

Isaiah 55:11 and the Gospel of John

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Dr. Dahms, who teaches at the Canadian Theological College in Regina, here explores the possible influence of Isaiah 55:11 on the thought of the Gospel of John.

In discussions concerning the doctrine of the Logos in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel note is frequently taken of Is. 55:11, 'So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.' There is little awareness, however, of the significance of the verse for the rest of the Gospel.¹ In this paper we seek to show that it had a direct influence on the book quite apart from any importance it may have had in the development of the concept of the Logos.

The influence of Is. 55:11 is to be seen particularly in the motif of coming from God and going to God, a motif which is only used concerning Christ, and which is especially characteristic of John 13-17, the section reporting the Last Supper, the Supper Discourse and the High Priestly Prayer. Indeed, the occurrence of the motif in its most characteristic form near the beginning of the section, plus the frequent occurrence of at least the latter part of it elsewhere in these chapters, suggest that it is of fundamental importance in this part of the book.

The motif as a whole is found in John 13-17 as follows:

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- (1) John 13:3, 'He had come (*exēlthen*) from (*apo*) God and was going (*hupagei*) to (*pros*) God.'
 - (2) John 16:27-30, ' . . . I came (*exēlthon*) from (*para*) the Father. I came (*exēlthon*) from (*ek* or *para*) the Father. . . . I am going (*poreuomai*) to (*pros*) the Father . . . We believe that you came (*exēlthes*) from (*apo*) God.'
 - (3) John 17:8, 11, 13, 'I came (*exēlthon*) from (*para*) thee . . . I am coming (*erchomai*) to (*pros*) thee. Holy Father . . . I am coming (*erchomai*) to (*pros*) thee.'

The latter part of the motif is found in John 13-17 as follows:

- (1) John 13:1, 'Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart (*metabē*) out of this world to (*pros*) the Father.' R. E. Brown,² states that 13:1 'seems simply to be a recasting of the words of Jesus in xvi.28: "Now I am leaving the world and I am going back to the Father."' As we have seen, 16:28 contains our motif. Of course, our motif is also found very close to 13:1, in 13:3.³

¹ R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John* (London, 1971), I, 274, 551, shows some awareness.

² *Op. cit.*, II, 550.

³ The evidence that *metabainō* reflects Passover language (see T. E. Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel* (London, 1963), 98) is not impressive.

- (2) John 13:33, 36, 'Where I am going (*hupagō*), you cannot come . . . Where I am going (*hupagō*), you cannot follow me now.'
- (3) John 14:2-5, 'I go (*poreuomai*) to prepare a place for you. And when I go (*poreuthō*) and prepare a place for you . . . You know where I am going (*hupagō*) . . . We do not know where you are going (*hupageis*).'
Note that it is implied that he is going to the Father (v.6; cf. v.2).
- (4) John 14:12, 'I go (*poreuomai*) to (*pros*) the Father.'
- (5) John 14:28, 'I go away (*hupagō*) and I will come to you . . . I go (*poreuomai*) to (*pros*) the Father.' It may be argued that a different motif is found here, that of going to God and returning here, rather than that of coming from God and returning to him, but, in view of 13:3, it is more likely that part of our motif is conjoined with another motif.
- (6) John 16:5-10, 'I am going (*hupagō*) to (*pros*) him to send me . . . It is to your advantage that I go away (*apelthō*) for if I do not go away (*apelthō*) . . . But if I go (*poreuthō*) . . . I go (*hupagō*) to the Father.'

Outside John 13-17 there is only one part of the Gospel where the occurrence of the motif is clearly discernible, *i.e.*, in chapters seven and eight.

