

Servant Song,
Messianic
Social Justice,
and Human
Flourishing in
the
Commonwealth
Caribbean

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INTRODUCTION

“The use of the Old Testament . . . in the New Testament has captured the interests of a wide spectrum of biblical scholars since the time of Jerome.” To judge from the literature, Evangelicals have, within the last twenty years, made a somewhat significant contribution to the ongoing discussion.¹ This to my mind is a step in the right direction, since careful exegesis of this sort will no doubt help us to understand much

better the nature (and weight!) of God’s inscripturated revelation than any amount of rhetoric on the subject. Thus in this paper I will seek to investigate the particular way in which Matthew employs the first Servant Song in his gospel and conclude with a few remarks from two other songs concerning issues of justice in the Caribbean vis-à-vis Matthew’s vision. Before doing so however an exegetical sketch of the Old Testament passage will be attempted.

Isaiah 42:1-4

*¹Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;*

¹ Walter C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 1. See especially, G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007) and its extensive bibliographies.

*I have put my Spirit upon him,
 he will bring forth justice to the nations.
²He will not cry or lift up his voice,
 or make it heard in the street;
³a bruised reed he will not break,
 and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
 he will faithfully bring forth justice.
⁴He will not fail or be discouraged
 till he has established justice in the earth;
 and the coastlands wait for his law. (RSV)*

In this brief strophe we are introduced to the first “Servant Song” in Isaiah.² The Song is made up of three four-line stanzas:

- A¹ The servant’s ministry of truth . . .
 B The servant’s ministry to people . . .
 A² The servant’s ministry of truth . . .

² The German scholar Bernhard Duhm (*Das Buch Jesaia*. Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2014 [1892]) is credited with being the first to specify four passages as “Servant Songs,” according to F. Duane Lindsay, *The Servant Songs* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 3. Though the term is somewhat of a misnomer, scholars still retain it for convenience. Cf. C. Westermann *Isaiah 40-66* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 92. I believe this particular Song extends to v. 9 (see Lindsay, op. cit., 36). But in keeping with the purpose of the paper, only the designated verses will be treated. Chapters 40-48 anticipate some of the questions the exiles would pose and provide cogent, theological responses that include a divinely ordained conquerer (Isa 42:2-4); J.N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 8-9; Walter Brueggemann (*Isaiah 40-66* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998], 42) also sees the servant as a warrior. According to N.K. Gottwald (*The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], 497), “The claim that the work reads more smoothly and continuously without these ‘Servant Songs’ is dubious”

The first and third stanzas are verbally linked by ‘bring forth justice’ (1d, 3c) and by the universality of *nations* (1d) and *islands* (4c). The second and third stanzas have an interesting association in the gentleness of the servant to the *bruised reed* and *smouldering wick* (3ab) and his own imperviousness to smouldering and bruising (he does not *falter* or become *discouraged*) (4a).³

Westermann believes that when answers are given to three crucial questions relating to this passage, our reading of it will be significantly advanced. The questions are in reference to the identification of the servant, the character of the task assigned to him, and the context in which the designation is made.⁴

The importance of the first two queries should be seen in light of the first word of the text, “Behold” (*henEÜ*). With this notice “we are again upon the threshold of a great message.”⁵ Lindsay assumes throughout that the servant is the Messiah.⁶ But it seems better to identify the servant with Israel. This is the view taken by Knight⁷

³ J.A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester: IVP, 1993), 319.

⁴ Westermann, op. cit., 93.

⁵ E.J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 3:108.

⁶ Lindsay, op. cit., 4-7. The echo is heard in Matt 3:1 (*Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, ed. Leland Ryken et al. [Leicester, England: IVP, 1998], 443, 446).

⁷ G. Knight, *Servant Theology* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1984), 43-43. Note LXX’s interpretative *Iakāb pais mou* (Jacob, my servant).

and Story.⁸ Should *abidi* be translated “my slave” or “my servant”? The larger Old Testament context would suggest our retaining the common designation “servant,” since the “servant of the Lord” certainly came to be a title of honour after the time of Moses (of whom the term was used many times).

The servant is further designated as “my chosen one in whom I delight” (42:1 NIV).⁹ This phrase should no doubt be related to verse 3 as underscoring the servant’s faithfulness.

The next line, “I placed my Spirit upon him,”¹⁰ is felt by Young to provide some evidence in identifying the servant: “The combination of *spirit* and *upon him* . . . 11:2-4 . . . is clearly a Messianic characteristic.”¹¹ But the immediate context seems to militate against this (41:8, 9; 43:10; 44:1, 2, 21; 45:4).

The purpose of this endowment is to bring “justice” (*misphat*; LXX *krisis*) to the nations. This evidently is a key term in the passage,

⁸ C.I.K. Story, *Isaiah* (mimeographed notes, CGST, 1987), 3. He summarizes the passage as emphasizing the servant’s ministry to the nations, and self-understanding; cf. B. Childs’ (*Isaiah* [Leiden: Westminister John Knox, 2001], 324), “designation . . . task . . . approach . . . success.”

⁹ *Nepshesh* (soul) is seldom used in reference to deity (Bruce Waltke, *Theological Word Book of the OT* ed. R. Laird Harris et al. [Chicago: Moody, 1980] 591. “My soul” (*napsi*) is identified by E.W. Bullinger, as an Anthropopatheia/condescension (*Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968) , 872. RSV and AV preserve it. NIV establishes the connection (faithfulness) between vv. 1 and 3.

¹⁰ My translation; “placed”(*nathanti*) should be construed as a *perfectum propheticum*; GKC, 312n.

