Destined to Disobey?
Isaiah 6:10 in John 12:37–41

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The concepts of divine hardening and fattening are difficult doctrines. Wherever Scripture broaches either topic, they may be appropriately classed as “hard sayings.” Two streams exist in both testaments, namely, Pharaonic hardening (Ex. 4–14) and Isaianic fattening (Isa. 6:9–10). The Isaianic motif is expressed in explicit and implicit texts and at crucial junctures in the Gospels, Acts, and epistolary literature.1 While it is generally assumed that both the Pharaonic and Isaianic citations and allusions are designed to account for unbelief, there is inconsistency in recognizing that the former connects unbelief to the will and the latter to the cognition.2 Herein lies the essential (but not only) rationale for distinguishing the two streams.3

This article will examine one such use of the Isaianic motif as recorded

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2 Webster defines fat as “exhibiting the qualities of a fat animal; coarse; heavy; gross; dull; stupid.” Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, s.v. “fat.”

3 The lexical difference also signifies different streams: Isaianic fattening (cognitive) uses the terms יָבֹ לּ “to make fat” (Isa. 6:10), παχύνω “to make thick, dull” (Isa. 6:10 LXX; Matt. 13:15; Acts 28:27), Symmachus reads ἐλαττόνσθη from λιπάσσω, “to anoint, make fat,” ἔφη “to make stupid” (Tg. Isa. 6:10), גלגל “to make thick” (Isa. 6:10 Peshitta), παχύσαστις “hardness” (Mark 3:5; Rom. 11:25; Eph. 4:18), and παχύνω “to harden” (Mark 6:52; 8:17; John 12:40; Rom. 11:7; 2 Cor. 3:14 [4:4]). Pharaonic hardening (volition) uses terms such as כותנ “to be strong” (Ex. 4:21; 7:13, 22; 8:19; 9:12, 35; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17), כבד “to be heavy” (Ex. 7:3; 13:15) usually rendered in the LXX by the σκληρός stem, and רכוב “to be heavy” (Ex. 7:14; 8:15, 32; 9:7, 34; 10:1). For examples of the σκληρός stem in the NT bearing out the volitional sense in terms of rebellion see Matt. 19:8; 25:24; Mark 10:5; 16:14; John 6:60; Acts 7:51; 19:9; 26:14; Rom. 2:5; 9:18; Heb. 3:8, 13, 15, 4:7; James 3:4; Jude 1:15. It is important to distinguish which background (hardening or fattening) lies behind any given NT passage under consideration. The lexical clue is one significant indicator of this. For the sake of consistency, all terms related to Pharaonic hardening will be labeled hardening while those whose background is Isaianic fattening will be labeled fattening.
in John 12:37–41. A detailed examination of Isaiah 6:9–10 will not be undertaken. The purpose of the inquiry here is threefold: First, on what basis is Isaianic fattening in John performed? Is it judicial or nonjudicial? If judicial, is it punitive or nonpunitive? Second, what is the nature (in terms of mode) of this divine act? Is fattening something done to the person or is it an act of God that perpetuates a human state? Is the divine act one of depletion (taking away an ability), deposition (adding something that offsets understanding), or deprivation (an act that perpetuates a condition)? I will refer to the first two views as transformative and the latter view as nontransformative. Third, what are the theological ramifications when it comes to the demand for obedience to the gospel?

Competing Positions on Divine Hardening and Fattening

John 12:37–41 is strategically located at the end of Jesus’ public ministry and the beginning of his final discourse to his disciples. After the prologue, John 12:37–50 “forms the close of the second part of the Gospel.” It falls into two segments where verses 37–43 represent the evangelists speaking while verses 44–50 give the salient points of Jesus’ preaching. The function of the former is to account for unbelief despite

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Because I have not found anyone holding to the deposition view, I will limit myself to either the depletion (transformative) view or the deprivation (nontransformative) view.


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the signs. References to Isaiah (53:1, 6:10) within these verses are “a theological analysis which tries to understand Jewish unbelief in scriptural terms.” Some scholars find the key to its function linked to other texts both inside (1:11–12; 3:16–21, 31–36; 20:30–31; 21:23–25) and outside of John, especially Romans 9–11. Others are hesitant to evoke predestinarian elements. Under this rubric, one may argue that Isaianic fattening addresses the dark side of predestination, namely, the predetermination of God to pass over the nonelect (doctrine of preterition) and thereby perpetuate their inability to salvifically understand the gospel. This would involve God in an indirect or non-act upon man. This view goes as far back as Augustine who said, “For God thus blinds and hardens, simply by letting alone and withdrawing His aid: and God can do this by a judgment that is hidden, although not by one that is unrighteous” (Tractates on John 52.6). This will be labeled the deprivation view and involves simply a divine perpetuation of unbelief (thus nontransformational). God indeed does indeed do not mention a specific page number but provides references for the statements made.
something but not to the object.

Others prefer to think of Pharaonic hardening or Isaianic fattening both here and elsewhere as either the direct act of God or the result of a natural digression from an unwillingness to believe to the inability of faith altogether. These second (direct act of God) and third (a natural digression) views are found in Origen who said, “For God gave to no one a stony heart by a creative act; but each individual’s heart is said to become stony through his own wickedness and disobedience” (Princ. 3.1.14; cf. 3.1.11). While Origen adopts the final position, here labeled the psychological view—designated by his words becomes stony through his own wickedness and disobedience, he rejects the direct transformational view—signaled by his words creative act. Thus, three perspectives of divine hardening and fattening appear under two general headings: the nontransformational (and nonpunitive) view of (1) deprivation versus the transformational (and punitive) view by depletion either (2) directly or (3) psychologically. Most scholars today hold to direct hardening and fattening, many to the psychological perspective, and fewer still to the deprivation view.

A modern example of the transformative viewpoint and one that seems to combine views two and three is Günter Röhser’s argument. He suggests a two-phased pattern for unbelief in John 1–12, namely, a simple (“einfachen”) unbelief occurring prior to or in the midst of signs and a more qualified (“qualifizierten”) type subsequent to signs and accompanied by a divinely imposed inability to believe. He also suggests that unbelief is a form of self-hardening (“selbst verstockt”) and leads to the more nuanced or qualified unbelief accompanied by a divine imposed inability (“von Gott verhangte Unfähigkeit zu glauben”). An underlying presupposition is that while exhibiting the simple stage of unbelief, agents maintain the ability to believe but—depending on their irresponsible use of free will—may be dispossessed of this asset. This also requires that the divine acts of blinding and fattening (12:40) be construed as transformative, involving


18 “Die von Gott verhangte Unfähigkeit zu glauben (Joh 12,39) folgt im JohEv dem faktischen Unglauben ... als die ihm gebührende Antwort” (Röhser, Prädestination und Verstockung, 238).

