

The Septuagint Version of Isaiah 53 and the Early Christian Formula “He Was Delivered for Our Trespasses”

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Abstract

Did Isaiah 53 (LXX) and its παραδίδοναι-terminology influence the early Christian notion of Jesus being delivered “for our sins” (Rom 4:25 etc.)? And if so, is that to be understood as a specific Jewish backdrop for the interpretation of the death of Jesus? The way in which the Septuagint deviates from the Hebrew text suggests another view. To render various terms of his *Vorlage* the translator of the LXX made use of the widespread Greek notion of delivering somebody unto a hostile force. If early Christian explication of the death of Jesus drew on Isaiah 53, it was influenced by its Greek translation.

Keywords

Isa 53; Rom 4:25a; interpreting Jesus’ death; to give life for someone

1. Introduction

The discussion of the early Christian prepositional formulae ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν or ἡμῶν has an impressive Scandinavian tradition. One of the most influential publications to the topic is surely Harald Riesenfelds article on ὑπὲρ in Kittel’s theological dictionary. In a note Riesenfeld stressed the importance of distinguishing between those cases where ὑπὲρ stands with a personal object and those cases where it is followed by τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν.¹ In his interpretation of the ὑπὲρ-phrases though, Riesenfeld did not distinguish between the verbs governing the prepositions. The verbs ἀποθνήσκειν or (παρα)δίδοναι were all to refer to an action of atonement (Sühne), as long as they were followed by the preposition ὑπὲρ or in some cases by διὰ and the accusative. Interpreting the ὑπὲρ-formulae in this way, Riesenfeld

¹ Cf. H. Riesenfeld, “ὑπὲρ,” *TWNT* VIII (1969) 512 note 12.

followed Joachim Jeremias, who in his article on $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ in Kittel's dictionary, advocated the view that the $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\acute{\epsilon}\rho$ -formulae are all said to be understood against the backdrop of the tradition of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, which is said to express the notion of an atoning sacrifice which takes away the consequences of sin.²

Although Riesenfeld was aware of the important differences between the MT and LXX texts of Isaiah 53 and that the $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\delta\iota\delta\omicron\nu\alpha\iota$ -terminology in Isaiah 53:6 and 12 does not occur in the Hebrew, he meant to overcome this problem by claiming that the LXX followed a text tradition closer to that of the Isaiah-Targum. Keeping the date of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan in mind, which is an 8th century document, it is much more likely that the LXX-translation influenced the Targum.³ It is also not possible to detach the prepositional phrase from the ruling verbs. Rather it is the ruling verb which signifies the broader frame which forms the backdrop of the prepositional phrase.

The phrase "dying for someone" has been scrutinized by scholars of the New Testament. It can be claimed that since the groundbreaking research of Klaus Wengst, Sam Williams and Martin Hengel and more recently Henk Versnel, it has been illustrated that the early Christian notion "dying for someone" has its roots in Greek tradition.⁴ The notion of dying for someone else to avert evil from him/her ranges back to the tragedies of Euripides. This notion kept its influence until Roman times, as Henk Versnel illustrated.⁵ In a new landmark investigation of the motif, Christina Eschner came up with additional evidence that Euripedian heroines like Alcestis and Macaria served as role models for women in Paul's times, expressing the highest level of dedication towards their spouses.⁶

² Cf. J. Jeremias, " $\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$," *TWNTV* (1954) 676-713.

³ Cf. G. Stemberger, "Judaistik und neutestamentliche Wissenschaft," in *Judaistik und neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* (ed. L. Doering, H.-G. Waubke and F. Wilk; FRLANT 226; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008) 15-31.

⁴ Cf. K. Wengst, *Christologische Formeln und Lieder des Urchristentums* (SNT 7; 2nd ed.; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1973); S.K. Williams, *Jesus' Death as a Saving Event: The Background and Origin of a Concept* (HDR 2; Missoula: Scholars, 1975); M. Hengel, *The Atonement: A Study of the Origins of the Doctrine in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1981).

⁵ For his most recent contribution, cf. H.S. Versnel, "Making Sense of Jesus' Death: The Pagan Contribution," in *Deutungen des Todes Jesu im Neuen Testament* (ed. J. Frey and J. Schröter; WUNT I/181; Tübingen: Mohr, 2005) 213-294.

