The Book of Isaiah*

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The Book of Isaiah is a wonderful work that is preserved from antiquity both in its Hebrew and its Greek version. It is a history written and reworked by many generations, covering the following periods: the Assyrian period (ca. 911–605 B.C.E.), the Neo-Babylonian period (ca. 625–539 B.C.E.), and the Persian period (ca. 550–333 B.C.E.).[1]

In the context of these empires, it is "world history." But it is oriented towards the divine history that lasts "forever and ever," as can be seen from all of its three parts: from "creation" to "the stories of the patriarchs and matriarchs," to "covenant and law," and "Zion/Jerusalem."

Our work on this book presupposes an already developed history of scholarship. Its historical-critical research and its literary criticism developed preeminently in the framework of work on the Pentateuch, but it then was carried over to the prophetic books. For the Book of Isaiah, I may mention only two names: Bernhard Duhm and Charles Cutler Torrey.[2] Their research has made excellent observations

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[1] See my commentary, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40–55* (ed. Peter Machinist; trans. Margaret Kohl; Hermeneia Series; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2001; German edition: *Deutero-Jesaja*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 1999). Other selected secondary literature includes: Peter Calmeyer, "Die 'Statistische Landcharte' des Perserreiches I und II," *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1982) 109–87, and *AMI* 16 (1983) 141–222; Melody D. Knowles, *Centrality Practiced: Jerusalem in the Religious Practice of Yehud and the Diaspora in the Persian Period* (SBL Archaeology and Biblical Studies 16; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006); Dieter Georgi, *The City in the Valley*: *Biblical Interpretation and Urban Theology* (SBL Studies in Biblical Literature 7; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005): "Legal Dimensions of Money and Theological Consequences," 103–34, and "Is There Justification in Money: A Historical and Theological Meditation on the Financial Aspects of Justification by Christ," 283–307.

[2] Charles Cutler Torrey, *The Second Isaiah. A New Interpretation* (New York: Scribner, 1928). In his *Einleitung ins Alte Testament* (3d ed.; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck 1964) 460–61, Otto Eissfeldt points out that Torrey entered intensively into the discussion about Duhm's theses, and contributed

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of permanent validity. But their explanatory models must be reexamined afresh. Duhm, in his commentary on the Book of Isaiah (1892),[3] first divided the book into three parts: 1) Proto-Isaiah (chs. 1–39); 2) Deutero-Isaiah (chs. 40–55); and 3) Trito-Isaiah (chs. 56–66).

Subsequent literary criticism relies too much the work of learned theorists, who work from the perspective of their writing desks. The basic assumption of literary criticism remains too linear: for example, assuming that half of a verse may be old, the other half later and an addition. It was, however, technically impossible to make such additions within a text existing in manuscript form (only marginal glosses could be added). Interdisciplinary comparisons are required: What were temple and court scribes permitted to do and able to do? And what was possible for scribes in the "House of Life" in Egypt?

In Israel not only the kings and priests had scribes, but also prophets had their scribes, as is evident in the case of Jeremiah and Baruch. In Israel's surrounding world the technology of composition plays an important role in the writing and transmission of literature. Earlier and later texts are combined; larger sections are joined to smaller ones. Interventions into the different sections themselves are rare and only slight. Contradictions are accepted and endured. Alterations are found especially at the beginning and at the end of the different parts. Names of gods and people are interchanged.[4] This technology can be studied particularly well in Egypt because the Egyptians took special pleasure in writing and it is relatively easy to date the temple inscriptions.

Isaiah 1–39: Proto-Isaiah

The very first glance at the building blocks of the text shows that it is clearly structured. It has been composed from most widely varying units. Schematically it looks just as the so-called "pocket tutor," used by students in their biblical studies, describes it.[5] The first verse (Isa 1:1) sums up the unit, designating itself as a "vision" (חָזוֹן) of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the time of the kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. We learn nothing about the prophet except for his descent. What is the nature of the vision?