¹¹ Young, op. cit. 110 n. 5.

occurring three times in short compass (vv 1, 3, 4). It should probably be understood generally as the *will* of YAHWEH. It “represents the conception of a rule . . . for life . . . it points to the idea that God has revealed the right way for men to live together.”¹² In this regard, Hertrich’s comment is illuminating: “In judging the point is not to reach a decision, but *to restore a relationship*.”¹³

Verses 2 and 3 seem to be descriptive of the servant’s meek and gentle character. The description employs four negative clauses (there is a fifth in v. 4), the effect of which is to underline the point made. Lindsay has suggested a figurative use of the negatives to emphasize the servant’s humility.¹⁴ Westermann, however, posits an oriental background where a new king re-enacts the laws and then sees that they are heralded. The servant, according to verses 2 and 3, must be seen in a different way.¹⁵ The two metaphors in verse 3, emphatic of the Servant’s compassion, are tender in themselves. The servant, though he promotes justice, will never be guilty of callousness or arrogance, especially to the weak (“bruised reed and smoldering wick”).¹⁶ The adverbial (“faithfully”) stresses the commitment of the servant to his assignment.¹⁷

¹² Knight op. cit., 44. F. Delitzch (*Isaiah* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976], 175) expresses a similar thought; cf. N.H. Smith “Judgement,” in *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, ed. A Richardson (New York: McMillan, 1950), 117.

¹³ V. Hertrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Exeter: Paternoster 1964-1974) 3:923 (my emphasis).

¹⁴ Lindsay, op. cit., 46; use of Litotes.

¹⁵ Westermann, op. cit., 96.

¹⁶ The hiphil verb in “lift up his voice” may express a context of disputation, according to U. Rüterwörden, *Theological Dictionary of the OT*, ed. J. Botterweck et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 15: 277; see further David

The final verse in this strophe advances the thought of the servant's ministry to establish the will of God far and wide. Westermann seems to understand the last verb of the sentence quite correctly: "it implies . . . expectancy of deliverance or help."¹⁸ To fulfill this great task, the servant will exercise un-flagging zeal (v. 4a). This strophe is remarkable not only for its powerful sentiments, but also its literary arrangement.¹⁹

Lindsay indicates that the occurrence of *mishpat* in verses 1 and 4 "is stylistically an inclusio that helps to mark off verses 1-4 as the first strophe of this servant song."²⁰ He continues: "The strophe designates YAHWEH's servant who will establish His reign through His Spirit (v. 1) describes the servant's successful mission (v. 3b); and declares his endurance to the end (v. 4)."²¹ We will

Clines, *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Phoenix, 2010), s.v. *Shema*.

¹⁷ cf. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1907), 516. W. Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, trans. A.E. Cowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 348, also suggests that, "like the infinitive absolute [the Hebrew behind "faithfully"] may be used adverbially." NIV reflects this exegetical decision. Contra. Delitzsch op. cit., 175, who virtually accepts the LXX's rendition; Westermann, op. cit., 96.

¹⁸ Westermann, op. cit., 96.

¹⁹ See n. 3 above.

²⁰ Lindsay, op. cit., 49.

²¹ Ibid.

now examine the strophe as it makes its appearance in Matthew's gospel.

Matthew 12:18-21 and Its Use of Isaiah 42:1-4

According to Frederic Gardiner, there are four general ways in which the New Testament employs the Old:

1. For purposes of argument
2. As expressions of general truth belonging alike to all ages
3. As illustrations, and
4. Simply as sacred and familiar words, expressing without regard to their original use, that which the writers wished to say.²²

Weir adds a further classification that is designed to delineate the hermeneutical method employed by the New Testament writers. They are listed and described by Kaiser thus:

1. The literal historical method . . . O.T. quotations have the same meaning in the New . . . as in their original contexts:

²² F. Gardiner, *The Old and New Testaments in their Mutual Relations* (New York: James Pott & Co., 1887), 312. cited in Kaiser, op. cit., 6. For recent discussions concerning methodology, see K. Berding and J. Lunde, eds. *Three Views on the NT Use of the OT*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008; G.K. Beale, *Handbook of the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012.

2. The Peshier method applied Old Testament texts directly to the contemporary events of the New Testament apart from any consideration of their original setting...;
3. The typological method focuses on . . . divinely ordained . . . similarities between the Old Testament . . . and New Testament . . .
4. The allegorical method focuses on theological content” while disregarding the historical context; and
5. The theological method [which] sets New Testament theological motifs . . . within broad general traditions.²³

Kaiser raises serious doubts concerning categories 2, 4 and 5, whereas Longenecker²⁴ is charged with finding an undue amount of category 2 in the New Testament.²⁵ While the problem of methodology is by no means an unimportant one, we will now turn our attention to the New Testament pericope under scrutiny, bearing in mind some of the above hermeneutical framework.

THE CONTEXT

Matthew 12:15-21 appears in a narrative which presents Jesus as preaching and teaching about the kingdom of Heaven and the

²³Kaiser, op. cit., 7.

²⁴ Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

²⁵ D.J. Moo, “The Problem of Sensus Plenior,” in D.A. Carson and J. Woodbridge, *Hermeneutics, Authority and Canon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 193. In my judgement, S. Lewis Johnson’s “fallacy” in this area is seeing too much typology. See his *Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980).

religious antagonism with which He was faced (11:2-12:50). No sooner had He cured the man with the withered hand (a bruised reed?), the Pharisees began to plot His death (12:9-14). “Aware of this,” says Matthew, He “withdrew from that place,” and “many followed Him, and he healed their sick (smoldering wicks?) warning them not to tell who He was” (12:15 NIV). This, Matthew claims, was a “fulfillment” of the first Servant Song.

