CHRISTOPHER R. SEITZ

Essays on Prophecy and Canon

Forschungen zum Alten Testament

Mohr Siebeck

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The Rise of a New Model for Interpretation

Mohr Siebeck

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To Leander Keck
Dean, Colleague, Friend

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This volume is dedicated to Leander Earl Keck, former Dean of Yale Divinity School, and Winckley Professor of Biblical Theology Emeritus. Lee has been a close friend on the journey during which these essays appeared, and a model of theological acumen and Menschlichkeit.

Toronto, July 2021 Christopher R. Seitz

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List of Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992
ad loc	*ad locum*, at the place discussed
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers*
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AS	Annals of Sennacherib
ATANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
ATM	Altes Testament und Moderne
AV	Authorized Version
BELT	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BBET	Beitrage zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie
BibSem	The Biblical Seminar
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament
BTCB	Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible
BZ	*Biblische Zeitschrift*
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	*Catholic Bible Quarterly*
CBSC	Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges
ch(s).	chapter(s)
CTR	*Calvin Theological Review*
EgT	*Eglise et Théologie*
e. g.	*exempli gratia*, for example
esp.	especially
et al.	*et alii*, and others
ETL	*Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*
ExAud	*Ex Auditu*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FC	Fathers of the Church
fem.	feminine
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HCOT	Historical Commentary on the Old Testament
Hermeneia	Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible

HKAT	Handkommentar zum Alten Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
IB	*Interpreter's Bible*. Edited by George A. Buttrick et al. 12 vols. New York, 1951–1957
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
idem	the same
ibid.	*ibidem*, in the same place
i. e.	*id est*, that is
IJST	*Interpretation Journal of Systematic Theology*
Int	*Interpretation*
IRT	Issues in Religion and Theology
ITL	The International Theological Commentary
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBT	*Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
KEHAT	Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament
KHC	Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LXX	Septuagint
masc.	masculine
MT	Masoretic Text
n(n).	note(s)
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
n. d.	no date
NIB	*The New Interpreter's Bible*. Edited by Leander E. Keck. 12 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994–2004
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NT	New Testament
NTT	*Norsk Teologisk Tidsskrift*
OAN	Oracles against the nations
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OT	Old Testament
OTE	*Old Testament Studies*
OTL	Old Testament Library
OtSt	*Oudtestamentische Studiën*
PR	*Presbyterian Review*
ProEccl	*Pro Ecclesia*
repr.	reprint
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series

SBET	*Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SEA	*Svensk Exegetisk Arsbok*
sg.	singular
SH	Scripture and Hermeneutics Series
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of Old Testament*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Monograph Series
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
STI	Studies in Theological Interpretation
SymS	Symposium Series
ThTo	*Theology Today*
TRev	*Theologische Revue*
TTFL	Theological Translation Fund Library
TBS	Tools for Biblical Study
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
viz.	*videlicet*, namely
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
UUA	Uppsala Universitetsårskrift
VF	*Verkündigung und Forschung*
v(v).	verse(s)
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WW	*Word and World*
XII	The Book of the Twelve
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

Introduction: The Rise of a New Model for Biblical Interpretation

Background

Seventies

Prior to North American university courses in biblical interpretation, my exposure to Old and New Testaments came through the lectionary of the 1928 Book of Common Prayer. Through that medium (unless one used it daily) scripture was tied to the liturgical year, and so did not give one much sense of the serial movement of the text, or the Bible as a whole work. The Old Testament, furthermore, was virtually absent, except through psalmody or a servant song from Isaiah at Lent and a prophetic text in Advent. The Bible was what one heard in the context of Sunday morning worship, rather than a book of its own to be read and to be edified by.

University introduction to Old and New Testament was exhilarating simply at the level of learning who Amos was, or thinking more carefully about the unfolding of Paul's thought, via a serial account of his letters as one held them to have been composed.[1] Specificity and clarity were provided about subjects I had known only at a distance. Mild forms of "historical critical" analysis were at the service of bringing the material into sharper focus. Differentiation and particularity were the goals, more so than creating an external scaffolding that would replace or obscure the canonical text in the form of a history-of-religion to which it referred. If there were three Isaiahs, this was less a matter of eliminating a single author (an idea that was foreign to me) than a desire for clarification and the provision of a plausible historical context. I was asked to be a teaching assistant and very much enjoyed the challenge. This was the age of John Bright and congenial map aids.

My Masters level work in Biblical Interpretation was an extension of this model, augmented by language study and close reading of texts in Hebrew and Greek. Having already completed basic introductory courses meant I had

[1] By comparison, see my commentary on Colossians four decades later and the model for interpretation it presumes (*Colossians*, BTCB [Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2014]).

room in my schedule for electives in Hebrew exegesis. The teacher had been a student of James Muilenburg and had written his doctoral dissertation on sources in the Pentateuch. This brought me into contact with the Exodus commentary of Brevard S. Childs (1974) as well as a sense of German biblical studies with which that commentary was conversant. My teacher, as was apparently true of all of Muilenburg's students, had been encouraged to go abroad and so he had spent time at the University of Heidelberg. That Union Theological Seminary Professor was known for his commentary on Isaiah 40–66 in the best-selling Interpreters Bible series, as well as for his form-critical version of a method he called called rhetorical criticism.[2] My first Hebrew Poetry exposure was "Second Isaiah" and the commentaries of Muilenburg and Claus Westermann. I was expected to memorize long portions of the Hebrew text, which is a special gift that remains resident in my mind to this day.