In John 7, 8, there appears to be only one verse in which the motif as a whole is in evidence, *i.e.*, in John 8:14, 'I know whence I have come and whither I am going (*pothen êlthon kai pou hupagō*), but you do not know whence I come or whither I am going (*pothen erchomai ē pou hupago*).'
In view of what is said just a few verses earlier, in 7:41-43, 52 (note *erchomai* in 7:41, 42), it might be thought that Jesus is speaking of his earthly home and destiny, but from 8:21, 23, it would appear that he has his divine origin and destiny in view: 'Where I am going (*hupagō*), you cannot come . . . You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.' Cf. 7:33, 'I go (*hupagō*) to him who sent me.' We judge, therefore, that our motif is being reflected, but that two factors have influenced the form of the saying: (a) The affirmation in 7:41 and in 7:52 that Jesus was from Galilee, and (b) What appears to be a set phrase in common use,⁴ a phrase used of the wind in John 3:8, 'You do not know whence it comes or whither it goes (*pothen erchetai kai pou hupagei*).'
(As we shall see later, the verb characteristic of the second part of our motif may have been suggested by this set phrase.)⁵

⁴ In LXX, however, the phrase has *poreuomai*, not *hupagō*. See Gn. 16:8; Jdg. 19:17; Judith 10:12. Cf. Gn. 32:17; 37:30; Jos. 2:5; 1 Sa. 10:14; Ps. 138 (139):7; Zc. 2:2.

⁵ R. E. Brown, *op. cit.*, I, 521, holds that our motif is reflected in the Prologue of John. At most it is to be discerned in the background.

The first part of our motif is to be recognized in John 7, 8, as follows:

- (1) John 7:28-29, 'You know where I come from (*pothen eimi*)? But I have not come (*elēlutha*) of my own accord . . . I come from him (*par autou eimi*), and he sent me.' We judge that the first part of our motif is reflected here because (a) The occurrences of *eimi* are no doubt due to the *pothen estin* credited to 'some of the people of Jerusalem' in 7:27, this phrase being credited to them, in turn, in accord with a common Johannine usage (2:9; 9:29, 30; 19:9); (b) In close proximity is 7:33, 'I go (*hupagō*) to him who sent me,' which, as we shall see, probably reflects the latter part of our motif; (c) *Erchomai* in close association with *pothen* occurs in 8:14, which, as we have seen, reflects our motif; (d) 'I have not come of my own accord' is repeated in 8:42 immediately following a clear occurrence of the first part of our motif, as we shall see.
- (2) John 8:42, 'I proceeded (*exēlthon*) and came forth (*hēkō*) from (*ek*) God (*theou*); I came (*elēlutha*) not of my own accord.' In Greek the word order is 'from God I proceeded and came forth,' so that 'from God' is closely connected with 'proceeded'. As we shall see later *erchomai ek* and *theou* are characteristic of our motif in its most original form. We shall also see later that it may be precisely because our motif is consciously being reflected that *hēkō* occurs.⁵

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The occurrence of the last part of our motif is probably to be discerned in two places in John 7, 8:

- (1) John 7:33, 'I go (*hupagō*) to (*pros*) him who sent me.' In addition to the proximity of this verse to John 8:14, 21-22, there is the exact parallel to John 16:5, and a close parallel to other passages exhibiting our motif or a part thereof.
- (2) John 8:21-22, 'I go away (*hupagō*) . . . Where I am going (*hupagō*) you cannot come . . . Where I am going (*hupagō*), you cannot come.' The close parallel to John 13:33, 36, and the proximity to John 8:14, 42, indicate that our motif is in view here.

To sum up, our motif, or a clearly distinguishable part thereof, is found as follows: John 7:28-29, 33; 8:14*, 21-22, 42; 13:1, 3*, 33, 36; 14:2-5, 12, 28; 16:5-10, 27-30*; 17:8, 11, 13.* Asterisks indicate passages in which the complete motif is represented.

⁵ It is possible that our motif is in the background of John 6:46, 'Not that anyone has seen the Father, except him who is from God (*on para tou theou*); he has seen the Father.' It is not likely that those passages which speak of Christ as coming into the world owe anything to our motif. See 1:9; 3:19; 9:39; 11:27; 12:46; 18:35; cf. 5:43; 15:22.

