INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY

IN ISAIAH 40-55

by

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ABBREVIATIONS

CBQ = Catholic Biblical Quarterly

JBL = Journal of Biblical Literature

IB   = Interpreter's Bible

IDB = Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible

LUA = Lunds Universitets Arsskrift

SBT = Studies in Biblical Theology

TDNT = Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
            Edited by G. Kittel.

VT   = Vetus Testamentum

ZAW = Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenchaft

ὅσα γὰρ προεγράφη, εἰς τὴν ἡμετέραν
διδασκαλίαν ἐγράφη, ἵνα διὰ τῆς
ὑπομονῆς καὶ διὰ τῆς παρακλήσεως
τῶν γραφῶν τὴν ἐλπίδα ἔχωμεν.

(Romans 15:4)

INTRODUCTION

In a recent unpublished essay,[1] Professor G.P. Albaugh put

forth the thesis that the need of our age is the recovery of "historical

consciousness". This concern was reflected ten years ago by Hans

Walter Wolff when he wrote: "It is an alarming sign of our time that

interest in history has become discredited."[2] As though in response to

this warning, many contemporary Christian historians and even "secular

theologians" are seeking to recover a "theology of history" in their

interpretation of the modern dilemma and twentieth-century man's

uncertain approach to the future.[3] This is not merely a study of

history pursued in erudite classrooms in the hope that knowledge of

yesterday's problems may enable us to cope with tomorrow's. Rather it

is a profound attempt at self-understanding in terms of our historical

existence. It may well be that our frantic quest for identity will be

rewarded only when we are able to appreciate once again the historical

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[1]"History and Youth's Search for Identity". A lecture delivered
to the graduating class of McMaster Divinity College, March 4, 1970.

[2]"The Understanding of History in the Old Testament Prophets",
trans. by K.R. Crim in C. Westermann, ed., Essays on the Old Testament
Hermeneutics, Eng. translation edited by J.L. Mays (Richmond: John
Knox Press, 2nd ed. 1964), p.336.

[3]For instance, Martin E. Marty, The Search for a Usable Future
(New York: Harper and Row, 1st ed. 1969) and Harvey Cox, The Feast of
Fools (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969).

traditions which authenticate and give meaning to our existence in the here and now. For the Christian who sees his private progress through life as somehow related to the whole scheme of human destiny, this need for a sense of history is particularly acute. Our confessions, prayers, liturgies and sacraments are all articulated with the rhythm of historical reflection and eschatological hope. It is only through such rhythm that we dare to "embrace catastrophe itself and transcend the immediate spectacle of tragedy... to wrestle with destiny and interpret history and discover meaning in the human drama, above all, to grapple with the moral difficulties that history presents to the religious mind."[4]

Sensing this need for a new awareness of history, we propose to study Isaiah 40-55, convinced that the prophet who speaks in these passages has provided clues that may enable us to interpret our own past, present and future from a theological - historical perspective. Certainly, more than any other prophet in the Old Testament, the one we call "Deutero-Isaiah" (DI) emerges with the clearest and yet most profound historical consciousness. DI's interpretation of history is

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[4]H. Butterfield, Christianity and History (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1949), p. 11.

due partly to the fact that he stood in a prophetic tradition[5] with

its own peculiar understanding of history.[6] The unique features of

this prophet's "theology of history", however, derive from the crisis

of the period in which he lived and spoke.

Deutero-Isaiah was a prophet of the Exile.[7] Without doubt

this was one of the darkest hours in Israel's history. When, in

587 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar breached the inviolable walls of Jerusalem,

razed the city to the ground and took its leading citizens in chains

to Babylon, the very "dogma upon which state and cult were founded

had been dealt a mortal blow."[8]

Israel had rested secure on the assurance that Yahweh would not

depart from Zion, his holy city, nor forsake the Davidic dynasty as the

channel of his special grace and favour. She had repudiated prophetic

counsel to the contrary as unutterable heresy. But Nebuchadnezzar's

torch had scorched that theology beyond repair. Now the very status

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[5]For the sake of our present discussion, we arbitrarily define
the "prophetic period" as extending from the 8th to the 6th century
B.C., i.e. the period of the monarchy. It should be recognized, how-
ever, that the prophetic movement has much earlier roots and extends
in various forms to the Christian era. At no point can the prophetic
phenomenon be simply defined. See G. von Rad, Old Testament Theology,
vol. 11, trans. by D.M.G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, Eng. ed.,
1965) for a thorough examination of Israel's prophetic traditions.