Isa 2:1 again begins by saying that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw the following "word." Specific pronouncements about salvation and disaster follow. It is all the

further to the literary criticism, differentiation of sources, and genre definition (see, e.g., Charles C. Torrey, "Isaiah 41," *HTR* 44 [1951] 121–36). In doing so he repeatedly raised the question about the interrelation and continuity of the text material in the book of Isaiah.

[3] Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaia* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892; repr., 4th ed.; 1922).

[4] My reflections here were initiated by the late Professor Diez Edzard of the University of Munich. I have also learned a great deal from the recently published work of Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007).

[5] See *Taschentutor Altes Testament* ("Hochschuldidaktische Arbeitshilfe") (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974–1975 [1st ed.]; repr., 1993 [6th rev. ed.]).

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more astonishing that we are not told about Isaiah's call and installation until chapter 6. The "biographies" of Jeremiah or Ezekiel are different in this respect. The story of the call then introduces the so-called "Isaiah Denkschrift" or memoir in Isaiah 6–8, which forms a clearly separable section of the text. This is, broadly speaking, the traditional view of scholars to which I shall return later.

Isaiah 24–27 has always been seen as a self-contained unit. The "pocket tutor" calls it the "Isaiah apocalypse." Regarding the textual material (C. C. Torrey has linked it with Isaiah 34–35 + 40–66 [Deutero-Isaiah]) the investigations of Stefan Ark Nitsche[6] have highlighted the dramatic structure of this text and its surrounding world, which moves it into close proximity to Isaiah 40–55 with respect to its genre. The textual material fits well into the context of the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah chapters 36–39 provide a good insight into the redactional work that was done on the Book of Isaiah. The "pocket tutor" treats the text as "biographical appendix: Isaiah legends (= 2 Kings 18–20), Hezekiah psalm."

It is a rarity that we possess three versions of the same textual material. This allows us to assume that all three versions drew on the same—Jerusalem—archive. The comparable texts are Isa 36–39; 2 Kgs 18:13–20, 21; 2 Chr 32:24–33. Points in common as well as differences show the diverging political and religious positions. This would require a more detailed comparison.

According to Isaiah 38, the prophet Isaiah speaks to king Hezekiah about his faith and his tradition. 38:4–6: "Then the word of YHWH came to Isaiah, 'Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says YHWH, the God of your ancestor David: I have heard your prayer . . . . I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and defend this city." The Hezekiah psalm is then described in v. 9 as "a writing" (מִכְתָּב) of the king of Judah. Here the text casts no doubt on Hezekiah's piety, unlike the Deuteronomistic text in 2 Kings 18. But Isa 39:1 notes the fact that "At that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan of Babylon, sent envoys with letters and a present to Hezekiah."

In the text of Isaiah 38–39 three kings are named: the king of Assyria (38:6), the king of Judah (38:9), and the king of Babylon (39:1). This signals a turning point in history. Israel and its king are caught between the great empires. Also, Hezekiah fails, devout though he may be. But his political naïveté (39:2, 8)—in fact his stupidity—is the reason for the exile. Together with Hezekiah the kings of Israel disappear from the Book of Isaiah. Some of Hezekiah's sons will be eunuchs (39:7). But neither the empires of Assyria and Babylon are eternal. In the compositions that make up the Book of Isaiah, the Persian period follows immediately. Thus Isaiah 36–39 is not an appendix; rather, it is the key text for the composition of the book.

[6] Stefan Ark Nitsche, *Jesaja 24–27, ein dramatischer Text. Die Frage nach den Genres der prophetischen Literatur des Alten Testaments und die Textgraphik der großen Jesaja-Rolle aus Qumran* (BWANT 166; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2006).

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In this context we hear the message of Isaiah 40–45 in a new way: "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem . . ." (40:1, 2; cf. 40:9: "Zion . . . Jerusalem"). The comparison with the withering grass and its flower takes on further sharpness through the addition: "surely, the people are grass." (40:7) And in verse seven who is represented by "the flower fades?" Is it the king who is meant? We shall be looking again at the significance of the catchword "Zion . . . Jerusalem."

