testament.”⁷⁷ To accomplish both of these ends, Irenaeus quotes extensively from prophetic biblical passages, particularly Isaiah 53. For example, in Chapter 67, Irenaeus quotes from Isaiah 53:4 to show that Christ was foretold by Hebrew Scripture. Interpreting this verse, Irenaeus claims that Christ shall bare peoples’ sins and iniquities by healing the sick. In this sense, Irenaeus echoes the logic of Matthew 8:17, which claims that Christ bears people’s sufferings by healing them. Interestingly,

⁷⁴ Ibid., 2.19.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ J. Armitage Robinson, introduction to *St. Irenaeus: The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1920), 2.

⁷⁷ Preface. 4.

although the Septuagint version of the verse uses the present tense, Irenaeus interprets the passage in the future tense.⁷⁸ Irenaeus' choice of tense indicates that he sees Christ's ministry as ongoing. Christ did not merely heal people in the past. Rather, he continues to do so. In Chapter 68, Irenaeus quotes from Isaiah 52:12-53:5 to demonstrate that Christ would be tormented and put to death. In Chapter 69, Irenaeus quotes from Isaiah 53:4-7 to demonstrate that Christ suffered voluntarily. He then quotes Isaiah 53:8 to show that Christ, by being humbled, saved others from judgment. Following these quotations, he quotes from Isaiah 53:8 to show that, although he was humiliated, Christ should not be despised. Christ is of divine, unspeakable origin and should thus be adored and not despised. Although Irenaeus' treatment of Isaiah 53 does not add many new insights into the way that the early Church read Isaiah 53, it does indicate that the early Church understood that this text was a key passage about Christ's nature and that it should be used apologetically, evangelistically, and instructionally.

Origen of Alexandria

Only an "infinitesimally small remainder" of Origen of Alexandria's extensive Isaiah commentary survives.⁷⁹ However, his apologetic use of Isaiah 53 in his tractate, *Contra Celsum*, provides readers with insight into this great theologian's understanding of the passage. Origen of Alexandria, one of the greatest and most productive theologians of the east, wrote the tractate between the years 244 and 249⁸⁰ as a defense of Christianity

⁷⁸ Marksches, "Jesus Christ as a Man before God," 279.

⁷⁹ Marksches, "Jesus Christ as a Man before God," 282.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 284.

against the criticisms of it made by the pagan philosopher Celsus in approximately 178 A.D.⁸¹ Celsus divided his text criticizing Christianity into two sections, a set of criticisms made by a fictional Jewish opponent and a set of Celsus's own pagan, philosophical criticisms. Origen organized his work along similar lines.

In the first part of the work, in opposition to Celsus's claim that Jesus could not have been the Messiah because he suffered, Origen quotes Isaiah 53:1-8 to prove that Christ's "sufferings were the subject of prophecy."⁸² Here Origen also records the story of an instance when he used this same line of argument in a conversation with another group of Jewish interlocutors. These Jewish men rejected the idea that Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in Christ by saying that the verses "bore reference to the whole people, regarded as one individual, and as being in a state of dispersion and suffering."⁸³ Origen rejects this interpretation of the verse, writing that he employed many arguments "to prove that these predictions regarding one particular person were not rightly applied by them to the whole nation."⁸⁴ In his rebuttal, Origen focuses specifically on Isaiah 53:8 and asks his Jewish interlocutors "how is the man said to be led away to death because of the iniquities of the people of God, unless he be a different person from that people of God?"⁸⁵

⁸¹ Ferdinand Prat, "Origen and Origenism," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 11 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911).

⁸² Origen, *Contra Celsum*, in *New Advent*, edited by Kevin Knight. 54-55.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Later in his work, Celsus claims that Christ could not have been a divinity because he was “ugly and undistinguished.”⁸⁶ Origen claims that by writing this, Celsus invalidates his own refusal to accept Isaiah 53 as a prophecy regarding Jesus. Origen claims that in making this statement about Christ’s bodily figure Celsus draws from Isaiah 53 because only this prophetic passage clearly describes him in this way.⁸⁷ The Gospels do not describe Christ as being ugly and undistinguished. Later in the work, when Origen replies to Celsus’s similar criticisms about Christ’s ugliness using similar logic, he also claims that Christ is capable of taking on many appearances and that only the pure in heart can see him in his beauty.⁸⁸ *Contra Celsum* provides both a pagan and Jewish interpretation of Isaiah 53. Additionally, in Origen’s work, one finds another example of the passage used apologetically.

Eusebius of Caesarea

Although very little of Origen’s commentary on Isaiah survives, his academic descendent, Eusebius of Caesarea’s, writings on the book remain. From his writings, one can get a better understanding of an Origenistic interpretation of Isaiah 53.⁸⁹ Eusebius lived from 263-339 and inherited much of his theological thought from his predecessor, Origen.⁹⁰ Eusebius wrote a commentary on Isaiah directly following the council of

⁸⁶ Ibid., 2.144.

⁸⁷ Ibid.; Marksches, “Jesus Christ as a Man before God,” 287.

⁸⁸ Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 6.74-76.

⁸⁹ Marksches, “Jesus Christ as a Man before God,” 293.

⁹⁰ Francis Joseph Bacchus, “Eusebius of Cæsarea,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 5 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909).

Nicaea. Isaiah 53 is not a central component of Eusebius' commentary on Isaiah. Although he dedicates over six pages to it, he does not allude to the passage elsewhere in the work.⁹¹ Isaiah 53 does play a more significant role in Eusebius' *Demonstration of the Gospel*. He recycles most of his teachings about Isaiah from this earlier writing in his commentary, and there is little distinction in his teachings on Isaiah between the two. As such, it is unnecessary to look at the earlier work to understand Eusebius' teaching on Isaiah 53.⁹² Eusebius' commentary on Isaiah does not provide much new insight into the passage. This lack of novelty suggests that understanding of Isaiah was becoming systematic and homogenous. Eusebius of Caesarea's teaching on Isaiah 53 is focused on Christ and what it means for him to be the Suffering Servant. Eusebius' interpretation of the passage emphasizes his subordinationist, Christological beliefs and focuses on the historical events of the day.

Following Origen, Eusebius believed that the Logos of God took on human flesh. This subordinationist view is evident in his writing on Isaiah 53.⁹³ In interpreting Isaiah 52:13, Eusebius quotes from both the Septuagint and Aquila's version of the Bible. He suggests that there is a distinction between Aquila's δουλοζ, or slave, and the Septuagint's παιζ, or servant. He claims that both rightly refer to the Logos. In the commentary, he writes "but this servant of God (παιζ) and slave (δουλοζ) was filled

⁹¹ Marksches, "Jesus Christ as a Man before God," 294.

⁹² Ibid., 295.

⁹³ Ibid., 297.

with all wisdom and knowledge because he contained God the Logos in himself.”⁹⁴ For Eusebius, this reference to the Lord’s servant, or slave, is about the Logos, which dwells in human flesh in place of a human soul. While this human being is unified with the Logos and is thus divine, he is not an equal to God the Father.⁹⁵

As a historian, Eusebius was interested in the way that history related to theology. This is shown in his interpretation of Isaiah 52:15. Here he writes “indeed the ‘kings, when they had uttered many blasphemous, godless, and profane words against him and persecuted his church . . . they were defeated. . . because they were driven into a corner by God-sent blows.”⁹⁶ He goes on to write that “some of them . . . issued a recantation, commanding the people by laws and edicts to build the prayer houses again.”⁹⁷ Here Eusebius alludes directly to Diocletian’s enjoining the demolition of churches and the corresponding recantation by Constantine.⁹⁸ In this reference, one sees Eusebius’ attempt to contextualize his theological interpretation to address the challenges of the current Christian church.

Eusebius interprets the first part of Isaiah 53 as a prophetic prediction of the birth of Jesus. He writes,

we have often shown that his ‘only begotten Son’ is called the ‘arm’ of God, who

⁹⁴ Eusebius, *Commentary on Isaiah*, in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources*, eds. Bernd Janowski and Peter Stuhlmacher (Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 2.42.

⁹⁵ Marschies, “Jesus Christ as a Man before God,” 298.

⁹⁶ Eusebius, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 2.42.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Marksches, “Jesus Christ as a Man before God,” 300.

has been made known by means of the corresponding prophetic words to all the peoples who have believed in him. But the prophets foretell the appearance among men of the predicted ‘servant’ or the ‘slave of God . . . This was the one who had been born of the virgin . . . This was the ‘nursing infant’ that sprang up ‘before the arm of God,’ as the word makes clear.⁹⁹

This passage shows that Eusebius, again following Origen, identified the Logos, or arm, of God as the person who is the tool or vessel of redemption. For Eusebius, this human vessel can exist independently of the Logos. In interpreting Isaiah 53:6, Eusebius uses early biblical, Christian sacrificial vocabulary. He writes, “the Lord himself delivered him over to our sins’ so that he might become our exchange and ‘ransom.’ In this way he has become the ‘lamb of God,’ who ‘takes away’ and purges ‘the sin of the world.’”¹⁰⁰ Here Eusebius draws upon the language of ransom and expiatory sacrifice found throughout the New Testament. Eusebius suggests that Isaiah 53:8 is a prophecy not about Christ’s suffering but about his generation. Here again he emphasizes the tension between the lowliness of Christ’s human body and the glory of the Logos. He writes “for all the more will someone be caught up in wonder at his obedience in such things, when he comes to ponder who and what he is.”¹⁰¹ The reader should be astounded that the divine Logos humbled himself and took the form of a lowly human. Apart from his use of subordinationist theology and his focus on historical events, Eusebius’ commentary on Isaiah offers little new insight into the early Church’s understanding of Isaiah 53. However, his treatment of the passage shows that certain aspects of the text were being translated in a uniform way.

⁹⁹ Eusebius, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 2.42.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

Jerome

Jerome, the Church father, most famous for his translation of the Bible into Latin, wrote a commentary on Isaiah between the years 408 and 410 A.D.¹⁰² In the preface to his translation of Isaiah, Jerome writes that Isaiah is a Gospel book rather than a book of prophecy. As such, he claims that it contains “all the mysteries of the faith: Christ’s birth, miracles, Passion, death and resurrection.”¹⁰³ Jerome substantiates this claim by interpreting Isaiah Christologically. In commenting on Isaiah 53:4-6, Jerome writes,

let him [Christ] be understood now not as the Word of God and wisdom but as servant and boy . . . And here there will be the greater miracle that his appearance will be inglorious among people, not in that it means a foulness of form but that he came in lowliness and poverty.¹⁰⁴

Here Jerome differentiates between Christ as the glorious word of God and Christ as the lowly human servant. He explains that the passages description of Christ’s humble appearance is not a reference to Christ’s form but rather to his lowliness and poverty. He then reconciles the fact that Christ is base and humble with the fact that God as divine is beautiful. He writes,

this puzzle can be easily solved. He was despised and base when he hung on the cross and was made for a curse and carried our sins . . . But he was glorious and fair in appearance when, at his Passion, the earth trembled, rocks were split and the elements were terrified.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Louis Saltet, "St. Jerome," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 8 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910).

¹⁰³ Brevard S. Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 92.

¹⁰⁴ Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah, Isaiah 40-66*, ed. Mark Elliot, in vol. 11 of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007) 14.21-22.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

In addition to his interpretation of the book offered in his commentary, Jerome also comments on Isaiah in other parts of his writings. For example, in a homily on Psalms 67, Jerome comments on Isaiah 53:1, writing, “may your right hand with which you fashioned the world bring light to the world. . . May your right hand with which you formed humanity take on a human body and save human persons.”¹⁰⁶ Here Jerome claims that the Logos, through whom God created the world, is the same Logos who, as the Suffering Servant, saves people.

Hilary of Poitiers

Hilary of Poitiers, who lived from approximately 300 to 368, was the bishop of Poitiers. As a firm defender of Nicene orthodoxy, after his exile from 356-360, he was a strong opponent of the Arian heresy. In his work *De Trinitate*, Hilary uses Isaiah 53 to refute the Arian claim that because he suffered, Jesus is inferior to God.¹⁰⁷ In doing this, Hilary gives an interpretation of Isaiah 53 that verges upon Docetism in that it suggests that Christ only appeared to suffer. In Chapter 10, Hilary writes “our Lord Jesus Christ suffered blows, hanging, crucifixion and death: but the suffering which attacked the body of the Lord, without ceasing to be suffering, had not the natural effect of suffering.”¹⁰⁸ Here, in his desire to refute Arianism, Hilary indicates that Christ’s divine nature did not really allow him to suffer as humans suffer. Later in the chapter, Hilary quotes Isaiah

¹⁰⁶ Jerome, *Homilies on the Psalms 67*, Alternate Series (Psalm 90).

¹⁰⁷ Léon Clugnet, "St. Hilary of Poitiers," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol.7 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.23.

53:4-5 and claims that although Christ did suffer, he did not suffer for his own sins. Rather Christ “suffered. But though He was wounded it was 'for our transgressions.' The wound was not the wound of His own transgressions: the suffering not a suffering for Himself.”¹⁰⁹ For Hilary Christ, as God, is completely sinless. As such, he cannot experience the pain that sin brings. Along this line, Hilary writes, Christ “was found in fashion as a man, with a body which could feel pain, but His nature could not feel pain; for, though His fashion was that of a man, His origin was not human, but He was born by conception of the Holy Ghost.”¹¹⁰ Hilary suggests that, although Christ appeared to suffer, Christ’s divine nature prohibited him from really suffering. This reading of Isaiah 53 diverges from earlier readings of the text, which took it for granted that Christ suffered in reality. In his attempt to reconcile the fact of Christ’s suffering with his understanding of Christ’s divine nature, Hilary nearly gives in to the heresy of Docetism. His dissolution of Christ’s actual suffering indicates how problematic interpretation of Christ’s suffering had become by the fourth century.¹¹¹

Augustine of Hippo

Augustine of Hippo, who lived from 354 to 430, is considered one of the greatest Latin theologians, and his writings are crucial to the development of western Christian

¹⁰⁹ Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate*, in *New Advent*, edited by Kevin Knight, 10.47.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Marksches, “Jesus Christ as a Man before God,” 318-319.

theology.¹¹² Although he never wrote a commentary on Isaiah, Augustine did draw extensively from Isaiah 53 in various sermons. Throughout these sermons, Augustine uses Isaiah 53 to describe Christ's nature, birth, and Passion. Augustine claims that Isaiah 53:1's reference to the arm of the Lord is really a reference to Christ. He writes that the arm of the Lord "is the only Son whom the Father did not spare. . . And thus he stretched out his right hand on the cross."¹¹³ He comments on the same verse in a different sermon, writing, "in giving his hand, he gives his Christ. He leads us to his way by leading us to his Christ."¹¹⁴ Augustine uses Isaiah 53 to indicate that Christ is the means by which God reveals himself to men. Augustine uses Isaiah 53:2-3 to describe Christ's nature and the nature of his ministry. He claims that Christ "had no beauty; he appeared as a mere man." In this way, Christ is like a root because "a root is not beautiful, but contains within itself the potentiality of its beauty."¹¹⁵ Like a root that does not appear beautiful but contains within it the beauty of a plant, Christ did not appear beautiful but contained within himself the beauty of divinity. Additionally, Christ's ministry, although it seemed to be humbly defeated in his death, had within it the beauty

¹¹²Eugène Portalié, "Life of St. Augustine of Hippo," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907).

¹¹³ Augustine, *Isaiah 40-66*, ed. Mark Elliot, vol. 11 of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007) *Homilies on the Psalms 67, Alternate Series*.

¹¹⁴ Augustine of Hippo, *Exposition of Psalm 85 [86]:11*, CCSL 39:1188, trans. M Boulding, WSA III/18.235, in *Isaiah: Interpreted by Christian and Medieval Commentators*, ed. Robert Louis Wilken (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007).

¹¹⁵ Augustine of Hippo, *Sermon 44.1-2*, PL 38:258-59; trans. E. Hill, WSA III/2.244-45 *Isaiah: Interpreted by Christian and Medieval Commentators*, ed. Robert Louis Wilken (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007).

that has been manifest in his resurrection and the work of the Church. Augustine uses Isaiah 53:3 to describe Christ's redemptive action upon the cross. He writes that "it is Christ's deformity that gives form to you. For if he had been unwilling to be deformed, you would never have gotten back the form you lost. So he hung on the cross deformed; but his deformity is our beauty."¹¹⁶ Augustine shows that by becoming humbly deformed, Christ redeems human nature and makes it so that deformed humans can become beautiful through their union with God.

Augustine quotes Isaiah 53:7 to comment on Christ's dual nature. He claims that when Christ "first came to be judged, it was in a hidden manner; when he comes to judge, it will be openly."¹¹⁷ In his humble, human form, Christ kept his divine nature silent, but when he comes in glory, his divine nature will speak. Augustine goes on to show that Christ is not silent in the present because he speaks through his word. For "the reader goes to the lectern, but it is Christ who is not silent."¹¹⁸ Finally, Augustine uses Isaiah 53:8 to describe Christ's ineffable origin. He writes that the verse refers to Christ's two begettings including both, "that one in which, never not born, he has the Father co-eternal with himself; or of this one in which, born at a particular time, he had already made the mother of whom he would be made."¹¹⁹ Although Augustine did not ever write directly

¹¹⁶ Augustine of Hippo, *Sermon 27.6*, PL 38:181.

¹¹⁷ Augustine of Hippo, *Sermon 17.1*, PL38: 124, trans. E. Hill, WSA III/1:366, slightly revised.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Augustine, *Sermon 195.1, Isaiah 40-66*, ed. Mark Elliot, vol. 11 of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007).

on Isaiah 53, it is clear that the passage was an important component of his theology and that he used it to develop a description of Jesus' nature and ministry.

Cyril of Alexandria

Cyril of Alexandria lived from around 378 to 444. As the Bishop of Alexandria, he was a leader against the Nestorian and Antiochene doctrinal parties and a defender of Alexandrian orthodoxy.¹²⁰ He wrote a commentary on Isaiah after finishing his *De Adoratione* sometime before 423.¹²¹ Cyril reads all of Isaiah 53, as if by reflex, as a reference to the Passion of Christ. Consequently, he pursues his goal of constructing a tight fit between the prophetic text and the New Testament by reflecting on a number of passages from the Gospels and writings of Paul.¹²² Cyril begins his commentary on the passage by commenting on Christ's humble nature. Interpreting Isaiah 52:13, he writes that Christ, "the servant - or rather, the slave - the Son, because even though he was God and Lord of all, the Word took the *form of a servant* and entered into the limitations of humankind."¹²³ Cyril goes on to demonstrate that this act of humiliation allows for humble creatures to be elevated. He writes "Christ became a beggar among us on earth in order that we might become rich from his poverty."¹²⁴ Commenting on Isaiah 53:3,

¹²⁰ Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 110.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 124.