I was encouraged to pursue doctoral studies and Yale was an obvious choice, due to the influence of Childs (he had done his doctoral work in Basel). As Muilenburg had insisted of his PhD students, I was encouraged to study in Germany. I have relatives outside of Heidelberg and this was an opportunity not to be missed. Having enrolled at Goethe Institute in Munich, it did not take long for me to discover the Theological faculty but a few blocks away. The Chair of the Old Testament department was Klaus Baltzer. A kinder and more encouraging Professor, especially open to foreign students, one cannot find. He encouraged me to postpone my studies at Yale and enroll at the University of Munich. For this I had to intensify my German studies in order to pass the exam necessary for matriculation. I recall working my way through the works of Martin Noth and Gerhard von Rad in German to help improve my German and because the contents were familiar to me from previous study of them in English language. I passed the exam and began attending lectures and seminars.

Baltzer was already at work on what would be his lifetime project, a commentary on Isaiah 40–55 for the prestigious Hermeneia Commentary.[3] So I went from Second Isaiah studies in the United States to graduate seminars with Baltzer in Munich, as well as a range of other courses. It was a rich experience I will never forget, even as in subsequent years I would visit Heidelberg, Marburg, Göttingen and Tübingen, for advanced study and research.

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[2] *Festschriften* for Muilenburg (1896–1974) appearing in 1962 and 1974 included contributions from Walther Eichrodt, G. Earnest Wright, Martin Noth, Bernhard Anderson, Walter Brueggemann and Norman Gottwald. It was a time of international exchange. Anderson's *Understanding the Old Testament* textbook was widely used. It remains in print, now in its 5th edition and edited by Judith Newman. Her father Murray L. Newman was my Old Testament professor at Virginia Theological Seminary. On rhetorical criticism, see his essay "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969): 1–18.

[3] I would later be invited to join Baltzer on the Hermeneia Board; I was offered the commentary on Isaiah 56–66, which I declined to undertake.

In correspondence with Professor Childs, I was encouraged not to stay in Germany but to begin doctoral studies at Yale. Baltzer was a compelling and gracious host and it was indeed tempting to stay and become a research assistant in Munich. Childs, having studied in Basel, knew how critical a network of recommendation and endorsement from within the North American context would be for entering the job market. He had spent his first years after returning from Basel at a small seminary in Wisconsin, prior to accepting a post at Yale in 1958. Persuaded and anxious to begin further study at Yale, I enrolled and began coursework.

For the purposes of the following account, I believe it is important to note several converging realities. Historical-critical work was at a high-water mark. International exchange brought German and Anglophone scholarship into close proximity and collaboration. The post war consensus around the work of Gerhard von Rad, Walther Zimmerli, Martin Noth, Walther Eichrodt and others is evident in the appearance of all their works in English translation, and their wide dissemination.[4] The Biblical Theology Movement was an Anglophone phenomenon that derived from this efflorescence and that attempted to bring the theological and historical conclusions into more popular public form. Childs bridged much of this and had his own distinctive take on it, which at the time was shared by his colleague James Barr.[5] The Exodus commentary of Childs, published four years later, demonstrated that he was not sundering the work of historical-criticism but bending it to a different purpose, and the reviews were uniformly strong.[6] The model of Three Isaiahs was at its heyday at this period, and especially chs. 40–55 would appear to have benefitted from this recasting of the unwieldy 66-chapter book. "Second Isaiah" was one of the findings of historical-criticism that seemed best suited to endorse this new repackaging.[7] Critical excavation of sources and traditions in the Pentateuch/Hexateuch was given a positive and constructive theological presentation in the work of von Rad or in congenial textbook presentations like that of the aforementioned *Understanding the Old Testament*. No one asked why a text-

[4] A striking account of how the "assured results" of this period did not withstand the test of time can be seen in J. Jeremias, "Vier Jahrzehnte Forschung am Alten Testament: Ein Rückblick," *VF* 50 (2005): 10–25. I agree with Jeremias but have a different take on the legacy of Noth and von Rad in *Convergences: Canon and Catholicity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020).

[5] Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970).

[6] Built upon the form-critical foundation in evidence in Brevard S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*, SBT 27 (London: SCM, 1960); idem, *Memory and Tradition in Israel*, SBT 37 (London: SCM, 1962); idem, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, SBT 2/3 (London: SCM, 1974).

[7] On this, see the insightful comments of Ulrich Berges, *Jesaja 40–48*, HKAT (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2008), 34–36.

book began with Exodus and not Genesis because the "Mighty Acts of God" ran attractive interference for the canonical form. Bernard Anderson and von Rad were singing off the same song-sheet, assuredly and well.