Isaiah 40–55: Deutero-Isaiah

My work on Deutero-Isaiah provided the starting point for reflections on the book as a whole.[7] Therefore I have to presuppose the findings that I have presented in my commentary.

In contrast to Isaiah 1–39, the text of Isaiah 40–55 is much more unified. It is a self-contained work of art. In my view it is a "liturgical drama" and was originally an independent work. It is a kind of *libretto* for a performance designed as a festival scroll for use in a performance.

The text has a clear structure: a prologue and an epilogue framing six acts in all, made up of separate scenes. Traditionally, the assumed date has been based on the mentioning of Cyrus in chapter 45, which resulted in dating the book at the end of the sixth century. I find it more probable that the book is part of a Cyrus renaissance that can be observed in Greece (Aeschylus, *Persians*: "the kindly father") and Egypt. The information that Alexander, who had the grave of Cyrus opened, belongs to this renaissance. The text is not exilic; it is rather a document belonging to the time of the new constitution after the exile. Particular features, like the building of the wall and the definition of the relation between city, country, and the temple belong to the postexilic period.

From a literary perspective, the completed Pentateuch and its traditions were available. The classical Greek works of Aeschylus, Aristophanes, and Sophocles were known.[8] Persian rule played a greater part in the Mediterranean world than we usually assume and it was of great political, economic, and religious importance.[9]

[7] One of the most pleasurable visiting lectures I have ever given was in Amsterdam, where, at the occasion of Wim Beuken's 70th birthday, I lectured on Deutero-Isaiah's theology. He and Norbert Lohfink have accompanied me ever since I developed my theses. On that particular occasion, Ulrich Berges asked me how I saw the connections to the Book of Isaiah as a whole. This gave me the decisive impetus for this paper. See Willem A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja. Deel II*, A and B, De Prediking van het Oude Testament 21/1 and 2 (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1979 and 1983); Ulrich Berges *Jesaja 40–48* (Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament; vol. 37, Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder 2008).

[8] See Klaus Baltzer and Peter Marinkovic, "Größe und Grenze des Menschen. Zum Verhältnis Gott—Welt—Erde—Mensch in Jes. 45, 19–13," in *Schriftprophetie. Festschrift Jörg Jeremias* (ed. Friedhelm Hartenstein, Jutta Krispenz and Aaron Schart; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2004) 369–79.

[9] The reason for this neglect is above all the humanistic tradition in the academic world, which was oriented primarily towards the Athenian point of view.

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Allow me to draw attention to a few historical facts. The Persian empire brought the first globalization: the monetary economy, taken over from the Lydian king Croesus, and the beginning of coins (the Dareike) for more general circulation. This enabled the transfer of power (gold being used for political purposes, silver for the payment of mercenaries, and bronze for the market). The Persian administrators were recruited from the indigenous nobility. Themistocles, Nehemiah, and Mausolos were all officials of the Persian state. The three official "imperial" languages—Greek, Aramaic, and Persian—made communication possible (see the bilingual, even trilingual inscriptions). Roads built for military purposes opened up inland travel for merchants. Trade and relative peace enabled the Greek cities to grow. There, the hereditary city kingdoms were replaced by new political structures, even in other countries bordering the realm of the Persians—Athens and Jerusalem are examples. Persian rule rested on the army, the monetary economy, and on a secret service. And that meant, above all, taxes.

On the basis of four topics, I shall try to show the consequences of these literary and historical observations and conclusions for an understanding of Proto-Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah, and the Book of Isaiah as a whole. I shall not lose sight of Trito-Isaiah in the process. The four topics are: 1) Zion-Jerusalem; 2) the Davidic tradition; 3) the "Servant of God" enigma; and 4) the subject "justice, righteousness, salvation."