¹²³ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Isaiah 52:13-53:6 and 53:10-11, Isaiah: Interpreted by Christian and Medieval Commentators*, ed. Robert Louis Wilken, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), PG 70:1164D-89C.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

Cyril writes that the reason for Christ's humiliation is his fear of death. For "he was confused and terrified since he was about to suffer death upon the tree."¹²⁵ Cyril quotes several New Testament verses, including, John 12:27, Mark 14:3-4, and Mathew 36:37, to demonstrate that Christ was afraid to die.

Sure to reflect Alexandrian Christology, Cyril states that Christ is God and that, as God, he does not suffer. However, he also explicitly shows that Christ was fully man, and that, as a man, he could enter into man's suffering. To this end he writes,

although the only-begotten Word of the Father is God by nature, and hence incapable of suffering bodily pain and other things of that sort, he accommodated himself to just those kinds of things, and when tempted he was not immune to pain, but in every way he showed that he had become like us . . . He was not a shadow and phantom, as some think; he was really and truly a human being.¹²⁶

Commenting on Isaiah 53:4-6, Cyril quotes extensively from the New Testament to show that Christ did not die to save himself but rather to save fallen mankind because he was the only one who could do this.¹²⁷

Cyril suggests that Isaiah writes as an apologist for the Christian faith. He writes that Isaiah

imagines those who have not known the mystery of Christ and believe that he suffered so that his own sins might be taken away. For we accounted him to be in trouble . . . we thought his suffering was sent by God because of certain sins. . . But this is not the case. Rather he was pierced for our transgressions . . . Thus the prophet gives other reasons that make it clear that he who did not know sin suffered for the sake of our salvation and life.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Heb 12:2, Phil 2:8, John 1:29; Rom 11:27, Heb 10=4, Heb 13:12, Rom. 8:32.

¹²⁸ Cyril, *Commentary on Isaiah*.

Furthermore, Cyril claims that people were worthy of discipline because they had been disobedient to God in their arrogance. But, he writes, “but this discipline which ought to have been placed upon those who had sinned . . . in order that they might be reconciled with him came upon Christ instead.”¹²⁹

Cyril comments upon Isaiah 53:8, writing that Christ’s indescribable generation could refer to the fact that he was ineffably begotten of the Father - “as God the Word he was born of God the Father.”¹³⁰ Additionally, he claims that it could refer to his Incarnation, writing, “he was born in human fashion of a woman not however, according to the laws of human nature. His coming forth was not from a man and a woman; rather, it was an unusual and mystical coming forth far beyond our powers of description.”¹³¹ Here Cyril draws upon the traditional way of reading this text as a reference to Christ’s origins. This suggests that by this time, a customary way of understanding this passage had already developed. Even while inheriting this interpretive tradition, Cyril clearly maintains his distinct Christological beliefs by claiming that, in his birth, Christ was fully man and that even so, he was somehow, mysteriously divine.

Cyril interprets Isaiah 53:10 a reference to the resurrection of the dead. He writes that unlike the Greeks, who had no concept of resurrection from the dead

among those nourished by the Church, the resurrection of the dead is a firm hope. God promises the Gentiles, since they had chosen the retribution of their souls, to offer Christ, who chose to suffer for their sins.¹³²

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

He then claims that in light of this eternal life, Christians should be obedient to Christ because for “clinging to an upright and blameless faith in him is to give an offering for sin (Is 53:10).”¹³³ Cyril concludes his commentary on Isaiah by writing that, although Christ was sorrowful in his death, he is now glorious in his resurrection.¹³⁴

Although it offers little new insight into the passage, Cyril’s commentary on Isaiah 53 shows the way in which early Christian fathers used New Testament texts to develop an understanding of the passage and interpreted the passage to support their own Christological beliefs. His commentary also suggests that in writing upon Isaiah 53, Church fathers drew upon a tradition that was becoming increasingly more established and homogenous.

Theodoret of Cyrus

While Cyril of Alexandria represents the Alexandrian school of theology Theodoret of Cyrus represents the rival Antiochene School. In keeping with the tenants of Antiochene theology, Theodoret focuses more on the historical sense of the text than Cyril’s did. Furthermore, his commentary on Isaiah reflects the Christological concerns of the Antiochene School. Theodoret, who was the bishop of Cyrus, lived between the years 393 and 460.¹³⁵ In his commentary on Isaiah, Theodoret set out to illuminate obscure passages and establish “the proper historical context and its narrative

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Isaiah 53:12.

¹³⁵ Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 134.

sequence.”¹³⁶ For example, commenting upon Isaiah 53:6, Theodoret writes

the offenses of all were not equal . . . for the idols of the Egyptians and those of the Greeks were different, and those of the Scythians were something else. Nevertheless, although the forms or error were different, we had all in a common manner abandoned the true God.¹³⁷

In this passage, one can see Theodoret’s desire to harmonize the passage’s teachings with historical realities. Theodoret does not merely accept that all people have sinned in a universal, abstract sense but rather wants to account for the different, specific sins that people have historically committed.

Additionally, in his description of Christ’s Passion, “Theodoret is very precise in his emphasis on the humanity of the son consisting of two natures in a union without confusion He uses his exegesis . . . to defend the dyophysite Christology of the Antiochene School.”¹³⁸ For example, commenting on Isaiah 53:3-4, Theodoret writes

He points the nature that received the suffering, for his body was nailed to the cross, but his divinity made the Passion its own . . . This was said about his humanity. For to be courageous and philosophical touches not divine but human nature . . . he hid the divine energy and chose suffering and did not see vengeance on others.¹³⁹

Theodoret interprets the passage’s teaching about the Suffering Servant’s nature and activity as a defense of his own Christological beliefs. He claims that, even as he suffered, Christ did have two natures but that each of these natures did not suffer in the

¹³⁶ Ibid., 139.

¹³⁷ Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on Isaiah, Isaiah 40-66*, ed. Mark Elliot, in vol. 11 of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 17.53.6.

¹³⁸ Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 140.

¹³⁹ Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 17.53.3-4.

same way. They were separate. Theodoret's commentary offers another example of the way in which Isaiah 53 was used to defend particular Christological beliefs.

Isidore of Seville

Isidore of Seville, the Spanish bishop who lived from about 560 to 630, is considered by many to be the last biblical scholar and theologian of the Patristic period. Although he was not a particularly original scholar, his insight into Isaiah 53 is still significant. As Sawyer writes, Isidore was "extremely well versed in the writings of the fathers so that his work therefore provided later generations with a convenient digest of what had by this day become received Christian tradition."¹⁴⁰ His *De fide Catholica adversus Judaeos*, written in the early 7th century, was meant to strengthen the Christian faith and show the ignorance of the Jews through reference to the Old Testament.¹⁴¹ In the first part of the work, Isidore quotes Isaiah 53 to show that Christ indeed was the Suffering Servant who died for the redemption of the world. He claims that although this prophetic text, made the reality of who Christ was available to the Jews, they rejected this knowledge.¹⁴² For example, in Chapter 10 of the work, Isidore quotes Isaiah 53:8 so demonstrate that Christ was born miraculously of a virgin. In Chapter 22, Isidore quotes Isaiah 53:7 as proof that Christ gave himself up in his Passion. In Chapter 33, Isidore uses the same verse to demonstrate that, while suffering Christ was silent. Similarly, in Chapter 43, Isidore quotes Isaiah 53:5 to support his claim that Christ was crucified for

¹⁴⁰ Sawyer, *The Fifth Gospel*, 113.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 114.

our sins. In this work, Isidore does not develop the meaning of Isaiah 53. Rather he merely quotes the verse to develop an account and defense of Christian orthodoxy. This apologetic use of the text mirrors Justin Martyr and Origen's use of the text in their defenses of Christianity against Judaism and paganism. The continuity of this usage suggests that early Christians understood that this text was an important apologetic tool.

Conclusion

From the very beginning of Christianity, writers understood Isaiah 53 as a Christological prophecy referring to Christ. Throughout the early centuries of Christianity, writers turned to Isaiah 53 in order to understand Christ's nature, suffering, and Atonement. Although it was used by some writers, including the writer of the First Epistle to Clement and the writer of the Martyrdom of Polycarp, to provide Christians with a moral example of humble suffering, its main purpose was Christological. Patristic writers used the passage to develop orthodox accounts of Christ's nature and activity. They used the verse to describe Christ's ineffable nature, the redemptive, substitutive nature of his death and suffering, his dual nature, and his resurrection and future advent. Although writers including Eusebius, Jerome, and Theodoret of Cyrus did treat the passage systematically in their respective commentaries on Isaiah, the passage was not implemented into any sort of systematic account of Christ's Atonement or his person. Similarly, although the writer of the Martyrdom of Polycarp and Melito of Sardis incorporated the passage into narratives and poetic treatments of Christ's suffering, such imaginative, affective treatments were not the norm. Even these writers did not provide a complete or thorough account of the way in which Christians should enter into and imaginatively understand Christ's sufferings as they are described in this passage.

During the patristic period, Isaiah 53 was most frequently used as an apologetic tool. It was incorporated into accounts of Christian orthodoxy and defenses of the faith against both pagans and Jews. Writers such as Eusebius, Theodoret, and Cyril employed the passage to defend their own articulations of orthodox Christology. Essentially, the primary use of the text in patristic period was as a tool in apologetic and Christological debates. It was not until the medieval period that Isaiah 53 was incorporated into systematic accounts of the reasonableness of Christ's Atonement and affective, imaginative treatments of his suffering. It is to these two very different sorts of medieval treatments of this passage that I now turn.

CHAPTER TWO

Christ as the Suffering Servant in Medieval Thought: The Representation of Isaiah 53 in Analytical and Imaginative Accounts of Christ's Passion

The patristic treatment of Isaiah 53 is predominantly limited to use of the passage within defenses both the Christian faith generally and of specific articulations of Christology. During the medieval period use of the passage expanded. Throughout this period, the passage, with its paradigmatic depiction of Christ's suffering, was utilized in a number of different ways. Specifically Isaiah 53 was used within the two most prevalent medieval ways of representing Christ's suffering: intellectual, analytical works and affective, imaginative works. Analytical, intellectual representations of Christ's suffering show how Christ's expiatory suffering, as it is described in Isaiah 53, functions within the logic of the Christian faith taken as a whole. Contrastingly, affective, imaginative meditations on Christ's suffering allow readers to enter affectively into Christ's suffering as it is described in the prophetic passage. In this chapter, I intend to analyze both of these medieval methods of engaging Christ's suffering by looking at specific examples of each. In order to do this, I first engage analytical, rational treatments of Christ's suffering, beginning with the Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* and then focusing on Aquinas' analytical treatment of Christ's suffering in the *Summa Theologica*. In contrast, I analyze affective, imaginative treatments of Christ's suffering from the Franciscan tradition, focusing specifically on Bonaventure's *Tree of Life*. Ultimately, I argue that affective, imaginative treatments of Christ's suffering are necessary to Christian thought.

Beginning in the eleventh century, Christian thinkers began to apply dialectics

and philosophical ideals to matters of faith in order to understand Christianity's logical rationale. Eugene Fairweather refers to this period of increased philosophical inquiry as "the second and decisive period in the history of medieval thought, [in which] the analysis of philosophical ideas and their systematic theological use acquired a new importance."¹⁴³ This emphasis on the application of reason to the Christian faith is typically referred to as scholasticism.¹⁴⁴ As a part of this scholastic project, Christian thinkers developed logical renderings of the Atonement. In developing these logical renderings, writers attempted to account for the mechanics and purpose of Christ's suffering, particularly as his suffering is described in Isaiah 53. Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas are two such writers who provided logical accounts of Christ's suffering.

Anselm of Canterbury's Cur Deus Homo

Anselm of Canterbury is known as the Father of Scholasticism. His method for inquiry, *credo ut intelligam*, which implies that "faith should precede reason but be perfected and completed by a rational study of the contents of revelation," is the foundation of much of what developed in scholastic thought.¹⁴⁵ In his work, *Cur Deus Homo*, written between the years 1094 and 1098, Anselm applies his method of rational inquiry to Christ's Incarnation and Atonement. Anselm's text "is one of the first essays

¹⁴³ Eugene R. Fairweather, *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), 47.

¹⁴⁴ Margaret Deanesly, *A History of the Medieval Church 590-1599* (New York: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1983), 162.

¹⁴⁵ Fairweather, *A Scholastic Miscellany*, 47; Deanesly, *A History of the Medieval Church*. 165.

in a systematic theology of the Atonement, attempting to bring intellectual shape to an area where there had been much disorder.”¹⁴⁶ In his work, Anselm implements theological rationalism and the first principles of Christianity to develop an account of the necessity of Christ’s Incarnation and Atonement. His intent was to show the logical necessity of Christ’s Incarnation and Passion and to demonstrate the deepest meaning of the sacrifice of the God-Man without relying on the authorities of faith.¹⁴⁷ In order to do this, Anselm employs a method of *remoto Christo*. This method entails that Anselm set Christ aside as though he had never been and prove, by logical reasoning, that in order for men to be saved, one like Christ must have existed and died.¹⁴⁸ Because of his methodology, Anselm does not specifically reference the events of Christ’s life or specific Scripture passages. As such, he never specifically references Isaiah 53. However, he does discuss the necessity of the God-Man’s suffering and, by so doing, echoes the teaching of Isaiah 53. As such, Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo* provides an example of a rational, albeit indirect, treatment of Isaiah 53.

Anselm begins his work by stating his purpose. He writes that he intends for the work to prove “by necessary reasons (Christ being put out of sight, as if nothing had ever been known of him) that it is impossible for any man to be saved without him.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Colin E. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality, and the Christian Tradition* (New York: T&T Clark Ltd, 2004), 87.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 54-55.

¹⁴⁸ John McIntyre, *St. Anselm and His Critics: A Re-Interpretation of the Cur Deus Homo* (Edinburgh: T. And A. Constable Ltd., 1954), 4.

¹⁴⁹ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, in *A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, ed. Eugene R. Fairweather (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), Preface.

Anselm then proceeds to offer an analytical explanation of why a God-Man's Incarnation and Passion were necessary for man's salvation. In doing this, Anselm offers a rational description of Christ's suffering, showing why it was necessary and fitting for him to suffer as he did. Anselm explains why it was necessary for a God-Man to suffer upon a cross. He writes that "since the devil, when he tempted man, conquered him by the tasting of a tree, it was fitting for him to be conquered by man's bearing of suffering on a tree."¹⁵⁰ Here, Anselm does not rely on the biblical testimony to explain why Christ suffered as he did. Rather he claims that it was reasonably fitting that he did so. Later, Anselm discusses in which of his natures it would be fitting for the God-Man to suffer. He writes "when we say that God bears humiliation or weakness, we do not apply this to the sublimity of the impassible nature, but to the weakness of the human substance which he bore, and so we know no debasement to the divine substance."¹⁵¹ Here, by discussing what one can rationally attribute to each of Christ's natures, Anselm shows that Christ must have suffered humiliation in his human nature. Furthermore, Anselm writes that although "his human flesh shrank from the pain of death," "Christ himself freely underwent death, not by yielding up his life as an act of obedience, but on account of his obedience in maintaining justice."¹⁵² Here Anselm shows that, although Christ as a human did not desire the suffering of death, his suffering was voluntary. Thus he shows that although Isaiah 53:10 seems to indicate that Christ's death was the Father's will and not necessarily Christ's, Christ really did suffer voluntarily.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 1.3.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 1.8.

¹⁵² Ibid., 1.9.

In the second part of his work, Anselm writes about why human suffering is necessary. He writes,

if man sinned through pleasure, is it not fitting for him to make satisfaction through adversity? And if he was so easily overcome by the devil that in sinning he dishonored God in the easiest possible way, is it not just for man, when he makes satisfaction for sin, to honor God by overcoming the devil with the greatest possible difficulty?¹⁵³

Anselm looks to man's sinful actions in the fall to derive the necessity of the Atonement. Consequently he arrives at the conclusion that it is reasonable and fitting for a man to suffer greatly in order to make satisfaction for sins. Anselm clearly states that although the God-Man will suffer, he is not miserable in his sufferings for "it is no misery to experience some disadvantage of our own free will, prudently and under no compulsion."¹⁵⁴ Anselm continues to expound upon the nature of the God-Man's suffering, describing why this suffering is so great. He writes "no greatness or multitude of sins apart from God's person can be compared to an injury done to the bodily life of this Man."¹⁵⁵ Anselm uses this explanation of the greatness of the God-Man's suffering to explain why these sufferings could be redemptive. The God-Man's horrific suffering and death are enough to "outweigh all the sins of men."¹⁵⁶ In this way, Anselm shows why it is logical that Christ's suffering "brought men peace."¹⁵⁷

Anselm's purpose is to demonstrate how Christ's suffering functions within a

¹⁵³ Ibid., 2. 11.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 2.12.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 2.24.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Isaiah 53:5.

logical account of Christ's Incarnation and Atonement. As such, he provides an analytical treatment of the necessity and nature of Christ's suffering that does not depend upon Scripture. His purpose is not to show that Christ's suffering can be proved merely with logic. Rather his purpose is to demonstrate that Christ's suffering is a logically necessary part of a reasonable account of the Atonement. As such, although Anselm does not depend upon scripture in his treatise and thus does not quote from Isaiah 53, he does show the rational integrity of Scripture. By so doing, he, proves that the "God-Man himself establishes the New Testament and proves the truth of the Old."¹⁵⁸ Thus, although he does not use Scripture, Anselm indicates that Christ is the necessary fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, specifically Isaiah 53.

Thomas Aquinas' Summa Theologica

Thomas Aquinas, who lived from 1225 to 1274, built upon Anselm's system of applying logic and dialectics to faith.¹⁵⁹ In order to develop a means of understanding the rationality of the Christian faith, Aquinas drew from Aristotle's philosophy and developed a systematic method of analyzing theological truths that was "orderly, free from glosses and digressions, and [full of] details . . . fitted in so as to become subservient to the main truths he was establishing."¹⁶⁰ In Aquinas' work, the medieval analytical treatment of faith reached its pinnacle. In fact the term scholasticism is

¹⁵⁸ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, 2.22.

¹⁵⁹ Deanesly, *History of the Medieval Church*, 168.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 170.

frequently used as an equivalent term for Aquinas' philosophy.¹⁶¹ In his most influential theological work, the *Summa Theologica*, which he wrote between 1265 and 1274, Aquinas offers a systematic, logical analysis of the doctrines of the Christian faith.¹⁶² In the third part of the *Summa*, Aquinas discusses Christ's ability to feel sorrow and physical pain and the mechanics and efficacy of Christ's Passion. Aquinas draws from Isaiah 53 in order to demonstrate the logical mechanics of Christ's suffering and what this suffering accomplished.