[6]This will be dealt with in some detail in Chapter One.

[7]The problems concerning the literary unity of the Book of
Isaiah have been adequately summarized in J.L. McKenzie, Second Isaiah.
Anchor Bible (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), xv-xxiii. His conclusions
are generally accepted here.

[8]John Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia: Westminster
Press, 1959), p.328.

of Yahweh was at stake. Where was his action on the part of his people?
Had the gods of Babylon proved superior to the Holy One of Israel?
Wholesale loss of faith, therefore, threatened the community before
whom Deutero-Isaiah was commissioned "to justify the ways of God to
men." His task was to comfort the people of Yahweh (40.1) with a
message of salvation, and to restore their confidence in the Lord of
history. What the prophet Jeremiah had proclaimed fifty years earlier,
DI reaffirmed, namely

> that Yahweh was primarily and essentially
> the god, not of the land, but instead of
> the people, Israel, and accordingly in
> Babylonia, or, by implication, wherever
> Israel might, for any reason, come to be
> or to dwell, in any land however remote,
> even unto the very ends of the earth,
> there Yahweh could still be found and
> supplicated....9

Moreover, DI announced a new day in Israel's saving history, one so
significant that it would eclipse all others as the basis of her
hope.

In Chapter One, we shall discuss the prophetic understanding
of history, particularly with reference to the relation of the
"divine Word" to history, In Chapter Two, we shall examine the
saving traditions of Israel's past as they appear and are applied
by DI, and the new saving event which the prophet announces has
replaced them. Chapter Three will attempt to understand the prophet's

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[9]Julian Morgenstern, The Message of Deutero-Isaiah in its
Sequential Unfolding (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1961),
p.4.

hope for Israel's future. We trust that this will be no mere exercise in antiquity, but that the interpretation of history in Isaiah 40-55 will prove a genuine contribution to the pursuit of meaning and purpose so characteristic of the living of our days.

"WORD" AND HISTORY

The absolute certainty and effectiveness of דְּבַר־יְהוָה

is the major premise upon which DI builds his philosophy of history.

Before we can appreciate the significance of this, however, some

background to the prophetic interpretation of history must be provided.

Hebraic Concept of Time

It must be realized at once that our twentieth century concept

of linear time was completely foreign to the ancient world. This

matter has been carefully considered by scholars, notably among them

H. Wheeler Robinson[1] and G. von Rad.[2] It only remains for us to re-

view their conclusions here. It appears that "throughout the ancient

world in general the sense of time originated in the changes of a

succession of concrete events, as the early vocabulary of time-

measurement shows. The measurements of time were primarily derived

from the phenomena of Nature which were so closely linked to the

common life of man."[3] Familiar, of course, were the succession of

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[1]Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1st. ed. 1946), pp. 106-122.

[2]Op. cit., 99-112.

[3]Robinson, op. cit., p. 106f.

day and night, the waxing and waning of the moon, the changing of the

seasons and so forth. Time and event were irreducibly linked[4] as an

examination of the common Hebrew word for time,(עֵת), will show:

"It seems to denote 'occurrence', that which runs across us, meets

us."[5] There is a time of giving birth (Micah 5:3), a time for the

animals to be gathered together (Genesis 29:7), a time when kings go

forth to battle (II Samuel 11:1), a time to audit accounts (II Kings

5:26), a time for building houses (Haggai 1:2ff).[6]

As well as the constant emphasis on the concrete aspect of

time, there was for the Hebrew the conviction that God was intimately

connected with time and that his relation to men required time as the

necessary category for the fulfilment of his purpose. Men's time-

experiences, therefore, are ultimately controlled by God. These range

from times to seek and call upon God (Hosea 10:12; Jeremiah 11:14)

to times of finding him (Psalm 32:6). God has his appointed times

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[4]"In addition to being without any idea of absolute and un-
linear time, it also seems evident that Israel was not capable of
thinking of time in the abstract, time divorced from specific events.
She found the idea of a time without a particular event quite incon-
ceivable; all she knew was time as containing events." (von Rad,
op. cit., 100.