THE TEXT²⁶

15 Bot Jiizas did nuo se dem a plan fi kil im an lef de-so. Wan bag a piipl fala im, an im get di uol a dem beta. *16* Bot im waan dem se dem mosn tel nobadi bout im. *17* Da wie ya, wa Aizaiya, di prafit, did se wuda kom chuu: *18* “Si mi sorvant ya we mi pik, di wan we mi lov, di wan we mek mi api so til. Mi ago gi'im mi Spirit, an im ago mek evribadi, aal di piipl dem we a no Juu, nuo se Gad ago joj dem fier. *19* Fi mi sorvant naa go a kos kos ar a ala, an nobadi naa go ier im mout outa chriit. *20* Jos laik ou im wuda neva pap out piis a graas we evribadi kom tep tep op pan, ar out wan lamp we bieli a flika, im naa go rof op piipl we wiik an ort di wan dem we no chrang. An im ago gwaan til im mek piipl si se mi kyan siev dem. *21* An piipl we a no Juu wi chos iina im fi siev dem. (JNT)²⁷

²⁶ According to G.L. Archer and G. Chrichigno (*Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005], 113), “Isa 42:1-4 . . . is a classic case of the independence of the LXX on Matthew’s part.”

²⁷ The translation of the NT into Jamaican may be regarded as one of the greatest achievements of independent Jamaica; there were roadblocks along the way and one major hurdle was to convince many that it is indeed a significant accomplishment that will in the long run benefit the nation (On this see E. Christine Campbell, “Language and Identity in Caribbean Theology,” in *A Kairos Moment in Caribbean Theology*, edited J. Richard Middleton and G. Lincoln Roper [Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013], 20-39, and

¹⁵ Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. A large crowd followed him, and he healed all who were ill. ¹⁶ He warned them not to tell others about him. ¹⁷ This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁸ “Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
the one I love, in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

¹⁹ He will not quarrel or cry out;
no one will hear his voice in the streets.

²⁰ A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,
till he has brought justice through to victory.

²¹ In his name the nations will put their hope.” (NIV)

The citation is the longest²⁸ in this Gospel and is curious if for no other reason. Scholars have also observed a more important phenomenon: the variations between the Old and New Testament texts. Were the changes arbitrary or deliberate? If the latter question be answered in the affirmative, what exactly is the purpose(s) for the changes? Is the methodology of the Evangelist normative for us today, hermeneutically and homiletically? These are some of the questions with which Bible students have been

D V Palmer and Samantha Mosha, *New Testament Theology: A Postcolonial Perspective* ([Saarbrücken: OmniScriptum], 2014), 40-44).

²⁸ D.L. Turner, “The Gospel of Matthew,” *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* v.11, ed. P.H. Comfort (Carol Stream, ILL: Tyndale, 2005), 171.

wrestling and in the growing literature on the subject some interesting and useful answers are being proffered.

Matthew's quotation seems to be, for the most part, a translation of a Hebrew text. However, Gundry shows where he follows the Septuagint (LXX) at times and offers reasons for such.²⁹ For example, he posits that Matthew used *pais* (following the LXX) instead of *doulos* to render *ebed*, because the former's semantic range includes both "boy" and "servant" and forms a nice parallel with "beloved" (v. 18b).³⁰ Allen, on the other hand, expresses surprise that Matthew did not use *doulos* instead of *pais*, because it is more applicable to the Messiah.³¹ He further conjectures that Matthew substitutes the latter for the former. Allen's view, however, seems to be based upon the assumption that Isaiah 42:1-4 is messianic in its original context. Gundry's suggestion above is more plausible, in my view. Gundry also points out the appropriateness of *pais* as a translation of *ebed*, especially in the light of the baptism and transfiguration of Jesus (3:17 and 17:5 respectively).³²

²⁹ R.H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 229ff.

³⁰ Gundry, *Matthew*, 229.

³¹ W.C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1907) 131.

³² Matthew's *thēsō* (I shall place) agrees with the Targum against MT and LXX, according to Gundry (*Matthew*, 229), and brings out the predictive character of the passage.

Another significant term in the second clause is “beloved.” *Agapētos* (beloved) is found in five other New Testament passages.³³ Grindel suggests that “*agapētos* is probably . . . an exegetical rendering of *behiri* [chosen] prompted by early Christian vocabulary.”³⁴ This suggestion seems plausible on account of the fact that ideas of “election” and “affection” (*agapētos*) sustain a close relation in the New Testament (cf. Ephesians 1:4; Rom. 8:28ff). For Matthew, then, the fact that Jesus was the chosen Servant assumes that He is the beloved Son.³⁵

A comparison of the OT and NT texts shows that Matthew omitted certain lines. Grindel addresses this problem as well. He observes that Matthew “leaves out a whole line that is in the MT. (It is disputed whether the omission is 3c and 4a or 4b). It is especially this last point that we wish to concern ourselves with.”³⁶ Later he again states the problem, “It is clear that Matthew omits 4a, but it is not clear whether he translates 3c or 4b.³⁷” His answer, after some technical discussion, emerges in his final paragraph: “Why he omitted 4ab is not clear, but the most *obvious answer* is that his eye skipped from *misphat* at the end of verse 3 to the *misphat* at the end

³³ Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:22; and 2 Pet. 1:17, all allusions to Isa. 42:1-4.

³⁴ John Grindel “Matthew 12:18-21,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 29 (1967): 110.

³⁵ A.B. Bruce, *Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.) I:185. A.B. Bruce observes that “The quotation is a very free reproduction from the Hebrew, with occasional side glances at the” LXX.