The Four Topics

ZION-JERUSALEM. One finds the formula "Zion-Jerusalem" in all three parts of the Book of Isaiah. The distribution is also surprisingly even. The formula describes the entire city, temple, and living quarters. If the translation of עִיר הַקֹּדֶשׁ (Isa 48:2; 52;1; cf. 60:14 צִיּוֹן קְדֹשׁ) is in question—does it mean "the city of the sanctuary" or "the holy city"? The Book of Isaiah opts for the latter interpretation (Zech 14:21: "and every cooking pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be sacred [קֹדֶשׁ] to the LORD of hosts").

The rebuilding of Jerusalem after the exile took place in the face of resistance, but with Persian approval and support (see Nehemiah's measures and Isa 26:1; 49:16; 60:18). Through the wall, serving the purpose of defense, Jerusalem's legal status as a "city" is also recognized.

"Zion-Jerusalem" is the capital of "Judah/Yehud," frequently mentioned as within its confines as the third element in the formula. If we add "language and custom," it corresponds to *Landcharte,* the smallest political unit in the Persian empire, as P. Calmeyer has demonstrated.[10] The Isaiah texts are dealing with a reality.

"Zion-Jerusalem" is the goal of pilgrimage. That is of decisive importance for Deutero-Isaiah (Isaiah 55). Among the multiple traditions, upon which Deutero-Isaiah depends and draws its materials, it is noteworthy that the occupation of the

[10] Calmeyer, "Die 'Statistische Landcharte' des Perserreiches I und II."

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land (*Landnahme*) is missing! To refer back to this tradition and its associated claims would have been impossible in the Persian period and would inevitably have resulted in trouble. Its place is taken by the pilgrimage; one goes up to Jerusalem but (only) for the festival.[11]

But the pilgrimage is also a topic in Proto-Isaiah: according to Isa 2:1–5 "all nations" and "many peoples" shall come. According to Isaiah 60 in Trito-Isaiah "Nations. . . and kings" shall come (60:3). ". . . all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, . . " (60:6). The pilgrimage also has economic implications. But what is achieved in terms of communication should not be underestimated. The pilgrimage also includes instruction "in the Torah" (Isa 2:3). The God will judge among the nations and arbitrate for the many peoples (2:4). Therefore pilgrimage also serves the creation of peace ("swords into ploughshares," 2:4; cf. 55:11–12).

I surmise that the translation of sacred texts into Greek already began in the Persian period. How else can the peoples and nations understand each other? According to the Septuagint (Rahlfs), Isa 55:12 reads: "with joy you will receive instruction" (ἐν χαρᾷ διδαχθήσεσθε) instead of MT's "and you shall be led forth in peace."

David and His Dynasty. The Book of Isaiah points to the manner by which it was possible to absorb traditions, to pass them on, and to impress them with a new understanding. The first verse of the book presents as a matter of course a list of kings: "Uzziah, Jotham, Ahas, and Hezekiah." These names allow time and history to be ordered (6:1; 7:1). That does not exclude an evaluation or negative judgment of individual kings. The "messianic prophecy" in Proto-Isaiah: "For a child has been born for us" (Isa 9:6) and "a shoot out of the root of Jesse" (Isa 11:1) show the ideology behind the monarchy and the hopes that were bound up with it.

For Deutero-Isaiah, when Cyrus is called "YHWH's anointed" (Isa 45:1–8), the expectation of an "anointed one"—that is, someone with a legitimate claim to rule—from the house of David has come to an end. The transfer[12] of political power to Persia is thus fully accepted. This stands in contrast to the Deuteronomistic History, where the hope for the continuation of the Davidic dynasty persists with Jehoiachin (2 Kings 25:27–30; note also Zerubbabel) but it agrees with the Chronicler's History (2 Chron 36:22–23), which also stresses Cyrus's legitimacy as king of Persia: "the God of heaven, has given me *all* the kingdoms of the earth."