19 “Trotz so großer Zeichen ‘glaubten sie nicht,’ weil sie sich selbst so sehr verstockt hatten und dann auch von Gott verstockt worden waren (und nicht mehr glauben konnten)” (Röhser, Prädestination und Verstockung, 239).
the alteration of man from the state of being able but unwilling to believe to the state of being unable to believe altogether. Stage-two unbelief, therefore, is the punitive effect of a stubborn unbelief.

A second modern example is that proposed by Bruce Hollenbach.\textsuperscript{20} He advocates the irony view.\textsuperscript{21} Under this scheme, “the notion that God purposes that they not see, hear, understand, turn, and be healed approaches absurdity…. Such absurdity is the only clue to the presence of the figure of speech called irony.”\textsuperscript{22} Certain usages of Isaiah 6:9–10, he argues, are nonironic (the LXX, Matt. 13:15; Acts 28:27) while the more difficult texts are deemed ironic (Mark 4:12; John 12:40). This view is hampered by the subjectivity of determining irony and begs the question on several levels.\textsuperscript{23} He further concedes that no commentary he is aware of has detected the irony in John 12 that he regards as self-evident.\textsuperscript{24} In the end, he opts for a retributive and transformative understanding of Isaianic fattening as a depletion of comprehension.\textsuperscript{25}

A third modern example may be labeled the effect-purpose idiom view set forth by Edmund F. Sutcliffe and C. F. D. Moule.\textsuperscript{26} The crux of this view is that purposive speech is actually preceded by its effect that is created by human agents. Applied to Isaiah 6:9–10, Sutcliffe argues that it means, “the failure of the mission was foreseen, and the outcome to which it would lead is spoken of as purpose.”\textsuperscript{27} Although Moule applies this to Mark 4:12 in


\textsuperscript{22} Hollenbach, “Lest They Should Turn and Be Forgiven: Irony,” 313, emphasis added.

\textsuperscript{23} Here are some questions: Why is the passage absurd and what are the criteria for determining absurdity? If absurdity is the only clue to irony, then how can one develop conditions for determining irony without begging the question? Why are certain usages of Isaiah 6:9–10 ironic and others are not?

\textsuperscript{24} Hollenbach, “Lest They Should Turn and Be Forgiven: Irony,” 319n8.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid. 318.


\textsuperscript{27} Sutcliffe, “Effect as Purpose,” 322.
particular, the same principle may apply to John 12:40. Interestingly, like Origen, Moule rejects a direct transformational view in favor of an indirect (or psychological) perspective. Thus, like the irony view of Hollenbach, the combination of the psychological and direct fattening view of Günter, the effect-purpose idiom also opts for an indirect (or psychological) view of divine fattening. In each case, transformation is assumed rather than proved.

At the risk of oversimplification, these positions attempt to answer a key question: Is inability to believe punitive (via God or nature) for refusal to believe, or is disbelief due to a congenital inability to believe? One’s view of hardening in general or Isaianic fattening specifically, particularly in terms of the divine role, is determined in large part by the answer to this question.

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**Isaianic Fattening Paradigms**

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**A Key Relationship: Unbelief and Inability to Believe**

**Unbelief: The Ministerial Summation (John 12:37)**

Because Isaiah 6:9–10 contrasts outer optic and acoustic phenomena with inner perception, the emphasis in John on “signs” or what is seen is significant. Indeed, the term for “so many” signs may indicate more than

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28 He says the parables in Mark do not “positively harden” i.e., directly transform and that to read it as such “[is] a pitifully literal reading of Isaiah 6” (Moule, “Mark v, 1–20 Yet Once More,” 105). Earlier he calls this direct transformational view “pitiful literalism” (ibid., 99).

29 For the most recent example of a transformative view see Edward P. Meadors, *Idolatry and the Hardening of the Heart: A Study in Biblical Theology* (New York: T & T Clark, 2006).

30 That the ocular issue is highlighted is evidenced by the use of signs (σημεῖα), the
the seven explicitly mentioned. The contrast is thus between undeniable outward confirmation versus inward or noetic opacity. Verse 37 reads, "Although he had done so many signs before them, they were not believing in him." The question is; Why not? Did the Jews not promise to believe if they saw signs (John 4:48; 6:30)? The expected answer to the question: Why not? should fall within either the volitional or cognitive category—either because they were unwilling to believe what the signs pointed toward, did not understand what the signs signified, or both. Underlying either element may, without violence to either one, be an inability. In favor of the cognitive over the volitional element is that the contrast is between visible signs that validate Jesus’ message and noetic darkness evidenced in unbelief. Thus, even before the Isaianic text is summoned, the idea that


they see and do not perceive is already implied. The question of why this is so continues.

One of the answers to this question lies in the text’s connection to Deuteronomy 29:3[4]. Not a few commentators recognize the conceptual links, namely, the presence of signs followed by the lack of perception. The deuteronomistic text asserts that unless God gives eyes to see and ears to hear, then acoustic (as primarily in the synoptics) or optic phenomena (as primarily in John) will remain meaningless. In synoptic (or Markan) terms, John’s signs come in parables to those who are on the outside (Mark 4:12). Like Deuteronomy, the signs in John are followed by the inability to properly recognize or see through them to their salvific purpose or consummation. More than this, Deuteronomy 29:3[4] lying behind Isaiah 6:9–10, highlights wisdom elements and confirms the cognitive component of the heart. Thus, the inability to believe in the face of signs is not rooted in unwillingness—else Pharaonic hardening would be more appropriate—but rather to the absence of salvific wisdom. If we may borrow from Edwards—the will is the mind choosing—then the will (volition) always follows the mind (cognition) and what seems best to it at the moment of choice. If the mind lacks understanding and perception that leads to salvation, then it will always choose to believe what seems best to it. Absence of this wisdom may be deemed an inability whereas the perpetuation of its absence may be regarded as part of the divine act. Finally, the conceptual link to Deuteronomy 29:3[4] and its restatement in Isaiah 6:9–10 (and pars.) help to establish that the divine act throughout is nontransformative in nature. That text explicitly affirms, “the Lord has not given to you a heart to know or eyes to see or ears to hear”—a deprivational view. It does not say, “The Lord has taken away from you a heart to know or eyes to see or ears to hear.” The restatement of the divine act in Isaiah 6:10, “Fatten the heart,” may be understood in this light as deprivational as well, or in grammatical categories, the Hiphil יָכְבֹּל may be construed as constative as opposed to ingressive, that is, “cause the heart to be or remain fat” rather


56 It is simplistic to say that the synoptics are strictly concerned with acoustic issues. It can be demonstrated that they are equally focused on the misperception of both Jesus’ teachings (parables and otherwise) and deeds.