The following characteristics of our motif are to be noted:

- (1) *Exerchomai* in the aorist tense is the verb used of 'coming forth' from God (8:42; 13:3; 16:27, 28, 30; 17:8). *Erchomai* in 8:14 is a special case, as we have seen. *Eimi* in 7:29 is to be explained by the context, as noted earlier.
- (2) *Apo* (13:3; 16:30), *ek* (8:42; 16:28?) and *para* (7:29; 16:27; 28?; 17:8) are all used to introduce the origin whence the coming forth took place. It may be noted that some important manuscripts of 16:27-30 exhibit the use of all three prepositions. Of special importance is the occurrence of *ek* in 8:42. Though *para* occurs in an earlier passage (7:29; cf. 1:14; 6:46), (a) the context called for the use of *eimi*, and (b) *eimi ek* was not available, because, for the author of the Fourth Gospel, this phrase ordinarily does not refer to origin. (See 1 John 2:19; cf. John 8:23 Gk. and NEB.)
- (3) The origin, when specified, is always 'God' (8:42; 13:3; 16:30; cf. 1:1; 6:46) or 'the Father' (16:27, 28; cf. 1:14; 17:5-11). It is to be noted that 'God' is used twice before 'Father' is used. The occurrence of 'God' in 8:42 is especially significant since its use is credited to Jesus, and the fourth gospel rarely credits Jesus with the use of 'God' in reference to deity other than in (a) Old Testament quotations, and (b) set phrases. 'Father' is his customary word.
- (4) *Hupagō* is the verb typical of the second part of the motif (7:33; 8:14 *bis*, 21 *bis*, 22; 13:3, 33, 36; 14:4, 5, 28; 16:5, 10, 17). *Poreuomai* occurs a number of times (14:2, 3, 12, 28; 16:7, 28), mostly in contexts in which *hupagō* also occurs. It seems to be used at least sometimes to avoid undue repetition. *Erchomai* in 17:11, 13 is due to the fact that the Father is being addressed, and neither *hupagō* nor *poreuomai* would be appropriate. *Metabainō* in 13:1 and *aperchomai* in 16:7 *bis* are probably to be explained by the desire to emphasize the idea of departure.
- (5) When the destination is indicated, it is always introduced by *pros* (7:33; 13:1, 3; 14:12, 28; 16:5, 10, 17, 28; 17:11, 13). This is not significant, however, since *para* is never used in the New Testament of motion towards a person.
- (6) When specified, the destination is 'God' (13:3), 'the Father' (13:1; 14:12, 28; 16:10, 17, 28; cf. 17:11, 13), or 'him who sent me' (7:33; 16:5). Though 'the Father' is most common, it is perhaps significant that the most characteristic occurrence of the motif in 13:3 has 'God'.

Our motif is to be distinguished from the descent/ascent motif found in 3:13, 'No one has ascended into heaven, but he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.' Cf. 3:31; 6:62; 20:17; and note 1:51. (It may

be that the descent motif in the bread of life passage — see 6:33, 38, 41, 42, 50, 51, 58 — is to be distinguished from the descent/ascent motif. See Num. 11:9 LXX. But, if so, the references to the Son of man in 6:27, 53, 62 — see especially 6:51-53 — bring the two motifs together.) Besides the difference between descent and ascent on the one hand, and 'coming from' and 'going to' on the other, the motifs differ as follows:

- (1) The origin and destination in the descent/ascent motif is 'heaven', not 'God' or 'the Father' (3:13, 31; see also 6:33, 38, 41, 42, 50, 51, 58; cf. 1:51; 6:62). John 20:17 contains an exception.
- (2) The descent/ascent motif relates to 'the Son of man' (3:13; 6:62; cf. 1:51). Our motif never does.⁶
- (3) The descent/ascent motif never occurs after chapter six, with the possible exception of 20:17. Indeed *katabainō* which is very important in the earlier chapters of the gospel, never occurs after 6:58. On the other hand, our motif is only clearly in evidence subsequent to chapter six.