³⁶ Grindel, Matthew 12, 110.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 112.

of 4b, a homoioteleuton.”³⁸If earlier Grindel expressed doubt as to what is really left out and translated by Matthew, how is it that he states his solution in categorical terms? The fact that Matthew cites such a fairly lengthy on this occasion seems significant. This to my mind indicates some familiarity with the Isaianic passage on the part of the author prompting a fresh translation for First Century application. It is not likely then (though the possibility is not ruled out) that he committed the error of haplography (in this case, according to Grindel, a homoioteleuton).³⁹ It has been suggested that Matthew compared his translation with that of the LXX. Grindel also admits that in Isaiah 42:1, “The *apaggelie* [will announce] of Matthew is a translation of *yosi* [promote] according to the sense.”⁴⁰ Thus it does seem that the Evangelist looked intently at the text before him after all. Therefore, although Grindel’s solution is plausible, his “most obvious answer” above seems too strong. If it be granted that the question remains open, another solution may be sought.

The context of Matthew 12:18-21 may be the clue. In 11:20-30, Jesus had just been rejected by the Pharisees. This seems to be the pivotal point of the book. So Matthew is showing why (by his

³⁸ Ibid., 115 (emphasis mine); “homoioteleuton,” identical ending. R. T. France (*The Gospel of Matthew* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 470) identifies the omitted section by way of a citation similar to the following (42:4a-b): “He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth.”

³⁹For a thorough explanation of this and other textual matters, consult Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994, and C. Blomberg, *Can We Still Believe the Bible? An Evangelical Engagement with Contemporary Questions* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2014), 17-37.

⁴⁰Grindel, op. cit., 110.

omission) the establishment of justice on the earth has not taken place (Is. 42:4b).⁴¹ The fulfillment was connected with events surrounding Christ's first advent.⁴²

Another significant change⁴³ in Matthew's citation is his reading *onoma* (name) presumably for *torah* (Is. 42:4b). The reason for this change is by no means clear and I am not certain that "this is probably an inner-Greek corruption" ⁴⁴ Grindel goes on to assert that whatever the reading of the LXX, which Matthew evidently follows here, Matthew could have easily accepted it "even if he knew it was wrong, because the use of *onoma* referring to Christ is more widespread in Matthew than in any of the other Gospels."⁴⁵

Perhaps more convincing is Carson's suggestion: "If, as we have maintained the law in this Gospel serves primarily to point to Jesus, then it is not surprising that Matthew prefers the LXX term."⁴⁶ It is also conceivable that Matthew sees in *onoma* an apt metonymy for "law" (*torah*), since "name" (*onoma*) often stands for the character of God. After all, is not the law an expression of God's character

⁴¹ Witness his cousin's unjust incarceration and decapitation in 11: 2-17.

⁴² Cf. the Lord's use of Is. 61:1-2a in Lk. 4.

⁴³ The words *eis nikos* ("unto victory" v. 20b) are also added; for an insightful discussion on this, see Blomberg (in Beale and Carson, op. cit., 43).

⁴⁴ Grindel, op. cit., 112. He notes that LXX "A" has *onoma* .

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ D.A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 8:287.

(name)? Although Grindel's suggestion (inner-Greek corruption) is questionable, his observation of the widespread use of *onoma* in Matthew is well taken.

THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

It has been hinted at already that the changes found in 12:18-21 are deliberate on the part of Matthew. What purpose might these serve? Having established that the servant of Isaiah 42:1-4 is Israel, how did Matthew come to connect the passage with Jesus?

In dealing with the way the Old Testament is cited in the New, E.E. Ellis has a fine discussion on the presuppositions that guided the apostles. He points out that the perspective from which the New Testament writers understand the Old is sometimes stated explicitly, and at other times it has to be inferred from their usage. This perspective, he explains, was derived in part from Jewish views and partly from the teaching of Jesus. "Apart from its christological forms, it appears to be governed primarily by four factors: a particular understanding of history, of man, of Israel and of Scripture." After elaborating on these, he adds another presupposition: "In agreement with the Old Testament conception, the New . . . views *man as both individual and corporate existence*. It presents the corporate dimension, the aspect most difficult for modern Western man to appreciate."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ E.E. Ellis, "How the New Testament Uses the Old," in *New Testament Interpretation*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Exeter: Paternoster, 1977), 209. Blomberg (in Beale and Carson, op. cit., 43), invokes the hermeneutic of double fulfillment, an improvement on Ellis' position. See also the excellent synthesis of the pericope in W.D. Davies and D.C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988-1997), 2:324.

This, I think, holds the key to Matthew's identification of the servant with Jesus.⁴⁸ In this regard, Longenecker's observation is pertinent: "The first evangelist seems to be following a thematic arrangement of his material in the structuring of his Gospel . . . in the first half . . . modern commentators believe they can detect echoes and reminiscences of Israel's earlier experiences. Thus in his portrayal of the life and ministry of Christ, there have been found particularly suggestive parallels between Jesus and the nation."⁴⁹

He goes on to point out that "what can be claimed with confidence . . . is (1) that behind the evangelist's presentation stands the Jewish concepts of corporate solidarity and typological correspondences in history, (2) that the phenomenon of historical parallelism seen in the First Gospel is a reflection of such conceptualization, and (3) that this background is important in understanding Matthew's treatment of specific Old Testament statements and events. By the employment of such concepts, Jesus is portrayed in Matthew's Gospel as the embodiment of ancient Israel and antitype of earlier redemption."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ So E.K. Nsiku, Congolese missionary to Brazil ("Isaiah," in *African Bible Commentary* ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006], 838). Nsiku is wrong, I believe, in identifying the Isaianic servant with Cyrus, but correct in citing a Yombe proverb ("kimfumu bieka kibiekuana . . . no serious person makes himself a leader of others") in relation to the election.