57 Hartley, Isaiah 6:9–10 in the Synoptics, 258, 262–66. Here, it is argued that the phrase in parables is less a linguistic statement than it is a noetic assessment.

than “cause the heart to become fat.”

This construal is in concert with later translational traditions of Isaiah 6:9–10 that assert that the heart is presently fat.

In summary, a partial answer for the cause of unbelief in John finds its roots in Deuteronomy 29:3[4], its restatement in Isaiah 6:9–10 (and pars.), and the nature of the divine action that underlies the fattening motif. It seems best to view the divine action of not giving as signifying a deprivalional, nontransformational, or Augustinian understanding of the event. The question is whether John posits this same modus operandi.

Unbelief: The Theological Explanation (John 12: 38–40)

John 12:38–40 gives evidence of a general concern over unbelief and its specific cause or causes. The text establishes the purpose for unbelief (v. 38), issues a restatement of the inability to believe (v. 39), and then points to the cause of this inability (v. 40). Beyond these formal indicators lies ambiguity in terms of how to causally construe them in terms of unbelief and inability. Initially it may be stated that the logical structure of the passage is far more significant for establishing the cause of unbelief rather than noting that the chronology of unbelief precedes the statement of the inability to believe. The key question is this: Does unbelief lead to inability to believe as a divine punishment (viewed psychologically or otherwise), or does inability to believe—perpetuated by a divine act but not precipitated by human actions—account for unbelief?

John preempts Isaiah 6:9–10 by citing Isaiah 53:1, but why this passage and what is the connection between it and Isaiah 6:9–10? Three preliminary reasons for citing Isaiah 53:1 may be posited. First, and most obvious, is that it states the case for unbelief. Second, it reveals somewhat the nature of the divine act not in terms of the signs themselves but rather the activity or lack thereof in the heart. It is not just the work of the servant for them but the act of God in them that is relevant to the saving act. Third, it represents a (and perhaps the) reversal text of Isaiah 6:9–10 by way of the work of the suffering servant. If the construal above concerning the divine action involved in fattening is correct, then Isaiah 53:1 represents not only how Isaianic fattening is done away with but also the means by which it is

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39 Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 690. See also Allen P. Ross, Introducing Biblical Hebrew (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), §30.3, who questions the ingressive sense here. In a personal correspondence, Waltke says, “I do not think the grammar can decide the issue of whether it is ingressive or constative. Stative verbs tend to go either way” (Bruce K. Waltke, Re: “Fatten” in Isaiah 6:10: A Question on the Hiphil [AOL Correspondence] (America Online, 2004 [cited June 29, 2004]).


perpetuated. Hence, by withholding the “arm of the Lord” in Isaiah 53:1, it makes the ability to salvifically perceive impossible or the assertions of Isaiah 6:10 the result. If, however, the arm of the Lord is restricted to those who have seen the signs, then the answer to its question is obvious but relatively meaningless.\(^\text{42}\)

Verse 38 sets forth the *purpose* of the unbelief of verse 37 as “*in order that* the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled.”\(^\text{43}\) Borchert points out that non-Calvinist interpreters, like Brown and Beasley-Murray, also hold to the *purposive* sense to the *ίνα* clause.\(^\text{44}\) Barrett notes that the nonpurposive sense is elsewhere attested in John (1:27; 17:3) but that it is impossible here as shown by verse 39. “It can hardly be questioned that John meant that the hardening of Israel was intended by God,”\(^\text{45}\) but it is critical to point out that the *basis* of this act is not mentioned. Thus, it would be hasty to conclude that if God’s fattening (Barrett’s “hardening”) is *purposive* that it must therefore be *punitive*, that is, based on human acts. The *purpose* is linked to Isaiah 53:1, but it does not directly address its *cause* until 12:39–40. These verses and the syntactical relationships indicate that the cause is linked to the divine action unsolicited by human activity. To infer from the order of John that unbelief (v. 37) led to inability to believe (v. 39) is to misconstrue both the *causal indicators* in the text as well as to beg the question with regard to the *basis* of the divine act. At the least, and in some way, the quotation of Isaiah 53:1 partly accounts for the unbelief of Israel and fulfills the divine purpose.

Both here (v. 38; Isa. 53:1) and subsequent verses (vv. 39–40; Isa. 6:10) explain in multiple ways the cause or causes accounting for unbelief rather than the inability to believe. Unbelief appears to have two causes: God’s deprivation of his arm in drawing (or failing to draw) some to himself (v. 38) and the innate inability of humanity to exercise saving faith (v. 39). This failing to exercise the arm in combination with man’s inability to believe is how God blinds and fattens (v. 40). *Thus, God’s blinding and fattening include the withholding of his arm and thereby the perpetuation of the human*

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\(^{42}\) “It is those who do ‘see signs’ and yet do not believe who are reproached, xii. 37” (C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963], 192).


condition. Contrary to Lindars, Isaiah 53:1 may explain more than just the fact of unbelief and Isaiah 6:10 the reason for unbelief.\textsuperscript{46} The nature of the quotation may suggest some sort of typological or analogical fulfillment.\textsuperscript{47} That John uses a fulfillment clause and adds a redundant statement “that which he said” (\textit{O\nu \epsilon\iota\pi\nu}) adds to the performative posture of the utterance or utterances.\textsuperscript{48} This may indicate that whenever and wherever unbelief occurs, the same human components and divine modus operandi are in operation and that unbelief is rooted in inability not vice versa.\textsuperscript{49}

The rhetorical question offered by Isaiah 53:1 expresses a lament concerning the unbelief of verse 37 as well as hints at the divine act that determines that condition. “The word of Isaiah” also serves to link Isaiah 53:1 and 6:10 together as one statement.\textsuperscript{50} If this phrase joins the two passages, then both purpose (v. 38) and cause (v. 40) are not only connected syntactically in John, where cause is subordinate to the purpose, but also unites them as a single prophetic utterance. Thus, although the root of unbelief is an inability, this inability is perpetuated because divine enablement is withheld.

\textsuperscript{46} Lindars, \textit{The Gospel of John}, 437; Morris, \textit{The Gospel according to John}, 603.