Eighties

I entered Yale just after the publication of *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, for which Childs was shortly to be well known – for better and for worse. Naturally, the preparatory work for this publication preceded my arrival, taking the form of regular lectures to students at Yale and also public lectures at Union Seminary in Richmond and other trial runs. For me and fellow students at the time it was the prior publications that were better known. My interests were in the kind of approach adopted in the Exodus commentary, with its rich engagement with source, form and tradition history.[8]

I had begun a project on chs. 40–55 of Isaiah in Munich as part of my research there, emerging from Baltzer's seminars. It argued for a meaningful placement of the servant songs in their context.[9] I wrote it up for a Masters level thesis at Yale and shared it with Baltzer the following summer. Doctoral students did a series of graduate level seminars at Yale, typically on individual biblical books and the present state of the research, as well as comparative Semitic languages. I was at the time intrigued with the impasse in studies on Jeremiah, underscored by the commentaries which were appearing and which came to such radically different conclusions about the character of the book.[10] My dissertation was completed in the same period, with the title *Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah*.[11]

I believe it is important to note that during my years as a student at Yale I was largely unaware of the project that would become associated with Childs. He taught seminars whose purpose was to acquaint us with the reigning approaches of the day, in classical historical-critical dress. I recall seminars on

[8] A very useful study is Daniel R. Driver, *Brevard Childs, Biblical Theologian: For the Church's One Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

[9] Childs's student Roy Melugin produced a volume close to the same topic, *The Formation of Isaiah 40–55*, BZAW 141 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976).

[10] William McKane, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986–1987); Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986); William Lee Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah*, 2 vols., Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986–1989).

[11] Christopher R. Seitz, *Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah*, BZAW 189 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989.) The PhD thesis was submitted to Yale in 1986. A journal article based upon the research and writing appeared a year earlier ("The Crisis of Interpretation over the Meaning and Purpose of the Exile: A Redactional Study of Jer xxi–xliii," *VT* 35 [1985]: 78–97).

Chronicles, Numbers, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. I suspect that having said what he wanted to say in print, he was more concerned that we learn classical Old Testament methods.[12] Robert Wilson offered alongside Childs his own Old Testament seminars, and my dissertation came out of one where we saw how fractured the state of Jeremiah research was, especially over issues of authorship, the influence of deuteronomism, and sources in the book. I was trying to come at the problem from a different angle, by evaluating the way the book took form given the fact of two deportations and a division of the community of Israel, for a ten year period, that is, between an Israel in exile in Babylon and a continuing presence around the prophet Jeremiah in the land.

I would now say the project fell somewhere between classical redaction-criticism and the concerns of Childs for a proper accounting of the final form of the text. A longer range view emerged in time which accommodated the level of traditions concerned with the affairs of 597/6 into a merged and unified portrayal in chs. 21–45, shortly after the denouement associated with the Fall of Jerusalem in 586/7. Ezekiel came alongside the former traditions, but it too spanned the same period in the presentation of its final form. We had read the commentaries of Zimmerli and Greenberg with Childs, and I suspect that is where the ground between them was being sought in my work on Jeremiah. To be sure, it was a productive time in the generating of commentary treatments of both books, and also of theories related to the final editing of the Deuteronomistic History, and the influence of deuteronomism on the Book of Jeremiah.

The third major prophetic witness, Isaiah, was soon to be the beneficiary of an entirely new approach. It is at this juncture that the essays to follow begin to give evidence of the rise of a new model for biblical interpretation.

Shifting Landscapes

I had prepared the *status questionis* portion of a Yale PhD dissertation and was into the writing of opening chapters when I was offered a teaching post as Assistant Professor of Old Testament at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. I would teach there for three years before returning to join the Yale faculty in 1989. I had some strong colleagues in Bible, Church History and Theology. The production of inaugural lectures for Introductory courses is a challenge as any young faculty person knows. At that period, a two-semester course was meant to cover all of the contents of the Old (and

[12] Unbeknownst to us, it was also at this period that Childs was researching and writing *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), which would soon appear. His conceptual mind was on that project during our coursework with him.

New) Testament for seminarians mostly headed to pastoral ministry posts. I felt a keen responsibility to provide an overview of the scriptures of Israel as students would in time be called upon to preach and teach in Lutheran (and other) congregational settings.

It was at this point in my career that I first paid serious attention to – indeed read through, page-by-page – the contents of Childs's 1979 Introduction. I had been a teaching assistant at Yale, but Childs had not assigned his own textbook. In my new post, I needed one. I realized I could relay in lectures what I knew of historical-critical findings (such had been my training for a decade), but at the same time harness them to the content of biblical books in their final form. It did not seem fair, as I reflected on it at the time, to swap out the basic content and structure of the biblical literature for either a reconstruction of how the books came to be or a history of Israel to which they were making reference as this could be plausibly recreated. That is, the practical matter of holding myself accountable to the biblical canon, in its wide Old Testament form, guided how I brokered the findings of historical-critical methods – which I knew well and which I appreciated for what they were able to explain.