⁴⁹ Longenecker, *op. cit.*, p. 141. Cf. Matt. 2:15 and Hosea 11:1, and see also J. Oswalt, "Theology of Isaiah," in *Dictionary of OT Theology & Exegesis*, ed W.A. vanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 4: 725-732.

⁵⁰ Longenecker, *op. cit.*, 142. Allen (*op. cit.*, 131) comes close to this: "The passage had probably been adapted in Christian writings in order to bring out the conception that the Messiah . . . accomplished the career that had been foretold of the idealized nation."

A summary of the passage is now in order. Matthew has shown elsewhere that Jesus often withdrew when His enemies became hostile (cf. 14:13; 15:21; 16:5). The warnings to those that were healed should be understood in the light of the growing antagonism against Him as well. In the Lord's conduct under these pressures, the evangelist perceived nothing less than the fulfillment⁵¹ of the Scriptures. The Pharisees may plot to kill Jesus (v. 14), but He would not quarrel or cry out (v. 19). As God's beloved Servant-Son in whom He delights, He would display gentleness and humility (v. 19), while breathing an air of compassion on the weak (v. 20). He would also promote vigorously the concerns of the Kingdom (v. 21).⁵²

In so far as the theological significance of the text is concerned, Matthew may have changed *ebed* (servant) in Isaiah 42:1 to *pais* (servant/child; 12:18), because the former presupposes the latter. Second, he evidently saw within *torah* (law; Isa 42:4) not only an apt metonymy for *onoma* (name) but, probably, an opportunity to bring out forcefully the idea that the real hope of the gentiles is not a precept but a Person. . Finally, he evidently saw in the career of the Lord a kind of recapitulation of the history of Israel, if indeed he shared the presupposition of corporate personality that scholars say was in vogue at that time.

⁵¹ Cf. Metzger ("Formulas introducing quotations of Scripture," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 70 [1951], 306): "All varieties of the formulas . . . indicate . . . the very highest view of the inspiration of Scriptures which they quote."

⁵² "As for *eis nikos*, that is impossible for *b'rt* which the LXX well renders *epi tēs gēs*. . . . Conceivably the establishment of God's perfect justice on earth is to be understood as involving a conquest or subduing of mankind in order to render them obedient to the Lord's judgement." G.L. Archer and G. Chrichigno (*Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005], 115).

Final Reflection

There are so many serious issues of injustice within our world that one does not know where to begin in addressing the problem. A longstanding majority-world issue that has caught the attention of Bible scholars is the plight of the Dalits living in the world's largest democratic nation. Though it bears some similarity to the Black-white impasse of the North Atlantic region, the Dalit situation is not related to post-slavery/post-emancipation vicissitudes. It is firmly entrenched in the history of Hindu culture.⁵³ Then there is the seemingly intractable Palestinian question amidst the more recent Syrian civil unrest—all of which threaten to undo the best efforts of international jurisprudence and exhaust the resources of the United Nations. Turning to South America, the pre-world cup build up provided a fitting stage for some to draw our attention to deplorable conditions in Brazil, and the oil rich Venezuelans (the majority?) want the world to know as well that the post-Chavez era is not a bed of roses. As Priscilla the author of Hebrews would say, time would fail me to mention the challenges of the peoples of the Ukraine, South Africa, Nigeria, Malaysia, et al., but we must hurry on to the region that one theologian dubs the neo-exilic nation.⁵⁴ Our main focus here will be on a few issues within the Anglophone

⁵³ See George Koonthanam, "Yahweh, the Defender of the Dalits: A Reflection on Isaiah 3:12-15," in *Voices from the Margins: Interpreting the Bible in the Third-World*, ed. R.S. Surgirharajah . London: SPCK, 1995, and Monica J. Melancton, "Unleashing the Power Within: The Bible and the Dalits," in *The Future of the Biblical Past: Envisioning Biblical Studies on a Global Key*. eds. Ronald Boer and F.F. Segovia (Atlanta: SBL, 2012), 47-66.

⁵⁴ G. Lincoln Roper,

community.⁵⁵ In recent times both Jamaica and the twin-island republic—Trinidad and Tobago—have passed anti-gang legislation to (presumably) strengthen the arm of justice within their borders. Will it work? It is certainly too early to tell, but already there are voices of dissent. For example, Father Cyde Harvey believes that such a bill does not go far enough “Anti-gang cultures, whether it leads to legislation or not” says he, must begin in various places.” He continues:

Those of us who have worked with youth at risk have been struck by the high percentage of them who have very poor reading skills. Many of our teenage boys are reading at levels half their age. Many of our gang leaders have reading disabilities which were not recognized at school, [which] left them at the back of the class and then saw them compensating through their other natural abilities of leadership, etc.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ The special problem of Haiti, for instance, is an interesting case study both regionally (with the Dominion Republic) and internationally (with the USA on one hand and France on the other); and what about the Cuban embargo? http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/editorial/Ending-the-Cuba-embargo--How-Caricom-can-help_16365436.

⁵⁶ “ ‘Getting to the Roots’: A Reflection on the Trinidad and Tobago Anti-Gang Bill” *Groundings: Catholic Theological Reflections on Issues facing Caribbean People in the 21st Century* 29 (January 2013), 24. The problem in Jamaica is probably worse.

