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978-0-521-56596-7 - The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity

John F. A. Sawyer

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There is currently much interest in the history of interpretation, reader-response and the sociology of sacred texts – in what the text does as much as what it means. Isaiah, ‘more evangelist than prophet’ according to Jerome and others, provides an ideal case study, because of his profound influence on the language and imagery of Christianity. With illustrations from art, music, literature and the media as well as commentaries, sermons and official church pronouncements, Professor Sawyer shows how Isaiah has been used in all kinds of context, from the cult of the Virgin Mary, mediaeval passion iconography and antisemitic propaganda to Christian feminism and liberation theology. This first attempt at a comprehensive critical study of an essential part of biblical interpretation will provide a model for further research, and ensure that commentaries will never be the same again.

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE FIFTH GOSPEL

Isaiah in the history of Christianity

JOHN F. A. SAWYER

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Frontmatter

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Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56596-7 - The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity

John F. A. Sawyer

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

For
Alexander
Hannah
Sarah
Joseph .

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56596-7 - The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity

John F. A. Sawyer

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

*Lighten the darkness, O Lord
Lighten the heaviness, O Lord
Make us heavy with thee, O Lord
And we shall bring forth thy glory
Jerusalem 1961*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56596-7 - The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity

John F. A. Sawyer

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Contents*

<i>List of plates</i>	<i>page</i> x
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xv
1 Introduction	1
2 Isaiah and Christian Origins	21
3 The Early Church	42
4 The Cult of the Virgin Mary	65
5 The Man of Sorrows	83
6 Isaiah and the Jews	100
7 The Reformation	126
8 The Evangelical Tradition	141
9 Isaiah in Literature and Music	158
10 The Quest for the Historical Isaiah	177
11 Women and Isaiah	198
12 The Peaceable Kingdom	220
13 Conclusion	241
<i>Bibliography</i>	251
<i>Index of Scriptural references</i>	266
<i>General index</i>	275

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56596-7 - The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity

John F. A. Sawyer

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Plates**Between pages 140 and 141*

1. Illustration from twelfth-century manuscript of St Jerome's commentary on Isaiah, Durham Cathedral Library (photo by permission of Dean and Chapter of Durham).
2. Charles LeBrun, *The Holy Family in Egypt*, seventeenth century (Warburg Institute).
3. Catacomb painting of Isaiah and the Virgin Mary, Rome, second century (© 1965 Sadea, Florence).
4. Enamelled plaque showing Isaiah, twelfth century (© British Museum).
5. Pre-Norman stone carving of 'Martyrdom of Isaiah', Winwick Parish Church, Cheshire (drawing: Richard Bailey).
6. 'Martyrdom of Isaiah', from the Arundel Psalter, thirteenth century (© British Library).
7. 'Isaiah canticle' from the Utrecht Psalter, ninth century (Bibliothek der Rijksuniversiteit Utrecht).
8. 'Isaiah canticle' from the St Alban's Psalter, twelfth century (Warburg Institute).
9. Statue of Isaiah, Cremona Cathedral, twelfth century (Conway Library, Courtauld Institute).
10. Twelfth-century relief of Isaiah, Souillac Cathedral (J. Feuillie/© CNMHS/SPADEM).
11. Matthias Grünewald, *The Annunciation*, Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar (photo: O. Zimmermann).
12. St Matthew on Isaiah's shoulders, Chartres Cathedral, thirteenth century (photo Giraudon).
13. 'Jesse tree' window in Chartres Cathedral, twelfth century (B. Acloque/© CNMHS/SPADEM).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56596-7 - The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity

John F. A. Sawyer

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*List of plates*

xi

14. 'Jesse tree' from Lambeth Bible, twelfth century (Lambeth Palace Library).
15. Brougham Triptych, Antwerp, sixteenth century (reproduced by permission of the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle to whom the Triptych is currently on loan).
16. 'Christ in the Wine-Press', stained glass window, sixteenth century, Conches (B. Acloque/© ARCH.PHOT. Paris/SPADEM).
17. Claus Sluter, 'The prophet Isaiah' on 'Moses' Fountain', Chartreuse de Champmol, Dijon, fourteenth century (B.Acloque/© ARCH.PHOT. Paris/SPADEM).
18. Matthias Grünewald, *Bearing the Cross* 1526 (Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe).
19. Sixth Station ('Veronica wipes Christ's face') from J. van Hulst, *Stations of the Cross*, 1886–9, Church of SS Nicholas and Barbara, Amsterdam (now destroyed) (photo: Stichting Kerkelijk Kunstbezit in Nederland, Utrecht).
20. Lukas Cranach, *Isaiah's Vision*, woodcut from the Bible of Nikolaus Wolrab, Leipzig 1541 (Schmidt, *Die Illustration der Lutherbibel* 1522–1700, p. 221).
21. L. Evetts, stained glass window, 1979, St Silas Church, Byker, Newcastle upon Tyne (photo: Rev. Ian Falconer).
22. Konrad Witz, *Die Synagoge*, fifteenth century (photo: Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, Martin Bühler).
23. Frontispiece of Paul Weidner's *Loca praecipua*, Vienna 1559 (by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University).
24. Woodcut from N. Reusner, *Emblemata*, Frankfurt 1581 (Heidelberg Universitätsbibliothek, Sign.: G 9506; Henkel-Schöne, cols. 1857–8).
25. Woodcut from J. Mannich, *Sacra Emblemata LXXVI*, Nuremberg 1625 (Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, Sign.: 389.1 Theol.; Henkel-Schöne, cols. 1024–5).
26. Drawing by Jakob Jordaens, *Isaiah's satire on the sculpting of idols*, seventeenth century (ENSB-A).
27. Jan Brueghel the Elder, *The Preaching of the Prophet Isaiah*, seventeenth century, Alte Pinakothek, Munich (photo: Artothek, Munich).
28. William Blake, *The Book of Urizen* (1794), Plate 1 (The Keynes Family Trust, on deposit at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56596-7 - The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity

John F. A. Sawyer

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xii

List of plates

29. Hermann Hultsch, the Prophet Isaiah, Royal Mausoleum, Frogmore, nineteenth century (The Royal Collection © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II).
30. Inscription on Church of San Gregorio, Rome, nineteenth century (photo: Gerard Byrne).
31. Detail from page of *Biblia Pauperum*, fifteenth century (© British Library).
32. Kenyon Cox, *Lilith*, nineteenth century (Witt Library, Courtauld Institute).
33. Illustration from *Texts of Terror* by Phyllis Tribble (© 1984 Fortress Press). (Used by permission of Augsburg Fortress.)
34. Evgeni Vuchetich, *Let us beat our swords into ploughshares* (1959), United Nations Building, New York (photo by courtesy of UN Public Relations).
35. *The Independent* 28 December 1991 (© *The Independent*, Geoff Thompson).
36. Edward Hicks, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 1820–5 (Abby Aldrich, Rockefeller Folk Art Center, Williamsburg, Virginia).
37. Edward Hicks, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 1846–7 (Everson Museum, Syracuse. Photo: Courtney Frisse).
38. War memorial window, Reformed Church in Spaarndam, Holland (photo: Stichting Kerkelijk Kunstbezit in Nederland, Utrecht, by permission of the Kerkvoogdij, Spaarndam Haarlem-Noord).

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56596-7 - The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity

John F. A. Sawyer

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

In its earliest form *The Fifth Gospel* was a series of public lectures given in Bangor in 1987 and I would like to begin by thanking Max Wilcox, at that time Head of the Religious Studies Department at the University College of North Wales, and his colleagues for giving me the opportunity to start working on this project. A version of part of chapter 7 was published in *Ritual and R  membrance. Responses to Death in Human Societies*, ed. Jon Davies (Sheffield 1994), and part of chapter 13 in *Currents in Research. Biblical Studies* 3 (1995).

I am grateful to the staff of many libraries for the help they have given me, in particular, the university libraries at Newcastle, Durham, Lancaster, Edinburgh and Utrecht, Durham Cathedral Library, the Warburg Institute and the Courtauld Institute in London, and the Stichting Kerkelijk Kunstbezit in Nederland in Utrecht. I would like to express my gratitude to Newcastle University for granting me a sabbatical in 1991–2, and to the Leverhulme Trust for generously funding it, as well as to the British Academy and the US National Endowment for the Humanities for making possible a stimulating visit to Berkeley in the Summer of 1994. My thanks are also due to the Dean of St Paul's and 'Peaceable Kingdom' artist Karen van Heerden for material they kindly supplied, and to the editorial staff at Cambridge University Press, especially Alex Wright.