It is now a matter of establishing Is. 55:11 as the origin of our motif, the only Old Testament passage from which it could be derived. This is of particular importance in view of the confidence of R. Bultmann that it is derived from Gnostic-type beliefs.⁷

1. In Is. 55:11 LXX *exerchomai* is used in the aorist tense to express the idea of proceeding, or going out from. This is, moreover, the natural word to use in translating *yātzā*' (MT). We have seen that *exerchomai* is the verb characteristic of the first part of our motif. That it is such, and that *ekporeuomai* is never used, is notable in view of (a) the tendency to variation of expression in the Fourth Gospel; (b) the occurrence of *poreuomai* a number of times in the second part of our motif; (c) the use of *ekporeuomai* in 15:26, 'the Spirit of truth, who proceeds (*ekporeuetai*) from the Father'; (d) the occurrence of *ekporeuomai* in Dt. 8:3 LXX in a way which might well have suggested it as an alternative to *exerchomai* in our motif: 'by every word that proceeds (*ekporeuomenō*) from the mouth of God shall man live' (quoted in Matt. 4:4). We shall suggest later that in John 4 there is evidence that reflections on Is. 55 led to a reminiscence of Dt. 8:3.

It may be significant that John's first use of *exerchomai* in giving expression to our motif, in 8:42, is followed by *kai hēkō*, and that in 16:28 similar usage thereof is followed by 'and I have come (*elēlutha*) into the world'. Was the author of the Fourth Gospel aware that in Is. 55:11 *exer-*

⁶ Contrast R. E. Brown, *op. cit.*, I, 55-6.

⁷ *The Gospel of John* (Oxford, 1971), 466.

chomai only referred to procession from God, and did not necessarily imply coming into the world?⁸

2. Following *exerchomai*, Is. 55:11 LXX has *ek*.

- (a) As we have seen, the first time our motif, or part of it, is expressed in characteristic fashion the preposition we find is *ek*, i.e., in 8:42. As already noted, *ek* could not have been used in 7:29, because, for the author of the Fourth Gospel, *etimi ek* does not ordinarily express origin.
- (b) *Exerchomai apo*, which occurs in some renderings of our motif, is often used as an alternative for *exerchomai ek*. Most significant for us is the fact that, though *exerchomai ek* may be used of the departure of demons from within a person (Mk. 1:25, 26; 5:8; 7:29; 9:25), *exerchomai apo* is more often so used. (See Mt. 12:43; 17:18; Lk. 4:35 bis, 41; 8:2, 29, 33, 35, 38; 11:24; Acts 16:18.) *Exerchomai apo* for departure from within a place is also a frequent alternative to *exerchomai ek*. (See Mt. 13:1; 24:1; Mk. 11:12; Lk. 9:5; 17:29; Acts 16:40; Phil. 4:15. On the other hand, *exerchomai apo* is also used of departure from the company of a person, as in Luke 5:8.)
- (c) *Exerchomai para* can also be used as an alternative to *exerchomai ek*, e.g., Luke 6:19, 'Power came forth from (*exērchetō par*) him.' The situation is parallel to the fact that *ekballō para* can be used as well as *ekballō ek* of the casting out of demons from within a person. (See Mk. 7:26; 16:9. That Mark 16:9 is spurious does not affect the argument.)

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3. 'God' or 'the Lord', since these occur in Is. 55:7 and Is. 55:8 respectively, would be appropriate as a replacement for 'my mouth' (Is. 55:11), which is not appropriate for the origin of Christ. (That 'my mouth' would be understood as an anthropomorphism is clear from Jn. 4:24. Cf. 1:14.) We have seen that 'God' is most characteristic in our motif. 'Lord' is never used of the Father in John's Gospel, except where Old Testament quotations require it, so that its non-occurrence in our motif is not surprising.

4. At first it may appear that the absence of *apostrephō* from our motif is an objection to our thesis, since it occurs in Is. 55:11 LXX. (Cf. MT: *shūb*.) But the following considerations are to be noted:

- (a) Though *apostrephō* is found some 500 times in LXX, it does not occur at all in the Johannine literature, appears only nine times in

⁸ L. Morris, *The Gospel according to John* (London, 1972), 711 n. 70, states that in our Gospel *exerchomai* in the aorist is used of 'leaving the Father', and *erchomai* in the perfect of 'arriving (and staying) in the world'.

the New Testament, and is almost unexampled in the papyri. Moreover, in none of the New Testament or papyri occurrences can it be rendered by an intransitive use of 'return'.