In the fifteenth question of the third part of his *Summa Theologica*, Aquinas addresses the defects of the soul assumed by Christ. In doing this, he addresses the questions: whether Christ's soul was passible, whether there was sensible pain in Christ, and whether there was sorrow in Christ. Ultimately, Aquinas shows that Christ's soul was passible and that he could feel sensible pain and sorrow. In this section, Aquinas "makes abundant use of Old Testament passages, particularly those from the Psalter and from Isaiah and Jeremiah, in his discussion on Jesus' human affectivity."¹⁶³ Specifically, in the passages under analysis, Aquinas makes use of Isaiah 53, either by quoting it explicitly or referencing it indirectly. In the fourth article of the fifteenth question, Aquinas addresses the question of whether or not Christ's soul was passible. He concludes that "the soul of Christ was passible" because "Christ body was passible and

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 162.

¹⁶² David Burr, trans., "Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*," in *Fordham Medieval Sourcebook*, edited by Paul Halsall. 14 November 2012. <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/aquinas1.asp>>.

¹⁶³ Paul Gondreau, *The Passions of Christ's Soul in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Scranton: University of Scranton, 2009), 42.

mortal,” and he thus experienced “bodily hurt.” Additionally, because Christ “deigned to live in the form of a servant, [he] took these upon Himself whenever He judged they ought to be assumed; for there was no false human affection in Him Who had a true body and a true human soul.”¹⁶⁴ Here Aquinas establishes that because the body in which Christ was “pierced” and “crushed” was truly a human body, Christ suffered in a literal and not a figurative sense.

In the next article, Aquinas addresses Christ’s sensible pain. In discussing Christ’s sensible pain, Aquinas “secures a point on which all believing Christians must concur: the fact that the redemptive act of Christ is accomplished through his tortuous crucifixion and death, i.e., through his bodily suffering and pain.”¹⁶⁵ Aquinas writes that “no one should doubt but that in Christ there was true pain.”¹⁶⁶ He quotes Isaiah 53:4 to defend his conclusion. Aquinas’ use of the passage indicates that he sees it as a clear representation of Christ’s physical pain that logically shows that Christ suffered bodily.

In the next article, Aquinas writes that because “there could be true pain in Christ, so too could there be true sorrow” even though “sorrow was not in Christ, as a perfect passion; yet it was inchoatively in Him as a propassion.”¹⁶⁷ Aquinas shows that because of the pain he bore Christ truly and necessarily was “a man of sorrows.”¹⁶⁸ However,

¹⁶⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1981), 3.15.4.

¹⁶⁵ Gondreau, *The Passions of Christ’s Soul*, 30.

¹⁶⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 3.15.5.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.15.6.

¹⁶⁸ Isaiah 53:3.

Aquinas is careful to acknowledge that Christ's pain was not the same sort of passion that fallen humans experience. Rather his pain was the sort of passion that befits a person "without blame." Consequently, it was the sort of passion that could redeem fallen men.

In Questions Forty-six through Forty-nine Aquinas turns to Christ's Passion. He discusses the specific types of suffering that Christ endured and develops a rational account of the role that this suffering played in Christ's Atonement. Aquinas establishes that in order for men to be saved, Christ must have suffered. He writes "'it was not possible at the same for Christ not to suffer, and for mankind to be delivered.'"¹⁶⁹

Aquinas then discusses the ways in which Christ's suffering was suitable. He writes that Christ's suffering and death show man "how much God loves him, and [man] is thereby stirred to love Him in return."¹⁷⁰ Additionally, Aquinas claims that Christ's obedience, humility, justice, and constancy, which he displayed in his suffering, provide men with an example of the way that they themselves should endure suffering.

Having discussed the necessity and suitability of Christ's suffering, Aquinas discusses whether or not Christ willingly chose to suffer. In Article Three of Question Forty-seven, Aquinas writes that God the Father delivered up Christ to the Passion. He claims that God delivered up Christ to the Passion in the respect that "He preordained Christ's Passion for the deliverance of the human race."¹⁷¹ Aquinas quotes Isaiah 53:6 to prove this point. However, Aquinas claims that "It was not necessary . . . for Christ to suffer from necessity of compulsion, either on God's part, who ruled that Christ should

¹⁶⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 3.46.2.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.46.3.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 3.47.3.

suffer or on Christ's own part, who suffered voluntarily."¹⁷² Thus, by drawing from Isaiah 53, Aquinas establishes that although Christ suffered because of God's command, he suffered voluntarily.

Aquinas also discusses the specific sort of suffering that Christ endured. For example, he claims that Christ ought to have died upon a cross. He claims that this form of death was fitting for Christ and did not represent a gross injury to his honor.¹⁷³ Furthermore, Aquinas writes that Christ did not endure all specific types of suffering but that he did generally experience every sort of suffering. Christ suffered every sort "which a man can endure." He suffered wrongs from every sort of man and he suffered generally in regard to all "His bodily members."¹⁷⁴ Aquinas then claims that Christ's Passion was greater than all other pain. Aquinas quotes Isaiah 53:5 to prove both that Christ suffered at one time for all sins and to emphasize that Christ did not die for his own sins but for the sins of all people. Finally, Aquinas quotes Isaiah 53:12 to prove that it was fitting for Christ to be crucified with thieves. In the questions addressing Christ's Passion, Aquinas establishes the logical reasons for Christ to have suffered in the way he did. In so doing, he provides more analytic reasoning to aid in interpretation of Isaiah 53's representation of Christ's suffering.

Additionally, Aquinas utilizes Isaiah 53 to demonstrate what the logical and necessary results of Christ's suffering are. In response to the question of whether men were freed from the punishment of sin through Christ's Passion, Aquinas claims that they

¹⁷² Ibid., 3.46.1.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 3.46.4.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 3.46.5.

were. In order to prove this, he quotes Isaiah 53:4 and claims that this verse shows that

through Christ's Passion we have been delivered from the debt of punishment in two ways. First of all directly – namely, inasmuch as Christ's Passion was sufficient and superabundant satisfaction for the sins of the whole human race . . . In another way – indirectly, that is to say – in so far as Christ's Passion is the cause of the forgiveness of sins.¹⁷⁵

Beyond merely quoting Isaiah 53 as an authority that proves that Christ's suffering redeemed the human race, Aquinas incorporates the passage into a greater rational treatment of Christ's suffering. He uses the verse along with intellectual analysis to show why Christ's suffering was necessary and to demonstrate the role that Christ's suffering plays within the rational system of faith.

Anselm and Aquinas each draw both implicitly and explicitly from Isaiah 53 in order to develop analytical accounts of Christ's suffering and Passion. They both show that, rationally, Christ must have suffered in the way that he did. These analytical accounts of Christ's suffering are helpful because they show that Christianity is reasonable and demonstrate how Christ's suffering is an integral part of this reasonable framework.

These analytical, systematic accounts of Christ's suffering are not the only accounts of Christ's suffering written during the medieval period. Affective, imaginative treatments of Christ's suffering were also composed. While the analytic treatments of Christ's suffering allow readers to understand the rational necessity of Christ's suffering and the logical way in which this suffering occurred, affective treatments of Christ's suffering allow readers to enter emotionally and imaginatively into Christ's suffering. These works employ details from Isaiah 53 to provide a fulsome depiction of the

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 3.49.3.

emotional dimensions of Christ's agony. These descriptions aid Christians in meditation on Christ's suffering, enabling them both to have compassion for Christ and to imitate his virtues. The foremost examples of such imaginative, affective treatments of Christ's suffering come from the Franciscan tradition, which centered around imitation of Christ and the importance of the cross. As David Jeffrey writes, "Christ's humanity is the aspect of his person which the Franciscans wished to emphasize in order to clarify the surrogative nature of his suffering."¹⁷⁶

The Franciscans' imaginative, affective treatments of Christ's suffering are particularly important when considered in light of a medieval Christian understanding of the emotions. William of St. Thierry, a Cistercian Abbot who lived from 1070 to 1148, sheds light on the way in which Christians should understand emotions and on the way in which emotions should lead them to God.¹⁷⁷ Throughout his work, *The Mirror of Faith*, William refers to the important role that the *affectus* plays in a soul's journey toward union with God. Although the word is generally translated as feeling or emotion, it is difficult to translate the exact meaning that William associated with the word.¹⁷⁸ Thomas Davis offers insight into William's understanding of the word, writing that "the route from faith to this unity of spirit is the *affectus*: the deepest aspect of a person's tending

¹⁷⁶ David L. Jeffrey, *The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1975), 51.

¹⁷⁷ E. Rozanne Elder, introduction to *The Mirror of Faith*, trans. Thomas X. Davis (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, Inc., 1979), xi.

¹⁷⁸ Thomas X. Davis, *The Mirror of Faith*, trans. Thomas X. Davis (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications Inc., 1979), 93.

toward God.”¹⁷⁹ *Affectus* is a person’s internal, affective response to God and is not merely a rational acceptance of logical truths. William writes “ the person who believes in the *affectus* of his heart stands under what he believes.”¹⁸⁰ The emotional seat of a person’s heart allows for a person to submit to the truths he believes by faith. Love, the highest of Christian virtues by which a person returns to God, is included under the category of *affectus*. William also understands humility, gratitude, and contrition to be experiences of *affectus* because these are attitudes of the heart that lead a person to God. Williams writes that God must “affect [the heart] with the spirit of humility until that substance of things hoped for begins to appear.”¹⁸¹ A humble attitude of the heart before God is necessary for the experience of faith. Further elaborating upon his understanding of *affectus*, William claims that a person’s affectionate love for Christ will never allow him to forget the suffering of Christ, writing “the *affectus* of love will never allow her to forget” the suffering that Christ endured for her.¹⁸² Similarly, a person comes to know Christ through *affectus* because “Christ is made clear in the beauty of his glorified humanity and he appears in the glory of his divinity in the *affectus* of persons of devout faith.”¹⁸³ Through this emotional attitude towards Christ, a person comes to know Christ. As such, for Christians, a rightly ordered *affectus* is necessary for a person’s response to

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 94-95.

¹⁸⁰ William St. Thierry, *The Mirror of Faith*, trans Thomas X. Davis (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publication Inc., 1979), 39.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 44.

¹⁸² Ibid., 63.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 69.

God. In order to engage fully with God, a person's heart must tend towards God in the right way. That is, he must have the right sorts of emotion. Therefore, William of St. Thierry is right in writing, "love itself is understanding."¹⁸⁴ For Christians, to love Christ is to have the right emotional attitude toward him and, thereby, to understand him properly. Therefore, affective, emotional treatments of Christ's suffering are particularly important because these treatments enable Christians to have a right emotional response to Christ and, therefore, to understand him rightly.

Franciscan Affective Treatments of Christ's Suffering

From its origin, the Franciscan tradition has emphasized Christ's human suffering and death and the benefits derived from affectively meditating on these events. Francis of Assisi the founder of the order "insisted on continuing devotion to the Passion as essential in achieving conformity to the Person of Christ, a focus maximized in [Christ's] suffering."¹⁸⁵ To this end, after returning from a journey to the Holy Land in the early 13th century, Francis allegedly developed and spread a version of *The Way of the Cross* in order to assist people in their meditation upon Christ's human Passion.¹⁸⁶ *The Way of the Cross* is a meditative practice that allows the faithful to make a spiritual pilgrimage through the scenes of Christ's death. In the form of *The Way of the Cross* ascribed to Francis, fourteen stations of Christ's Passion are described in detail. Events of Christ's

¹⁸⁴ Elder, introduction, xx.

¹⁸⁵ Jeffrey, *The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality*, 54.

¹⁸⁶ Scholars contest Francis' authorship of *The Way of the Cross*. However, *The Way of the Cross* was certainly a Franciscan tradition that was developed and promulgated by the order. See George Cyprian Alston, "Way of the Cross," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 15 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912).

Passion are described so that the participant can imagine the physical realities of each aspect of Christ's Passion and enter compassionately into Christ's suffering. For example, Francis documents Jesus carrying his cross, writing "He most willingly stretched out His bleeding arms, lovingly embraced it, and tenderly kissed it, and placing it on His bruised shoulders, He, although almost exhausted, joyfully carried it."¹⁸⁷ Additionally, Francis records Jesus falling three times, writing "the suffering Jesus, under the weight of His cross, again falls to the ground."¹⁸⁸ These descriptions, remind participants of the suffering that Christ underwent on sinners' behalf. Francis provides these descriptions so that the participant might feel compassion for Christ and a desire to imitate Christ's obedient suffering. To this end, each station begins with the words "we adore Thee, O Christ, and we praise Thee, because by Thy holy cross, Thou hast redeemed the world."¹⁸⁹ This prayer is redolent of Isaiah 53:5 in that it emphasizes that Christ redeemed mankind through his suffering. The prayer, by reminding Christians that Christ underwent his suffering in order to redeem them, suggests that they should feel compassion for him. The concluding prayer for the *Way* further underlines its purpose:

Almighty and eternal God, merciful Father, who hast given to the human race Thy beloved Son as an example of humility, obedience, and patience, to precede us on the way of life, bearing the cross: Graciously grant us that we, inflamed by His infinite love, may take up the sweet yoke of His Gospel together with the mortification of the cross, following Him as His true disciples, so that we shall one day gloriously rise with Him.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ Francis, *The Way of the Cross*, Station Two.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, Station Nine.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, Stations One-Fourteen.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Conclusion.

This concluding prayer shows that Francis' *Way* was intended to inflame viewers with love for God and inspire them to take up their own crosses to follow Christ through imitation.

The Franciscan emphasis on affective understanding of Christ's suffering is evident in the hagiographic traditions that developed surrounding Francis' life. David Jeffrey writes that "the idea of the necessary centrality of Christ's human nature [was] dramatically intrinsic to the life of St. Francis."¹⁹¹ This emphasis on Christ's human nature is evident in the centrality of the motif of imitation of Christ that developed in "the hagiographical tradition rapidly built up by early biographers of St. Francis."¹⁹² The hagiographical tradition held that Francis, by so closely imitating Christ's human life, especially his suffering, had been conformed to Christ.

Christ's suffering is a central theme in Bonaventure's *Life of St. Francis*. Bonaventure was a 13th century Franciscan friar, who is considered [to be the] second founder and the chief architect of [the] spirituality" of the Franciscan order.¹⁹³ His biography of Francis' life was adopted by the Franciscan order as Francis' official biography shortly after its completion in 1260.¹⁹⁴ The biography vividly describes Francis' meditation on Christ's suffering with the intention of providing readers with the means of attaining virtues. For "just as one enters into the fullness of the mystery of

¹⁹¹ Jeffrey, *The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality*, 53.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁹³ Ewert Cousins, introduction to *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewert Cousins (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1978), 1.

¹⁹⁴ Cousins, Foreward, xix.

Christ by meditating on his humanity and imitating his virtues, so the Franciscan imitates Christ by following the example of Francis, [who] was looked upon as the one who most closely imitated Christ.”¹⁹⁵ Bonaventure describes Francis’ meditation upon Christ’s Passion, writing, “Jesus Christ crucified always rested like a bundle of myrrh in the bosom of Francis’s soul and he longed to be totally transformed into him.”¹⁹⁶ Ultimately, Francis achieved his desire and was totally conformed to Christ. For, “just as he had imitated Christ in the actions of his life, so he should be conformed to him in the affliction and sorrow of his Passion.”¹⁹⁷ “As Christ’s lover, [Francis was] . . . totally transformed into the likeness of Christ crucified.”¹⁹⁸ As Bonaventure presents it, Francis believed that true identification with Christ required identification with him in his suffering. Consequently, when Francis attained perfection, he received the stigmata, a physical reminder of Christ’s human suffering and death. This indicates that true identification with Christ requires both an affective and literal identification with the Suffering Servant.

A fourteenth century *Meditations on the Life of Christ* that developed out of the Franciscan tradition offers another affective treatment of Christ’s suffering. *Meditations on the Life of Christ* was at one time attributed to St. Bonaventure but is now ascribed to the Franciscan friar, Johannes a Caulibus.¹⁹⁹ The text, which dates from between 1346

¹⁹⁵ Cousins, introduction, 14.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 9.2

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 13.2.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 13.3.

¹⁹⁹ Jeffrey, *The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality*, 48.

and 1364,²⁰⁰ is “widely recognized as one of the most ubiquitous and influential texts of the Middle Ages.”²⁰¹ The work, which Isa Ragusa describes as “a life of Christ, a biography of the Blessed Virgin, the fifth Gospel, the last of the apocrypha . . . a summary of medieval spirituality, a religious handbook of contemplation, [and] a manual of Christian iconography,”²⁰² chronologically relates the complete story of Christ’s human life. It begins with God’s plan for the Incarnation and concludes with the mission of the Holy Spirit.²⁰³ In constructing his narrative, Caulibus reflects the later medieval period’s “ever growing tendency to transform the abstract and the theological to the personal and concrete.”²⁰⁴ In so doing, he offers a concrete account of Christ’s suffering on which readers can meditate.

In his chapter on contemplation on the humanity of Christ, Caulibus explains his emphasis on Christ’s humanity, particularly his emphasis on Christ’s human suffering and death. He writes that meditation on Christ’s humanity purges the conscience. For, as he says, “what is as effectual in caring for wounds of conscience and purging the light of

²⁰⁰ Eric L. Saak, *High Way to Heaven: The Augustinian Platform Between Reform and Reformation* (Boston: Die Deutsche Bibliothek, 2002), 507.

²⁰¹ Susan M. Arvay, “Private Passions: the Contemplation of Suffering in Medieval Affective Devotions” (PhD diss., Graduate School-New Brunswick Rutgers, 2008), 87.

²⁰² Isa Ragusa, introduction to *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*, trans. Isa Ragusa and Ragusa B. Green (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), xxii.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Michael G. Sargent, ed., *Nicholas Love’s Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ: A Critical Edition Based on Cambridge University Library Additional MSS 6578 and 6686* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), xx.

the mind as the continual meditation on the wounds of Christ?”²⁰⁵ Caulibus claims that meditation on Christ’s physical wounds is an effective means for cleansing one’s spiritual infirmities. He writes that Christians can best meditate on Christ’s humanity by considering each of Christ’s human cares such as “those needs of the vigils in praying, of temptations in fasting, of tears in having pity . . . of the infamies of the spitting, of the nailing, and of similar things.”²⁰⁶ By meditating on Christ’s life, specifically his human suffering, the Christian learns how to act correctly in his own trials and ultimately attains true wisdom, which is “to know Jesus and Him crucified.”²⁰⁷ Thus Caulibus’ purpose in emphasizing Christ’s human suffering was “to enjoin a sympathetic response to . . . the Cross for the spiritual virtues inherent in the response”²⁰⁸

Christ’s Passion is a central part of the Meditations. The description of Christ’s suffering and Passion is, “the thematic center [of the *Meditations*,] toward which all other elements point is the Atonement, the Passion of Christ.”²⁰⁹ Caulibus writes that

he who wishes to glory in the Cross and Passion must dwell with continued meditation on the mysteries and events that occurred . . . To him who searches for it from the bottom of the heart and with the marrow of his being, many unhopd for steps would take place by which he would receive new compassion, new love, new solace, and then a new condition of sweetness that would seem to him a promise of glory.²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ a Caulibus, *Meditation on the Life of Christ*, in *Meditations on the Life of Christ: An Illustrated Manuscript of the Fourteenth Century*, trans. Isa Ragusa and Ragusa B. Green (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), L.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, LI.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Jeffrey, *The Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality*, 50.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 53.