I have been greatly helped by the suggestions and criticisms of colleagues, students, friends and relations, among whom I would like to say a special word of thanks to Jon Davies, Graham Harvey, Brian Pearson, Sue Vernon, Paul Hilditch, Harry Tait, Ian Falconer, Archimandrite Ephrem, Eric Cross, Andrew Fairbairn, Richard Bailey, Peter Evans, Andrew Ballantyne, Jack Watt, Gerald Miller, Diana Crockford, Alexander Sawyer, Lindsay Sawyer, Claire MacGregor, Margaret Fergusson, Ann Loades, Chris Rowland, Robert

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56596-7 - The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity

John F. A. Sawyer

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xiv

Preface

Carroll, Philip Davies, David Clines, John Rogerson, Paul Morris, David Martin, John Andrews, Robert Hamilton, Gerard Byrne, Cyril Ashton, Myrtle Langley, Martin Molyneux, Marc Vervenne, Alexander Rofé, Raya Heller, Lauren Pfister, Alan Hauser, Lenore Erickson, Calum Carmichael and, in a class of her own, Deborah Sawyer.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56596-7 - The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity

John F. A. Sawyer

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Abbreviations*

- ABD* *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman, 6 vols. (Doubleday, New York 1992)
- APOT* *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English*, 2 vols. ed. R. H. Charles (Oxford 1913)
- ASB* *The Alternative Service Book. Services Authorized for Use in the Church of England* (Oxford 1980)
- AV* *Authorized Version of the Bible* (1611)
- BP* *Biblia Pauperum. A Facsimile and Edition.* ed. A. Henry (Scolar Press, London 1987)
- CCSL* *Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina* (Brepols, Turnholt 1953–)
- CH* *The Church Hymnal* (revised edition, Oxford 1927)
- CH³* *The Church Hymnal* (3rd edition, Oxford 1973)
- CHB* *Cambridge History of the Bible*, 3 vols. (Cambridge 1969–70)
- DBI* *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, edd. R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden (SCM Press, London 1990)
- DBTEL* *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*, ed. D. L. Jeffrey, (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan 1992)
- EH* *English Hymnal* (Oxford 1906)
- EJ* *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 16 vols. (Jerusalem 1971–2)
- ELL* *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, ed. R. Asher (Pergamon Press, Oxford 1994)
- FOC* *Fathers of the Church* (Washington 1947–)
- HAM* *Hymns Ancient and Modern* (London 1916)
- HAP* *Hymns and Psalms* (Methodist Publishing House, London 1983)
- HON* *Hymns Old and New with Supplement*, ed. K. Mayhew (Bath Press, Avon 1989)
- JAAR* *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
- JBL* *Journal of Biblical Literature*

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56596-7 - The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity

John F. A. Sawyer

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

xvi

List of abbreviations

- JE* *Jewish Encyclopedia*, 10 vols. (Funk and Wagnall, New York 1904)
- JJS* *Journal of Jewish Studies*
- JSNT* *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
- JSOT* *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
- JSS* *Journal of Semitic Studies*
- JTS* *Journal of Theological Studies*
- Lectionary* Order of Readings for use at Mass (Geoffrey Chapman, London 1970)
- LW* *Luther's Works*, edd. J. Pelikan and others, 55 vols. (St Louis and Philadelphia 1955–)
- MP* *Mission Praise* (London 1983)
- New Sunday Missal* Texts approved for use in England and Wales, Ireland, Scotland and Africa (Geoffrey Chapman, London 1982)
- NRSV* *New Oxford Annotated Bible (New Revised Standard Version)*, edd. B. M. Metzger and R. E. Murphy (Oxford University Press, Oxford 1991),
- NTA* *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2 vols., edd. Hennecke, E., Schneemelcher, W., and R. McL. Wilson, London 1963–5
- NTS* *New Testament Studies*
- OBC* *Oxford Book of Carols*, edd. P. Dearmer, R. Vaughan Williams and M. Shaw (London 1928)
- OCB* *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, edd. B. M. Metzger and M. D. Coogan (New York and Oxford 1993)
- ODQ* *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (2nd edition, Oxford 1953)
- OTP* *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols., ed. J. H. Charlesworth (London 1985)
- PG* *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Graeca*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris 1857–)
- PL* *Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris 1844). *Supplementum* vol. 4, ed. A. Hamman (Paris 1967)
- RB* *Revue Biblique*
- REB* *Revised English Bible* (Oxford/Cambridge 1989)
- RSV* *Revised Standard Version*, Ecumenical Edition (Collins, London 1973)
- SBSA* *Song Book of the Salvation Army* (London 1986)

xvi

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-56596-7 - The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity

John F. A. Sawyer

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*List of abbreviations*

xvii

- SNOBC* *Shorter New Oxford Book of Carols*, edd. H. Keyte and
A. Parrott (Oxford 1993)
- SOP* *Songs of Praise* (Oxford 1932)
- TZ* *Theologische Zeitung*
- VT* *Vetus Testamentum*
- ZNW* *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*