It is, however, also important that the promises of grace given to David are still valid. The "covenant" now applies to the whole community (Isa 55:4). David becomes "a

[11] Knowles, *Centrality Practiced*.

[12] Out of this tradition the medieval political-legal doctrine of the *translatio imperii* is developed. See Reinhard G. Kratz, *Untersuchungen zu den aramäischen Danielerzählungen und ihrem theologiegeschichtlichen Umfeld* (WMANT 63; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukircher Verlag, 1991) and Piet A. van den Baar, *Die kirchliche Lehre der* Translatio imperii romani *bis zur Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Rome, Italy: Univ. Gregoriana, 1956).

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witness to the peoples," and it is he who bears witness. He is the David of the "Psalms of David."[13] For Trito-Isaiah, David and his dynasty are no longer relevant.

THE RIDDLE OF THE SERVANT OF GOD. The Book of Isaiah can draw on the full range of meanings of the term "servant" (עֶבֶד). A servant is absolutely dependent upon his master, who is responsible for his life and protection. In the phrase "servant of God" it can be a sociomorpheme expressing the relationship to God of an individual or a community. Thus in Proto-Isaiah the prophet Isaiah (Isa 20:3), like king David (37:35), is called "my (i.e., God's) Servant."

In Deutero-Isaiah both the collective understanding (41:8; 49:3) and the individual understanding appear. Trito-Isaiah—except for Moses "his servant" (63:11)—always uses the term as collective, "his" or "my" (i.e., God's) servant. The special feature in Deutero-Isaiah is that the term is not only used as a title but in a text of a biographical character. The person remains anonymous. Reasons can be given for that anonymity.

The person, to which the title points, is "Moses," specifically the Moses of the prophetic tradition. The four Servant of God texts all have their foundation in the Pentateuch:

1) Isa 42:1–9, see the call of Moses according to Exodus 3.

2) Isa 48:16–49:12, see the giving of the law according to Exodus 20–23.

3) Isa 50:2–51:16, see Moses as teacher according to Deuteronomy 1–6.

4) Isa 52:13–54:12, see the life of Moses in Deuteronomy 34 and other texts.

Also here it is important to remember the historical situation of the book in the Persian period. Everyone knew—even if he was not familiar with the story of Moses' birth and youth—that Moses was an Egyptian name (*Ra-mose*). So it was impossible that it could be acknowledged in Israel's confession that "Our liberator was an Egyptian." The Persian secret service had ears everywhere. Egypt was the province that gave the Persians most trouble, including a number of revolts.

In the Pentateuch's Sinai tradition there is another, indeed religious reason for the elimination of Moses' name. According to Exodus 32, Moses comes down from the mountain "carrying the two tablets of the covenant" (Exod 32:15). The context is the story about the Golden Calf. In spite of everything, Moses intercedes with YHWH (Exod 32:30–32). Verse 32 reads, "But now, if you will only forgive their sin—but if not, blot me out of the book that you have written." That is the sacrifice that Moses offers in solidarity with his people; it implies that he would be blotted out of the list of heavenly citizens,[14] which is to say, his eternal death.

[13] See Ps 51:1. 17; Ps 22, esp. v. 32 (31); Ps 38, esp. v. 19 (18); Ps 40, esp. v. 6 (5); Ps 64, esp. v. 10 (9); Ps 142, esp. v. 3 (2); Ps 145, esp. vv. 4–7. See my commentary on these passages, 597–98.

[14] See Ps 69:29 (Engl. 28); Dan 12:1; Luke 10:20; Rom 9:3; Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5; 17:8; 20:5. Also 1 Sam 25:29: "the bundle of the living" (בִּצְרוֹר הַחַיִּים).