The Book of Isaiah represented a classic challenge. It is a very big and very complicated book. It is not easy to read from beginning to end without some kind of external paring down. It seems to start in the middle, it covers at least three centuries of Israel's reflective account of her history under God, it appears to correlate key figures and events but not in any tidy one-to-one way. The general "three Isaiah" idea provides a rough-and-ready model to help bring the project down to scale, but it also appears to leave a good deal out – especially in respect of the contents of Isaiah 1–39, which seems to breathe the age and spirit of later sub-sections in chs. 40–66.

The seminary held annual alumni events on scripture and theology. One year we did Isaiah. I edited the speakers' contributions in a small book called *Reading and Preaching the Book of Isaiah*.[13] The lecture I gave on Isaiah as a whole 66-chapter work appears in that volume as well as an editor's introductory chapter. I was trying to find my way to an accounting of the parts and the sum of them as greater as a whole. In my view the authorship question was getting in the way of an accounting of the main concerns of the book itself. I held that to be the destiny of Zion, a theme uniting all sub-divisions.

Isaiah was an obvious choice for a public lecture series because former students, now alumni, were already aware of the classical model and so were in a good position to listen in on a changing landscape. All major commentary

[13] Christopher R. Seitz, ed., *Reading and Preaching the Book of Isaiah* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

series of the period were still dividing the book in half or in three and underscored the divisions by assigning sub-sections to different authors. Publishing houses accepted as a given this model for commentaries and monographs. The sole exception was the Word Biblical commentary, which divided the book in half, at ch. 33. Yet it was regarded as a very unusual production: neither single-author oriented in the manner of conservative hold-outs, nor resembling the classical model either.[14]

It should be acknowledged, at the same time, that newer approaches were being tested during this same period. I have in mind the publications of Joachim Becker, in German, and Jacques Vermeylen, in French.[15] There was nothing quite like these full-scale projects in English language form. More on this at the appropriate place below.

Coming out of that teaching experience and the efforts to relate historical-critical findings to an accounting of the final form of books, I began to contemplate new approaches to reading the biblical literature. The lecture I gave at Yale during my interview process tackled the complicated question of the structure and design of the Book of Job. To be sure, one could identify constituent parts in the manner of traditional critical readings (older folktale book-ends; dialogues in three rounds; Elihu speeches; wisdom poem [ch. 28]; and divine speeches). Accounting for their diachronic development through speculative theories was one way of thinking about interpreting the Book of Job. But could one see in the design of the final form a different way of appreciating their role in the book, one in which the reader and the characters in the drama of Job are intentionally differentiated? The book poses a question about disinterested loyalty to God the readers are privy to but which Job must walk through fire to answer. This particular way of approaching the "canonical shape" of the Book of Job had its roots in the model Childs had developed in his 1979 publication, but it was also moving into new territory.[16]

A similar impulse lay behind an essay published in this same period.[17] In this article, I was seeking to move beyond the conceptual framework of *Theology in Conflict* (1989) with its redaction-critical evaluation of chs. 21–45 of Jeremiah, in order to address the canonical shape of the book as a whole.

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[14] J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1993); John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 2 vols., rev. ed., WBC 24–25 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005).

[15] Citations in n. 19 below.

[16] Christopher R. Seitz, "Job: Full Structure, Movement, and Interpretation," *Int* 43 (1989): 5–17.

[17] Christopher R. Seitz, "The Prophet Moses and the Canonical Shape of Jeremiah," *ZAW* 101 (1989): 3–27. The essay appears with permission. A pre-publication version of this essay was prepared for a lecture at the University of Marburg, and published as "Mose als Prophet: Redaktionsthemen und Gesamtstruktur des Jeremiabuch," *BZ* 34 (1990): 234–45.

I noted the analogies between the portrayal of Moses and Jeremiah and argued that this entailed an effort to interpret the career of the latter based upon the traditions circulating in respect of the former. It is in this more limited, less diachronically complex, sense that one might properly speak of the influence of deuteronomistic thought on the Book of Jeremiah – a still neuralgic point in the commentary treatments mentioned above. The burning of the scroll was a motif associated with the breaking of the tablets; the role of foreign faithfulness in the figure of Caleb had its counterpart in the depiction of Ebed-Melech; the refusal of the intercessory role known to have been decisive in Moses's day led in Jeremiah's case to an extended lamentation series; the new generation represented by Joshua had its counterpart in the role of Baruch the scribe. Neither Moses nor Jeremiah would accompany the new generation into the "promised land" though both were granted a vision of its promised fulfillment.

A topic not addressed in the published thesis – the divergent LXX and MT presentations – also needed address, given my concern to interpret the canonical shape of the book. This would involve a detailed treatment of the role and placement of ch. 45. Canonical reading does not try to put the literary deposit in "correct" chronological order – a problem particularly acute in the case of ch. 45 – but instead seeks to understand its present placement, linking backwards to the scribal role identified in ch. 36 and forward to the Oracles Against the Nations.[18] They remain "planted" in their role as agents of judgments, and only then "torn down," ending with Babylon. The different arrangement in the LXX is not so much a hard alternative whose "originality" is to be evaluated vis-a-vis the MT, but simply represents its own effort to place the OAN in a position already familiar from Isaiah and Ezekiel.