⁵⁶Witness the Myrie case that both Barbados and Jamaica will not forget, for different reasons.

One way, some say, to tackle challenges like these is to increase the support and full implementation of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), especially in light of the fact that our:

Independence Constitutions were never the constituent acts of us as a sovereign people. Rather, they were all orders in council of the Westminster Imperial Parliament. . . . Our Independence Constitutions were not products of any communal act of constitution-making in the Commonwealth Caribbean. . . . The PROCESS Of constitution reform in the Commonwealth Caribbean therefore offers an auspicious occasion as any for critical reflection on the fundamental terms of our political and rethinking of the conventional understandings of West Indian constitutional law and practice, in order to rationally diagnose the more critical problems attending our political order, and to attempt resolve these problems by a discursive engagement of the West INDIAN citizenry on some of the larger questions of constitutional democratic governance.⁵⁷

This worthwhile proposal raises at least two significant questions: can Caribbean leaders muster the political will to hasten such reforms? If and when they do, how far will these reforms go to effectively address the social ills plaguing the region?

Before returning to the Isaiah-Matthew inter-textual study attempted above, we highlight one more justice-concern: the Black presence in the Caribbean and the issue of reparation. This matter has caught the attention of the CARICOM secretariat as well as some of the most prominent academics in the regions. For all the stakeholders, except

⁵⁷Simeon C.R. McIntosh, *Reading Text & Polity: Hermeneutics and Constitutional Theory* (Kingston: The Caribbean Law Publishing Co., 2012), 6-7.

the former colonizers, the main point here is one of natural justice.⁵⁸ One Caribbean scholar argues that:

There is no doubt that reparation is a just cause; and clear precedence exists. . . . [P]erhaps the most famous case of reparation was that paid by the German state to the Jews in territories controlled by Hitler's Germany to indemnify them for persecution. In the initial phase, payments included US\$2 billion to make amends to victims of Nazi persecution; US\$952 million in personal indemnities; US\$35.70 per month per inmate of concentration camps; pensions for the survivors of victims; and US\$820 million to Israel to resettle fifty thousand Jewish emigrants from lands formerly controlled by Hitler. Later, other, and largely undisclosed, payments followed; and even in 1992, the World Jewish Congress in New York announced that the newly unified Germany would pay compensation, totaling \$63 million for 1993, to fifty thousand Jews who had suffered Nazi persecution but had not been paid reparations because they lived in East Germany. Reparation has also been paid to First Nation People in the USA and Canada, as well as to Japanese-Americans, Koreans and Japanese-Canadians.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Or 'compensatory justice,' as Cain Hope Felder (*Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and Family* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995], 73-74) sees it.

⁵⁹Verene Sheperd https://www.google.com/jm/search?hl=en-JM&source=hp&q=verene+shepard+and+reparation&gbv=2&oq=verene+shepard+and+reparation&gs_l=heirloom-hp.12...336944.363074.0.365726.31.8.1.22.23.0.328.1295.2-4j1.5.0....0...1ac.1.34.heirloom-hp..23.8.1373.Zx8HPmuDoBk. For arguments

We will wait and see what is the outcome of this latest call.

In more recent times as well and in tandem with African-Americans in particular, the Anglophone Caribbean has been in the habit of celebrating the achievements of peoples of African descent, against the backdrop of five-hundred years of slavery and colonialism.⁶⁰ Here in Jamaica, February is earmarked as the month to carry that celebration, along with a focus on Reggae, the most enduring musical genre coming out of the Caribbean. The appropriateness of February to highlight such events has not been lost on the majority of Jamaicans, since it is the month of Bob Marley, who is undoubtedly the greatest Reggae icon of the last century. There are especially two songs that are indelibly etched in my mind with respect to the Caribbean and its fractured history.⁶¹ The First is the soul stirring ode by Los Pop Tops, a vocal band of Spaniards with a Trinidadian as lead singer. Like the Jamaica National Anthem it is prayer full of soul-food for thought. It tells of the lead singer's astronomical quest to ascertain why his beautiful skin is not recognized as such; why indeed it was thought to be an awful thing. The song is full of deep pathos, and is surpassed in this regard only

against, see Dingwall, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20140424/cleisure/cleisure5.html>.

⁶⁰ In this regard, see Noel Leo Erskine, *Plantation Church: How African American Religion Was Born in Caribbean Slavery*. New York: Oxford, 2014.

⁶¹ For a song of a different order, in which "One searches . . . in vain for any reference to the historical fact of colonialism or the history of European chattel slavery and later indentured labour" (80), see J. R. Middleton, "Islands in the Sun: Overtures to a Caribbean Creation Theology," in *A Kairos Moment in Caribbean Theology*, edited by J. Richard Middleton and G. Lincoln Roper (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 79-95.

by Sam Cooke's magnum opus; *I was Born by the River*, posthumously released. The strong lyrical content of Los Pop Tops' tune is regularly punctuated by the title- refrain 'Oh Lord, why Lord' reminiscent of the lament of the martyrs in Revelation chapter 6. Those who lived through the 60s and 70s cannot forget these words:

*I've searched the open sky
To find the reason why
Oh Lord, why Lord
The color of my skin
Is said to be an awful sin
Oh Lord, why Lord
No, I cannot understand
No, I can never, never understand
Oh Lord, why Lord
I've got to live and give
Much more than I can give
Oh Lord, why Lord
Oh why, why why, why why
Why why, why why, why Lord
In this world it is no secret
All the problems and hatred
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
I just can't seem to find why
My every move is so unseen
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
Why this lonely man must try
And can have no peace of mind
Oh Lord, why Lord*

