

CHRISTOPHER R. SEITZ

Essays on Prophecy
and Canon

*Forschungen
zum Alten Testament*

Mohr Siebeck

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Christopher R. Seitz

Essays on Prophecy and Canon

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	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992
ad loc	<i>ad locum</i> , at the place discussed
AIL	Ancient Israel and Its Literature
ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
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	Beiträge 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	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Bible Quarterly</i>
CBSC	Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges
ch(s).	chapter(s)
CTR	<i>Calvin Theological Review</i>
EgT	<i>Eglise et Théologie</i>
e. g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> , for example
esp.	especially
et al.	<i>et alii</i> , and others
ETL	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
ExAud	<i>Ex Auditus</i>
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	<i>Interpreter's Bible</i> . 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.	<i>ibidem</i> , in the same place
i. e.	<i>id est</i> , that is
IJST	<i>Interpretation Journal of Systematic Theology</i>
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
IRT	Issues in Religion and Theology
ITL	The International Theological Commentary
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBT	<i>Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
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	<i>The New Interpreter's Bible</i> . Edited by Leander E. Keck. 12 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994–2004
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NT	New Testament
NTT	<i>Norsk Teologisk Tidsskrift</i>
OAN	Oracles against the nations
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OT	Old Testament
OTE	<i>Old Testament Studies</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
OtSt	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
PR	<i>Presbyterian Review</i>
ProEccl	<i>Pro Ecclesia</i>
repr.	reprint
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series

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

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 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.

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.

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 deuteronomic 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’apocalyptique* (Paris: Gabalda, 1977–78); R. Lack, *La symbolique du livre d’Isaïe: Essai sur l’image littéraire comme élément 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.

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