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It must be noted that in the whole Book of Isaiah the name of Moses occurs only twice, namely in Isa 63:11 and 12, that is, only in Trito-Isaiah, where the historical situation was such that one could dare to mention Moses' name.[15]

The Concepts of Justice, Righteousness, and Salvation. It is noticeable that particular concepts run through the entire Book of Isaiah. Topics and terms that are dealing with law and justice are examples. Every concordance makes this clear. Such terms and topics are used in both a positive and in a negative sense. Prominent are such terms as "covenant" (בְּרִית) and "law" (תּוֹרָה). Here Torah can designate the individual instruction or the collection of the commandments (Pentateuch?) but it can even refer to the abstract concept "Israel's religion." The term "Torah" is missing in Trito-Isaiah. But justice, salvation, help, and peace signify positive social values in the community. If they are lacking, it is dangerous for everyone. These values take concrete form in the case of "poor and rich" and with respect to marginal groups in society (widows, orphans, and foreigners); see Isa 58:10: "If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness." "The shepherds," that is the rulers, are viewed surprisingly critically: "The dogs have a mighty appetite; they never have enough" (Isa 56:11). In this way the introduction to Trito-Isaiah ends chapter 56. This falls fully into the prophetic tradition.

Findings

The threefold division of the book of Isaiah makes sense, namely: 1) Proto-Isaiah, 2) Deutero-Isaiah, and 3) Trito-Isaiah. The three parts are determined by literary aspects arising in the course of their composition and development. Style, genre, and tradition history determine the different components.

What is above all characteristic, however, is the historical sequence, which is already made clear through the extent of the times covered in the "list of kings" at the beginning (Isa 1:1). In my view the division has been preserved in each of the three parts. We have to expect a subdivision down to the "smallest units."[16]

The manner in which earlier and later texts have been fused together is striking. Tensions caused by the divergences in the text are tolerated, and interventions in the sections of the text itself are avoided. What is important for an understanding of the composition are the introductions and final sections, as well as the linking passages.

Examples of such tensions in the book are the Abraham and the David traditions. The name "Abraham" occurs in all three parts of the book (Isa 29:22; 41:8; 51:2; 63:16). In Deutero-Isaiah, 51:2, Abraham is specifically called "father." Trito-Isaiah is familiar with this designation too, but there the title is explicitly

[15] See the Book of Nehemiah, where the name of Moses is mentioned seven times: Neh 1:7, 8; 8:1, 14; 9:14; 10:29; 13:1.

[16] See Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*.

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called in question: 63:16, "You, O LORD, are our father." This step has been absorbed into the Jewish and Christian tradition. The promises to the king in 7:9 and chapter eleven derive from the David tradition. They belong to the ideology of kingship. With the end of the monarchy they become hopes for the future.[17] This leaves open the possibility for a further development in the "God is king" theology.

Finally, the possible collectivization of the promises must be mentioned. What was once promised to the house of David now applies to the whole people of Israel and/or the people of God.[18] E.g., Isa 55:3b–4: "I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David (חַסְדֵי דָוִד הַנֶּאֱמָנִים). See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples." The figure of King David turns from being the ruler who wields the sword—as has been shown—to the witness as poet of the psalms. In mediaeval illustrated manuscripts, David has become Orpheus with his lyre.

The question whether interlinear additions and corrections are possible depends on the scribe's material and its cost. In the case of clay tablets and clay cylinders alterations are not possible. The material is relatively cheap, and costs arise from the firing of the clay; papyrus and parchment, on the other hand, are expensive, and they also make additions difficult (though marginal notes are possible). Of what material was the scroll which Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe, wrote at the prophet's dictation, and which King Jehoiakim burned (Jeremiah 36)?

In closing, let me sum up once more the results that I find important. From a literary point of view, the Book of Isaiah is a unified composition. The main sections of which the book consists can still be distinguished, and the introductions to the different sections have been preserved in each case.