⁶ Cf. C. Eschner, *Gestorben und hingegeben 'für' die Sünder: Die griechische Konzeption des Unheil abwendenden Sterbens und deren paulinische Aufnahme für die Deutung des Todes*

It was known that the motif found its way into Plato, Stoicism and 2 and 4 Maccabees, into sepulchral inscriptions and decorations.⁷ Eschner showed us that the motif became popular not only through tragedy itself, but it also resounded in popular philosophy, in wall paintings in villas and in common proverbial speech in the Greek and Latin traditions during the early Roman Empire.⁸ One can readily say that it became part of common culture.⁹

Paul and the early Christian tradition surely draw on this tradition when they formulate the saving effect of the death of the Messiah in the phrase, “Christ died for us/for our sins.” To a certain extent, this tradition can explain the dying formulae,¹⁰ but what is the underlying conception behind the traditional phrase that Jesus the Lord “was delivered because of our transgressions” (ὅς παρεδόθη διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν—Rom 4:25a) or that God delivered his own Son “for us all” (ὕπερ ἡμῶν πάντων παρέδωκεν αὐτόν—Rom 8:32). Are not these utterances to be understood against the backdrop of Isaiah 53:6, 12 as Riesenfeld claimed, thereby following Joachim Jeremias? Rom 4:25a seems to be the strongest case. Here the verb παρεδόθη is in the passive and rules the preposition διὰ, *as is the case* in the LXX Isaiah 53:12. And if Isaiah 53:12 forms the backdrop for Rom 4:25 this might as well be the case in Rom 8:32.¹¹

Not every one however, agreed with the above mentioned position of Riesenfeld. One of his brightest students, Nils Dahl, who earned his doctoral honours in Oslo, came up with a fresh solution. Rather than the idea of cultic atonement, he suggested that the tradition of the binding of Isaac (*‘aqedah*) forms the backdrop of the ὑπερ-formulae. Especially the terminology of Rom 8:32a is said to allude to Gen 22:16-17: “The exegetical pattern can hardly have been other than one of correspondence: as

Jesu Christi, Diss. Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin 2006 (forthcoming as WMANT 122; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2009).

⁷ Cf. C. Breytenbach, “‘Christus starb für uns’: Zur Tradition und paulinischen Rezeption der sogenannten ‘Sterbeformeln,’” *NTS* 49 (2003) 447-475, 463-464.

⁸ This also applies to the tradition about the deaths of Menoiceus and Codrus.

⁹ Cf. Eschner, *Gestorben und hingegeben*, B, II C 2.5.

¹⁰ On the peculiarities of 1 Cor 15:3 cf. Breytenbach, “Christus starb für uns,” and *infra* n. 39.

¹¹ Paul can even speak in the active voice about the Son of God who gave himself “for our sins” (τοῦ δόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπερ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν—Gal 1:4), or “for Paul” (παραδόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπερ ἑμοῦ—Gal 2:20).

Abraham did not spare his son, so God did not spare his own Son."¹² But how is this correspondence to be understood? Drawing on later explanations by Irenaeus,¹³ Dahl interpreted Rom 8:32 in the following way: "... the allusion to Genesis 22 in Romans 8:32a is best explained on the assumption that it is derived from an exposition in which the atonement was understood as an 'adequate reward' for the Akedah. Obviously, the adequacy should not be understood in terms of quantitative equivalency but as an exact correspondence of quality. In fact, this is how the rule 'measure for measure' was applied both in Judaism and in early Christianity. Some early Jewish adherent of the crucified Messiah may have taken Genesis 22 to imply that God, who judges those who judge and shows mercy upon those who act with mercy, rewarded Abraham's sacrifice by offering up his own Son."¹⁴ Even though Dahl's tour de force to read all Pauline ὑπέρ-formulae, including Gal 3:13-14, against the backdrop of the 'aqedah could not convince the scholarly community,¹⁵ his observation that Romans 8:30-35 forms a clear inclusion with Rom 5:1, 6-11 was followed by many interpreters of Romans.¹⁶

Another Norwegian scholar, Peder Borgen, rightly took another line on the interpretation of Gal 3:13. He enhanced the interpretation of this passage in the light of Deut 21:22-23: "When someone is convicted of a crime punishable by death and is executed, and you hang him on a tree..." Since in this passage of the Law it is unclear whether the person hung from a tree, had been killed beforehand or was killed by the hanging itself, Borgen turned to the Temple Scroll from Qumran (11QTemp 64:6-12). From the scroll it is clear that the hanging caused the death. But does it refer to death by crucifixion? Borgen was able to clarify this point by referring to Philo's exposition of Deut 21:22-23 in book three of the Special Laws: "Philo adds support to the understanding that crucifixion is meant. In *Spec.* 3.151-52 he defines the hanging in Deut 21:22-23 as to fix on a pole, impale (ἀνασκολοπίζω). When Philo uses this verb in *Somn.* 2.213 he explicitly says that the fixing is done by

¹² N.A. Dahl, "The Atonement—An Adequate Reward for the Aqedah" (1969), in *The Crucified Messiah and Other Essays* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974) 146-166, 184-189, 149.