²¹⁰ a Caulibus, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, LXXIV.

The purpose of meditation on Christ's physical suffering during the Passion is "the attainment of an appropriate level of compassion for Christ in his humanity, to repay God's love for us with a suitable depth of compassion for him."²¹¹ The reader must "suffer deeply with Christ" in order to attain the proper depth of compassion for Christ and, consequently, to receive a foretaste of the perfection that is to come.²¹² In order to suffer deeply with Christ, the reader is invited to "see each event individually"²¹³ and to "imagine himself present at Calvary, so as to achieve the most realistic visual and emotional effect."²¹⁴ To this end, the reader is told, "to follow" Christ as he is led away by the guards.²¹⁵ Caulibus describes Christ's whipping in gruesome detail, writing,

He stands naked before them all, in youthful grace and shamefacedness . . . and sustains the harsh and grievous scourges on His innocent. . . flesh. The Flower of all. . . human nature is covered with bruises and cuts. The royal blood flows all about, from all parts of His body. Again and again, repeatedly. . . it is done, bruise upon bruise, and cut upon cut.²¹⁶

Here, Caulibus claims that he offers this graphic descriptions of the physical pain that Christ endured in order to show that the prophecy of Isaiah 53:2 and 4 was fulfilled.²¹⁷

Caulibus intends for the reader, having realized the brutal way in which Isaiah's prophecy

²¹¹ Arvay, "Personal Passions, 93.

²¹² a Caulibus, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, XLV.

²¹³ Ibid., LXXIV.

²¹⁴ Jeffrey, *The Early English Lyric & Franciscan Spirituality*, 58.

²¹⁵ a Caulibus, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, XLV.

²¹⁶ Ibid., LXXVI.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

was fulfilled, to feel compassion for Christ. Caulibus writes, “if you do not feel compassion at this point, you may count yours as a heart of stone.”²¹⁸ Caulibus’ purpose in describing the graphic details of Christ’s human suffering is to enable readers to have a compassionate response to Christ’s suffering.

In composing his description of Christ’s suffering, Caulibus quotes directly from Isaiah 53 several other times. For example, in describing the anguish that Christ felt as he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, Caulibus quotes Isaiah 53:7 to show that Christ suffered because he wished to.²¹⁹ Furthermore, in his description of the way in which Christ carried his cross along with thieves, Caulibus quotes Isaiah 53:12.²²⁰ He claims that this verse should remind viewers of Christ’s patience in suffering and should therefore lead them to increased compassion for him.

Bonaventure offers a similar treatment of Christ’s suffering in his work, *The Tree of Life*. However, his work relies more on Isaiah 53 and is more intellectually grounded than Caulibus’ *Meditations*. Bonaventure wrote *The Tree of Life*, or *Lignum Vitae*, between the years 1259 and 1260, as a spiritual guide for the Franciscan friars to whom the work is addressed.²²¹ In this work Bonaventure offers a meditation “that touches the

²¹⁸ Ibid., LXXXVI.

²¹⁹ Ibid., LXXV.

²²⁰ Ibid., LXXVII.

²²¹ Noone, Tim and Houser, R. E., "Saint Bonaventure," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2010 Edition)*, ed., Edward N. Zalta, 31 October 2012 <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2010/entries/bonaventure/>>.

very heart of Franciscan devotion to the humanity and Passion of Christ.”²²² The work reflects the medieval “devotion to the humanity and Passion of Christ, with concentration on vivid details, an awakening of human emotions, especially compassion, and the imitation of Christ in his moral virtues.”²²³ Although Bonaventure’s *Tree of Life* was not as popular or well known as Caulibus’ similar *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, Bonaventure’s work combines delicacy and power that inspire “that complex cluster of human sentiments which the Middle Ages cultivated in compassion for the suffering Savior.”²²⁴ The *Tree of Life* offers “deep feeling and intellectual power without the sentimentality and flights of fancy” that characterized Caulibus’ work.²²⁵ The work emphasizes Christ’s Passion and suffering. In fact, over a third of the treatise describes Christ’s Passion. In this portion of the work, Christ’s suffering is described in vivid detail, and readers are encouraged to enter into Christ’s anguish through application of the senses and prayer.

In the prologue, Bonaventure establishes that he intends for the work to enable readers to imagine Christ’s suffering so that they can enter imaginatively into this suffering and, consequentially, be made holy. He begins his prologue by writing,

with Christ I am nailed to the cross. . . the true worshiper of God and disciple of Christ, who desires to conform perfectly to the Savior of all men crucified for him, should, above all, strive with an earnest endeavor of soul to carry about

²²²Ewert Cousins, introduction to *Bonaventure: The Soul’s Journey Into God, The Tree of Life, and The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewert Cousins (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1978), 35.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 34.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

continuously, both in his soul and in his flesh, the cross of Christ . . . Moreover an affection and feeling of this kind is merited to be experienced in a vital way only by one who . . . contemplates the labor, suffering and love of Jesus crucified, with such vividness of memory, such sharpness of intellect and such charity of will.²²⁶

This passage indicates that by meditating on Christ's suffering one can be conformed to Christ imaginatively. Bonaventure suggests that such imaginative conformation with Christ in his suffering both enables people to be conformed to Christ in their actions and increases their affection and gratitude for Christ. The method that Bonaventure uses to compose his meditations is based on his belief in the importance of imagination to understanding. He writes "since imagination aids understanding, I have arranged in the form of an imaginary tree the few items I have collected from among many."²²⁷

Furthermore, Bonaventure claims that merely intellectual understanding is insufficient grounds for faith and charity. To this end, he writes, "no one can avoid this error unless he prefers faith to reason, devotion to investigation, simplicity to curiosity, and finally the sacred cross of Christ to all carnal feeling or wisdom of the flesh."²²⁸ For Bonaventure, devotion to the cross of Christ is more important to the life of the faithful than mere intellectual understanding. Consequently, he composes a treatise on Christ's suffering and death that does not emphasize the intellectual logic of the event but rather emphasizes emotional devotion to the cross.

In order to enable his readers to enter imaginatively into Christ's suffering,

²²⁶ Bonaventure, *The Tree of Life*, in *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey Into God, The Tree of Life, and The Life of St. Francis*, trans. Ewert Cousins (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1978), Prologue.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

Bonaventure presents four detailed meditations, which he terms fruits, regarding the events of Christ's Passion. Each 'fruit' is comprised of four shorter meditations on specific events of Christ's Passion, including Jesus being bound with chains, Jesus being condemned to death, and Jesus being nailed to the cross. Each of these shorter, episodic meditations begins with a graphic description of the concrete events of Christ's Passion. Bonaventure then presents a meditative prayer, in which he elaborates on the purpose of Christ's suffering and enjoins the reader to respond with both compassion and contrition.

In describing the concrete details surrounding Christ's death, Bonaventure draws both explicitly and implicitly from Isaiah 53. For example, in his description of the scene in which Jesus is bound with chains, Bonaventure writes "the cruel executioners . . . bound with chains the innocent hands of the gentle Jesus as if her were a robber, and insultingly dragged as a victim to sacrifice that most meek Lamb who offered no objection."²²⁹ Here, Bonaventure echoes Isaiah 53:7 to create a vivid image of the way in which Christ submitted to his captors. Similarly, in his description of the scene in which Jesus is handed over to Pilate, Bonaventure writes,

the high priests led Jesus bound before the face of Pilate, demanding death by the torture of the cross for him who knew nothing of sin. But he, like a lamb before his shearer, stood before his judge meek and silent, while deceitful and impious men, . . . with tumultuous shouts sought to bring to death the Author of Life.²³⁰

In this passage, Bonaventure quotes Isaiah 53:7 in order to provide a more accurate and dramatic description of Christ's appearance before his accusers. By using this verse, Bonaventure highlights Christ's meek humility in the face of his accusers and thus allows

²²⁹Ibid., 20.

²³⁰ Ibid., 23.

his readers to imagine more fully Christ's submissive appearance before Pilate.

Describing Jesus' beating, Bonaventure portrays the graphic details of the suffering that Christ endured. He writes Jesus stood

stripped in the sight of men who mocked his so that savage scourgers could lash that virginal and pure-white flesh with fierce blows, cruelly inflicting bruise upon bruise, wound upon wound. The precious blood flowed down the sacred sides of that innocent and loving youth in whom there was found absolutely no basis for accusation.²³¹

Bonaventure's graphic description here is redolent of Isaiah 53's description of the Suffering Servant who was "oppressed and afflicted . . . though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth." By describing the concrete details of Christ's beating Bonaventure elaborates upon what it means for the innocent lamb to have been oppressed and afflicted. Additionally, Bonaventure writes "to increase the confusion, ignominy, shame, and suffering the innocent Lamb was lifted up on the cross as a spectacle, in the midst of thieves, outside the gate in the place of punishment for criminals."²³² This passage echoes Isaiah 53:9 and offers the reader a concrete representation of what it meant for Christ to make "his grave with the wicked."

After each description of a scene of Christ's Passion, Bonaventure offers a prayer, reminding the readers of the reason for Christ's death. These prayers also enjoin the readers to feel compassion for Christ, contrition for their own sins, and inspiration to imitate Christ. These prayers are directed to Christ and are written in emotional, personal language, indicating that the meditations on Christ's suffering should move the reader to a personal response to Christ. In the prayer following the description of Jesus in the

²³¹ Ibid., 24.

²³² Ibid., 27.

garden of Gethsemane, Bonaventure quotes Isaiah 53:4 to prove that Christ really did feel human pain. He writes “you exhibited the natural weakness of the flesh by evident signs which teach us that you have truly born our sorrows and that it was not without experiencing pain that you tasted the bitterness of your Passion.”²³³ In addition to using the verse to prove that Christ really did experience pain, Bonaventure also uses it to direct his readers to a right response to Christ’s suffering. In his prayer, he writes that the fact that Christ experienced true pain “shapes [us] in faith by believing that you have truly shared our mortal nature, to lift us up in hope when we must endure similar hardships, to give us greater incentives to love you.”²³⁴ In this prayer, Bonaventure indicates that meditation on Christ’s suffering enables people both to endure suffering of their own and to feel greater love for Christ. Furthermore, in the prayer following his description of Jesus’ death among thieves, Bonaventure writes, “however great a sinner you are, if you do not shrink from following the footsteps of the Lord God who is suffering for you, who in all his torments did not once open his mouth to say even the slightest word of complaint or excuse or threat or abuse” then you will find pardon.²³⁵ Here Bonaventure echoes Isaiah 53:7 and suggests that by following Christ’s humble submission unto death Christians can gain pardon and share in Christ’s glorification. This prayer thus serves the purpose of calling people to contrition. Similarly, following his description of Jesus being condemned to death, Bonaventure writes

²³³ Ibid., 18.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid., 27.

you, lost man, the cause of all this confusion and sorrow, how is It that you do not break down and weep? Behold, the most innocent Lamb has chosen on your account to be condemned . . . And you, my wicked and impious soul, you do not repay him with gratitude and devotion.²³⁶

This prayer again serves the purpose of leading people to contrition. Here, Bonaventure emphasizes that Christ suffered for sinful men. He claims that, in light of Christ's expiatory sacrifice, people should repent of their sins and show gratitude and devotion to Christ. In the same vein, in the prayer following his description of Christ being scorned, Bonaventure writes, "attend now, O pride of human heart . . . He is your King and your God, who is accounted as a leper and the last of men in order to snatch you from eternal confusion and to heal you from the disease of pride."²³⁷ Bonaventure quotes Isaiah 53:3 to show that Christ as God humbly suffered and died for sinful man. This prayer implies that people should feel contrition for the sins and should be devoted to Christ. Finally, in the prayer following the description of Christ being nailed to the cross, Bonaventure writes,

see, now my soul how he who is God blessed above all things, is totally submerged in the waters of suffering . . . In order that he might draw you out totally from these sufferings . . . he appeared to you as you beloved cut through with wound upon wound in order to heal you. Who will grant me that my request should come about . . . that having been totally transpierced in both mind and flesh, I may be fixed with my beloved to the yoke of the cross?²³⁸

This prayer begins by describing Christ's intense agony. It then reminds the readers that this suffering was endured on their behalf. Finally Bonaventure ends with a call for the readers to be radically conformed to Christ on the cross. Consequently, this prayer

²³⁶ Ibid., 24.

²³⁷ Ibid., 25.

²³⁸ Ibid., 26.

elucidates Bonaventure's intended purpose for his meditations. He intends for meditation on Christ's suffering to lead the reader to an understanding that Christ suffered on behalf of sinful people and to enable the readers to be conformed to Christ.

Conclusion

Affective, imaginative treatments of Christ's suffering, such as Bonaventure's *Tree of Life* and the other works from the Franciscan tradition, serve a purpose that the more analytical, rational treatments do not. While purely logical treatments of Christ's suffering show the reasonableness of the faith with regard to the purpose and mechanics of Christ's suffering, affective treatments of his suffering provide Christians with the ability to enter emotionally into Christ's suffering. These affective treatments allow readers to enter into Christ's suffering by providing them with the means for an individual experience of the Suffering Servant's Passion. Logical treatments of Christ's suffering are necessary in that they allow readers to understand faith's rationale and the place of suffering within this rationale. However, their use is limited. Readers of such intellectual treatments of Christ's suffering remain at a distance from Christ's suffering. While they can analyze the rationality of the mechanisms and purpose of Christ's suffering, his suffering remains for them an extrinsic fact to be understood. Contrastingly, imaginative affective treatments allow readers to enter into Christ's sacrifice more fully. As they read these meditations on Christ's suffering, people are, in a way, conformed to Christ's suffering and, therefore, are able to share in the emotional reality of Christ's suffering to a greater degree. As such, these imaginative, affective treatments of Christ's suffering are an important part of Christian faith because they allow people to be conformed emotionally to Christ. By being conformed to Christ, even

if only imaginatively, people are able to internalize the reality of their faith to a greater extent. Thus, conformation to Christ's suffering through imaginative meditation moves people to feel contrition for their own sins, greater love for Christ, and greater inspiration to imitate Christ's virtues. As such, I agree with Bonaventure that no one can fully come to Christ "unless he prefers faith to reason, devotion to investigation, simplicity to curiosity, and finally the sacred cross of Christ to all carnal feeling or wisdom of the flesh."²³⁹ Consequently, I believe that emotional, affective treatments of Isaiah 53 are crucial to true understanding of the text and of what this text entails for the life of the righteous. In the next chapter, I will analyze how several emotional, imaginative treatments of Isaiah 53 in the form of poetry allow readers to enter into more fully and thus to understand more completely Christ's suffering.

²³⁹ Ibid., Prologue.

Artistic Exegesis

CHAPTER THREE

Christ as the Suffering Servant in the Poetry of George Herbert and John Donne

Because poetry provides the reader with a means of entering imaginatively and emotionally into Scripture, it can serve as valuable affective commentary on Scripture. Specifically, poetry has historically been used to provide emotional, imaginative insight into the way in which Christ's suffering, as described in Isaiah 53, should affect Christians. Such poetry not only provides readers a means of imagining Christ's suffering, it also guides them to a correct emotion response to this suffering. In order to demonstrate the benefits of rendering Isaiah 53 poetically, in this chapter, I examine religious poetry from the 17th century. Specifically, I analyze several poems written by John Donne and George Herbert. I first discuss how metaphysical poetry is particularly able to offer imaginative, affective commentary on Isaiah 53. I then turn to analysis of John Donne's poetry. I analyze his treatment of Christ's suffering generally and then look at several of his poems, including "Holy Sonnet XI," "Crucifying," and "The Litanie." I then turn to George Herbert's poetry and analyze the way that *The Temple* as a whole provides readers with greater insight into the significance of Christ's suffering. Next, I look specifically at a series of poems from *The Temple*, including, "The Sacrifice," "The Thanksgiving," and "The Reprisal." Analyzing each, I look specifically at the way in which Herbert draws upon the liturgy of Holy Week and other passages of scripture to provide a meaningful commentary on Isaiah 53.

Metaphysical Poetry

In his *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, written in 1779-1181, Samuel Johnson introduces the classification “metaphysical poetry” in his discussion of Abraham Cowley’s poetry. In so doing, he borrows from John Dryden, who, in 1639, wrote that John Donne “affects the metaphysics.”²⁴⁰ Since Johnson’s use of it, the term has been expanded to refer to a “race of [British] writers,” including John Donne, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, Andrew Marvell, Richard Crashaw, and other poets, who wrote in the 17th century.²⁴¹ In his *Lives*, Johnson describes metaphysical poetry as poetry that is characterized by its use of wit, which he describes as “that which has been often thought, but was never before [been] well expressed.”²⁴² Johnson claims that metaphysical poetry is distinctive in its novelty, writing that these poets “cannot be said to have imitated any thing.”²⁴³ Louis Martz provides further insight into the nature of metaphysical poetry, defining it as the poetry that

tends to begin abruptly in the middle of an occasion; and the meaning of the occasion is explored and grasped through a peculiar use of metaphor. The old Renaissance ‘conceit,’ the ingenious comparison, is developed into a device by which the extremes of abstraction and concreteness, the extremes of unlikeness, may be woven together into a fabric of argument unified by the prevailing force of ‘wit.’²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ Harold Bloom, introduction to *John Donne and the Seventeenth-Century Metaphysical Poets*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986), 1-3.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ Louis L. Martz, introduction to *The Anchor Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Verse*, ed. Louis L. Martz (Garden City: Doubleday, 1969), xxiv.

Additionally, metaphysical poetry is distinctive in that it often addresses a religious topic. For example, Martz argues that “poetry of meditation . . . would be a more accurate . . . term, both historically and critically than the much debated term ‘metaphysical poetry.’”²⁴⁵ He claims that the “acute self-consciousness . . . conversational tone . . . highly unconventional imagery . . . [and] strain of passionate paradoxical reasoning” that characterize metaphysical poetry result from the art of religious meditation.²⁴⁶ Consequently, he claims that the style of poetry that is generally characterized as metaphysical is better characterized as meditative because it results from religious meditative practices and is meant to inspire similar meditation. I do not wish to enter into the discussion of the proper way to reference the group of religious English poetry that was written in the 17th century.