\textsuperscript{48} Its superfluity is recognized by P\textsuperscript{75}. It omits or simply lacks the phrase. If this statement is performative and in collocation with a fulfillment formula, then it may argue for a causative connection where fulfillment is logically dependent on “that which is said.” Fulfillment, then, occurs because of that which is said not vice versa. Support can be found in John (1:15; 2:22; 4:29, 53; 7:36; 12:38; 14:26; 18:9, 21, 32) where in every case the phrase refers to an anaphoric oracular utterance that is prophetically fulfilled. The phrase refers, then, to an anaphoric oracular utterance with causative force. It is not fait accompli; thus, not a commissive performative statement but rather a causative performative tantamount to an irrevocabile verbum. See G. B. Caird, \textit{The Language and Imagery of the Bible}, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 7–36; J. L. Austin, \textit{How to Do Things with Words}, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

\textsuperscript{49} Likewise Dodd, \textit{The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel}, 380.

\textsuperscript{50} This phrase (\textit{i\nu\alpha\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\sigma\omicron\sigma}) is used only thrice in the NT to refer to specific predictions or previous statements (John 12:38; 18:32; 2 Thess. 3:1). See Schnackenburg, \textit{The Gospel according to John}, 413. A similar expression in John is \textit{i\nu\alpha\omicron\omicron\omicron\gamma\omicron\sigma\omicron\phi\nu\pi\lambda\rho\omicron\omega} (13:18; 17:12; 19:24, 36) and is semantically similar but may suggest a different kind of fulfillment being employed.
Isaiah 53:1 (John 12:38)\textsuperscript{51}

The first Isaianic quotation is a two-part question dealing with the message (τῆς ἀκοῆς ἡμῶν)\textsuperscript{52} and the power of God (ὁ βραχίων κυρίου)\textsuperscript{53} on one end and implying the ears and the eyes (or heart) of man on the other. Most prefer to identify the reference to the arm of the Lord with the signs and hence the eyes.\textsuperscript{54} Others see signs as referring to Jesus’ actions (Barrett), his preaching as a divine act (Bultmann), how faith and the divine activity are connected (Morris), the divine power especially as demonstrated in the resurrection (Godet), or God’s powerful action through signs (Beasley-Murray, Carson).\textsuperscript{55} If the divine activity is heard and seen in its effects, then it may not be excluded from the internal work of the heart that bears its own signs (cf. John 3:8). Thus, the arm of the Lord is responsible for not only producing the outward signs but also the inward cognitive and volitional signs of faith.

The difference of interpretation concerning the referent the arm of the Lord is between hearing (ears) and seeing (eyes) versus hearing (ears) and not perceiving (heart). The former view may summarize Isaiah 6:9—listening without understanding and looking without perceiving—before moving directly to Isaiah 6:10.\textsuperscript{56} In either case, the power of God would include more than simply the external signs but also address the heart matter. The answer to the two-part question suggests few if any either believed the

\textsuperscript{51} It is generally assumed that John’s quotation follows the LXX. See Bernard, Gospel according to John, 450; Godet, Commentary on John’s Gospel, 793; Kruse, The Gospel according to John 274; Kraus, “Johannes und das Alte Testament,” 9. Other than the addition of κύριος, the Greek follows the Hebrew text with accuracy as well (Barrett, The Gospel according to St. John, 431; Schnackenburg, The Gospel according to John, 413).

\textsuperscript{52} The message deals with the discourse of Jesus (Barrett, The Gospel according to St. John, 431; Bultmann, The Gospel of John, 453n1; Beasley-Murray, John, 216; Carson, The Gospel according to John, 448). The our in our report “may mean either ‘the message which came from us, which we delivered,’ or ‘the message which came to us which we received’ ” (Westcott, The Gospel according to St. John, 134). It is most likely the former view where the genitive is construed as subjective (as opposed to objective).


\textsuperscript{54} Bernard, Gospel according to John, 450; Brown, The Gospel according to John, 485; Köstenberger, John, 391; Keddie, A Study Commentary on John, 482. Westcott refers to the message as appealing inwardly while the signs appeal outwardly (Westcott, The Gospel according to St. John, 133).

\textsuperscript{55} Barrett, The Gospel according to St. John, 431; Bultmann, The Gospel of John, 453n1; Morris, The Gospel according to John, 603; Godet, Commentary on John’s Gospel, 792; Beasley-Murray, John, 216; Carson, The Gospel according to John, 447.

\textsuperscript{56} A similar view is held by Barrett, The Gospel according to St. John, 431.
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message or experienced the power of God as demonstrated by the signs.\textsuperscript{57} The few who did believe, did so at the discretion of God.\textsuperscript{58} This discretion is the subject of the next Isaianic quotation.

**Inability Theme (John 12:39)**

Most commentators will acknowledge an inability in the phrase οὐκ ἦ δύναντο πιστεύειν.\textsuperscript{59} The verse reads, “For this reason they were unable to believe because Isaiah again said” (Isa. 6:10; John 12:40). The question is whether this inability is an explanation of an already existing phenomenon or something de novo, precipitated in some way by human action or inaction. In the latter view, inability may be either a natural effect of unbelief, or it may involve God more directly in applying retribution. This retributive idea is what many refer to as judicial hardening and fattening and is normally equated with a punitive notion. A possible solution lies in a phrase analysis, a causal analysis, and a survey of inability in John up to this point.

The first reply lies within the precise causative relationship between the two phrases διὰ τοῦτο (“for this reason”) and ὅτι (“because” or “namely”) in terms of unbelief. Is the antecedent of διὰ τοῦτο anaphoric (referring back to unbelief), kataphoric (pointing forward to hardening), or in some way both? Second, should ὅτι be construed as appositional, modifying the previous τοῦτο or causal, modifying ἦδυναντο πιστεύειν? Either explanation for ὅτι is sufficient and results in the same sense, but the causal use appears more likely. διὰ τοῦτο is universally regarded as causal, “for this reason.”\textsuperscript{60} At stake is whether this reason has already occurred

\textsuperscript{57} Godet, *Commentary on John’s Gospel*, 792.

\textsuperscript{58} “Let it be held as a fixed principle, that God enlightens to salvation, and that by a peculiar gift, those whom He has freely chosen; and that all the reprobate are deprived of the light of life, whether God withholds his word from them, or keeps their eyes and ears closed, that they do not hear or see” (John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, trans. William Pringle, vol. 2 [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999], 107; William Bruce, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John* [London: James Speirs, 1891], 302).