¹³ *Haer.* IV 5.4. Dahl also refers to the Armenian version.

¹⁴ Dahl, "Atonement," 151.

¹⁵ Cf. the discussion in Eschner, *Gestorben und hingegeben*.

¹⁶ Cf. P. von der Osten-Sacken, *Römer 8 als Beispiel paulinischer Soteriologie* (FRLANT 112; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975) 57-60, and H. Paulsen, *Überlieferung und Auslegung in Römer 8* (WMANT 43; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1974) 14ff.

nailing (προσηλόω). Philo made this remark whilst discussing the implication of the commandment “Thou shalt not murder!”¹⁷ The following section in his exposition of Deuteronomy is of particular interest for the question of the backdrop of the *ὑπέρ*-formulae in early Christian tradition.

2. The Importance of Philo *Spec.* 3.153-154 for the Question under Discussion

(153) Παγκάλως μέντοι κάκεινο διατέτακται,
πατέρας ὑπὲρ υἱῶν μὴ ἀποθνήσκειν
μηδ' υἱοὺς ὑπὲρ γονέων,
ἀλλ'
ἕκαστον τῶν ἄξια θανάτου δεδρακότων αὐτὸν ἰδίᾳ μόνον ἀναιρεῖσθαι,
διὰ τοὺς ἢ βίαν τοῦ δικαίου πρωτιμῶντας ἢ πάνυ φιλοστόργους.
(154) Οὐδοὶ μὲν γὰρ διὰ περιττὴν καὶ ὑπερβάλλουσαν εὐνοίαν
ἐθελήσουσι πολλάκις ἄσμενοι προαποθνήσκειν,
αὐτοὺς ἐπιδιδόντες ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐνόχων οἱ ἀνυπαίτιοι,
μέγα κέδρος νομίζοντες τὸ μὴ ἐπιδεῖν κολαζομένους
ἢ τοὺς γεννέσαντας υἱοὶ
ἢ τοὺς παῖδας γονεῖς,
ὡς ἀβίωτον καὶ παντὸς ἀργαλεώτερον θανάτου τὸν ἀῖθις
χρόνον βιωσόμενοι. Πρὸς οὓς λεκτέον·

In the section immediately following upon the exposition of Deut 22:21-24, Philo discusses Deut 24:16: “Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents; only for their own crimes may persons be put to death.” In his comment, Philo opposes the noble intentions of kinsmen. Compassion should not overcome reason. To deliver the guilty from punishment and to think that it is right that you should be punished in their place is wrong.¹⁸ According to Jewish law, Philo says, “... fathers should not *die for* their sons, nor sons *for* their parents (πατέρας ὑπὲρ υἱῶν μὴ ἀποθνήσκειν μηδ' υἱοὺς ὑπὲρ γονέων).”¹⁹ Philo then continues to explain the need of the stipulation in Deut 24:16 he is commenting on. It becomes obvious that he uses the

¹⁷ P. Borgen, “Openly Portrayed as Crucified: Some Observations on Gal 3:1-14,” in *Christology, Controversy and Community* (ed. D.G. Horrell and C.M. Tuckett; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000) 345-353, 348.

¹⁸ Philo, *Spec.* 3.156.

¹⁹ Philo, *Spec.* 3.153.