*I just can't help but cry
The tears won't stay inside
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
I've got to live and give
Much more than I can give
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
I feel the weight of everlasting hate
But my strength will not grow faint
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
I'll wear the chains
So every man must see the change
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
I ask no special kindness
I ask no special deed
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
Only peace and justice
Forever more
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord
Is it so much to ask
Even of you
To be the same as the
Majority
Why is it that I must suffer
Without even a cause
And no one cares
Oh Lord, why God*

*I've got to live and give
Much more than I can give
Oh Lord, why Lord
Why why, why why, why Lord.*⁶²

This beautiful piece of poetic-petition was written at a time when a man was judged not by the content of his character but by the colour of his skin, to use words attributed to the late great Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. The other song of merit appears less painful but is no less removed from the reality of the day. It is what some may regard as a triumphal recital, and just like Sam Cooke's lyrical master piece, it was released after the writer's home going.

⁶²https://www.google.com/search?sourceid=navclient&ie=UTF-8&rlz=1T4ADFA_enJM491JM491&q=oh+lord+why+lord+lyrics. See also <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/gleaner/20140417/lead/lead92.html>. There are some who believe that the following allegory vividly typifies the injustice back in the day. A domestic flight over Birmingham, Alabama, soon found itself in serious problems. In a desperate effort to preserve the lives of the crew and passengers, the pilot jettisoned some fuel to lighten the aircraft. Later, some pieces of luggage were released. Finally, when the pilot noticed that there was very little improvement, he sent his co-pilot outside the cabin to address the flight attendants and their charges. "We need to make the plane much lighter,' he says, 'are there any volunteers, to jump?" there was no response. 'OK,' the co-pilot continued, 'I guess I'd just have to volunteer some of you. We will proceed alphabetically.' He then shouts, ' "A". Are there any Afro-American on board?' No response. ' "B." Are there any Blacks on board?' still no response. "C." any coloureds?" D." Any dark skinned passengers?' continued the now frantic officer. On hearing all this a little girl said, 'but Mommy, don't we fall under all a those categories? 'Hush your mouth!, came the sharp response, 'Today we are Zulus.'

*Old Pirates, Yes, They Rob I/Sold I To the Merchant
Ships/Minutes Later Took I From The Bottomless Pit/But My
Hand Was Made Strong/By' The Hand of The Almighty/We
Forward In This Generation Triumphantly/Won't You Help
To Sing These Songs of Freedom?/ 'Cause All I Ever Had,
Redemption Songs . . . Emancipate Yourself From Mental
Slavery/None But Ourselves Can Free Our Minds/Have No
Fear For Atomic Energy/'Cause None Of Them Can Stop
The Time/How Shall They Kill Our Prophets/While We Stand
Aside And Look?/ Yes, Some Say It's Just A Part Of It/We
Got To Fulfill The Book.*

Unlike 'O Lord, Why Lord,' the theme of liberation dominates this other piece written by an outstanding Jamaican.⁶³ In the opening lines the individuality of the enslaved figures quite prominently to underscore the degradation of his bondage on the one hand and liberation on the other. What is of interest too is the skillful admixture of pronouns 'I', 'my', and 'we', which at the same time expresses personal interest as well as subtle inclusiveness.

The other pronouns in the song point ostensibly to the 'fatalists' who insist 'We got to fulfill the book', and also to those who murder genuine prophets. The Song also points to vestiges of slavery and the urgent need of Black people in particular to emancipate themselves from cognitive and spiritual bondage,⁶⁴ words echoing a

⁶³Robert Nesta Marley; see also Jo-Ann Richards, "In What Language Do You Think? A Case for the Development of Bilingual Corporate Worship in Jamaica," *Groundings: Reflections on Justice and Equality—Catholic Theological Reflections on Issues Facing Caribbean People* (January 2012): 30-38.

⁶⁴ Delroy Reid-Salmon, *Burning for Freedom: A Theology for the Black Atlantic Struggle for Freedom* Kingston: Ian Randle, 2012.

famous speech by a Christian statesman.⁶⁵ This task must be carried out courageously even in the face of the threat of ‘atomic energy’. Some analysts find the second stanza intriguing in that it urges liberation of the self by the self, yet in the opening lines redemption was effected by the ‘Hand of the Almighty’. On closer examination, however, the song writer declares that his hand was indeed strengthened by the selfsame Almighty himself.

The Ghanaian-Jamaican Kwame Dawes best sums up Marley's Redemption Song: “In four minutes Marley tells of a history that spans 400 years.” This begs the question: Why is it that after 400 years ‘man to man’ is still so unjust? To put the question differently, how is it that in the 21st century human trafficking seems to be such big business for whites, for blacks, and those in between? I am glad that as it was in the beginning, it will not be so in the end!⁶⁶ The Good Book declares that slavery has its source in the human heart (sin, not skin).

⁶⁵ “Although Bob Marley made the phrase famous . . . he was quoting from a speech that Marcus Garvey gave in Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada, in early October 1937. Garvey said: ‘We are going to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery because whilst others might free the body, none but ourselves can free the mind.’ E. Christine Campbell, “Language and Identity in Caribbean Theology,” in *A Kairos Moment in Caribbean Theology*, edited by J. Richard Middleton and G. Lincoln Roper (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 21.