I think it is fair to say that a general consensus about how to interpret the final form of Jeremiah, and to prepare a commentary treatment with a clear method, remains elusive to this day. Here, work on Isaiah stands in some contrast. There was a rough consensus in place, in the form of Isaiah of Jerusalem

[18] A very similar set of concerns accompanies interpretation of chs. 36–39 in Isaiah. They are not in correct chronological order. They represent different, discrete episodes. They have a different counterpart in Kings. They sit on a very important transition point in the larger book of Isaiah, moving us from the Assyrian to the Babylonian era. Zion's and Hezekiah's deliverance are figures of a coming age, in which as well the nations will play a new role vis-à-vis Zion/Israel. Early, insightful essays discussing the arrangement of chs. 36–39 in the larger book are Peter R. Ackroyd, "An Interpretation of the Babylonian Exile: A Study of 2 Kings 20, Isaiah 38–39," *SJT* 27 (1974): 329–59; idem, "Isaiah 36–39: Structure and Function," in *Von Kanaan bis Kerala: Festschrift für Prof. Mag. Dr. Dr. J. P. M. van der Ploeg O. P. zur Vollendung des siebzigsten Lebensjahres am 4. Juli 1979*, ed. W. C. Delsman, AOAT 211 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 3–21. More on this below.

(chs.1–39), Second Isaiah, the Great Prophet of the Exile (40–55), and Trito-Isaiah oracles, delivered back in the land (56–66). To be sure, chs. 34–35 were regarded as anticipatory of 40–55, and the final sixteen chapters did not break so sharply from what preceded in the same way one could observe at the border between Isaiah 39 and 40. But the general approach and distribution of commentary assignments fell along these lines, in a way without analogy for Jeremiah or Ezekiel.

The Book of Isaiah: Beyond the Three-Isaiah Model for Interpretation

It is in this spirit of the age that I was offered and accepted an invitation to write on Isaiah 1–39 for the Interpretation series. There was simply no alternative model. Isaiah 40–66 had already been completed, and other series likewise broke the book into three (or two) sub-sections. Yet at the same time, it was a period of Isaiah research in which this very model was being interrogated and new alternatives were set forth in monograph studies and individual articles.[19] Annual Society of Biblical Literature sessions were given over to the theme "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah" and contributors included Rolf Rendtorff, Walter Brueggemann, Gerald Sheppard, Edgar Conrad, David Carr, Ron Clements, Hugh Williamson, and others.

The point is that even as work was being done on sub-sections of Isaiah, no longer was the assumption in place that these treatments had nothing to do with each other. At issue was the proper model for assessing the 66 chapter "unity." One stressed redactional overlays that created a "Greater Isaiah" book out of separate blocks of tradition. The "unity" was therefore one imposed externally, as over time new historical and sociological pressures led to supplementation. The job was to spot disjunction and assign texts to levels of redaction. The other saw an organic development that led to further supplementation, with an eye toward a meaningful final literary creation. Clements would speak of a deutero-Isaianic development of first-Isaiah material. Williamson's model was

[19] So, for example, Joachim Becker, *Isaias – der Prophet und sein Buch*, SBS 30 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1968); Jacques Vermeylen, *Du prophète Isaïe à l'apocalyptic* (Paris: Gabalda, 1977–78); R. Lack, *La symbolique du livre d'Isaïe: Essai sur l'image littéraire comme element de structuration*, AnBib 59 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1973); the works of Ackroyd in the previous note. Ronald E. Clements, "The Prophecies of Isaiah and the Fall of Jerusalem in 587 B. C.," *VT* 30 (1980): 421–36; idem, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem: A Study of the Interpretation of Prophecy in the Old Testament*, JSOTSup 13 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980); idem, "Beyond Tradition-History: Deutero-Isaianic Development of First Isaiah's Themes," *JSOT* 31 (1985): 95–113; Rolf Rendtorff, "Zur Komposition des Buches Jesaja," *VT* 34 (1984): 295–320.

similar.[20] Ulrich Berges shuttled carefully, and conscientiously, between both levels of concern.[21]

In order to prepare for the Isaiah 1–39 commentary treatment it would be necessary, therefore, to have some kind of working conceptual model in place in respect of those chapters but also the larger book as a whole. Typical of the transitional period, I was given Anchor Bible Dictionary articles to prepare but only First and Third Isaiah were available; Second Isaiah had already been assigned.[22] Yet in my entries it is obvious I am no longer working with the idea of discrete sections. This is truly a transitional period in Isaiah studies.

A careful reader will note above that while one could speak of chs. 34–35 as anticipatory of "Second Isaiah" chapters, that put a sort of spotlight on the role and placement of chs. 36–39. This came with some struggle, however. The longstanding view, going back to Gesenius (1821), was that the original location of these chapters, concerning the siege of Jerusalem and King Hezekiah, was in Kings (2 Kings 18–20). They were not integral to Isaiah nor its dramatic unfolding at this key narrative juncture but were secondarily added. That they resembled closely the other key narrative section in Isaiah itself (chs. 7–8) was ignored. Kings was also judged to have told the true story of Hezekiah, eliminated in Isaiah's rendering, concerning his paying tribute to Sennacherib (2 Kgs 18:14–16). In time, these "historical verses" were judged to be corroborated by the Annals of Sennacherib.