(unbelief leads to inability to believe) or is about to be explained (unbelief is caused by inability). In favor of the former, Westcott says the phrase “appears all but uniformly to a preceding fact or thought…. In many cases the reason indicated is developed in the clause which follows…. So it is here.”61 Other commentators favor the latter and focus exclusively on its kataphoric reference or deny its anaphoric reference altogether. Barrett says, “διὰ τοῦτο, as elsewhere in John, is taken up and explained by the ὦτί clause.”62 Bernard says that this phrase “refers to what follows, not what precedes.”63 Lindars chides the RSV for punctuating it “as if this sentence refers back to the preceding quotation. In fact it refers forward.”64 Godet also criticizes Weiss saying, “It is in vain that Weiss tries to make the διὰ τοῦτο for this cause, also refer to the preceding idea, namely, that of the fact; it refers to the following ὦτί and consequently to the cause of the fact.”65 An analysis of Johannine usage substantiates these latter commentators.

Based on the use of the phrase in John, it is evident that whenever the causal ὦτί is in the context, it follows διὰ τοῦτο, and διὰ τοῦτο points solely to it. Six of the fifteen cases are in this category (5:16, 18; 8:47; 10:17; 12:18, 39). Of the remaining kataphoric references, two point to ὦτί of indirect discourse (6:65; 16:15), two to ὦτί recitative (9:23; 13:11), and one to an elliptical context (7:72). Of the anaphoric instances, one points to a ἵνα purpose clause (1:31) and three to a previous context (12:27; 15:19; 19:11). Thus, the pattern for the kataphoric reference is διὰ τοῦτο “for this reason” pointing to ὦτί “because” or semantically reason-cause. In summary, διὰ τοῦτο is never used in John to refer back to either a context or any other clause whenever a causal ὦτί is in the near vicinity. Thus, it is unlikely that the phrase in 12:39 is anaphoric in any sense. This observation supports the contention that the cause of unbelief is an inability, rather than the cause of the inability to believe being

61 Westcott, The Gospel according to St. John, 134. The phrase normally refers back to the previous argument (conceptual antecedent), but this is not always the case (Daniel B. Wallace, Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996], 333).


63 Bernard, Gospel according to John, 450.

64 Lindars, The Gospel of John, 438.

65 Godet, Commentary on John’s Gospel, 793; Ridderbos, The Gospel according to John, 444n214.

persistent unbelief. Because διὰ τοῦτο points to the following ὅτι clause and because the latter modifies ἡδύναμον πιστεύειν, both clauses lend support to the notion that unbelief arises from an inability that is caused by the divine acts of blinding and fattening (12:40).

A second reply that argues against unbelief as the cause of inability is based on the cause-and-effect pattern of the phrases and clauses as they appear in verses 37–40. As a general rule, John moves from effect to cause not cause to effect. He does this on both a micro and a macro level. On a micro level, verse 37 begins with an effect (unbelief) and then a concession (in spite of signs). Verse 38 begins likewise with an effect (fulfilled Scripture) followed by its cause (“that which he said”) and an effect (not believing the report) followed by its cause (arm of the Lord). Verse 39 starts with an effect (inability to believe) followed by its cause (“because Isaiah again said”). Verse 40 undergoes this very Johannine tendency as seen in the alteration of the first couplet in the Isaianic quotation. It begins with the effect (blinding) followed by its cause (fattening). The rest of the Isaianic quotation is retained, which follows the opposite pattern of cause and effect. On a macro level, this effect to cause pattern continues. Verse 37 is the effect (unbelief in spite of signs) whereas verse 38 is the cause (fulfillment of Scripture). The same pattern is evident in verses 39–40. Finally, verses 37–38 may be viewed as the effect and verses 39–40 the cause. Thus, the Johannine pattern is effect to cause not cause to effect, and this argues against viewing unbelief as the cause of the inability to believe.

If both the phrase and causal analysis tend to rule out unbelief as the cause for the inability to believe, then it may still be argued that something earlier has rendered them unable to believe (e.g., Röhser). The third reply to this question is to show that inability in 12:39 is not de novo. If unbelief is a persistent problem as well as an inability in John and if true faith is shown to require divine enablement, then the divine acts of blinding and fattening may be conclusively shown to be nonpunitive and nontransformative in nature. Of interest are the places where the inability of man is stressed in terms related to faith and/or themes germane to Isaiah 6:9–10.

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66 Even if it were granted that the reference is anaphoric, there is no reason to assume that it points to unbelief necessarily. It may well be argued that it points back to the withholding of God’s arm. Given the usage of the phrase, however, none of this speculation is warranted.

67 This cause-and-effect pattern is evident on a small scale where not seeing with the eyes is the cause and not perceiving is the effect (v. 40b) and turning is the cause while healing is the effect (v. 40c). Slightly expanded, the first couplet (v. 40b) is the cause while the second couplet (v. 40c) is the effect. Taking all of v. 40, the first part dealing with blinding and hardening is the cause (v. 40a) while the second (ἵνα clause) dealing with noetic opacity and volitional obduracy is the effect (v. 40bc).

The inability of faith that appears in John 12:39 is not new. Jesus indicated that without the new birth (regeneration) a man could neither “see” nor “enter” the kingdom of God (3:3–5). This inability to see leads to willful rejection of the divine testimony (3:11). Further, anything that one has is a result of divine gifting, for without this giving no one can receive anything (3:27; 6:65). Those who receive Jesus (1:12) do so because of this new birth (1:13). This inability of faith along with divine enablement or absence thereof is nowhere brought out more clearly and definitively than in John 6:44. This passage, like John 12, explains the underlying cause of unbelief (6:41–71). “No man can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

Coming to Jesus in this gospel means exercising genuine faith (6:35). Thus, this text teaches three things: (1) human inability, namely, that no man can come (believe) apart from divine enablement; (2) divine necessity, that this divine enablement is an essential condition for faith; and (3) divine sufficiency, noted by the double use of ἀυτόν strongly implying that the “him” drawn (ἐλκύσῃ) is the same “him” raised (ἀναστήσω) without equivocation. Therefore, the drawing is best viewed as both a necessary and sufficient condition for faith. This would substantiate what is positively stated in John 6:37 where it is “everyone whom the Father gives me will come to me” and negatively in 6:65 where Jesus accounts again for unbelief by saying, “Because of this I told you that no one can come to me unless it has been given to him by the Father.” The it given is presumably the divine enablement. The lack of enablement (not drawing, not giving) as well as the act of enablement (drawing, giving) is entirely within the divine prerogative, and the effect of either divine act leaves man with the impossibility to the contrary. That man cannot believe apart from this enablement is every bit as true as the

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69 The Nicodemus scene is designated a “failed anagnorisis” or a failure to rightly “perceive” (Culpepper, “The Plot of John’s Story of Jesus,” 354). Culpepper argues convincingly that this failure to rightly perceive operates throughout John.