However, I do find Martz’s emphasis on the meditative quality of this type of poetry to be significant to this study. It is this meditative nature that enables this poetry to offer valuable insight into Isaiah 53. For example, powerful, concrete images are often featured in this type of poetry because they lead the reader to meditation. Isaiah 53 is full of powerful, concrete images of Christ’s suffering that can be adapted easily to such meditative poetry. Additionally, metaphysical wit often relies on the use of paradox. As such, metaphysical poetry is particularly suited to description of the paradoxes expounded upon in Isaiah 53. Furthermore, the meditative nature of this poetry often encourages a reader’s response to the subject matter. As Elsky writes, in this meditative

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 2.

poetry, “the focus moves away from the object. The center of [this poetry] is not just Christ, but Christ experienced by the mediator.”²⁴⁷ When reading meditative poetry about Christ’s suffering, the reader is not only encouraged to observe Christ’s suffering but is also moved to experience this suffering and to respond to it. Therefore, meditative poetry encourages readers to enter into Christ’s suffering as it is described in Isaiah 53.

John Donne

John Donne, who lived from 1572 to 1631, is “arguably the greatest metaphysical poet in the English language.”²⁴⁸ In fact, John Donne is often considered “the master and father” of this sort of English poetry, which has even been termed “the Donne tradition in English religious poetry.”²⁴⁹ Like most metaphysical poetry, Donne’s poetry is marked by its vivid wit, emphasis on the senses, and treatment of religious material. Donne often wrote on sacred topics and, because of his use of wit and emphasis on the senses, this sacred poetry is vivid and varied. This richness is attested to by the fact that scholars have traced many different threads of Christian thought in his poetry, including Calvinistic considerations of election, Ignatian spiritual practices, and Anglican contrition.²⁵⁰ The vivid and often varied nature of Donne’s religious poetry reflects his

²⁴⁷ Martin Elsky, “History, Liturgy, and Point of View in Protestant Meditative Poetry,” *Studies in Philology* 77, no 1 (1980): 72.

²⁴⁸ Charles M. Coffin, ed. *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2001) v.

²⁴⁹ Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, 3.

²⁵⁰ Denis Donoghue, introduction to *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne*, ed. Charles M. Coffin, (New York: Random House, Inc., 2001), xxi-xxxii, xxx.

biography. Born into a Roman Catholic family in London in 1572, he received a Catholic upbringing but eventually abandoned Catholicism in the mid 1590's. He took orders in the Anglican Church in 1615 and served as the dean of St. Paul's cathedral from 1621 to his death in 1631.²⁵¹

Although Donne's religious poetry reflects his own varied religious experiences as it is quite varied, Christ's Atonement is a constant, recurring element throughout this poetry. For Donne, the Atonement and the cross are of central importance. He writes that "the first Character, that I was taught to know, was the Crosse of Christ Jesus."²⁵² Specifically, Donne emphasizes the necessity of being conformed to Christ upon the cross. Often he presents such conformity to Christ as a solution to the theological questions that he wrestles with in his verses. Terry Sherwood elaborates on Donne's understanding of conformity of Christ, writing, "Donne's solution to misery is conformity to the suffering Christ."²⁵³ For Donne, this conformity is made possible through true meditation on Christ and his suffering. He writes in his sermon XXV, "if I come to a true meditation upon Christ, I come to a conformity with Christ."²⁵⁴ Because of his understanding of the importance of meditation, much of Donne's poetry focuses on enabling readers to meditate on Christ's suffering, particularly as this suffering is

²⁵¹ Coffin, *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne*, v-vi.

²⁵² Patrick Grant, *The Transformation of Sin: Studies in Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, and Traherne* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1974), 57.

²⁵³ Terry G. Sherwood, *Fulfilling the Circle: A Study of John Donne's Thought* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 17.

²⁵⁴ Elsky, "History, Liturgy, and Point of View in Protestant Meditative Poetry," 78.

described in Isaiah 53. In order to aid meditation on Christ's suffering, Donne describes Christ "in physical as well as spiritual terms; he is a tangible model of bodily and spiritual continuity."²⁵⁵ Concrete descriptions of Christ's suffering allow the reader to enter more effectively into Christ's suffering, so that they can be imaginatively conformed to him. Additionally, because "the tears of the crucified Christ give the example of contrition," Donne presents vivid images of Christ suffering as a means of moving readers to contrition.²⁵⁶ In the next passage, I will explore three poems in particular that reflect Donne's emphasis on the prominence of the suffering Christ.

"Holy Sonnet XI"

Donne's "Holy Sonnet XI," "Spit in my face you Jews," reflects his emphasis on Christ's suffering and his understanding of the necessity of correctly conforming to this suffering. The sonnet is one of nineteen sacred sonnets that Donne most likely wrote between 1609 and 1610. As he does in many of his other Holy Sonnets, in this sonnet, Donne combines a Shakespearean structure with a Petrarchan rhyme sequence.²⁵⁷ Additionally, as he does in his other religious poetry, in this sonnet, Donne emphasizes "penitential mourning, guided by the affecting image of the crucified Christ."²⁵⁸ For Donne, the process of penitential mourning should lead to contrition. In Donne's understanding "such contrition [is] described in terms of the Passion which makes

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 94.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Coffin, *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne*, vi.

²⁵⁸ Sherwood, *Fulfilling the Circle*, 143.

satisfaction for Adam's sin [and] inspires humility and penitence."²⁵⁹ Because "a graphic awareness of the contribution of Christ's blood sacrifice" leads to contrition, graphic depictions are "one of the most distinctive themes of the *Holy Sonnets*."²⁶⁰ This emphasis on a graphic awareness of Christ's suffering and crucifixion is particularly apparent in "Holy Sonnet XI."

Like many other meditative works on Christ's suffering, the sonnet begins with a dramatic description of the sort of grief that Christ experienced. Martz describes the poem's dramatic opening, writing that "the speaker has made himself present at the scene."²⁶¹ However, instead of merely meditating upon the abuses that Christ endured, the speaker expresses his desire to "replace Christ on the cross and to make reparation by suffering for his own sins."²⁶² While the speaker does implement "affective piety . . . [picturing himself] actually present at the cross," instead of merely reflecting on Christ's suffering, he pleads to suffer himself.²⁶³ He exclaims "Spit in my face, you Jews, and pierce my side, / Buffet, and scoff, scourge, and crucify me."²⁶⁴ The speaker's desire to suffer in Christ's place is motivated by a feeling of contrition. He feels guilty and desires to make reparation for his sins. This guilt and desire are shown in the next lines,

²⁵⁹ Grant, *The Transformation of Sin*, 60.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

²⁶¹ Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, 50; In fact Martz sees this opening as a form of Jesuit premeditation on the subject to be meditated upon, 49.

²⁶² Grant, *The Transformation of Sin*, 41.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 42.

²⁶⁴ John Donne, "Holy Sonnet XI," in *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne*, ed. Charles M. Coffin (New York: Random House, Inc., 2001), 1-2.

For I have sinn'd, and sinne', and only He,
Who could do no iniquity, hath died.
But by my death can not be satisfied
My sins, which pass the Jews' impiety.
They kill'd once an inglorious man, but I
Crucify him daily, being now glorified.²⁶⁵

The speaker's desire to participate in Christ's suffering is motivated by his feelings of contrition. He feels guilty for Christ's innocent suffering and his own part in it. He meditates upon Christ's innocence, and his realization that Christ was the one "who could do no iniquity" is redolent of Isaiah 53's description of Christ as the one who had "done no violence nor was any deceit in his mouth." Furthermore, the speaker acknowledges his own responsibility for Christ's innocent suffering, by claiming that he crucifies Christ daily by sinning. The speaker's own feelings of contrition and guilt prompt him to desire radical conformation to Christ. More than merely desiring to emotionally suffer with Christ, the reader desires to be crucified in Christ's stead.

However, the speaker's contrite desire is impossible to fulfill. He, in his limited, sinful nature cannot atone for his sins or make reparation to Christ. The opening lines reflect the speaker's prideful misconceptions about his own ability to make reparation for his sin. The speaker cannot make reparation by suffering. Only Christ, the perfectly innocent suffering servant can do that. As the sonnet progresses, the speaker realizes his misconception as he "comes to realize that . . . he must be content to face the paradox that only the innocent can atone for the sins of the guilty."²⁶⁶

O let me then His strange love still admire;
Kings pardon, but He bore our punishment;

²⁶⁵ Ibid, 3-8.

²⁶⁶ Grant, *The Transformation of Sin*, 41.

And Jacob came clothed in vile harsh attire,
But to supplant, and with gainful intent;
God clothed Himself in vile man's flesh, that so
He might be weak enough to suffer woe.²⁶⁷

Through his reflection on Christ's suffering and the love that motivates this suffering, the speaker realizes what his response to this suffering should be: humble adoration. Christ's "strange love" is described in terms redolent of Isaiah 53. In contrasting Christ's love with that of secular rulers, the speaker draws from Isaiah 53:4 to draw a clear contrast between the love of an earthly king, who merely pardons, and the love of a kingly suffering servant, who takes man's pains and sins upon himself. In the next four lines, the speaker again contrasts Christ's actions with an earthly paradigm. The speaker alludes to Jacob, who like Christ, adopted a different appearance in order to achieve his aim. However, Jacob donned a disguise of wooly arms to deceive his father and supplant his brother, receiving Esau's birthright. Contrastingly, Christ "took the form of a slave," and appeared as one with "no form or comeliness" in order to redeem mankind. By so clearly drawing a contrast between man's sinful ways and Christ's pure, humble suffering, the speaker comes to the conclusion that Christ alone is able to redeem mankind. This conclusion, drawn from the truths of Isaiah 53 is a response to the speaker's initial ill-conceived attempt to make his own reparation for his sins. The speaker initially displays a prideful, misguided response to Christ's suffering. However, after reflecting on Christ's nature and the nature of his suffering, the speaker comes to the right response to Christ's suffering: humble adoration. By reflecting on truths about Christ's love and nature drawn from Isaiah 53, the speaker realizes that men should not

²⁶⁷ Donne, "Holy Sonnet XI," 9-14.

attempt to atone for their own or other's sins by suffering, but rather should admire Christ's suffering and attempt to humbly conform their sufferings to his.²⁶⁸

“Crucifying”

In his sonnet, “Crucifying,” Donne offers another reflection on what a correct response to Christ's suffering and death should consist of. This sonnet is the fifth of a series of seven sonnets entitled *La Corona*. Traditionally, the poetic term “corona” refers to a structural form in which sonnets are linked in such a way that “the last line of each stanza forms the first line of the next, and the last line of the whole sequence repeats the line that began it.”²⁶⁹ Donne's collection of sonnets follows this pattern. However, the title of the series does not refer merely to its form. Rather, as Martz notes, the title alludes to the practice “of meditation according to the corona.”²⁷⁰ As Martz indicates, Donne would have seen this meditation upon the corona as a meditation upon Christ and his life. “The use of the term ‘corona’ with reference to meditations focused on Christ would find a precedent in the popular practice . . . of using a ‘corona of our Lord’ – a rosary of thirty – three Aves.”²⁷¹ The meditational resonances of this title indicate that Donne intended for the series to serve a meditative purpose. Specifically, the fifth sonnet of the series is intended to serve as a meditation on Christ's suffering and crucifixion.

²⁶⁸ Sherwood, *Fulfilling the Circle*, 126.

²⁶⁹ Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, 107.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Donne begins this sonnet by recounting different, erroneous ways in men who had witnessed “miracles exceeding power of man” responded to these miracles.²⁷² He writes

Hee faith in some, envie in some begat,
For, what weak spirits admire, ambitious, hate;
In both affections many to him ran²⁷³

Although these lines refer explicitly to ways in which men responded to Christ while he was on earth, it seems as though Donne also refers to contemporary responses to Christ and his miracles. By acknowledging that different affections can motivate people to turn to Christ, Donne implicitly indicates that readers have a choice of which “affection” will motivate them to turn to Christ. They can respond with faith, envy or love. Donne continues in this vein, writing

But Oh! The worst are most, they will and can,
Alas, and do, unto the immaculate,
Whose creature Fate is, now prescribe a Fate,
Measuring selfe – lifes infinity to’ a span,
Nay to an inch.²⁷⁴

Here, Donne denounces those who crucified Christ and, in so doing, indicates his “preoccupation with paradox.”²⁷⁵ On the cross, not only does Christ who “had done no violence” bear man’s suffering, but also he who is in control of all fate allows his fate to be controlled by men, and he, who is infinity, is “measured and confined” in death.²⁷⁶

²⁷² Donne, “Crucifying,” 1.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 2-4.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-9.

²⁷⁵ Julia J. Smith, “Donne and the Crucifixion,” *The Modern Language Review* 79, no 3 (1984): 516.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

In the next lines, Donne offers a brief description of Christ's death, writing

Loe, where condemned hee
Beares his owne, crosse, with paine, yet by and by
When it beares him, he must beare more and die.²⁷⁷

Although these lines are brief and do not contain the same graphic description of Christ's death that other meditations on Christ's suffering do, they do offer powerful commentary on Isaiah 53. The repetition of the word "beare" brings to mind the fact that Christ bore suffering and sin and indicates that Christ's suffering surpassed the physical agony that he endured. The first two uses of the word are redolent of Isaiah 53's prophecy that Christ "bore our sins" in a physical sense by suffering abuses. However, the third use of the word indicates that Christ bore much more than man's physical suffering in that he was "bruised for our iniquities." By repeating this word in a way that intensifies its third appearance, Donne suggests that the burden of our sins was the most difficult for Christ to bear and also the most important.

In the final lines of the sonnet, Donne indicates what a right response to Christ's suffering is. He writes

Now thou art lifted up, draw mee to thee,
And at thy death giving such liberall dole,
Moyst, with one drop of thy blood, my dry soule.²⁷⁸

Here Donne suggests that Christ's bloody suffering and death not only redeem fallen people but also draw them to contrition and conformity with Christ. Donne's final words indicate a desire to be conformed to Christ. His request for Christ to moisten his dry soul indicates a desire for emotional contrition. He indicates that this contrition can be

²⁷⁷ Donne, "Crucifying," 244.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

motivated by meditation on Christ's suffering and blood and that this contrition leads one to conformity with Christ. Such contrition and desire to be conformed to Christ are the right responses to Christ's suffering.

"The Sonne"

The second stanza of Donne's poem, "The Litanie" again expresses Donne's desire to be conformed to the suffering Christ. Donne wrote "The Litanie" as a "private meditation" for his own personal use.²⁷⁹ The second stanza of the poem, entitled "The Sonne" indicates that Donne desires to meditate on Christ's suffering so that he might become a participant in Christ's pain. In the first lines of the stanza, Donne meditates upon Christ's reasons for being incarnated and suffering the crucifixion. He writes, "O Sonne of God, who seeing two things, / Sinne and death crept in, which were never made."²⁸⁰ By emphasizing the fact that man's sinfulness motivated Christ to suffer and die, Donne draws from Isaiah 53:5's teaching that "he was bruised for our iniquities." Donne continues to discuss the fact that Christ redeemed mankind by bearing its sinfulness, writing, "by bearing one, tried'st with what stings / The other could thine heritage invade."²⁸¹ These lines, in their emphasis on the fact that, by bearing man's sins, Christ redeemed man from death again echoes Isaiah 53:5. The last half of the stanza offers a good example of what Donne believes should be the mediator's response to the Passion. Donne writes

²⁷⁹ Dominic Baker-Smith, "Donne's 'Litanie,'" *The Review of English Studies* 76, no 102 (1975): 171.

²⁸⁰ Donne, "The Litanie," 10-11.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

“O be thou nail’d unto my heart,
And crucified againe,
Part not from it, though it from thee would part,
But let it be, by applying so thy paine,
Drown’d in thy blood, and in thy Passion slaine.”²⁸²

These lines indicate that the correct response to Christ’s suffering and crucifixion is personal identification with Christ. Here Donne reveals his desire to have Christ’s Passion become an integral part of his inward psyche. He desires internally to experience Christ’s pain. Elsky describes such internal participation well, writing that for Donne, “the Passion has been reenacted in the person of the mediator, as he becomes the sacrificial offering of Christ’s mystical body.”²⁸³ Donne indicates that by meditating on Christ’s suffering and pain, a person should be able to identify so closely with Christ that he himself becomes a participant in Christ’s sacrifice. In this stanza, Donne provides his readers with one means of meditating on Christ’s suffering.

George Herbert

George Herbert, who lived from 1533 to 1633, is considered “one of the best English lyric poets.”²⁸⁴ Born into a well-established, pious family, Herbert received an early education in the arts and was encouraged to pursue scholarship and other poetic endeavors.²⁸⁵ Eventually, Herbert pursued scholarship at Trinity College, Cambridge,

²⁸² Donne, “The Litanie,” 14-18.

²⁸³ Elsky, “History, Liturgy, and Point of View in Protestant Meditative Poetry,” 77.

²⁸⁴ Joseph H. Summers, *George Herbert: His Religion and Art* (Binghamton: Harvard University Press, 1954), 11.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

where he studied classics and divinity and eventually was appointed Reader in Rhetoric.²⁸⁶ After a brief membership in parliament, Herbert was ordained to the Anglican Church in 1630.²⁸⁷ He served within a small parish in Bemerton for three years until he succumbed to the sickness that had plagued him for most of his life. Although he did not serve in his position for long, Herbert's priesthood reflects a life-long dedication to religious life. The period of his priesthood is also is the most productive period of Herbert's life, and he wrote much of his religious poetry, including all of the poetry that will be analyzed here, during this time.²⁸⁸

Compared to Donne's poetry, which is "clamorous . . . and anguished" Herbert's poetry is marked by "comparative calm, assurance and mildness."²⁸⁹ Although Herbert's poetry is less passionate and tumultuous than Donne's, meditation on the suffering of Christ plays a similarly important role in it. Herbert's poetry is essentially prayer.²⁹⁰ Through his poetry, Herbert hopes to allow his readers to achieve "mental communion" with God.²⁹¹ For Herbert, such communion occurs through sacrifice: both "a propitiatory blood sacrifice offered by Christ to the Father to satisfy divine justice . . .

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 31-32.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 35.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 37.

²⁸⁹ Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, 144-145; Although Martz attributes this difference in tones to the respective influence of Jesuit meditative practices on Donne and Salesian practices on Herbert, I do not wish to discuss this distinction here.

²⁹⁰ Terry G. Sherwood, *Herbert's Prayerful Art* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 7.

²⁹¹ Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, 288.