There are multiple problems associated with this rather simple view of the matter that do not need review here. For our purposes, what was required was a suitable account of the function of these chapters, including ch. 39, in the Book of Isaiah itself. A focus on originalism and history was blocking an eval-

[20] H. G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford; Clarendon; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[21] Ulrich Berges, *Das Buch Jesaja: Komposition und Endgestalt* (Freiburg: Herder, 1998); English translation, see idem, *The Book of Isaiah: Its Composition and Final Form*, trans. Millard C. Lind, HBM 46 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2012). Allow me to note in passing a difficulty in this period of Isaiah reconceptualization. Often there are gaps in cross-reference due to publication dates, different series and their format handling of "three Isaiahs," and just the general ferment in Isaiah studies. Berges is conversant with my works on Isaiah appearing from 1988 to 1996 but neither my 2001 commentary on Isaiah 40–66 nor Childs's OTL commentary on the whole book, in his several publications prior to this date. My commentary on 1–39 appeared earlier than his 2008 contribution to HKAT. The volumes on 1–39 in HKAT were prepared by Willem Beuken. The preponderance of references to Beuken in Childs's commentary are from Beuken's published essays concerning 40–66, not the commentary on 1–39. The same is true of my own treatments. Finally, as Childs's commentary and my own on Isaiah 40–66 appeared in the same year, there is not any exchange between them. On this, see ch. 5 in the present volume, for example.

[22] Appearing in 1993, Christopher R. Seitz, "Isaiah, Book of (First Isaiah)," in *ABD* 3:472–88; idem, "Isaiah, Book of (Third Isaiah)," in *ABD* 3:500–10.

uation of chapters, prefaced as they were by material anticipatory of chs. 40–66, within the narrative flow of the Book of Isaiah. The logic of both contexts – that of Kings and that of Isaiah – required attention and explanation. Moreover, key elements concerning Hezekiah's deportment in chs. 36–37 mirrored those concerning Ahaz in chs. 7–8 and offered a stunning contrast. Hezekiah believed and was established. His prayer saved a city. The salvation of Zion and the King's faithfulness offered a figure of redemption, when after Assyria a new agent of judgment would arise in the outstretched arm of Babylon. We are prepared for this development already in the way chs. 13–14 have correlated discrete historical eras (Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian).

Any proper estimate of the canonical shape of Isaiah would have to come to terms with the role played by these key chapters. This in turn would require a fresh evaluation of the model inherited from the 19th century for interpreting chs. 36–38 in relation to their counterpart in Kings. The discussion can be seen in the essay below on "Account A and the Annals of Sennacherib" (1993).[23] Also relevant, given the above, is how we are to understand the material found in chs. 36–39 as now prefaced by "Second Isaiah" type material in chs. 34–35. This question is taken up in the essay from the same period, "On the Question of Divisions Internal to the Book of Isaiah" (1993).[24] The whole idea of three independent sections needed interrogation in the light of fresh work on Isaiah 36–39, given impetus in the essays of Peter R. Ackroyd in particular, undertaken in the 70s and early 80s. Clarity on the interpretation of these chapters as a whole (34–39) would be all the more crucial given a call for evaluating the Book of Isaiah as a whole, on either model vying for consent.[25] What about the influence of these chapters on how we are to understand the dramatic courtroom-like presentation of Isaiah 40–48, where the nations are summoned for trial? Is Cyrus bringing an end to the "rod of fury" agency such as we have known it previously?

Because I was working on a commentary within the constraints of the inherited model, but wanted to address the interpretation of the Book of Isaiah as a whole, it would be critical to provide a way of understanding the role of "First Isaiah's" finale-become-transition chs. (34–39). Perhaps the division of the book into two sections, now located at ch. 33, had more going for it

[23] Christopher R. Seitz, "Account A and the Annals of Sennacherib," *JSOT* 58 (1993): 1–11. The essay appears in the present volume with kind permission.

[24] Christopher R. Seitz, "On the Question of Divisions Internal to the Book of Isaiah," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1993 Seminar Papers*, ed. Eugene H. Lovering (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 260–66. The essay appears with permission.

[25] On the redactional overlay model, see especially Odil H. Steck, *Bereitete Heimkehr: Jesaja 35 als redaktionelle Brücke zwischen dem Ersten und dem Zweiten Jesaja*, SBS 121 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1985).

than had been contemplated in the three-Isaiah consensus.[26] In order to clear the way for due consideration of chs. 36–39, prior to writing the commentary, I produced a monograph in which the central role of Zion in the Book of Isaiah was foregrounded, as described in the preceding paragraphs.[27] A good recent review of the wider discussion, and that book, can be seen in the exhaustive survey of Berges.[28]

Equally critical was the interpretation of Isa 40:1–11 for obvious reasons: this is the introduction to latter Isaiah chapters, and so must surely offer clues as to how what follows is to be read. Indeed, for many interpreters, it represented a "call narrative" of the Great Prophet of the Exile, in spite of there being no clear profile of this individual given in what we read. In the 1990 essay, my concern was in establishing the character of the opening verses. I accepted the view that the multiple voices in evidence were the divine plenipotentiary.[29] (I have not been persuaded that latter Isaiah's strong insistence on the exclusive nature of YHWH as sole deity precludes his speaking from the divine council; Isaiah 6 has this scenario and no one would call the prophet an entertainer of rival deities; equally Zechariah.) The opening section of latter Isaiah returns us to the divine council of Isaiah 6, upon which its depiction is dependent, as the means by which to authorize and extend that inspired divine voice, now speaking again for a new day.