70 The verb Ἐλκύω occurs eight times in the NT (John 6:44; 12:32; 18:10; 21:6, 11; Acts 16:19; 21:90; James 2:6). The sense to the “drawing” or “dragging” is more accurately depicted as inevitable and effectual than irresistible. It can signify, “to drag or pull by physical force, often implying resistance” (L & N, §15.178). Here used with the sense of, “to draw a pers. in the direction of values for inner life, draw, attract” (BDAG, 318).


72 There is a distinction in the “giving” of enablement to sinners (John 3:27; 6:65) and the “giving” of sinners to the Son (John 6:37, 39; 10:29; 17:6, 9, 11, 12, 24; 18:9). All those given to the Son are enabled to come.
notion that man cannot fail to believe with it.\textsuperscript{73}

It is the contention here that not only is inability to believe in 12:37 not new but also that the perpetuation of this inability, specifically in terms of cognition, is what is meant by Isaianic fattening. Divine withholding of regeneration, or not drawing or not giving that thereby perpetuates blindness and lack of salvific wisdom, aptly describes how God blinds and fattens. This depriving of his salvific arm and his refusal to draw or give to them seems an eminently more textually justifiable modus operandi than the notion that God punitively takes away (depletes) the ability to see and believe. Ultimately, the divine basis for withholding the light of regeneration may be judicial (just), as Augustine asserts, but not punitive (based on human contingencies). In sum, the precise function of the causal phrases, the Johannine pattern of effect to cause, and the inability theme prevalent throughout John show that the inability of faith in 12:37 is not likely due to the unwillingness to believe or to human behavior. Rather, man is unable to believe by nature, and God is the ultimate cause of either overcoming or perpetuating this condition. These lines of evidence argue against a punitive and thus transformational scheme to fattening and blinding.

\textbf{Isaiah 6:10 (John 12:40)}

The divine role in this act leads John to cite from Isaiah again in a way that supports his argument thus far.\textsuperscript{74} “He has blinded their eyes and fattened their heart in order that they should not see with their eyes and understand with their heart and turn and I should heal them.” Beyond the difficulties of determining which underlying text of Isaiah 6:10 John has in mind or the exact subjects of the verbs, the two rather obvious observations are the fronting of the phrase “he has blinded their eyes” (\textit{πετύφλωκεν αὐτῶν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς}) and the omission of reference to

\textsuperscript{73}In his interview with C. S. Lewis on May 7, 1963, Mr. Sherwood E. Wirt of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association commented that it sounded as if Lewis “came to a very definite point of decision.” Lewis answered, “Well, I would say that the most deeply compelled action is also the freest action. By that I mean, no part of you is outside the action. It is a paradox. I expressed it in \textit{Surprised by Joy} by saying that I chose, yet it really did not seem possible to do the opposite” (C. S. Lewis, \textit{God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics} [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970], 261). What sparked this was Lewis’ statement, “I was the object rather than the subject in this affair. I was decided upon” (ibid.).

\textsuperscript{74}John says “again” (\textit{πάλιν}). Here it signifies that “there is a second idea, serving to explain the fact by completing the first” (Godet, \textit{Commentary on John’s Gospel}, 793; BDAG, 752). Evans adds that these texts are connected through the exegetical principle of \textit{gezerā šāwā} (“equivalence of expression”), united under one quotation formula, and linked by the themes of obduracy and exaltation/glorification (Evans, “Obduracy and the Lord’s Servant,” 230–31; idem, \textit{To See and Not Perceive}, 133; Richard J. Bauckham, \textit{God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament} [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 47–51). Evans also contends that John 12:1–43 is a midrash on Isa. 52:7–53:12 (Evans, “Obduracy and the Lord’s Servant,” 232).
the ears. The emphases on signs and sight best account for both the omission of the ears or hearing and the fronting of blinding. Although Isaiah 6:9 is omitted, commentators point to John 9:39 as alluding to it. In that story, Jesus cures a man with congenital blindness (9:1, 20). Even when the disciples attempt to blame blindness on the man’s or his parents’ sin (9:2), Jesus avoids any punitive notion and points to the final cause being that “the acts of God may be revealed” (9:3; cf. 12:38). According to Westermann, the disciples were apparently still “locked into the doctrine of recompense.” These “acts” of God probably refer to both perpetuating blindness (as with the Pharisees) as well as reversing it (with the man). The lesson is that “all are born blind and need to see the light.” The wording does not agree with the Masoretic text, the LXX, or the Targum Jonathan (Schnackenburg, The Gospel according to John, 414; Westcott, The Gospel according to St. John, 135; Whitacre, John, 321; MHT 4:68; Craig S. Keener, The Gospel of John: A Commentary, vol. 2 [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003], 883). John probably had a variety of texts before him besides these (or those behind these) three texts including testimonia as the combination of καρδία and πυροποιήματος seem to suggest (Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, 380; Evans, “The Function of Isaiah 6:9–10 in Mark and John,” 133–34; Perumbalath, “Biblical Hermeneutics,” 48, 51; Glenn Balfour, “The Jewishness of John’s Use of the Scriptures in John 6:31 and 7:37–38,” Tyndale Bulletin 46 [1995]: 357–80; Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 131). Barrett says John is nearest to the Hebrew but quoting loosely and adapting the material to suit his own purpose (Barrett, The Gospel according to St. John, 431). Omission of the ears is despite the mention of hearing in v. 38 (Schnackenburg, The Gospel according to John, 415; Carson, The Gospel according to John, 449). See Brown, The Gospel according to John, 486.


“The allusion appears to mean that Jesus will give the truth (‘sight’) to the innocent (‘the blind’), but will withhold it (‘become blind’) from the guilty (‘those who see’). In this episode, it is the man born blind who gains true (in)sight, while the Pharisees who have eyesight, but lack insight, are those who are truly blind” (Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 132).

Culpepper, “The Plot of John’s Story of Jesus,” 355. “The story of the blind man and the Pharisees, therefore, interprets what is involved in an anagnorisis and why some fail to
If John 12:40 is mindful of this story, then this would lend support to the notion of congenital spiritual blindness apart from either a punitive basis or transformational act here, and, if congenital, then the act of “blinding” in 12:40 (and fattening) is best understood as a form of divine deprivation.