[and] an honorific and dutiful sacrifice offered by the believer . . . expressed as prayer and praise.”²⁹² The first type of sacrifice allows men to come before God in that it serves as expiation for their sins. The latter type allows men to appropriate personally the effects of this sacrifice by communing personally with God. Herbert understood that man could best offer their personal sacrifice of prayer by imitating Christ’s own sacrifice. As such the “conformity between man’s sacrifice and Christ’s is . . . the centre of Herbert’s conception of prayer.”²⁹³ To this end, Herbert’s poetry shows “remarkable emphasis on the Passion of Christ.”²⁹⁴ Readers are encouraged to enter more fully into this sacrifice through “application of the senses” to the reality of Christ’s suffering.²⁹⁵ To aid in this process of meditative communion, Herbert employs details from Isaiah 53.

The Temple

Written in the last three years of his life and published posthumously, Herbert’s collection of poems entitled, *The Temple* is his most important work.²⁹⁶ As such, *The Temple* is also Herbert’s most studied work. Herbert himself gave no insight into the organization of the work other than to say that it is “a picture of the many spiritual Conflicts that have past betwixt God and my Soul, before I could subject mine to the will

²⁹² Sherwood, *Herbert’s Prayerful Art*, 16.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁹⁴ Grant, *The Transformation of Sin*, 96.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ Summers, *George Herbert*, 34-35.

of Jesus my master.”²⁹⁷ Since Herbert’s wrote these words, many scholars have attempted to determine what the unifying structure of *The Temple* is. As Sarah Hanley writes “that the unity to be found in Herbert’s *The Temple* is subtle as well as complex and that this unity derives in some way from the title of the volume are principles espoused by the majority of scholars who treat Herbert’s work.”²⁹⁸ Although many scholars have different views concerning what these unifying elements are, most agree that Christ’s suffering is a central, unifying element in the work.²⁹⁹

Christ’s suffering is central in *The Temple* because it is this suffering that allows men to enter God’s Temple. Sarah Hanley offers an explanation of the basic unity of *The Temple* that is helpful to this study. She writes that

The Temple is, literally, a book about temples, and the plot of the book concerns man’s gradual efforts to enter the temple of his own soul, the temple, of his Christian Church, and the eternal temple of the people of God, finding at the center of each temple the God who created it and inhabits it.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁷ Sharon Cadman Seelig, *The Shadow of Eternity: Belief and Structure in Herbert, Vaughan, and Traherne* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1981), 7-8.

²⁹⁸ Sarah William Hanley, “Temples in the Temple: George Herbert’s Study of the Church,” *Studies in English Literature* 8, no 1 (1968): 121.

²⁹⁹ Many scholars have developed differing theories regarding the unifying themes of the work. For Stanley Fish, “poetic movement in *The Temple* catechizes the reader.”²⁹⁹ Rosemond Tuve focuses on the traditional, liturgical structure of the series while Louis Martz focuses on the meditative structure of the collection.²⁹⁹ Many of these methods are helpful approaches to understanding the structure and unity of *The Temple*. However, my concern is to analyze the ways in which the Christ’s suffering is handled in the series. Therefore, I do not find it necessary to enter deeply into discussion of the structure of the series at this point. Rather, I look at the unity and structure of the series only insofar as it demonstrates the central role that Christ’s suffering plays in the series.

³⁰⁰ Hanley, “Temples in the Temple,” 122.

As Hanley shows, *The Temple* centers upon a person's journey towards God. Because God exists within a person's soul, the series is intended, in part, to lead to "mental communion" with God.³⁰¹ For Herbert, Christ allows for people to enjoy this personal communion with God through his suffering and death. As such, Christ's sacrifice is the central foundation on which the spiritual temple, which leads to internal communion with God, must be built. Essentially, "the model for both the individual and the communal temple is the suffering Christ."³⁰² Not only does Christ's sacrifice provide men with the means of approaching God, it also provides them with an example of the way that they should sacrifice themselves in order to enter into communion with God. Thus meditation on Christ's suffering helps readers to understand Christ's suffering and to enact their own. As such, Christ's sacrifice is of central importance for Herbert and he structures his series around it.³⁰³

Furthermore, as Hanley also indicates in the quote above, Herbert's *The Temple* is essentially a series about the Church and about a Christian's experience within it. The title of the series itself indicates this fact as do the titles that Herbert assigns to his three subsections: "The Church Porch," "The Church," and "The Church Militant." The Church and its practices are a large part of the subject for this series. Herbert reflects on the different parts of the church, including the church windows, the altar, and the church floor. Additionally, he draws from the Church's liturgy and readings in composing his poems about the church. That Herbert draws both implicitly and explicitly from

³⁰¹ Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, 288.

³⁰² Sherwood, *Herbert's Prayerful Art*, 88.

³⁰³ Seelig, *The Shadow of Eternity*, 9.

traditional Church readings and from Scripture is not surprising. As an Anglican priest who was steeped in liturgy and Scripture, Herbert would have thought it natural to turn to these traditional Christian texts when composing his poetry about the Christian life.

When he turned to these Christian practices and readings, Herbert found Christ's sacrifice at their center. The Eucharist, the center of a Christian mass, is a commemoration of this sacrifice. The Church altar is a physical reminder of Christ, the perfect sacrifice. Holy Week, a period of reflection upon Christ's sacrificial suffering is the center of the Christian year. Thus, in placing Christ sacrificial suffering at the center of his series, Herbert echoes traditional Church practices in order to offer his own meditation on the Church. In order to elaborate further on Herbert's portrayal of Christ's suffering, in the next section, I turn to a series of three poems that Herbert places at the beginning of the second major subsection of *The Temple*, "The Church."

"The Sacrifice"

In "The Sacrifice," readers find Herbert's most powerful use of Isaiah 53. As Sherwood writes, the importance that Herbert assigns to Christ's sacrifice "is expressed most obviously in the pivotal role of 'The Sacrifice'" in the series.³⁰⁴ Christ himself is the narrator of this poem. He mournfully cries out to his people from the cross, recounting the events of Holy Week. Each stanza of the poem contains four lines: three that relate the paradoxical suffering that Christ endured and one line that reads "Was ever grief like mine?" or, in the final stanza, the phrase that answers Christ's repeated rhetorical question - "Never was grief like mine." This poem directly follows Herbert's

³⁰⁴ Sherwood, *Herbert's Prayerful Art*, 16.

“The Altar,” and its position is significant. The final lines of “The Altar” read, “O let thy blessed SACRIFICE be mine, / And sanctify this ALTAR to be thine.”³⁰⁵ Here the speaker expresses his desire to participate in Christ’s sacrifice. As such, these lines indicate that Herbert’s intention in describing Christ’s sacrifice in the poem directly following is not merely to offer a vivid description of Christ’s suffering but also to provide the reader with a way of participating in this suffering. As Strier writes,

the placement of The “Altar” before “The Sacrifice” establishes Herbert’s main interest as the “application” rather than the history of redemption. He prays to receive the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice before he presents the narrative of the sacrifice.³⁰⁶

In order to provide readers with a means of applying Christ’s sacrifice to their own hearts, Herbert draws from biblical and liturgical sources to create a moving poem that highlights the paradoxical nature of Christ’s sacrifice.

The poem centers upon the deeply ironic nature of Christ’s suffering, a theme that is also central to Isaiah 53’s paradoxical description of the suffering servant. This ironic tone of the poem is tied to Herbert’s use of Biblical texts. As Chana Bloch writes,

some of the most brilliant ironic effects in the poem come from the studied juxtaposition of two texts . . . In each case, a verse from the Passion story “marks” another verse elsewhere in the Bible . . . which offers a striking contrast.³⁰⁷

These contrasts intensify the descriptions of the deeply paradoxical grief that Christ endured. In many cases, these paradoxes are redolent of aspects of Isaiah 53. As in this prophetic passage, the most striking types of antithesis in the poems “are those which

³⁰⁵ George Herbert, “The Altar,” in *George Herbert: The Complete English Poems*, ed. John Tobin (New York: Penguin Group Inc., 2001), 15-16.

³⁰⁶ Strier, *Love Known*, 153.

³⁰⁷ Bloch, *Spelling the Word*, 65.

directly pose the shocking contrast between man's actions toward God and God's actions toward man."³⁰⁸ This paradox is apparent in the first two stanzas of the poem. Here

Herbert writes

O, all ye, who pass by, whose eyes and mind
To worldly things are sharp, but to me blind;
To me, who took eyes that I might you find:
Was ever grief like mine?

The Princes of my people make a head
Against their Maker: they do wish me dead
Who cannot wish, except I give them bread:
Was ever grief like mine?³⁰⁹

In these lines, Herbert establishes the paradox that will form the center of the poem. Christ is tormented and killed by the very people for whom he dies. Furthermore, it is Christ himself who gives these men this power to kill. In the first stanza, Herbert comments on the people's blindness to Christ. This section is redolent of Isaiah 53:3, which describes the suffering servant as the one from whom we "hid our faces." By drawing from Isaiah 53, Herbert indicates that people are blind to Christ in that they cannot see his true divinity.

In these stanzas, Herbert draws deeply from liturgy and litany of Holy Week. His use of the Office of Holy Week indicates that the poem itself is part of a larger liturgical tradition. Rosemond Tuve confirms this point, writing

Herbert's poem belongs with two interlinked groups . . . of medieval lyrics; both groups belong as does his poem to a larger group, the Complaints of Christ to his

³⁰⁸ Rosemond Tuve, "On Herbert's 'Sacrifice,'" *The Kenyon Review* 12, no 1 (1950): 64.

³⁰⁹ Herbert, "The Sacrifice," 1-8.

people, and all apparently have their spring in the liturgical offices of Holy Week, most obviously in the *Improperia* or Reproaches of Good Friday.³¹⁰

One such liturgical form that Herbert draws from in creating his poem is “the extra-scriptural Monologue or Complaint of Christ (of which one type is the O-all-ye who-pass by poems).” This type of poetry “provides the formal basis and thence exerts much influence upon the tone” of Herbert’s poem.³¹¹ Herbert draws more specifically from the *Improperia*. The *Improperia* is part of the liturgy of the office of Good Friday, in which the reproaches of Christ to his people are recited or sung. This liturgical meditation is traditionally “chanted by two choirs during the Veneration of the Cross and consists of twelve verses, which set in parallel the Divine compassion for Israel and the outrage inflicted on Christ in His Passion . . . [It is] built upon Old Testament passages.”³¹² Herbert’s poem imitates this *Improperia* in its subject matter and in its use of Old Testament passages. Herbert’s use of a dramatic monologue, featuring Christ as its speaker, his use of Old and New Testament passages, and his reliance on ironical language is redolent of the tradition from which he draws. In this way,

Herbert’s ‘Sacrifice’ is a meditation upon the liturgy, developing the events of the Passion Week according to the intricate methods of the seventeenth century: visualization, intellectual analysis, profit drawn from the dual and simultaneous vision of the God mad man.³¹³

³¹⁰ Tuve, “On Herbert’s Sacrifice,” 52.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

³¹² “Reproaches,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F.L. Cross (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), 1154.

³¹³ Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation*, 91.

In this poem, Herbert prompts readers to consider the way in which the liturgy itself is a means of reflecting upon Christ's suffering.

Furthermore, by drawing from this liturgical tradition in this poem, Herbert draws from another passage of Scripture that itself is redolent of Isaiah 53: Lamentations 1. Specifically, in his first stanza, Herbert draws directly from Lamentations 1:12: "O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow: for he hath made a vintage of me, as the Lord spoke in the day of his fierce anger."³¹⁴ By echoing this passage, Herbert draws from the traditional liturgical Reproaches of Christ, which are often based around the sentence: "*O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte: Si est dolor similis sicut dolor meus.*" This phrase itself is a quotation drawn from Lamentations 1:12 that is meant to prompt the meditator to reflect on Christ's suffering. In Church practices and teaching, Lamentations 1 is traditionally identified with Christ's Passion. As such, Herbert reflects a greater Church tradition by drawing from the passage to create his poem about Christ's sacrifice. For example, in the Book of Common Prayer of 1549, with which Herbert would have been very familiar, Lamentations 1 is the appointed text for evensong of the Wednesday of Holy Week.³¹⁵ Furthermore, Lamentations 1:12 was a popular text within many Holy Week sermons of the 17th century. For example, Lancelot Andrewes uses Lamentations 1:12 as subject text for his Good Friday Sermon given in 1604. He claims that the theme of the verse

is affliction, the pain of the body, and grief, sorrow of the soul. Although, written by Jeremiah to express the misery facing his own people at the hand of the

³¹⁴This quotation is given in the King James Version.

³¹⁵ *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1938), 96.

Chaldeans, the text is nevertheless most appropriate to our Saviour in His Passion and Death.³¹⁶

In his sermon, Andrewes interprets Lamentations 1:12 as a meditation on Christ's sorrow and uses it to discuss the ways in which Christians should respond to Christ.

Lamentations 1:12 is thematically similar to Isaiah 53. Both are prophetic passages that have been interpreted as references to Christ and his Passion. Additionally, both draw attention to Christ's suffering and to the callousness with which people approach this suffering. These prophetic passages work together to provide a more fulsome picture of the suffering servant. Because of this similarity and apparent intertextuality, these two passages have traditionally been used together. Isaiah 53 is also used in the liturgy of Holy Week as the lesson for evensong on Good Friday.

Furthermore, in his sermon for Good Friday, Andrewes draws from Isaiah 53 in order to explicate Lamentations 1:12. He quotes Isaiah 53:4-6 in his explanation of the cause of Christ's sorrow as it is revealed in Lamentations 1:12. Because they are traditionally and thematically linked, these two passages often implicitly draw attention to one another. As such, by drawing from Lamentations 1:12 in the opening of his poem, Herbert not only echoes liturgical tradition, he also implicitly draws the reader's mind to Isaiah 53 and focuses the reader's attention on the suffering servant to which both prophetic passages point.

Having drawn implicitly and explicitly from Isaiah 53 and liturgical tradition in the first stanza of the poem, Herbert continues to do so. In the remainder of the poem,

³¹⁶ Lancelot Andrewes, in *The Liturgical Sermons of Lancelot Andrewes, Vol I: Nativity, Lenten and Passion*, ed. Marianne Dorman (Cambridge: The Pentland Press Ltd., 1992), 223.

Herbert describes Christ's paradoxical suffering by drawing from Isaiah 53 and maintains the ironic tone associated with the *Impropria* and Complaints of Christ. For example, in describing the soldier's binding, Herbert's Christ exclaims, "I suffer binding, who have loosed their bands."³¹⁷ The juxtaposition of the two forms of "binding" draw attention to the fact that Christ was bound in that he "bore man's suffering" so that man could be set free from the binds of sin.

Several stanzas later, Herbert comments upon Christ's meekness in the face of his accusers. He writes

The Priest and rulers all false witness seek
'Gainst him, who seeks not life, but is the meek
And ready Paschal Lamb of this great week:
Was ever grief like mine?

Again, about half way through the poem, Herbert comments on Christ's meekness, recording Christ's exclamation that

I answer nothing, but with patience prove
If stony hearts will melt with gentle love.
But who does hawk at eagles with a dove?
Was ever grief like mine?

My silence rather doth augment their cry;
My dove doth back into my bosom fly,
Because the raging waters still are high:
Was ever grief like mine?³¹⁸

In these three stanzas, Herbert draws from Isaiah 53:7. In the first stanza, Herbert directly refers to Christ as the meek lamb. In the latter two stanzas, Herbert emphasizes Christ's silence before his accusers. In both cases, Herbert dramatically contrasts

³¹⁷ Herbert, "The Sacrifice," 57-60.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 89-96.

Christ's meek silence with the false, harsh indictments of his accusers. This stark contrast, by creating a more dramatic portrayal of Christ's appearance before his accusers, allows readers to appreciate more fully Christ's silence and meek appearance as it is described in Isaiah 53.

In describing Christ's crown of thorns, Herbert draws from Isaiah 53 to highlight the fact that by bearing man's sins through suffering, Christ removes their sins.

Referencing his crown, Herbert's Christ proclaims

So sits the earth's great curse in *Adam's* fall
Upon my head: so I remove it all
From th' earth unto my brows, and bear the thrall;
Was ever grief like mine?

Here, the crown of thorns, representative of Christ's suffering, is a symbol of man's sin.

As such, the reference to Christ's crown reminds readers that Christ bears man's sins.

The repetition of the rhetorical question at the end of the stanza also emphasizes the relationship between Christ's suffering and man's sins. Here, Herbert again reminds his readers that their sins cause Christ's great grief. This reminder of the part that their sins played in Christ's suffering encourages readers to turn to Christ with contrition and gratitude.

Herbert writes more about the correct way in which a reader should respond to Christ's suffering in a stanza that follows. He writes,

My cross I bear myself, until I faint:
Then Simon bears it for me by constraint,
The decreed burden of each moral Saint
Was ever grief like mine?³¹⁹

³¹⁹ Ibid., 197-200.

Here, Herbert, with his description of Christ bearing his cross begins by drawing attention to the fact that Christ bore man's sin. He then indicates that men should attempt to imitate Christ's suffering. Herbert suggests that Simon is an example of such imitation. Although Simon's imitation of Christ's suffering was compulsory, Herbert suggests that all Christians should voluntarily follow Simon's example and participate in Christ's suffering, taking up their crosses to follow him.

In the three stanzas that follow, Herbert describes Christ's suffering upon the cross in vivid details and draws attention that Christ suffered in this way to heal mankind. Herbert's Christ exclaims,

Shame tears my soul, my body many a wound;
Sharp nails pierce this but sharper that confound;
Reproaches, which are free, while I am bound.
Was ever grief like mine?

Now heal thyself, Physician: now come down.
Alas! I did so, when I left my crown
And father's smile for you, to feel his frown:
Was ever grief like mine?

In healing not myself, there doth consist
All that salvation, which ye now resist;
Your safety in my sickness doth subsist:
Was ever grief like mine?³²⁰

In the first two lines of the first stanza, Herbert echoes Isaiah 53 through his use of the words "shame," "wound," and "pierce." Furthermore, by claiming that the reproaches that are hurled at Christ are more painful than these wounds, Herbert draws attention to the fact that Christ's suffering was not merely physical but also spiritual. Moreover, Christ's discussion of his role as a physician in the latter two stanzas draws attention to

³²⁰ Ibid., 221-228.

his paradoxical role as a healer. The people mock Christ, instructing him to heal himself. The people's mocking demand that Christ heal himself is ironic because Christ is in fact a physician. However, he is not the type of physician that they expect. Their ironic derision draws attention to the true purpose of Christ's suffering. Christ's purpose as a physician is not to heal himself but, rather, to heal all people of their iniquities. Christ does not heal in the way that the world understands healing. His healing comes through suffering and is offered to those who are guilty.

Finally, the poem echoes Isaiah 53 in its discussion of Christ's dying between two thieves. Christ cries,

Betwixt two thieves I spend my utmost breath,
As he that for some robbery suffereth.
Alas! what have I stolen from you? death:
Was ever grief like mine?