On this view, latter Isaiah chapters are cognizant of and speak as an extension of the literary deposit in chs. 1–39. Here I side with Ackroyd, Clements, Williamson and others. Determining the extent of that deposit at the time

[26] Christopher R. Seitz, "The Unique Achievement of the Book of the Twelve: Neither Redactional Unity nor Anthology," in *The Book of the Twelve: An Anthology of Prophetic Book or the Result of Complex Redaction Processes*, ed. Heiko Wenzel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 37–48.

[27] Christopher R. Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah: A Reassessment of Isaiah 36–39* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

[28] See n. 21 above for citation. His is a very fair evaluation of my 1991 work with an exhaustive bibliography, providing a good view of the various positions (Ackroyd, Childs, Gonçalves, Smelik, Hardmeier, Williamson, Konkel, Liwak, Mayer, Conrad, Leene, and others). I note that in respect of my work on Isa 40:1–11, he believes I have altered the position I took in 1990 in a later essay (1996) concerning the divine council background. Actually, I was simply looking at two different issues (Isaiah 40's dependence on Isaiah 6 in the former, and the way the chapters handle the prophetic agency in the second essay). In neither does my concern for Zion's role in the larger book diminish. My commentary on Isaiah 40–66 had not appeared at the time he was writing (Christopher R. Seitz, "The Book of Isaiah 40–66," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. L. E. Keck [Nashville: Abingdon, 2001], 6:309–559). The convergence of these three concerns can be seen there.

[29] Christopher R. Seitz, "The Divine Council: Temporal Transition and New Prophecy in the Book of Isaiah," *JBL* 109 (1990): 229–47; idem, "How is the Prophet Isaiah Present in the Latter Half of the Book? The Logic of Chapters 40–66 within the Book of Isaiah," *JBL* 115 (1996): 219–40. Both essays reproduced by permission.

of latter Isaiah's composition cannot be easily done, though Williamson has sought to pursue this task. I reckon with a mutual influencing (chs. 13–14 and 34–35 are obvious examples) while assuming a reasonably broad Isaianic base. A rival view holds that the two major sections of the book are independent and have been brought together by an external redactional effort. Steck and Kratz are good examples of this position, with Berges negotiating synchrony and diachrony in conjunction with each other.[30]

The 1996 essay was written after the commentary on Isaiah 1–39 had been completed and also anticipating the commentary project on Isaiah 40–66, which I had accepted at the time. The irony is obvious that, as I was working on interpreting the Book of Isaiah as a whole work, I could only do so in two different commentaries, for two different series, which would appear about a decade apart. My goal in the second essay was broader than an accounting of the opening section of latter Isaiah, and it was built upon the first one's conclusions. There I described Isaiah's word as a word consciously understood to be in the past, *insofar as God's judgment was concerned, and insofar as he was seen to be the announcer of that in his day and for his generation*.[31] But equally presupposed was that his former word was a word for the generations to come, and it was a word of future redemption. The salvation in Hezekiah's day was a portent for the future.

In my commentary treatment and in this same essay, I took the view that the divine word from the heavenly courtroom was an extension of Isaiah's proclamation. It was a former thing to be remembered and encouraged/emboldened by, with the power to defeat the nations called for trial. As a former word, it constituted a testimony and Israel was to bear witness to it, all the more potent because delivered long ago. Chapters 40–48 are dedicated to this dramatic trial presentation. No first-person prophetic agency is in view, because the agency is in the form of appeal to past testimony already in the public record, based upon Isaiah's proclamation and other privileged sacred history. At 48:16, as this presentation is approaching its denouement and beginning to open onto "new things … created now, not long ago" (48:6–7), for the first time, an individual steps into view, saying "and now the LORD God has sent me and his spirit."

In my view, the prophetic agent is depicted realistically and is intended to be understood as an historical figure. His "call" is recorded in the immediately following chapter, traditionally understood to be the second of the so-called "servant songs" (49:1–6/7). Childs views the call against the backdrop of

[30] See his cautions on the view of Kratz in Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 34–37. He acknowledges as well the "tower of Babel" like proliferation of redactional theories in 40–55 (see reference at p. 302).