'dying for someone' and 'giving one's life up for someone' as alternative ways of referring to the same action. In *Spec.* 3.154 he says that those influenced by family affection, in their excessive and overwhelming devotion will often be glad to *die* (προαποθνήσκειν), *giving themselves* (αὐτοὺς ἐπιδιδόντες) as blameless persons (οἱ ἀνυπαίτιοι) *for* those who are guilty (ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐνόχων).²⁰

Philo is of course not alone in using the terminology ἀποθνήσκειν ὑπέρ τινος and (ἐπι)διδόναι ὑπέρ τινος as stylistic alternatives referring to the death on behalf of other persons. Paul did and so did others! Almost a century after them, Aelius Aristides still applies the "dying for" and "being given for"-terminology as stylistic variants. "It is said that Erechtheus in the war against Eumolpus, because of the god's oracle gave his daughter on behalf of the polis (τὴν θυγατέρα ὑπὲρ τῆς πόλεως ἐπιδούνα). In the war against the Dorians and the Peloponnesians Codrus died voluntarily on behalf of his land" (ἐθέλοντῆς ὑπὲρ τῆς χώρας ἀποθανεῖν).²¹ The so called "dying-for"- and "deliverance for"- "formulae" thus both draw by implication on the same Greek tradition, as Eschner has illustrated with reference to the abovementioned and numerous other contemporary texts.²²

3. The "Dying for" and "Deliverance" Formulae and the LXX Version of Isaiah 53:6, 12

Now that the common Greek background of the (παρα)διδόναι ὑπέρ τινος- and the ἀποθνήσκειν ὑπέρ τινος-phrases has been confirmed,²³ the relationship between LXX Isaiah 53:6 and 12 and the "pre"-Pauline tradition in Rom 4:25 should be revisited. As has been noted, the Greek translation of the LXX does use the passive form of the verb παραδιδόναι to express that the servant was delivered to suffer and to be martyred. This is said in the context where it is stated that he carries the transgressions of many.²⁴

²⁰ Philo, *Spec.* 3.154.

²¹ Aelius Aristides, *Panathenaicus*, 118-119 [I 87].

²² Cf. C. Eschner, "Die Hingabe des einzigen Sohnes 'für' uns alle: Zur Wiederaufnahme des Sterben-'für'-Motivs aus Röm 5,6-8 in Röm 8,32," forthcoming in *The Letter to the Romans* (ed. U. Schnelle; BETL 226; Leuven: Peeters, 2009).

²³ Cf. Eschner, *Gestorben und hingegeben*, II D.

²⁴ Cf. C. Breytenbach, "Jes^{LXX} 53,6.12 und die urchristliche Hingabeformeln," forthcoming in *Die Septuaginta—Texte, Theologien und Einflüsse* (ed. M. Karrer and W. Kraus; WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr, 2009).

Rom 4:25a is commonly regarded to be a traditional parallelism and the use of the verb (παρρα)διδόναι is taken as an allusion to LXX Isaiah 53:12.²⁵ When comparing Rom 4:25 to LXX Isaiah 53:12 it should however be kept in mind that the Greek text of Isaiah 53 is formulated in such a way that it deviates considerably from the Hebrew original.

(5a) αὐτὸς δὲ ἐτραυματίσθη διὰ τὰς ἀνομίας ἡμῶν והוא מחלל מפשעו	(12a) διὰ τοῦτο לכן
(5b) καὶ μεμαλάκισται διὰ τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν מדכא מעונותינו	(12b) αὐτὸς κληρονομήσει πολλοὺς אחלק לו ברבים
(5c) παιδεία εἰρήνης ἡμῶν ἐπ' αὐτόν, מוסר שלומנו עלי	(12c) καὶ τῶν ἰσχυρῶν μεριεῖ σκῦλα, ואת עצומים יחלק שלל
(5d) τῷ μῶλωπι αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς ἰάθημεν. ובחברתו נרפא לנו:	(12d) ἀνθ' ὧν παρεδόθη εἰς θάνατον ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ, תחת אשר הערה למות נפשו
(6a) πάντες ὡς πρόβρατα ἐπλανήθημεν, כלנו כצאן תעינו	(12e) καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀνόμοις ἐλογίσθη· ואת פשעים נמנה
(6b) ἄνθρωπος τῇ ὁδῷ αὐτοῦ ἐπλανήθη· איש לדרכו פנינו	(12f) καὶ αὐτὸς ἀμαρτίας πολλῶν ἀνήνεγκεν והוא חטא רבים נשא
(6c) καὶ κύριος παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν ויהוה הפגיע בו את עון כלנו:	(12g) καὶ διὰ τὰς ἀμαρτίας αὐτῶν παρεδόθη. ולפשעים יפגיע:

[...]