The subject of the first two verbs “he has blinded,” “he has fattened,” and the last “I should heal,” must be briefly examined. The first two are third person while the final is first person. Besides this, the first two differ in tenses wherein the former is perfect and the latter aorist. Westcott’s observation that the change in tenses is remarkable is perhaps an overstatement. In any case, tense difference aids little in determining subjects. Taking person as the key factor, most commentators posit identical subjects for the first two verbs but switch for the last. Three views have emerged in this regard. First, some argue that the order of subjects is Satan, Satan, and God. According to Carson, this interpretation wrongly equates the Johannine “Prince of this world” with the Pauline “God of this age” and is theologically driven to circumvent the doctrine of compatibilism. Schnackenburg adds, “Of the reference to the devil as an agent there is no sign at all.” Burge says, “Most scholars reject this view vigorously.” Second, others argue for Jesus, Jesus, and God. This interpretation would be unique in attributing to Jesus either blinding or fattening. Third, most commentators view the subjects as recognize Jesus” (ibid.). On light-darkness in John see Étienne Trocmé, “Light and Darkness in the Fourth Gospel,” Didaskalia 6 (1995): 3–13.


85 So says Carson, The Gospel according to John, 448n1.


87 Burge, John, 348n28.

88 Hollenbach, “Lest They Should Turn and Be Forgiven: Irony,” 317–18; Carson, The Gospel according to John, 450.
God, God, and Jesus (or God). Although this is stronger in terms of consistent usage, either of the final two views would be similar in not requiring a distinction in the divine modus operandi.

The subject matter of the first two verbs is noetic incapacity. On blinding (τυφλόω) Porter states, “Though God is not mentioned by name the emphasis appears to be upon him as agent in such a stark act.” Godet, although a bit too broad in his application, adds that the blinding here “designates the depriving of intellectual light, in the sense of the true and even of the useful, of simple good sense.” The term used for “fattening,” παρόνω (as well as its nominal παρονία), is more specific and always refers to an absence of wisdom. Although second in order (due to emphasis on sight), it is the logical cause of blindness. It refers directly to a lack of wisdom that prevents the eyes from seeing aright. It pertains to the cognitive element of the heart (understanding) that informs and determines its volitional aspect (repentance). The ἵνα clause indicates that the divine purpose of this cognitive privation (perpetuated by way of divine deprivation) is that it manifests itself in a volitional refusal to turn and be healed. Divine blinding and fattening guarantee that these individuals will “not begin to see with their eyes” (ἰδωσει τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς) and therefore “begin to understand with their heart” (νοήσωσιν τῇ

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90 Porter, Verbal Aspect 280. The verb occurs thrice in the NT (John 12:40; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 2:11), and this, combined with a similar idea in Rom. 11:8, argues conclusively for God (Yahweh) as the agent of blinding.


92 See Job 17:7; Mark 3:5; 6:52; 8:17; John 12:40; Rom. 11:7, 25; 2 Cor. 3:14; Eph. 4:18; Herm. Mand. 4.2 [30:1]; 12.4 [47:4].

93 The ἵνα clause is most likely a purpose or purpose-result. See Wallace, Exegetical Syntax, 474; MHT 2:470; Bernard, Gospel according to John, 450. John avoids the LXX μὴ ποτὲ. His frequent ἵνα μὴ may instead represent the Aramaic particle.

καρδία)⁹⁵ and “turn” (στραφῶσιν).⁹⁶ These conditions then preclude Jesus (or God) from “healing” (ἰάσομαι) them.⁹⁷

**Basis of Divine Act**

An important issue concerns the basis of fattening or why God fattens some and not others. It has been argued above that neither the lack of faith nor any other human behavior provides this basis in John. Still, Bernard, as well as others, argues that this blindness is penal and “a Divine punishment for sin…. That sin causes a blindness of the soul, a moral insensibility to spiritual truths, is a law of the natural, that is of the divine order.”⁹⁸ Ridderbos describes fattening as “a punishment from God,” “on account of unbelief,” and a “divinely ordained judgment.”⁹⁹ Keener cites Isaiah 29:9–10 and 44:18 (both reuses of Isa. 6:9–10) as examples of where God blinds people “to punish their willful transgression.”¹⁰⁰ These comments, while reflecting a punitive notion and a transformative perspective, find little textual support. For example, where in John does inability of faith suggest a retributive or penal view or the idea that man becomes morally insensitive? How did the individuals of verse 39—putatively prior to being fattened—not turn (repent) and find healing? On the contrary, the Johannine use of the Isaianic texts seems to suggest not that irresponsible volitional acts lead to mental blindness but the reverse, including unbelief and failure to turn. It is the mind that informs the volition not the reverse.¹⁰¹ On the other hand, Carson mentions Deuteronomy 29:3–4 without evoking penal blindness, and Bultmann recognizes that even though this behavior is “determined by the deepest ground of being” that this “does not destroy responsibility, but for the first time awakens it.”¹⁰²

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⁹⁵ It may be that the μὴ is meant to govern both verbs (ἰάσωμι, νοήσασθαι) as the addition of it preceding the latter in ἰάσωμι seems to confirm, but it is not necessary to make the point. Both verbs are probably ingressive as translated here (MHT, 1:117).

⁹⁶ This final verb is either a constative or consummative aorist and tantamount to “be converted” (BDF, §308; MHT, 3:51–52). Unlike the LXX and other uses of this text in the NT, it is not compounded, and it is passive not active. Textual variants account for both of these points. On the avoidance of the compound, see Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to John*, 415.


¹⁰¹ Similarly, Painter says believing in John involves “1. perception, recognition, understanding; 2. decision; 3. dependence and obedience” (Painter, “Eschatological Faith in the Gospel of John,” 41).

On the one hand, many draw the conclusion that God not only does not secure repentance for everyone but also decrees unbelief. “That the evangelist seems to be saying that it was God’s will that few believe in Jesus because of hardened hearts seems to be unavoidable.”103 That is, unbelief was not only predicted in John12:38 (Isa. 53:1) but “produced by God” in verses 39–40 (Isa. 6:10).104 On the other hand, “they habitually misunderstood (12:29, 34) because they were blind by nature (12:38–40).”105 Both aspects are true, namely, God blinds and fattens, and man is by nature blind and fat-hearted. The solution offered here is that blinding and fattening were produced on those who were by nature blind and fat-hearted by way of divine deprivation that perpetuates these natural conditions but reaching this conclusion is where many exegetes struggle: There is an aversion in appearing to attribute to God an act that in any way seems arbitrary.106 Moreover, the divine act unsolicited by human causes (related to behavior) raises the issue that there may be injustice on God’s part.107 Furthermore, that individuals may suffer from an inability to believe (due to the Fall) seems to threaten the very concept of responsibility. Together these concerns fuel and motivate the search for a human basis for God’s actions. In light of the preceding argument, the Johannine evidence locates this basis within the will of God either in immediate terms of Heilsgegeschichte or the more remote notion of divine predestination or both. That this basis is not rooted in human contingencies does not make God’s actions arbitrary. It is not unjust to withhold the understanding heart, but it is the essence of justice (judicial) precisely because God is not obligated to show mercy and grace to sinners. Finally, the divine act does not threaten human responsibility, for the call to repent is still valid, permissible, and apart from coercion. The advantage of this construal is that God is not tinkering with the human heart to either counter belief or disable these folks from believing, but he is simply withholding his divine aid and letting man go his own way.