[31] Compare the commentary remarks of Childs in Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 294–96.

rebuke, which he understands to be the main theme of ch. 48. I take a different view as I do not see the main burden of ch. 48 along these lines. The emphasis is not on the failure of exilic Israel to do something but rather on the stepping forward of a faithful servant – because sent and empowered by God's spirit (48:16) – as the embodiment of faithful Israel (as 49:3 will state it).[32] The servant's first-person declaration of frustration (v. 4), odd if arising in the context of an inaugural commissioning, requires a broader context for interpretation than a recalcitrant exilic generation. On my reading, the servant is reflecting on the frustration associated with the prophetic office *grosso modo* as this has taken form in the entire history of its existence in relation to Israel and furthermore with a vocation to the nations. Jeremiah, and his call to be prophet to the nations, is likely in the foreground here. God therefore reiterates the vocation and commits to its fulfillment in the servant (v. 6). As many agree, v. 7 is an intertextual anticipation of the final servant poem (52:15), where that vocation unfolds in line with God's purposes.

I develop the lines of this argument in the 2001 commentary treatment and include here a 2004 essay which is focused on this dramatic portrayal in chs. 49–53. The servant who steps forward in 48:16; who is commissioned against a background of frustration regarding the history of the prophetic vocation; who suffers at the hands of his own people and also likely the nations (50:4–11), is the embodiment of faithful Israel and of Israel in its missional/prophetic role vis-à-vis the nations, going back to the charge/promise given to Abram. The faithful servant dies, in something of the manner of the faithful intercessory Moses, but on the horizon of this sacrificial offering are the nations, who are envisioned as shutting their mouths in the light of awakened comprehension (52:15). The servants pay tribute and acknowledge the intercessory vocation and final victory of the servant, via his sacrifice, and its redemptive purpose in God's designs. The "we" and "us" plural voices are the

[32] Christopher R. Seitz, "'You are my Servant, You are the Israel in whom I will be glorified' – The Servant Songs and the Effect of Literary Context in Isaiah," *CTJ* 39 (2004): 117–34. This essay is included by kind permission of the *Calvin Theological Journal*. Berges has his own strong alternative reading. The first servant song originally referred to Cyrus before being adapted. In the second and third texts, the returned Golah is the servant. The final servant song has Zion as its referent. This is derived from his view of chs. 40–48 and 49–55 as representing two different provenances: the first in Babylon and the second as back in Zion (Berges, *Jesaja 40–48*). The masculine references in the final servant poem are explained with reference to Lamentations 3:1. The returned Golah becomes the servant in 42:1–4. The opening unit (40:1–11*) is addressed to Zion's sentinels and was outfitted to function in reference to 1–39. It was supplied redactionally as a bookend to 52:7–10 by these same returned Golah editors. I do not discuss the specifics of his view as my commentary on 40–66 was completed prior to the HKAT publication (2008) as well as his earlier monograph (1998). He has also modified his view on the authorship of chs. 40–48 over this ten-year period.

faithful servants of the servant (54:17) and are in that sense his "seed" (53:10), the righteous offspring he will be given to "see," much like a Moses looking over into a promised land he has secured but will not enter. This keyword ("seed/offspring") anticipates the unfolding drama of chs. 55–66, as Beuken has so helpfully demonstrated.[33] There the themes associated with the effect of the servant's work vis-à-vis the nations are played out. The frustrations of the past are addressed and reconciled (49:1–9) in the context of promises being kept, at least proleptically, because of the servant and the faithful offspring God has raised up in the light of his sacrifice.

The final essay for this section provides a nice summary of the shifting landscape in Isaiah studies, as represented in the foregoing discussion.[34] It was prepared in the context of a grant I received for a research leave, during which time I wrote the commentary on latter Isaiah chapters for the *New Interpreter's Bible Series*. The subtitle, "Authorship and Inspiration," indicates the direction of my concern. The proper interpretation of the Book of Isaiah in the modern period has been heavily influenced by an account of inspiration linked to individual prophetic "authorship."

The priority of the literal sense is a well-known signature of the Reformation and, alongside it, a concern for an intention rooted in the biblical author. Uncomplicatedly at the time, the author was identified with the books bearing the name of the agent of inspiration (Moses, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Daniel, Mark, Paul, Peter, and so forth). The literal sense was grounded in history and derivative of this agent in time. It would not take very long for this simple set of parameters to come apart once an "author" intending something was no longer a simple cohesion of book and agent of inspiration.

To the degree this older paradigm held sway there seemed to be no other way to guard single authorial inspiration and literary coherence at the level of the final form of a text. As we have seen, the problem was particularly acute in the 66-chapter Book of Isaiah. The book was asked to bear the burden of a single authorial standpoint crossing all chapters and some account of "prediction" whereby Isaiah of Jerusalem could speak of events centuries away. The problem was amplified, however, because this referring-to-something-later speech did not take the form of prediction but of contemporaneous speech to an audience likewise far out in the future.[35]

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[33] W. A. M. Beuken, "The Main Theme of Trito-Isaiah: The 'Servants of YHWH,'" *JSOT* 47 (1990): 67–87.

[34] Christopher R. Seitz, "Isaiah and the Search for a New Paradigm: Authorship and Inspiration," *Papers of the Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology*, ed. Gary Gilbert (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 3:97–114.

[35] The ch. 20 of this volume looks at two mediaeval interpreters who sensed this challenge and addressed it in ingenious ways, neither "modern" but equally not "traditional."