The use of the Greek verb παραδιδόναι to translate פגע is introduced in Isaiah 47:3.²⁶ In Isaiah 53:12d, “because he has ‘poured out’ (הִפְחִיל *hiphil* of ערה)²⁷ his life to death,” is translated by “his psyche was ‘delivered unto’ (παρεδόθη) death.” In verse 12g the last phrase “and he ‘will intercede’

²⁵ Cf. C. Breytenbach, “The ‘for us’ Phrases in Pauline Soteriology: Considering Their Background and Use,” in *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology* (ed. J.G. van der Watt; NovTSup 121; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2005) 162-185, 174-175. The verb could also allude to early Christian tradition. Jesus was betrayed (παραδιδόναι) by Judas (1 Cor 11:23; Mark 14:11, 18, 21, 41) and handed over (παραδιδόναι) to the Romans for punishment (Mark 15:1, 10, 15; Acts 3:13).

²⁶ The meaning of the Hebrew text is unclear. It has been suggested to read אפגע as *gal*, *niphal* or *hiphil*; cf. L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner and J.J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament. Volume II* (= KB) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000) s.v. The Greek translator wrote τὸ δίκαιον ἐκ σοῦ λήψομαι, οὐκέτι μὴ παραδῶ ἀνθρώποις (“What is lawful I will seize from you, never will I surrender to men”).

²⁷ Cf. KB, s.v.

(*וְגִבֹּרֵי הִיפְחִיל* of *גִּבֹּר*)²⁸ for rebels” is rendered by “and because of their sins ‘he was handed over’ (*διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν παρεδόθη*).” The servant is counted amongst the lawless and handed over *διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν*. The function of the *διὰ* in the Greek translation in verse 12g can be inferred from the preceding context. The phrase in verse 6c, *καὶ κύριος παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ἡμῶν*, needs special attention. Following the use of the verb,²⁹ the dative expresses the hostile force unto which the Lord delivers the servant. The role of the sins has to be interpreted in the light of the *διὰ*-phrases in preceding verses so that it ought to be translated: “But he was wounded on account of our sins, and was bruised because of our iniquities . . . and the Lord handed him over to our sins.” He suffered punishment for their sake.³⁰ The sins or the transgressions of the “us” are the reason why the servant was delivered or handed over. This has been called vicarious suffering.³¹

But why was the *hiphil* of *גִּבֹּר* in verse 12g translated by *παρεδόθη*? Why does the translator move from the meaning of *גִּבֹּר* with *ל*, “intercession” or “intervention on behalf of”³² the rebels to *παραδιδόναι* in the sense of “being handed over” because of their sins? It is notable that in verse 6c a similar switch occurred. In this case the Hebrew verb *גִּבֹּר* with *כ* means “to let something strike someone.”³³ According to the Hebrew text, the “Lord caused the iniquity of us all to strike him.” The Greek translator rendered the *hiphil* of *גִּבֹּר* with *παρέδωκεν*, turning the servant into

²⁸ The translator seems to understand it in this way. The verb can also mean “to make supplication”; cf. KB, *s.v.*

²⁹ Cf. *A Greek-English Lexicon*, compiled by H.G. Liddell and R. Scott. Revised and augmented throughout by Sir H.S. Jones with the assistance of R. McKenzie and with the co-operation of many scholars. With a supplement (= LSJM) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) *s.v.* I 2.

³⁰ Cf. my analysis of the text: “‘Christus litt eurentwegen’: Zur Rezeption von Jesaja 53 LXX und anderen frühjüdischen Traditionen im 1. Petrusbrief,” in *Deutungen des Todes Jesu im Neuen Testament* (ed. J. Frey and J. Schröter; WUNT I/181; Tübingen: Mohr, 2005) 437-454, 443.

³¹ This applies for the Hebrew original (cf. B. Janowski, “He Bore Our Sins: Isaiah 53 and the Drama of Taking Another’s Place,” in *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources* [ed. B. Janowski and P. Stuhlmacher; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004] 48-74, 69-70) and for the Greek translation (E.R. Ekblad Jr., *Isaiah’s Servant Poems According to the Septuagint: An Exegetical and Theological Study* [CBET 23; Leuven: Peeters, 1999] 266).