A king my title is, prefixed on high;
Yet by my subjects am condemned to die
A servile death in servile company:
Was ever grief like mine?³²¹

In these two stanzas, Herbert draws attention to the fact that Christ "was assigned a grave with the wicked" and emphasizes the irony of this fact. Whereas the thieves who surround Christ are guilty, Christ is innocent. The only crime that he is guilty of is destroying death. Furthermore, Christ is a king and yet he is condemned to die a servile, criminal death. By highlighting these details, Herbert emphasizes the irony of the fact that Christ "was assigned a death with the wicked."

"The Thanksgiving"

³²¹ Ibid., 229-236.

In “The Thanksgiving” that directly follows “The Sacrifice,” Herbert reflects upon man’s inability to fully understand or make recompense for Christ’s sacrifice. In this poem, Herbert does not implement the same poetic form that he does in “The Sacrifice.” Instead, the poem follows an AB rhyme scheme with alternating lines of iambic pentameter and tetrameter. In the poem, Herbert struggles with the question of “how ‘[to] make up for the physical and psychological torture Christ suffered.’”³²² While “The Sacrifice” describes God’s love, manifest in Christ’s suffering and death on the cross, “The Thanksgiving” gives a depiction of the difficulty that men face in loving Christ in return. Sherwood writes that in the poem

Herbert is dramatically announcing the difficulty in finding terms to understand man’s answering love of God. It is not that man does not love God, but that expressing love in traditional terms is fraught with difficulty. The terms of conformity . . . are not clear to the speaker at all. The problem lies not in defining God’s love for man . . . Christ’s sacrifice is a clear expression of his love; the Problem lies in knowing how to love God in turn.

“The Sacrifice” is a poem about the uniqueness and magnitude of Christ’s love, which was revealed in his sacrifice. In “The Thanksgiving,” Herbert acknowledges this uniqueness and magnitude. At the end of “The Sacrifice,” Christ requests that “others say, when I am dead, / Never was grief like mine.”³²³ The speaker of “The Thanksgiving” fully acknowledges this fact. He reflects on Christ’s suffering claiming,

O King of grief! (a title strange, yet true,
To thee of all kings only due)
O King of wounds!³²⁴

³²² John Vanderslice, “Herbert’s the Thanksgiving,” *The Explicator* 56 (1998): 175.

³²³ Herbert, “The Sacrifice, 251-252.

³²⁴ Herbert, “The Thanksgiving, 1-3.

Here the speaker fully acknowledges the magnitude of Christ's suffering and wonders at its paradoxical nature. In doing this, he draws from Isaiah 53's testimony that Christ was wounded for our transgressions. The speaker does not struggle to understand Christ's suffering. Rather he finds it difficult to respond to the suffering in the correct way. The speaker exclaims "how shall I grieve for thee, / Who in all grief preventest me."³²⁵ In the lines that follow, he indicates his desire to respond to Christ's sacrifice by suffering on his own. The speaker asks,

Shall I weep blood? why, thou has wept such store
That all thy body was one door.
Shall I be scourged, flouted, boxed, sold?
'Tis but to tell the tale is told.
My God, my God, why dost thou part from me?
Was such a grief as cannot be.³²⁶

The speaker considers responding to Christ's suffering by undergoing suffering of his own. However, he realizes that this idea is futile and misguided. Christ himself has undergone such intense suffering that limited, mortal suffering cannot compare.

In the next lines, the speaker rejects the idea of "skipping [Christ's] doleful story, [to] side with [his] triumphant glory."³²⁷ He understands that such a flippant response is incorrect but still struggles with the question "how then shall I imitate thee, and copy thy fair though bloody hand?"³²⁸ These lines again indicate the impossibility of fully imitating Christ's suffering.

³²⁵ Ibid., 3-4.

³²⁶ Ibid., 5-10.

³²⁷ Ibid., 11-12.

³²⁸ Ibid., 15-16.

In the next section of the poem, the speaker explores another method of responding to Christ's suffering. He "pledges to reciprocate Christ's love through Christian use of his gifts."³²⁹ He pledges to give Christ his wealth, honor, wife, children, friends and even his body.³³⁰ However, the speaker must ultimately acknowledge that none of these sacrifices appropriately repay Christ for his sacrifice. About halfway through the poem, the speaker exclaims "As for thy Passion – But for that anon, / When with the other I have done."³³¹ After this interjection, the speaker continues with his discussion of how he will respond to Christ's other gifts. He claims that "for thy predestination. . . . I'll build a spittle, or mend common ways."³³² He vows to use God's creation for God's glory and to dedicate music to praising him.³³³ Furthermore he pledges to use his own wit to praise God's victory.³³⁴ All of the speaker's resolves "are clearly admirable and pious."³³⁵ However, they do not really address Christ's sacrifice. As Strier writes, this "poem which began as a meditation on the crucifixion has gradually become . . . an enumeration of the speaker's resolutions. The sacrifice has fallen away from his consciousness, and with it the sense of strangeness."³³⁶ However, in the final

³²⁹ Strier, *Love Known*, 50.

³³⁰ Herbert, "The Thanksgiving," 19-28.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

³³² *Ibid.*, 31-33.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 35-42.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 43-47.

³³⁵ Strier, *Love Known*,

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

lines of the poem, the speaker returns to a meditation on Christ's sacrifice. He exclaims "then for thy Passion – I will do for that – Alas, my God, I know not what."³³⁷ In these lines, the speaker admits the difficulty of responding to Christ's Passion and suffering. No human sacrifice or imitation can repay Christ's sacrifice. The suggestion then is that, in light of one's own inability to respond to Christ's sacrifice, one should adopt an attitude of humble admiration.

"The Reprisal"

The poem directly following "The Thanksgiving" was originally entitled "The Second Thanksgiving" and "every commentator on these poems has noted their continuity."³³⁸ The poem later titled "The Reprisal" takes up the same question that "The Thanksgiving" addresses: how to respond rightly to Christ's sacrifice. The speaker begins in the same vein as he ended in the previous poem. However, he adopts a more contemplative tone. He again addresses Christ's sacrifice, explaining

I have considered it, and find
There is no dealing with thy mighty Passion:
For though I die with thee, I am behind;
My sins deserve the condemnation.³³⁹

Here, the speaker reflects on the fact that there is no way to repay Christ for his Passion. He reflects on the fact that even his own death will not be a just payment. For, if he were to die, he would die as a sinful man while Christ died as a perfectly innocent victim. The speaker continues in this vein, exclaiming

³³⁷ Herbert, "The Thanksgiving," 49-50.

³³⁸ Strier, *Love Known*, 52.

³³⁹ Herbert, "The Reprisal," 1-4.

O make me innocent, that I
May give a disentangled state and free:
And yet thy wounds still my attempts defy³⁴⁰

The speaker desires to be innocent so that he can make just retribution for his own sins. However, he realizes that this is impossible. Christ's wounds are too grievous to be atoned for by his own death.

In the third stanza, the speaker's tone shifts. He adopts a tone of "mock outrage."³⁴¹ He exclaims "Couldst thou not grief's sad conquests me allow, / But in all vict'ries overthrow me?"³⁴² Here, Herbert expresses the frustration that one will experience if he attempts to make recompense to Christ for his sacrifice. Making recompense is impossible, so it is futile to attempt to do so. In the final stanza of the poem, Herbert presents the solution to this frustration. The speaker exclaims:

Yet by confession will I come
Into the conquest. Though I can do nought
Against thee, in these I will overcome
The man, who once against thee fought.³⁴³

Here the speaker realizes that the correct response to Christ's suffering is submission to Christ. He cannot repay Christ's suffering, nor can he fully imitate this suffering. However, he can be conformed to Christ by becoming a member of his body, the Church. Herbert indicates that this humble contrite submission to Christ is the correct response to the suffering servant.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 5-7.

³⁴¹ Strier, *Love Known*, 53.

³⁴² Herbert, "The Reprisal," 9-10.

³⁴³ Herbert, "The Reprisal," 13-16.

Conclusion

Both Donne and Herbert offer valuable insight into Isaiah 53 by indicating how the reader should respond to this biblical passage. Meditation upon Christ's cross is a central aspect of both poets' works. Not only do the poets offer vivid descriptions of Christ's suffering drawn from Isaiah 53 that can aid in meditation on Christ's suffering, but they also offer guidance about how men should respond to this prophetic passage. In his three poems, Donne describes the paradoxical nature of Christ's suffering. He also records several examples of misconceived responses to Christ's suffering. Finally Donne indicates what he conceives to be a correct response: contrite, submissive conformity to Christ. Similarly, in his series of poems, Herbert considers the difficulty of responding to Christ's suffering. In "The Sacrifice," Herbert offers a vivid description of Christ's sacrifice drawn from liturgical and Scriptural passages. In the two poems that follow, Herbert considers the difficulty of responding to Christ's sacrifice and finally shows that the correct response is humble submission to Christ's church. The poetry of both of these writers offers valuable insight into Isaiah 53. Not only do these poems make Christ's suffering more emotionally and imaginatively accessible to readers, they also direct the readers to correct emotional responses to Christ's suffering. Donne and Herbert guide readers to humble gratitude and submission to the suffering servant whose paradoxical sufferings they poetically describe.

CHAPTER FOUR

Partakers in Christ's Suffering: Human and Divine Suffering in Georges Rouault's *Miserere*

Since the time of Christ's death, Christians have drawn from Isaiah 53 in order to develop accounts of Christ's suffering and to frame discussions concerning the way in which people should respond to this suffering. Treatments of Isaiah 53 vary widely from use of the passage in patristic apologetics to use of the passage within meditative poetry. Thus far, I have focused on imaginative, affective treatments of the passage, looking specifically at Franciscan meditations and metaphysical poetry. I have argued that such affective, imaginative treatments of Christ's suffering provide readers with the ability to enter emotionally into Christ's suffering and to offer guidance on how best to pursue such an emotional response. In this final chapter, I look at the ways in which treatments of Isaiah 53, particularly emotional, imaginative treatments, enable Christians to understand the ways in which human suffering reflects Christ's suffering. I argue that such treatments of the passage enable Christians to make sense of their own suffering and to understand properly the brokenness of their world. These treatments remind people that they do not suffer alone and that their suffering is not a reason to despair. God himself, as a man, suffers with men and ultimately redeems this suffering. As such, Christ's suffering offers redemptive hope to a world crippled by suffering. In order to demonstrate this, I analyze another imaginative, treatment of Isaiah 53: Georges Rouault's series of etchings, *Miserere et Guerre*. I analyze the ways in which suffering, particularly Christ's suffering, is depicted in this series and comment upon the ways in

which Rouault's representations of suffering enable readers to understand better the way in which humanity's suffering is related to Christ's suffering. I then return to the treatments of Isaiah 53 that I have already analyzed and briefly consider how these treatments also enable Christians to understand the connection between Christ's suffering and human suffering.

George's Rouault's Miserere et Guerre

Georges Rouault was a French artist and printmaker who lived between 1871 and 1958.³⁴⁴ A devout Catholic, Rouault has been referred to as “undoubtedly [the] greatest religious artist” of the twentieth century and “the monk of modern art.”³⁴⁵ Rouault often chose deeply religious subjects for his artwork, and the theme of Christ suffering predominates. Seamus Gaffney sheds light on this central theme, writing

It may be said that . . . portrayals of our Divine Redeemer are the focus of [Rouault's] whole art. Christ, as depicted by Rouault, is always the Man of Sorrows, tortured, bruised, and despised. Rouault once said in a letter to a friend: “My only ambition in life is to be able some day to paint a Christ so moving that those who see Him will be converted.”³⁴⁶

Rouault's depictions of Christ suffering often serve a meditative purpose; they enable the viewer to enter emotionally into Christ's suffering. As the quote above indicates, Rouault's hope in painting the Suffering Servant was that viewers would be moved to an

³⁴⁴Ena G. Heller, preface to *Georges Rouault's Miserere et Guerre: This Anguished World of Shadows*, by Holly Flora and Soo Yun Kang (New York: Museum of Biblical Art, 2006), 9.

³⁴⁵Brian O'Doherty, “Georges Rouault,” *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 45, no 177 (1956): 67.

³⁴⁶Seamus L. Gaffney, “Georges Rouault: The Monk of Modern Art,” *The Irish Monthly* 78, no 926 (1950): 386.

emotional understanding of and response to Christ. His goal in depicting Christ's suffering is to enable Christians to enter emotionally and imaginatively into Christ's suffering and to help them to understand what this suffering means for their world.

Christ's suffering plays a particularly important role in Rouault's series of etchings, *Miserere et Guerre*. Rouault began working on the *Miserere* in France in 1912 and completed it in 1927.³⁴⁷ Consequently, the series reflects the suffering of the French during World War I and the years that followed. His images are responses to this great human suffering; "bleeding through into Rouault's images are the misery, affliction [and] the lunacy and despair of those times."³⁴⁸ The *Miserere* does not depict mere abstractions meant to teach the viewers logical truth or to make an intellectual argument about a distant God. Rather, it is a direct spiritual and emotional response to Christ's suffering and the suffering of Rouault's world. Rouault intended for this emotional response to serve an emotional, meditative purpose, leading its viewers to contemplation of Christ. "From the start, Rouault envisioned the *Miserere* in the tradition of devotional art . . . Rouault created a series of images that, like icons, invite quiet contemplation."³⁴⁹ Through his meditative images, Rouault draws attention to the similarity between Christ's suffering and the suffering of the world. He indicates that Christ continues to suffer the brutalities of this world and encourages his viewers to consider this correlation between their own suffering and Christ's suffering. As such,

³⁴⁷ Kirsten Appleyard, "Exhibition Notes," *Sacred Texts, Holy Images: Rouault's Miserere and Chagall's Bible Series* (Mayborn Museum, Waco, TX, 2010).

³⁴⁸ Katherine Lieber, "George Rouault's *Miserere et Guerre*," *Artscope*. 2007.

³⁴⁹ Holly Flora, "Georges Rouault: Arbiter of Shadows," in *Georges Rouault's Miserere et Guerre: This Anguished World of Shadows*, by Holly Flora and Soo Yun Kang (New York: Museum of Biblical Art, 2006), 16.

Rouault uses these images to aid his viewers in making sense of their own world in light of Christ's suffering.

The fact that Christ's suffering is of central importance for Rouault is attested to by the fact that there are ten etchings of Christ suffering in this series of fifty-eight etchings. Additionally, Rouault begins and ends his series with etchings that depict Christ suffering. Rouault understood Christ's suffering to be the starting point and conclusion of his artistic reflection on suffering and pain. Christ's suffering is the key to understanding the brokenness of the world that is depicted in the series. Considered apart from the fact that Christ suffers, the human suffering depicted remains senseless.

The series itself is divided into two sections, *Miserere* and *Guerre*. The title piece of the first section, *Miserere*, depicts the bowed head of Christ underneath the title and a smiling face that floats ephemerally above two olive branches.³⁵⁰ Christ appears to be in anguish. His head is bowed and his eyes are dark-lidded and closed. The dark lines of his face accentuate his anguish. In this figure, Christ appears as the man of sorrows. By choosing to open his series with this depiction of the Suffering Servant, Rouault establishes that Christ's sacrificial suffering is the place where one must begin in order to understand the suffering of this world.

³⁵⁰ *Miserere* is from the Latin, meaning, and "have mercy." The word is an allusion to the Psalmist's penitential words "Have mercy upon me O God, according to thy loving kindness" in the opening lines of Psalm 51.



Figure One: Plate One

In the plate directly following, Rouault offers another depiction of Christ in anguish. The title of this plate, “Jesus despised,” is an allusion to Isaiah 53:3. Looking at the etching, the viewer is forced to imagine what it means for Christ to be despised. As in the Title Plate, Christ appears with bowed head. However, here, he is the only figure depicted. He stands stark against the grey background. The dark lines of his anguished head and crown of thorns contrast dramatically with the muted background. The grey lines and smudges across Christ’s face and neck give Christ the appearance of being bruised and wounded, moving the reader to imagine Christ as the man who was beaten and despised. In this image, Rouault again invites viewers to enter into meditation upon Christ’s suffering.



Figure Two: Plate Two

In the next plate, Rouault again depicts Christ as the Suffering Servant. The title of this plate, “Eternally Flagellated,” is a reference to Isaiah 53’s description of the Suffering Servant as one who was “beaten” and “pierced.” The title, “Eternally Flagellated,” reminds the viewer that Christ’s suffering is not merely a singular, past event but rather an eternal reality. As Soo Yun Kang writes, this etching reminds the viewer “he is not the Christ of the past, but of the present, perennially in Passion to atone for the sins of mankind.”³⁵¹ Christ’s Passion is not merely a past event to be observed detachedly but is also a present reality that one should actively enter into. The etching’s depiction of Christ draws the viewer into deeper reflection on the reality of Christ’s suffering. As in the etching before it, Christ appears with his head bent in anguish. However, in this etching, he stands upright, naked against a mostly black background. The thick black lines that outline his white body emphasize the contrast between the black background and Christ’s white body. The effect of this contrast is that Christ’s wounded body stands out, drawing the viewer to focus on Christ’s wounds. Christ’s eyes again are darkly lined and closed in grief. Christ’s body is mottled with dark lines and

³⁵¹ Soo Yun Kang, “In the Deep Furrow: Rouault’s Views on Life and Suffering,” *Georges Rouault’s Miserere et Guerre: This Anguished World of Shadows*, by Holly Flora and Soo Yun Kang (New York: Museum of Biblical Art, 2006), 42.

smudges - scars and wounds -, results of the flagellation that Christ has received. This etching motivates the viewer to meditate on Christ's suffering and reminds him that Christ's suffering was not merely a one-time occurrence but an eternal reality. Christ continues to suffer with men.

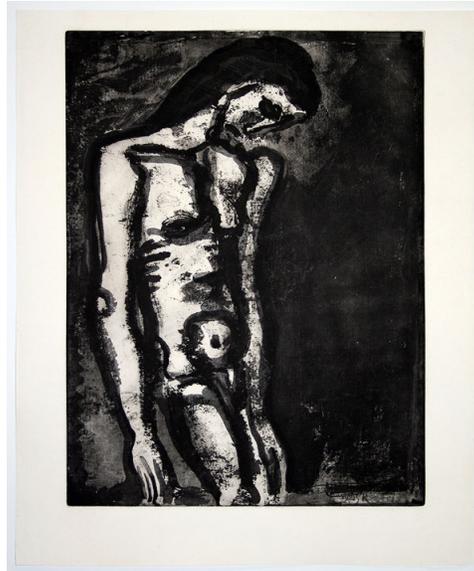


Figure Three: Plate Three

Rouault's next explicit reference to Isaiah 53 appears towards the middle of the series. Plate Twenty-one is titled "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth," a direct quotation of Isaiah 53:7. The etching is very similar to Plate Three. Here, Christ again stands naked with his head bent in sorrow submission. However, this etching is more muted than the previous one. Christ's body is more grey and thus contrasts less starkly with the black background than it did in the previous plate. The lines of Christ's body are less thick and angular. His body is not as mottled by smudges and lines. In this plate, the Christ's submissive meekness is emphasized rather than his tortured body. To this end, faint black rays radiate from Christ's bent head,

emphasizing Christ's divinity and reminding the viewer that Christ is the holy, perfect victim. While Plate Three presents Christ as the tortured Suffering Servant, Plate Twenty-one presents him as the submissive victim, led as a sheep before his slaughters.