The Glory: The Prophetic Appraisal (v. 41).

Finally, the evangelist ties the two Isaianic passages together under a christological framework associated with God’s glory in verse 41. “These

103 Evans, “Obduracy and the Lord’s Servant,” 228.

104 Evans, To See and Not Perceive, 132. I would replace his produced with perpetuated to avoid a transformative nuance.

105 Keener, The Gospel of John, 883. This statement contradicts his earlier punitive and transformational assertion.

106 Burge, John, 348 doubts that either “Isaiah or John were thinking about a philosophical causality as some would call it today.” The assumption is that determinism implicit in causality obliterates human responsibility.

107 Rom. 9:14–18 is written to answer this very question.
things Isaiah said because he saw his glory.” The things Isaiah has said refers back, most likely, to both of the Isaianic quotations (Isa. 53:1 and Isa. 6:1). Here John establishes a causal connection between what he has said and the seeing of his glory. As was true about Isaiah in his own day, he is again contrasted with Jesus’ contemporaries who are fat-hearted and do not see God’s glory. In Jesus’ case, they fail to see through the signs to their true significance in terms of the humiliation and exaltation of the suffering servant. The signs were designed to point to Jesus’ glory but like Isaiah’s contemporaries who lacked access to the divine assembly, these also lacked the faculties to see the glory of Jesus.

John’s phrasing also emphasizes Christ as the referent behind Isaiah’s epiphany and thus elevates the degree of glory attributed to Jesus. When John indicates that Isaiah said these things because “he saw his glory,” the verbal parallel is drawn not to the Hebrew text but rather to the Targum Jonathan. While the Hebrew and the LXX of Isaiah 6:1 read, “I saw the Lord,” the Targum states, “I saw the glory of the Lord.” The Targum in Isaiah 6:5 reads not, “my eyes have seen the King” (as the Hebrew text) but “my eyes have seen the glory of the shekinah of the king of eternity, the Lord of Hosts.” Thus, the object of the divine vision in the Targum and John is identified with the glory of the Lord. The referent of his in the phrase, he saw his glory, seems to refer more to the glory of Christ (not Jesus) rather than that of God (the Father). Schnackenburg writes, “Even if it were possible to regard the seeing of the glory as still a reference to God (as some manuscripts wrongly do), the second part makes it certain that John means Jesus; this is the evangelist’s unique, Christological view.”

The continuity between Isaiah’s and Jesus’ day is that the majority of Jews failed to understand God’s glory as it was revealed in the explanation of the

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108 Whitacre, John, 322.

109 Westcott, The Gospel according to St. John, 135; Morris, The Gospel according to John, 605; Lindars, The Gospel of John, 439; Carson, The Gospel according to John, 450; Ridderbos, The Gospel according to John, 445. There are two variants that render this with a more temporal or temporal/causal sense ὅτε or ὅτε ἐπεί.


111 Carson, The Gospel according to John, 449; Brown, The Gospel according to John, 486.


113 Schnackenburg, The Gospel according to John, 416. Because it refers to “glory and not Jesus” directly, it is not necessary to see this as direct preincarnate vision of Jesus (Köstenberger, John, 391–92).
Lord’s glory in terms of the suffering servant. This lack of apprehension and thus failure to rightly appreciate is accounted for early on by Isaiah (6:9–10) and subsequent to the signs in John (12:37–41) in the language of divine fattening. They could not believe (a volitional act) because they could not perceive (a cognitive act), and they could not perceive because they were fat-hearted and remained fat-hearted because God perpetuated this condition (by way of divine fattening).

**Conclusion**

There is a need to qualify the term *judicial* when defining what judicial entails either in terms of Pharaonic hardening or Isaianic fattening. Exegetes may wish to nuance this by pointing to either a punitive or nonpunitive *basis*. If a punitive idea is advanced, then scholars should provide the human conditions without evoking merely the universal quality of human sinfulness. That explanation does not answer why all are not fattened—assuming for the sake of argument (with transformational proponents) that all are not fat-hearted prior to the act of fattening. Furthermore, it would help if commentators were prepared to detail what *mode* of divine fattening is being advanced. If either a psychological or a more direct divine avenue, then the introduction of a transformative idea should be accompanied by clear examples of this sort of phenomenon. The notion that a *transitive* idea (“God hardens/fattens X”) necessitates a *transformative* notion (“God transformatively [by way of depletion or deposition] hardens/fattens X”) needs validation. Irrespective of the view one proposes to advance, most would welcome greater specificity and clarity on these issues.

It has been argued here that the divine *basis* of fattening lies within the purposes of God (judicial) and not human actions or inaction (nonpunitive). Instead, all men lack the ability to salvifically believe and are in need of the divine initiative. What underlies genuine faith is salvifically *perceiving*, *knowing*, and *understanding*. The failure to rightly exercise this salvific wisdom is the twofold effect of congenital inability and divine perpetuation, but it is not simply a matter of possessing and then failing to exercise this wisdom. Because this effect is congenital (as John 9 seems to confirm), John 12:37–41 serves to explain its perpetuation rather than commencing in terms of divine causality. It is this congenital lack or *privation* of salvific wisdom that constitutes the very definition of the fat-heart. The act of fattening in terms of divine causality, therefore, is best represented by the words of Deuteronomy 29:3[4] as not giving noetic enablement rather than subtracting (or offsetting) it. Thus, the divine *mode* should be construed as nontransformative or more specifically as *deprivation*. As to the *purpose* (or *final cause*) of this act, it is likely two-pronged. First, it has implications in terms of the plan of salvation. It was necessary to ensure the rejection and crucifixion of Christ. Second, it serves ultimately to guarantee the final judgment of those who are not the sheep. This dual purpose of Isaianic
fattening has both a near and a remote eventuality in terms of *Heilsgeschichte* and eschatological judgment. It is in this sense that the fattened would not see and thus be destined to not turn and be healed.