³² Cf. KB, *s.v.*

³³ Cf. KB, *s.v.*

the direct object of the Lord's action: "The Lord 'delivered' him to our sins." In Isaiah 53:6c and 12g the translator seems to reformulate the relation between the servant and the "iniquity" (53:6c) or the "rebels" (53:12g). The reason appears to be that he takes the *hiphil* of פגע in the sense of "to cause someone to be struck by something" and he translates it and הערה in verse 12d consequently by a form of παραδιδόναι. New research has extended available lexicographic knowledge on the use of this Greek verb considerably. It is clear that the composite verb denotes the deliverance to a hostile force.³⁴

Since the research of Joseph Ziegler and Isac Seeligman on the Greek translation of the book of Isaiah,³⁵ it has become abundantly clear that, to put it in Seeligman's words, "... the translation of Isaiah is characterized in numerous places not only by a fairly considerable independence of the Hebrew text, but also by the fact that it evinces an equally marked influence from the surrounding cultural atmosphere, as well as expressing the author's personal views."³⁶ The considerable deviation of the Greek translation from the original Hebrew text suggests that in the case of Isaiah 53:6c, 12d and 12g the translator presupposed the well known Greek notion of someone being handed to a hostile power to be handled as his enemy pleases. The servant is delivered unto sin (53:6c), to death (53:12d). Clearly the notion in 53:12g that this deliverance is "because of their sins," is rooted in the Greek text of Isaiah 53, especially verses 4-6. According to the Isaiah text, the servant is not actively dying; the Lord delivered him (53:6c), thus the παραδιδόναι-terminology is used. But this formulation commended itself to the translator, since the notion that somebody is delivered unto a hostile force, is a well known notion in

³⁴ Cf. LSJM, *s.v.* I 2; C. Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament, Volume 3* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994) 12-23. See now Eschner, *Gestorben und hingegeben*, II C 1.1.2.2.1 (b), esp. note 162. She refers to Plutarch, *Cat. Min.* 68.5; *Marc.* 20.6; Arrian, *An.* III 21.5; Josephus, *A.J.* 13.4; Cassius Dio XVII *apud* Zon. IX 13.5; I 265.11 Boissvain; Thucydides III 59.2. This meaning, which holds for the LXX (Cf. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* [rev. ed.; compiled by J. Lust, E. Eynikel and K. Hauspie; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003] *s.v.*; G. Berényi, "Gal 2:20: A Pre-Pauline or a Pauline Text?" *Bib* 65 [1984] 490-537), is also presupposed by the translator of the book of Isaiah.

³⁵ Cf. J. Ziegler, *Untersuchungen zur Septuaginta des Buches Isaias* (ATA XII/3; Münster: Aschendorff, 1934) 57-58, and I.L. Seeligmann, *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah: A Discussion of its Problems* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1948) (= id., *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah and Cognate Studies* [FAT 40; Tübingen: Mohr, 2004] 119-294).

³⁶ Seeligmann, *Version*, 3-4, 128.

Greek thought. And this deliverance is expressed by παραδιδόναι τινά τιμι or τινὰ εἰς τινά,³⁷ in the same way in which LXX Isaiah 53:6c and 12d+g is formulated in deviation from the Hebrew. By using this verb to render the *hiphil* of פגע and ערה, and by depicting the servant as direct object (cf. *supra*), the translator of Isaiah 53 coherently superimposes upon the text the notion that someone (the Lord) delivered someone (the servant) to a hostile force.³⁸ That this is because of the iniquity of others is in accord with the Hebrew original (cf. also verses 4 and 5).

To return to the question: "It is then possible that Rom 4:25a was influenced by the Greek translation of Isaiah 53:12g?" Then Paul will have to imply that Christ was given up "because of our trespasses."³⁹ But even this unlikely causal interpretation of Rom 4:25a should not encour-

³⁷ Cf. the material in Eschner, *Gestorben und hingegeben*, II C 1.1.2.2.1 (b).

³⁸ Apart from פגע and ערה, in LXX Isaiah παραδιδόναι also translates the *piel* of סכר (19:4), the *hiphil* of שלם (38:13), and the *qal* of מנה (65:12). But more often it renders נתן.