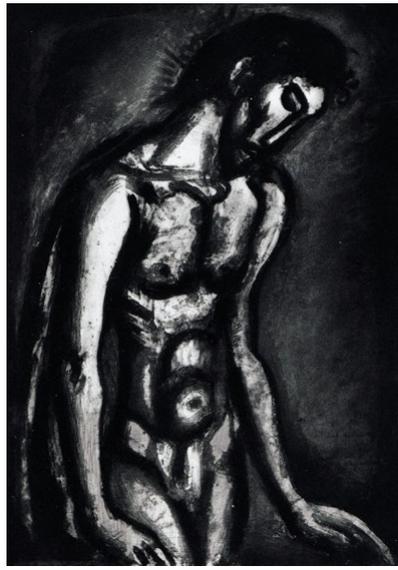


Figure Four: Plate Twenty-one

The final plate of the series depicts the Suffering Servant once more. This plate is titled "It is through his wounds that we are healed," a direct quotation of Isaiah 53:5. The placement of this depiction of the Suffering Servant at the end of the series indicates that Christ's redemptive suffering brings closure to the series. Christ's suffering serves as an answer to the problems of human sin and suffering that the series depicts, bringing meaning into the senseless world of agony and war. The Suffering Servant, who was himself broken, is the only solution for the broken world. Christ's redeeming suffering is able to heal the suffering of the world, and thus he is an image of hope.



Figure Five: Plate Fifty-eight

In this etching, only Christ's bloody face appears. His eyes are heavily lidded and closed. Blood drips down his mouth and his forehead. A tangled crown of thorns is pressed upon his head. This is certainly an image of Christ in the midst of his suffering. This etching is also a representation of St. Veronica's veil. The image of Christ on Veronica's veil is traditionally understood to have been miraculously created along Christ's path to Calvary. In his depiction of St. Veronica's veil, Rouault draws upon the traditional story of its miraculous creation to remind the viewer of Christ's suffering. Traditionally this miraculous image of Christ was made when St. Veronica, "a woman of Jerusalem whose house Christ passed when bearing his cross, seeing his sufferings . . . pitied him and gave him her veil to wipe his brow. When he returned it to her, it was impressed with the sacred image."³⁵² This image is powerfully charged with Christ's sufferings; it was created when Christ was most humbled, and its very substance is his

³⁵² Clara Erskine Clements, *Christian Symbols and Stories of the Saints* (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1971), 316.

sweat and blood.³⁵³ The Veronica image is a physical representative of Christ's Passion and thus carries strong emotional, affective power. It appeals to the viewer's senses and imagination, leading him to meditation on Christ's suffering.

By using this image of Veronica's veil to encourage meditation on Christ's suffering, Rouault draws from the earlier, Franciscan tradition of affective meditation on Christ's suffering. Jesus' encounter with St. Veronica, a traditional station of Francis' *Way of the Cross* was the sixth of the traditional fourteen Stations.³⁵⁴ The Stations inspire a believer to contemplate Christ's suffering and to walk along the path to Calvary with him. By moving prayerfully through the stations, a believer learns to "know Jesus and Him crucified." By meditating on Christ's path to Calvary, the believer learns to partake in Christ's suffering. Similarly, Plate Fifty-eight, with its connection to *The Way of the Cross*, affects the viewer emotionally and allows him to see that "just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows." The figure serves the devotional purpose that Rouault intended the series as a whole to perform. It inspires contemplation and invites the viewer to look beyond his own sufferings to those of Christ. In a way similar to *The Way of the Cross*, the image of St. Veronica in the figure encourages the viewer to meditate on Christ's suffering and to see that just as his sufferings share a part of Christ's Passion, so too he can find ultimate hope in Christ's comfort. Rouault thus draws from the traditional sources to create his image of the Suffering Servant and to encourage his viewers to enter emotionally into Christ's suffering.

³⁵³ Alessandro Falassi, "Believing by Images," *FMR* 67 (1994): 23.

³⁵⁴ Ewa Kuryluk, *Veronica and Her Cloth: History, Symbolism, and Structure of a "True" Image* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, Inc, 1991), 123.

These etchings of Christ's sufferings do not stand on their own. Rouault does not merely offer affective, meditative depictions; nor is the series a modern "Life of Christ." Rather it is a meditation on Christ's interaction with the broken world. Rouault embeds his images of Christ's suffering within images of human suffering. The series is full of images of grieving mothers, unhappy clowns, prostitutes, skeletons, and convicts. Images of Christ's suffering are always juxtaposed with these images of contemporary human suffering. The affect of this juxtaposition is that Christ's "suffering is always linked to that of mankind."³⁵⁵ Contemporary human sufferers, including "prostitutes and other downtrodden figures, [become] types of the suffering Christ."³⁵⁶ Viewers are encouraged to see that human suffering participates in and is reflected in Christ's suffering. Through these images of human suffering, Rouault indicates that as people "fully accept and are immersed in misery, as the way of meeting Christ in his suffering Christ in response partakes in their agonies himself . . . he is the ultimate recipient of all pain."³⁵⁷ Through their suffering, people encounter Christ. As such, people need not bear their sorrows alone. Christ suffers with them and, through his suffering, he heals those who suffer and gives them the hope that their suffering will ultimately be redeemed.

Two plates in particular illuminate the connection that exists between man's suffering and Christ's suffering: Plate Twelve and Plate Eighteen. Plate Twelve is entitled "The hard work of living." It depicts a man whose head is bent in sorrow. The

³⁵⁵Kang, "In the Deep Furrow," 28.

³⁵⁶Flora, "Georges Rouault: Arbiter of Shadows," 13-14.

³⁵⁷Kang, "In the Deep Furrow," 42.

man's appearance is very similar to the Christ of Plate Two. Christ and this man are in similar positions of agony. This man's eyes are closed and darkly outlined just as Christ's are. His body is outlined with dark black lines that create a sharp contrast with the dark grey background. Just as it did in Plate Two, here, this contrast draws attention to the man's body. His body, like Christ's, is covered in grey smudges - bruises. The similarity between the two paintings emphasizes the similarity between Christ and humanity's suffering. Christ suffered as a man, and men continue to suffer as Christ did. As men suffer, the Suffering Servant bears their suffering with them. Consequently, men come to know Christ through their suffering.



Figure Six: Plate Twelve

Plate Eighteen, "The condemned man has gone away . . ." is also similar to other plates depicting Christ's suffering. Specifically it is similar to Plates Three and Twenty-one. The title of the plate is redolent of Isaiah 53 and brings to mind the fact that

Christ himself was condemned. Just as Christ stands with his head bent in Plates Three and Twenty-one, in Plate Eighteen a man, presumably a convict, appears with his head bowed. His eyes are closed and heavily lidded like Christ's. Even the convict's wounds resemble the wounds depicted on Christ's body in Plate Three, indicating that

the wounds of Christ are universal wounds carried by everyone, whether inwardly or outwardly, and Rouault thereby translates a poignant biblical image into the vernacular. Such imagery encourages the viewer to envision his or her sufferings in light of Christ's own painful experience of the human condition.³⁵⁸

The similarity between the man's appearance and Christ's appearance in other plates, prompts the viewer to consider the similarity between the suffering that they endure and the suffering of their Lord. Ultimately, the viewer learns to see suffering as a way of knowing Christ and to understand more fully the way in which Christ bears humanity's suffering.



Figure Seven: Plate Eighteen

³⁵⁸ Flora, "Georges Rouault: Arbiter of Shadows," 16.

Rouault's *Miserere* shows that Isaiah 53 can still be used to make sense of human suffering and the brokenness of this world. The series emphasizes the fact that Isaiah 53's Suffering Servant does not stand on the periphery of human history but rather enters into history, suffering with those who suffer and, consequently, redeeming this suffering. Visual art is particularly suited to demonstrating the way in which Christ's suffering gives meaning to contemporary human suffering. Jacques Maritain comments upon the way in which art is a product of an artist's world, writing that art is "basically dependent upon everything which the human community, spiritual tradition and history transmit to the body and mind of man. By its human subject and its human roots, art belongs to a time and a country."³⁵⁹ Georges Rouault's art belongs to a time of war, economic depression, and political turmoil; it is unarguably the product of human suffering. In his series, Rouault attempts to make sense of apparently senseless agony. In order to do this, Rouault emphasizes the intimate relationship between human suffering and Christ's suffering. Because Christ suffers with people, human suffering is not utterly senseless. Rather, it is a means of encountering Christ. Because God himself suffers, people need not suffer alone or without guidance. They find both a companion and a guide in the Suffering Servant. Furthermore, suffering is not a reason to despair. Although suffering is a painful reality of this world, it is not an eternal reality. Christ redeems this suffering; "by his stripes we are healed." In this light, even while enduring agony, people need not surrender to despair. Christ has redeemed suffering and thus offers hope.

³⁵⁹ Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism and the Frontiers of Poetry*, translated by Joseph W. Evans (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons: 1962), 74.

Christ's Suffering and Human Suffering in Earlier Works

Use of Isaiah 53 to understand the intimate association between human suffering and Christ's suffering has historical precedent stemming from the very beginning of Christianity. The writer of *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* draws from Isaiah 53 in order to demonstrate that Polycarp participates in Christ's suffering through his own suffering. The author claims that Polycarp is "a partaker with Christ" because the suffering that he endures is similar to the suffering that Christ endured.³⁶⁰ If Rouault's prostitutes and convicts are suffering servants, then Polycarp is even more so a suffering servant. His martyrdom brings him near to the very heart of the man of sorrows. Like the Suffering Servant, who was a lamb before his shearers, Polycarp is "like a noble ram . . . ready for sacrifice, a burnt offering ready and acceptable to God."³⁶¹ Polycarp's suffering should be understood as a typological representative of the suffering that Christ endured. As such, by understanding Christ's suffering properly, the reader can also understand this martyr's suffering properly. Furthermore, Polycarp has fellowship with Christ because of his suffering. Through their suffering, the martyrs in this account achieve fellowship with Christ because Christ "stood by them and conversed with them as they suffered."³⁶² This account of a martyr's death indicates that even in the early days of their faith Christians had an understanding of the connection between Christ's suffering and human suffering that is similar to Rouault's understanding of this relationship. Polycarp's suffering evokes the suffering that the Suffering Servant endured and Christ continues to

³⁶⁰ Cyril C. Richardson, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 6.2.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 14.1.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 2.3.

suffer with the martyr. Accordingly, by drawing from Isaiah 53, early Christians were able to make sense of and to respond constructively to this martyr's death

Similarly, Franciscan affective meditations on Christ's suffering and death emphasize the connection between human suffering and Christ's suffering. For example, in the concluding prayer of his *Way of the Cross*, Francis expresses his desire to partake in Christ's suffering, writing, "graciously grant us that we, inflamed by His infinite love, may take up the sweet yoke of His Gospel together with the mortification of the cross, following Him as His true disciples."³⁶³ Suffering under Christ's yoke is an expected and even welcome part of the Christian life. Christians are not directionless in this suffering; nor do they suffer senselessly. Rather, they have been provided with a model of how to understand and approach their own suffering through the example of Christ's suffering. Moreover, such suffering brings Christians into closer communion with Christ because, in their suffering, they are able to become Christ's "true disciples."

Additionally, various hagiographic accounts of St. Francis' life indicate that the saint clearly believed that a close connection exists between human suffering and Christ's suffering. Written towards the end of the thirteenth century and ascribed to Leo of Assisi, *The Mirror of Perfection* is a memorial to Francis compiled from earlier documents and is one of the most important of the earlier writings about St. Francis. In the work, Leo describes a scene in which Francis rebukes a follower who has failed to serve a poor man by reminding him to consider that "Christ did take upon Himself our poverty and infirmity . . . [this man's] sickness and poverty be as it were a mirror unto us wherein we may look and with pity perceive the sickness and poverty of our Lord

³⁶³ Francis, *The Way of the Cross*, Conclusion.

Jesus Christ."³⁶⁴ Francis' words here indicate that human suffering is intimately connected to Christ's suffering. Human suffering, in a sense, participates in Christ's suffering because it reflects his suffering and, consequently, provides people with a way of understanding Christ's suffering. As such, by attending to the suffering of other people, one can attend to Christ's suffering. Because of his understanding of the correlation between Christ's suffering and the suffering of men, Francis embraced the suffering of his own life, viewing it as a way to know Christ better. Specifically, Francis welcomed the suffering of the stigmata as a means of achieving greater fellowship with Christ. By suffering, Francis desired to have a greater understanding of Christ "so he should be conformed to him in the affliction and sorrow of his Passion."³⁶⁵ These Franciscan meditations indicate that human suffering should be viewed as a temporal reflection of Christ's suffering. Understood as such, human suffering should be attended to and even welcomed as a way to both understand the Suffering Servant more fully and to enter into greater fellowship with him.

Donne and Herbert's poetry emphasizes the uniqueness of Christ's suffering and, therefore, do not focus on human suffering to the extent that these other writers do. However, in a few of their poems, Donne and Herbert offer a similar image of the intimate connection between human suffering and Christ's. In his poem, "The Litanie," Donne writes

Part not from [my heart], though it from thee would part,
But let it be, by applying so thy paine,

³⁶⁴Leo of Assisi, *The Mirror of Perfection*, translated by Sebastian Ebans, (Boston: L.C. Page and Co., 1900), XXXVII.

³⁶⁵ Bonaventure, *The Life of St. Francis*, 13.2.

Drown'd in thy blood, and in thy Passion slaine.³⁶⁶

Donne desires to suffer precisely so that he can partake in Christ's suffering. By so suffering, Donne believes that he will come to a more complete fellowship with Christ. Like Rouault, Donne understood that personal human suffering is a way of entering into fellowship with Christ. Herbert also indicates that human suffering can be a way of understanding Christ's suffering. In "The Thanksgiving," Herbert considers how he might suffer in order to make recompense for Christ's suffering. He writes

Shall I weep blood? why, thou has wept such store
That all thy body was one door.
Shall I be scourged, flouted, boxed, sold?
'Tis but to tell the tale is told.
My God, my God, why dost thou part from me?
Was such a grief as cannot be.³⁶⁷

Herbert ultimately rejects the idea that such suffering can be a means of making reparation for Christ's suffering, claiming that human suffering cannot match the magnitude of Christ's suffering. However, Herbert does indicate that such suffering offers some insight into Christ's suffering. Human suffering may not repay Christ for the suffering that he endured but it is an imitation of Christ's suffering and, as such, provides the sufferer with a better understanding of Christ's suffering.

Conclusion

In the *Miserere*, images of Christ's suffering are juxtaposed with images that depict the brokenness of Rouault's own world. Rouault suggests that Christ's suffering is not distinct from the human suffering he depicts. Rather than standing on the periphery

³⁶⁶ Donne, "The Litanie," 14-18.

³⁶⁷ Herbert, "The Thanksgiving," 5-10.

of the broken world, Christ actively enters into human suffering. As such, prostitutes, convicts, laborers, and soldiers are not merely tortured people; they are partakers in Christ's suffering. As Rouault artistically presents the passage, Isaiah 53 does not merely describe a past, inert event but an active, ongoing reality. Consequently, meditating affectively upon Isaiah 53 enables people to make sense of their suffering. By seeing that Christ suffers, people learn that they are not alone in suffering and that this suffering is not the occasion for despair.

While Georges Rouault's treatment of Isaiah 53 specifically draws attention to the connection between Christ's suffering and the suffering that people endure, this theme is not unique to his work. Many of the affective, imaginative treatments of Isaiah 53 engaged in this study also draw attention to the relation between Christ's suffering and human suffering. By attending to such treatments of the passage, Christians can more fully realize that Christ suffers as they suffer, supporting them and redeeming their suffering. Therefore, imaginative, affective treatments of Isaiah 53 help Christians to see the way in which Christ's suffering transforms their own experiences of suffering. As such, these treatments serve as reminders that Isaiah 53 is not simply an ancient prophecy directed to the Israelites. It is also a powerful prophecy for today's world, which reminds modern readers that there is a greater reality than the anguish and suffering that surrounds them. Affective, imaginative treatments of Isaiah 53 enable people to grasp the truth of this prophecy and to apply this truth to their lives. By affectively meditating on this passage, people come to see that, even as they bear great sorrow, they need not despair because, in the midst of such agony, the Suffering Servant offers hope.

CONCLUSION

Isaiah 53 contains one of the most paradigmatic treatments of Christ's suffering in all of Scripture. As such, Christians have historically turned to this passage in order to develop accounts of Christ's suffering and to understand how they should respond to such suffering. Historically, imaginative, affective renderings of this passage have provided Christians both with a way of imaginatively engaging this passage of Scripture and also with a way of developing a correct emotional response to this suffering.

In order to demonstrate the way in which affective, imaginative treatments of Isaiah 53 enable Christians to engage imaginatively this passage and to develop a correct response to Christ's suffering, I first traced the development of such treatments of the passage. I did this by engaging examples of formal exegesis of the passage from the Patristic and medieval period. From this study, I indicated the way in which the Patristic apologetic use of the text developed into Franciscan affective, meditative treatments of the text. I determined that such Franciscan affective, meditative treatments provide Christians with a necessary way of engaging this text that previous, more systematic treatments fail to offer.

After this study of formal exegesis, I turned to two artistic treatments of the passage. These artistic treatments are extensions of the Franciscan tradition of reading the passage in an affective, imaginative way. As such, these specific artistic renderings of Isaiah 53 indicate the benefits of treating the passage in an imaginative, affective way. Donne and Herbert's poetic treatments of the passage indicate the way in which imaginative, affective treatment of Isaiah 53 can lead Christians to a right emotional

response to Christ's suffering. Rouault's artistic rendering of Isaiah 53 indicates the way in which imaginative, affective treatments of Isaiah 53 can enable Christians to understand the connection between human suffering and Christ's suffering.

There is a historical precedent for imaginatively, affectively rendering Isaiah 53 that was established by the Franciscan use of the passage within meditative works. This sort of rendering of Isaiah 53 is a necessary component of Christian tradition because it enables Christians to participate imaginatively in Christ's suffering and to develop a correct emotional response to this suffering. The two artistic treatments of this passage that I have considered indicate the benefits of rendering Isaiah 53 in imaginative and affective terms.

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