- (b) Though other compounds of *strephō* are used in LXX to translate *shūb* in MT (*apostrephō* and *epistrephō* account for some 718 of the some 1040 occurrences of *shūb*), there is only one well-attested use of any of them in the Johannine gospel and epistles — *epistrephō* in 21:20 — and it does not have the meaning 'return'.
- (c) *Hupagō*, which is typical of our motif in John, is exceedingly rare in LXX, being found only in Ex. 14:21 and as a variant reading in a half dozen other places, four of which are in Tobit.
- (d) According to J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *hupagō* has 'a variety of usage in the vernacular, meaning "go on" or "come on" as well as "go back".⁹ There is reason to believe that in John's Gospel it may sometimes mean 'go back'. In 6:67, 'Will you also go away (*hupagein*)?', *hupagein* is parallel to *apēlthō eis ta opisō* in v.66, 'Many of his disciples drew back (*apēlthō eis ta opisō*).' Though John 18:6 shows that *apēlthō eis ta opisō* does not necessarily mean 'return to the place from which one came', it does imply at least some movement in that direction. We may note in this connection that Mark 5:19, 'Go (*hupage*) home', is rendered in Luke 8:39, 'Return (*hupostrephe*) to your home.' (Lk. 24:9 has *hupostrepsasai* more or less parallel to *hupagete* in Mt. 28:10, but it is doubtful that Luke is dependent on Matthew or on Matthew's source at this point.)
- (e) Since the use of language which is capable of more than one interpretation, leading to misunderstanding on the part of the hearers, is common in the Fourth Gospel, *hupagō* may have been considered useful just because it does not always mean 'return'. That it is represented as leading to misunderstanding is seen in 7:33-35, 'I go (*hupagō*) to him who sent me; you will seek me and you will not find me; where I am you cannot come.' The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go (*poreuesthai*) that we shall not find him? Does he intend to go (*poreuesthai*) to the Dispersion among the Greeks . . .?"; and in 8:21-22, "Where I am going (*hupagō*), you cannot come.' Then said the Jews, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going (*hupagō*), you cannot come?'"
- (f) Our motif is reflected in 8:14, 'I know whence I have come and whither I am going (*hupagō*), but you do not know whence I come

⁹ *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (London, 1916-1929), 650. Cf. E. A. Abbott, *Johannine Vocabulary* (London, 1905), 143-6.

whither I am going (*hupagō*).” We suggest that we have here not only the use of a set phrase or common saying (see above) here taken to be applicable to Jesus himself, but also a way of expressing what is implied in a Messianic understanding of Is. 55:11. If so, this set phrase may well be the origin of the use of *hupagō* in our motif.

5. In specifying the destination of Christ, our motif does not follow the Septuagint, which at most implies the destination. The Massoretic Text specifies it in the words ‘unto me’. As we have seen, the destination in John’s Gospel is usually ‘the Father’. In view of our discussion of the origin, further comment is unnecessary here.

6. It may be because our motif largely follows the Septuagint that there is nothing comparable to ‘empty’ in the Massoretic Text. The only additional comment is to raise the question whether it is too farfetched to see the MT statement that the return shall not be empty reflected in what is said in connection with our motif in John 17, *i.e.*, ‘I kept them in thy name, which thou hast given me; I have guarded them, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled’ (v.12)? If the suggestion is not farfetched, the Scripture being fulfilled is Is. 55:11 MT. Commentators generally consider that the Scripture fulfilled is one which could be understood as referring to the betrayal of Judas, probably Ps. 41:9, which is quoted in John 13:18. It seems strange, however, that the reference to the fulfilment of Scripture should have to do with the exception clause and not with the main thrust of the sentence. But if our suggestion concerning John 17:12 lacks merit, the thesis of this paper is not adversely affected.

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Objection to finding our motif’s origin in Is. 55:11 may be raised on the basis of such an interpretation as that of C. R. North.¹⁰ He understands Is. 55:11 MT to mean that God’s word ‘must find its mark. Having done that it does not return to God.’ Presumably he would interpret the Septuagint version of the verse in the same way. This understanding is attractive because (a) God’s word is compared to ‘the rain and the snow (which) come down from heaven, and return not thither . . .’; and (b) Is. 45:23 has ‘from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness a word that shall not return,’ the language in both MT and LXX being remarkably similar to that of Is. 55:11.