³⁹ But even if one would understand Rom 4:25 in the light of Isaiah 53:4-6, 12 as having the sense of "being delivered because of our sins/trespasses," its affinity with 1 Cor 15:3 only emerges under the assumption that the ὑπέρ in 1 Cor 15:3 is taken to be causal too. Is it probable that the active expression of the death of Christ in 1 Cor 15:3 could be influenced by the notion of LXX Isaiah 53:6, 12 that the servant was handed over because of "our/their sins"? 1 Cor 15:3 expresses the death of Christ as his own action and thus used the ἀποθνήσκειν-terminology. But should this not be regarded as a variant of the παραδιδόναι ὑπέρ τινος-phrase expressing the action to give oneself up actively? This is very unlikely. Apart from the absence of the verb ἀποθνήσκειν in Isaiah 53, there is another essential difference between 1 Cor 15:3 on the one and Isaiah 53 on the other hand. According to LXX Isaiah 53:12, the ψυχή of the servant was delivered unto death (παρεδόθη εἰς θάνατον). He was delivered because of the iniquities of the people (διὰ τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν παρεδόθη). The sins of the community thus caused the death of the servant (cf. *infra*). In line with the Greek tradition of "dying for", the way in which Paul understands Christ's death "for" the sinners expresses the positive function of the death, not its cause. Because of this fundamental difference, there is little reason to suspect influence of LXX Isaiah 53:12 on the traditional formula in 1 Cor 15:3 (Cf. Breytenbach, "Christus starb für uns"). Nobody can deny that in 1 Cor 15:3 the Greek notion of "dying for" is firmly suggested by the syntagma ἀποθνήσκειν ὑπέρ. One cannot separate the prepositional clauses from the reigning verb, neither in the interpretation, nor when drawing traditio-historical conclusions from the clauses. *Contra* J. Frey, "Die Deutung des Todes Jesu als Stellvertretung: Neutestamentliche Perspektiven," in *Stellvertretung: Theologische, philosophische und kulturelle Aspekte, Band 1. Interdisziplinäres Symposium Tübingen 2004* (ed. J.C. Janowski, B. Janowski and H.P. Lichtenberger with A. Krüger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2006) 87-121, 95-105, whose line of argument is bought at expense of this basic grammatical rule.

age anybody to postulate Isaiah 53:6c, 12d+g as an *alternative* “more Jewish” backdrop for the interpretation of the phrase that “he was delivered ‘because of’ our trespasses.”⁴⁰ The LXX text of Isaiah 53:6c and 12d+g does not provide a backdrop entirely different from the Greco-Roman tradition for the (παρα)διδόναι διά phrase in Rom 4:25a. As was illustrated above by comparing the Hebrew original and the Greek translation, the use of the παραδιδόναι-terminology in the LXX translation of Isaiah 53:6, 12 itself is the result of the influence of the Greek tradition of delivering someone to a hostile force on the translator of the book of Isaiah.⁴¹ In his use of the παραδιδόναι-terminology, the translator thus was led more by Greek idiom than by the Hebrew original. His *interpretatio Graeca* of the original surely influenced the way in which subsequent readers understood and applied the fate of the servant. If the “pre”-Pauline tradition behind Rom 4:25a alludes to LXX Isaiah 53:6, 12 then it takes up the very Greek way of expressing the deliverance unto a hostile force⁴² and presupposes the use of a Greek translation and not of a Hebrew original. In its LXX form, however, it cannot be regarded as an independent, non-Greek Israelite or Jewish tradition. It illustrates the influence of Hellenised Alexandrian Judaism on early Christian tradition.

4. The Origin of the Christian Reception of the “Dying for” and “Deliverance” Formulae

If the earliest Christian interpretation of the death of Christ in terms of the “dying for” and “deliverance” formulae was not derived from the

⁴⁰ Pace Frey, “Deutung,” 98-99 (notes 55 and 60), 103-104 (with note 78).

⁴¹ In the Greek versions of the Hebrew Bible, this use of the verb is not confined to the translation of Isaiah. It also occurs in Dan 3:28 and Jewish writers like Josephus made use of it in expressing the idea that someone gave up his life for others; cf. Josephus, *A.J.* 2.137, 148, 159; 10.230; *B.J.* 6.433.

⁴² The natural reading of Rom 4:25 though, would rather be to interpret both prepositional phrases alike. The διά in Rom 4:25b (καὶ ἠγγέρθη διὰ τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἡμῶν) cannot be interpreted causal. This hardly encourages one to take the διά in verse 25a in a causal sense. A coherent interpretation of both prepositional phrases is more plausible. Then—as in the case of the death of Christ in 1 Cor 15:3—the deliverance of Jesus the Lord was interpreted to be ‘concerning sin,’ thus taking away the effect of sin or trespasses. Cf. Breytenbach, “The ‘for us’ Phrases,” 174-175. In the light of 1 Cor 15:3b; Gal 1:4 and Rom 8:3 the διὰ τὰ παραπτώματα ἡμῶν phrase rather expresses that the consequences of sin will not take effect. The deliverance of Christ averts the judgement that follows on trespasses.