⁶⁶ Here I have in mind what some call eschatological justice, “the strict reckoning by God at the . . . Judgement, which is the decisive time for divine rewards or punishing in accordance with the deeds of a person’s life.” (Cain Hope Felder, *Troubling Biblical Waters: Race, Class, and Family* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995], 72). For a case of ‘existential’ justice (or the lack there of) in the Caribbean church, see “*Prima Inter Partes?* Prisca as Pastor and the People of God,” *Groundings: Catholic Theological Reflections on Issues Facing Caribbean People in the 21st Century* (July 2014):

This is seen, for example, in Jacob's family when his older sons sold their brother into slavery and in the response of an African monarch to the rapid growth of Jacob's great grandchildren in their first Diasporan experience: "Then," the Bible says, "a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. "Look," he said to his people, "the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country." So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labour" (Exodus 1: 9-11).⁶⁷

The Bible also teaches that deliverance from every form of oppression and slavery is the work of God, even when human agency⁶⁸ is evident (Jonah 2:9). The Bible further teaches that the greatest and best experience from the agony of enslavement comes only through Jesus the Son of God who gave his life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). This is essentially what the people of God celebrate, commemorate, and communicate yearly, monthly, and weekly in the Eucharist—and this is just the beginning. In the end, the best is yet to come! This vision of fulsome human flourishing in the Eschaton is just what Matthew and Isaiah have laid before us. In their day they were no doubt those who hungered and thirsted

⁶⁷ Imagine, these are Africans enslaving others; this underscores the point that skin colour is not the fundamental problem. See also Delroy Reid-Salmon, "A Sin of Black Theology," *Black Theology* 6.2 (2008): 154-173 and Wainete E Wariboko, *Ruined by "Race": Afro-Caribbean Missionaries and the Evangelization of Southern Nigeria 1895-1925*. 2007; Peter Abrahams, *The Black Experience in the 20th Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

⁶⁸ See, e.g., the intriguing but all too short chapter on how one Public Defender secured justice for a minor group in the region; Howard Randolph Hamilton (Hylton W. Dennis), *Born to Defend* (Kingston: Selectco, 2012), 203-207.

after societal and personal justice, while awaiting the fulfillment of the pertinent promises.⁶⁹ Twenty-first century members of the Messianic community⁷⁰ cannot do anything less, especially in light of the fact that:

The holy books of no other religion depict their followers so negatively as the Bible does the Jews and the Christians. Scripture describes very graphically the doctrine that Jews and Christians are also . . . [unjust] and capable of the most dreadful sins, and denounces not only the atrocities carried out by the Gentiles, but also those of the supposed (or true) people of God. This pitiless self-criticism is integral to Judaism and Christianity, in contrast to other religions. No other faith criticizes itself so severely as Old Testament Judaism or New Testament Christianity. Scripture exposes the errors of the leaders very clearly, and God often employs outsiders to recall His people to obedience.⁷¹

Conspicuous by his absence, in relation to this ‘canonical criticism’—both in the Hebrew Bible and the NT—is the One whom Isaiah identifies as the Servant of the Lord:

In Isa. 41, Yahweh’s sovereignty is demonstrated in the calling of Cyrus . . . from the east subduing kings before him

⁶⁹On this, see “Justice,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, ed. L. Ryken et al. (Leicester: IVP, 1998), 474-475.

⁷⁰See for instance, K.D. Rathbun, “Shortcomings of the Reformation: Unity versus Purity in the Ecclesiology and Praxis of Martin Bucer,” PhD thesis, UWI, 2006.

⁷¹Thomas Schirmmacker, *Towards a Theology of Martyrdom* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2008), 43.

(41:2). In Isa. 42 the true servant of God is introduced and is contrasted by juxtaposition with Cyrus, whose violent ways . . . he will not follow (42:2-3). Both Cyrus and God's Servant are called in righteousness (41:2; 42:6), called by name (45:4; 49:1), grasped by the hand (45:1; 42:6), and will accomplish Yahweh will.⁷²

This Servant of the Lord⁷³ is also to be contrasted with some of the leaders of the region at various levels (Pastors, Politicians, Police).⁷⁴ Although they bear the name servants (of the people), few, it would appear, are committed to the concept of servant leadership. Certainly none can be truly compared with the Isaianic Suffering-Servant in his pursuit of justice on behalf of the poor; too many, like Cyrus of old, serve the Almighty in what may be described as a 'mono-dimensional experience' ("you do not acknowledge me"). This notwithstanding, we are still optimistic concerning human flourishing in the region, for, "*A Fresh Wind is blowing over . . . [the Caribbean] I hear it on the airwaves, the aspirations of our people in the cries of transparency For justice brotherhood and peace. Blow wind blow*".⁷⁵

⁷² R. Schultz, "Isaiah," *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. K. J. Vanhoozer (London: SPCK, 2005), 340-341. Schultz also contrasts the Servant with sinful Israel.

⁷³ Seen as a royal figure by some; see G.P. Hungenberger, "The Servant of the Lord in the 'Servant Songs' of Isaiah," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of OT Messianic Texts*, eds. P.E. Satterwaite et. al. (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 114-115.

⁷⁴ See, for example, "Parliamentarian Admits Driving Unlicensed Vehicle for Five Years," *Daily Observer*, January 2, 2015.

⁷⁵ J C Keane, *iPromise: Inspiration from Jamaica's National Pledge* (Kingston: Peartree Press, 2012), ix.

[And] As Christians, we are commanded to pray for those in leadership. . . . I do pray regularly for the Most Honourable Prime Minister, her Cabinet and members of Parliament, as well as for leaders of the Church, business, the public sector and of the society in general. There are times, though, when we are called to do more than pray. God has given gifts and talents to His servants and He calls on us to use them in defence of truth and justice in our nation.⁷⁶

⁷⁶Dr Patrick Allen, “Fortifying the Foundations,” *CJET* 14 (2015), 10.