But the interpretation must be rejected. ‘Shall not return empty’ (MT) means something entirely different from ‘shall not return’. The parallel with the wind and the snow, and with Is. 45:23, is not as extensive as one might expect. Moreover, the exact idiom ‘shall not return (*lō*)

¹⁰ *The Second Isaiah* (Oxford, 1964), 260f.

yāshūb) . . . empty (*rēqām*)' occurs in 2 Sa. 1:22, 'The sword of Saul returned not empty (*lō' tāshūb rēqām*)' (cf. Je. 50:9). Indeed, one may speculate that the idiom was originally used of swords, and that it was because the author of Is. 55:11 could compare speech with a sword that he could use the idiom of 'my word' (see Is. 49:2; cf. 11:4). However that may be, the idiom in Is. 55:11 MT does imply returning to God. The same is true of Is. 55:11 LXX, even though it has no word corresponding to 'empty'. Is. 55:11 LXX reads, 'It shall by no means turn back (or "return"), until all the things which I have willed shall have been accomplished.'

A further objection to finding the origin of our motif in Is. 55:11 may be found in the fact that the Septuagint version of this verse does not easily lend itself to a Christological interpretation, since it speaks of 'my word (*rēma*) . . . , whatever (*ho ean*) goes out of my mouth.' There is evidence, however, that the author of the Fourth Gospel sometimes followed the Hebrew text rather than the Septuagint.¹¹

In the light of the evidence adduced, it is reasonably certain that the proceeding from/returning to motif in John's Gospel is derived from Is. 55:11.

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Another motif in the Fourth Gospel to take our attention is the one expressed most briefly in the cry from the cross in John 19:30, 'It is finished (*tetelestai*).'¹² Closely connected with this cry is the clause two verses earlier in 19:28, 'Jesus knowing that all was now finished (*tetelestai*).'¹³ (Note that these are the only occurrences of *teleō* in the Johannine Gospel and Epistles.) The same motif is found in more complete form in John 4:34, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish (*teleiōsō*) his work (*ergon*)'; in 5:36, 'The works (*erga*) which the Father has granted me to accomplish (*teleiōsō*)'; and in 17:4, 'Having accomplished (*teleiōsas*) the work (*ergon*) which thou gavest me to do.' Probably we should add 9:4, 'We must work the works (*erga*) of him who sent me.'

No doubt this motif is derived primarily from Gn. 2:2, 'On the seventh day God finished (*sunetelesen*) his work (LXX has plural: *erga*).'¹⁴ There are several reasons, however, for suggesting that Is. 55:11 has had some influence upon the motif:

- (1) The motif has a Christological reference.
- (2) The Logos conception in the Johannine prologue shows that Gn. 1:1-2:3 and Is. 55:11 could easily have been reminiscent of each other in the mind of the author of the Fourth Gospel.

¹¹ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London, 1955), 22-24.

- (3) *Teleō*, not *sunteleō*, occurs in John 19:28, 30. In the B text of Is. 55:11, the particular text of the Septuagint which the author of the Fourth Gospel uses (compare John 2:17 with Ps. 68:10 LXX), *teleō* has its only Septuagintal occurrence which could receive a Christological interpretation. Moreover, there is no Septuagintal passage on which the *teleiōō* of 4:34; 5:36; 17:4, could be based. It is most easily explained on the basis of its relationship to *teleō*.

- (4) John 4:34 in its context is especially reminiscent of Is. 55.

That John 4:34 owes a good deal to Is. 55:11 and its context is suggested by the following:

- (1) Comparison of John 4:34, *thelēma . . . teleiōsō*, with Is. 55:11 LXX, *telesthē . . . ēthelēsa*.

- (2) Comparison of John 4:34, 'him who sent (*pempantos*) me,' with Is. 55:11 MT, 'I sent it (my word).' This point may be of little significance, however, since there is no equivalent in the Septuagint, and since the concept has a Johannine occurrence earlier in 3:17, 34, in the former of which it is more likely to be dependent on such a verse as Is. 19:20 LXX than on Is. 55:11. That *pempō* is used here, rather than *apostellō* as in 3:17, 34, may be merely an example of the Johannine tendency to variation of expression. In view of the importance of Wisdom Christology in John's writings, it is just possible that the use of *pempō* as an alternative to *apostellō* was suggested by Wisd. 9:10, 'Send her (Wisdom) forth (*exaposteilon*) from the holy heavens, and from the throne of thy glory send (*pempson*) her.'