Hebrew text of Isaiah 53, how did it originate? This question takes us back to the initial stages of the Christian interpretation of Christ's death. It is, however, important to acknowledge the fact that those Jews who interpreted the death of Jesus had to give meaning to his crucifixion by the Romans. They had to give meaning to his execution as an upsurgent messianic King who was suspected to be a threat to the authority of the Empire. He was thus, as Dahl taught us, crucified as a political rebel under the charge "King of the Jews" (Mark 15:26).⁴³ Early followers of Jesus had to make sense of the crucifixion of "a said to be king." The first interpretation was made by those followers who had a dual experience. They knew the tradition about Jesus' last days in Jerusalem and they believed that God resurrected him from death. The interpretation of Jesus' death only began after Easter. Driven by the conviction that God resurrected him from the dead, meaning was ascribed to the crucifixion of the "King of the Jews," reconsidering the events preceding his death. Since, as we could see from Philo's exposition of Deut 24:16, it was not allowed in Jewish tradition that one person dies bearing the penalty for their next of kin. But Philo's comment on the law also illustrate that the terminology, "dying for" and "giving one's life for" can be applied to historical persons. A similar transfer is documented by Cassius Dio (A.D. 150-235).⁴⁴ He refers to an incident during the year of the three emperors A.D. 68. Addressing his army, the Roman emperor Otho, according to Dio's narration, says: "Surely it is far better and far more just that one should perish for all than many for one (πολὸν γάρ που καὶ κρεῖττον καὶ δικαιοτέρον ἐστὶν ἓνα ὑπὲρ πάντων ἢ πολλοὺς ὑπὲρ ἑνὸς ἀπολέσθαι), and that I should refuse on account of one man alone to embroil the Roman people in civil war and cause so great a multitude of human beings to perish." His soldiers are instructed to take leave. He shall free himself, "... that all men may learn from the event that you chose for your emperor one who would not give you up for himself, but rather himself for you (ὅστις οὐχ ὑμᾶς ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ ἀλλ' ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν δέδωκε)."⁴⁵

This incident helps us to understand the Greek language the first Christians utilized metaphorically to express the saving effect of the death of Jesus. He was crucified as "King of the Jews." Taking up this messianic

⁴³ Cf. N.A. Dahl, "The Crucified Messiah" (1960), in *The Crucified Messiah and Other Essays* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974) 10-36.

⁴⁴ Cf. Eschner, *Gestorben und hingegeben*, II C 1.1.2.2.1 (b).

⁴⁵ Cassius Dio 63[64].13.1-3 *apud* Xiph. 192.6-18; III 111.6-20 and III 615 Boissevain.

notion, they formulated that “Christ died for our sins” (1 Cor 15:3) or that the Son was delivered because of our sins (Rom 4:25). But why did they choose such language?

The text from Dio also sheds light on the remark of the high priest in John 11:49-50:⁴⁶ “But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people (ἵνα εἷς ἄνθρωπος ἀποθάνῃ ὑπὲρ τοῦ λαοῦ) than to have the whole nation destroyed.’” The Evangelist interprets (11:51-52): “He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God.” There can be little doubt that the Gospel uses the Greek notion of “dying for” to give meaning to the death of the Johannine Jesus. In fact in the beginning of his narration, in 3:16, he used the alternate terminology by formulating that God gave his own Son: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son (τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν) . . .”

The interesting question arises whether the remark the evangelist puts on the lips of the high priest is reminiscent of what happened during that particular Pesach. It is conceivable that the thoroughly Hellenized priestly families from whose ranks the high priest came were familiar with the Greek notion of “dying for” or being “delivered unto for.” A few years ago, no one less than the great British historian Fergus Millar noted how much historical detail is transmitted through the Johannine passion narrative.⁴⁷ Should the remark of the high priest be taken as an historical reminiscence, his remark could have given the impetus why it was formulated that “Christ died for our sins” or was “delivered because of our transgressions.” The seemingly similar notion in the Greek text of Isaiah 53:6, 12 might have facilitated the use of this Greek notion in early Christian soteriology. In its LXX-form, it cannot however be regarded as an independent Israelite or Jewish tradition.

⁴⁶ Cf. Eschner, *Gestorben und hingegeben*, IIc Exkurs.

⁴⁷ Cf. F. Millar, “Reflections on the Trials of Jesus,” in *A Tribute to Geza Vermes: Essays on Jewish and Christian Literature and History* (ed. P.R. Davies; JSOT.S 100; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990) 355-381.



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