The earliest introduction to Proto-Isaiah begins in chapter six with the call and installation of the prophet Isaiah. This introduction belongs in essence to the first book of Isaiah. The introduction to Deutero-Isaiah has survived in Isaiah chapter 2, which begins with "In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, . . . all the nations shall stream to it." This introduction is related to the beginning and the end of Deutero-Isaiah: Isa 40:9: "Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings," and Isaiah 55: the pilgrimage. In this way the two parts are linked with each other. The introduction to Trito-Isaiah and to the whole book appears in Isa 1:1 with the history of Judah, dated by the listing of the kings of Judah. But it then covers the entire history of Israel in disaster and salvation. The theological concept, with its individual terms, corresponds to Isaiah 56–66. Historically, the succession of

[17] Conflicts with the party loyal to the king can be seen from texts such as Jer 40-41; cf. 2 Kgs 25, with the murder of the governor Gedalia.

[18] Cf. Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 469–73. Note also especially Isa 55:11: "So [also] shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it" (see ibid. 482 [480]–484). That is, in a single sentence, Deutero-Isaiah`s theological concept.

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the three empires—Assyria, Neo-Babylonia, and Persia—is documented. It is an astonishing "cultural memory" (in the terminology of Jan Assmann).[19]

With respect to the date of writing of Deutero-Isaiah, I would suggest some time around the year 450 B.C.E., the time of Nehemiah. The fusion of Proto-Isaiah and Deutero-Isaiah need not have happened much later. For the Book of Isaiah as a whole, there is a *terminus ad quem*: It must have been finalized before Alexander the Great. What that book would have looked like can be estimated on the basis of the Book of Daniel, which has a number of points in common. Apart from the scheme of the four empires, there are also Wisdom traditions.

As a historical work, the Book of Isaiah competes with the so-called Deuteronomistic History. The beginning of the latter is disputed—it is argued that it began with Moses' successor Joshua or with David. The ending is clear: It concludes with the Babylonian period. 2 Kings tells of the capture and destruction of Jerusalem and the carrying off of the population. It closes with the pardon of Jehoiachin, the last legitimate king of Judah, by the Babylonians. The experiment with Zerubbabel, Jehoiachin's grandson, demonstrates that people faithful to the king tried to have the monarchy restored. Here the Chronicler's history is closer to the Book of Isaiah since it recognizes Persian rule without more ado.

One particular result of my work on the Book of Isaiah is especially important for me. I have come to develop great respect for Trito-Isaiah—although it seems to be no more than an appendix. One only needs to look at chapter 56, the introduction, to notice its poetic qualities. The heart of the book (Isaiah 60–62), as Gary Stansell has shown,[20] is theologically well conceived. The text is enormously progressive, even revolutionary; it can conceive of Israel without a monarchy! "All" are the servants of God (cf. 65:13–16); "we are all the work of your hand . . . we are all your people " (64:8–9). "God's spirit is in their midst" (59:21; cf. 57:15, 16; 61:1; 63:11, 14). Can more be said? But there is still something more astonishing: foreigners also belong to God's people (56:6–8), indeed, they can even become Levite priests (66:21; this is not in accordance to the Zadokite view; see the Book of Ezra[21]), and the supreme values are "peace, peace" (57:19; cf. 60:17), justice (56:1; 58:2; 5911, 15), and righteousness (56:1; 60:17; 62:1, 2; 63:1). Could anything be more up to date? It is the description of the rule of God: *malkut adonai/basileia tou theou* (see יהוה בַּשָּׁמַיִם הֵכִין כִּסְאוֹ וּמַלְכוּתוֹ בַכֹּל מָשָׁלָה, Ps 103:19; and ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, Mark 1:15 passim).

[19] Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Beck'sche Reihe, vol. 1307, 6th edition; München: Beck Verlag 2007). See especially "Repristination von Tradition als persische Kulturpolitik," 207-212.

[20] Gary Stansell, "Isahiah 60-62 as the 'Kernel' of Isaiah 56-66 in Light of Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives," unpublished SBL conference paper, San Diego 2007.

[21] See also the introduction of Ezra into Nehemiah 8. Only the priest and scribe Ezra (Neh 8.1-18) was permitted to read the Scripture, not the "governor"—and hence layman—Nehemiah.

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