- (3) According to John 4:8, Jesus' disciples had gone 'away into the city to buy (*agorasōsin*) food.' This may have suggested Is. 55:1-2, 'He who has no money, come, buy (*agorasate*) and eat! . . . Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread . . .?', to say nothing of the rain and snow and earth giving 'bread to the eater' (LXX: 'bread for food'; *arton eis brōsin*) in the first part of the sentence which is completed in Is. 55:11. This becomes especially significant in view of the fact that in John 4:32, 34 Jesus is represented as saying, 'I have food (*brōsin*) to eat of which you do not know . . . My food (*brōma*) is to do the will of him who sent me . . .'

- (4) It may be that Jesus' invitation to the Samaritan woman to petition him for 'living water (*hudōr*)' (Jn. 4:10, 14) owes something to Is. 55:1, 'Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters (LXX: *hudōr*).' (It probably owes more to Je. 2:13; 17:13, where Jahweh is called 'the fountain of living water'. Cf. Ps. 36:9; cf. 4:15; Ezk. 47:1-12. Note also Ex. 17:6; Nu. 20:11; 1 Cor. 10:4.)

- (5) It may well be that Is. 55:11, 'My word which goes forth out of my mouth,' together with Is. 55:1-2, 'Come, buy wine and milk with-

out money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread?' was reminiscent of Dt. 8:3, 'Man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord,' and led to the statement in John 4:32, 'I have food to eat of which you do not know (*hēn humeis ouk oidate*),' which is evidently a reflection of words in the first part of Dt. 8:3, 'He . . . fed you with manna, which you did not know (LXX: *ho ouk ēdeisan hoi pateres sou*).'

Especially in light of these contacts between Is. 55 and John 4, we suggest that the Johannine passages which speak of Christ as finishing or accomplishing God's work owe something to Is. 55:11, even though they may owe more to Gen. 2:2.¹²

Even if our suggestion concerning the finishing of God's work for Jesus is not convincing, we believe that we have established the indebtedness of the Fourth Gospel to Is. 55:11 for the proceeding from/returning to God motif.

¹² We are not impressed with the suggestion of T. F. Glasson, *op. cit.*, 57, that John 4:31-34 may owe something to Gen. 24:33. For the dependence of the motif being considered on Gen. 2:2, see G. Reim, *Studien zum alttestamentlichen Hintergrund des Johannes-evangeliums* (Cambridge, 1974), 98.

Isa 55:11 - So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. Isa 55:12. Isa 55:12 - "For you shall go out with joy, And be led out with peace; The mountains and the hills Shall break forth into singing before you, And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Isa 55:13. Isa 55:13 - Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; And it shall be to the LORD for a name, For an everlasting sign that shall be seen particularly in the motif of coming from God and going to God, a motif which is only used concerning Christ, and which is especially characteristic of John 13-17, the Gospel of John (Oxford, 1971), 466. Isaiah 55:11 and the Gospel of John. chomai only referred to procession from God, and did not necessarily imply coming into the world?8. 2. Following exerchomai, Is. 55: 11 LXX has ek. (a) As we have seen, the first time our motif, or part of it, is expressed in characteristic fashion the preposition we find is ek, i.e., in 8:42. As already noted, ek could not have been used in 7:29, because, for the author of the Fourth Gospel, eimi ek does not ordinarily express origin. (b) Exerchomai apo, which occurs in some renderings of our motif, is often used as What does Isaiah 55:11 mean? Read commentary on this popular Bible verse and understand the real meaning behind God's Word using John Gill's Exposition of the Bible. Christ, pardon and peace through him; such as are given forth in this chapter: or rather it may be meant of the word of the Gospel, which is of God; comes from heaven; is a blessing grace; falls according to divine direction here and there; tarries not for the expectations, desires, or deserts of men; falls in great plenty; and is a blessing.