[5]Robinson, op. cit., p. 109.

[6]Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 provides a classic illustration of the
use of עֵת in this sense. However, as Robinson has pointed out
op. cit., pp. 121f.) the time-consciousness of Koheleth is, on the
whole, quite un-Hebraic.

of activity (Job 24:1 LXX) such as the career of Cyrus (Isaiah 48:16)

or the future of his people (Ps. 102:13; Zephaniah 3:20). There are

times of divine deliverance (Jer. 2:27; Nehemiah 9:28) and judgement.

(Jer. 6:15, 8:12, 10:15). God's connection with time is most clearly

seen in the significance of the festivals. Indeed one might describe

the time of the cultic festival, as von Rad has done, as

> the one and only "time" in the full sense
> of the word, for it alone was time furn-
> ished with content in the truest sense of
> the term; because the observance of these
> cultic festivals did not rest upon any
> human arrangement.... The festivals, not
> time [i.e. as we understand it], were the
> absolute data, and were data whose holi-
> ness was absolute.[7]

Failure to observe a festal occasion was not merely the infringement

of a human arrangement, but the contradiction of a divinely appointed

fixed order. This is of crucial importance because it underlines the

distinction between Israel's festal celebrations and that of the

Canaanites with whom Israel's festal calendar had its origins. The

agrarian Canaanite cultus had celebrated the periodic cycle of

nature in its festivals; but soon after the settlement, Israel

"historicized" them. In them she celebrated the concrete historical

events whereby Yahweh had brought her into existence as a people.

Again, von Rad has clearly pointed out the significance of this for the

early Hebraic understanding of history:

> The historical acts by which Jahweh founded
> the community of Israel were absolute. They
> did not share the fate of all other events,
> which inevitably slip back into the past.

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[7]Op. cit., 102f. Cf. J.R. Wilch, Time and Event (Leiden: Brill, 1969).

> They were actual for each subsequent
> generation; and this not just in the
> sense of furnishing the imagination with
> a vivid present picture of past events –
> no, it was only the community assembled
> for a festival that by recitation and
> ritual brought Israel in the full sense
> of the word into being – in her own
> person she really and truly entered into
> the historic situation to which the
> festival in question was related.[8]

History existed, therefore, only as the "times" (D'J7 y) in which

Yahweh performed his acts. The implications of this for our present

study will become clearer in Chapter Two. For the present, however,

it is sufficient to note that this premise provided the basis for the

prophetic view of history which we must now briefly consider.

Prophetic View of History

The prophets reflected the understanding that history was a

long road down which Yahweh accompanied his people. For them, time

was irreducible from concrete events. When we ask what lay behind

the event, we discover that the "event" was inseparable from the

"word", ٦_٦ , which brought it – or "spoke" it, as it were – into

existence. It follows from this that "history is the event established

and narrated in the word."[9] It is true to say, therefore, that

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[8] Ibid., 104. The Passover, as a perfect illustration of the case, is discussed by von Rad, op. cit., 253f.

[9] O. Procksch, "'Word of God' in the OT", TDNT, vol. IV, trans. by G.W. Bromiley (1967), 93. Wolff also suggests a comparison between the Hebrew ٦_٦ and our own word "history" (Ger. Geschichte) which we use for that which is spoken (recounted history) and for that which occurred (experienced history)" (op. cit., p. 338).

history, for the prophets, was דְּבָרִים ("words", "events") uttered

in the first instance by Yahweh and brought into concrete historical

existence by the power inherent in them. The creative power of

דְּבַר־יהוה was central to the ministry and the message of Israel's

prophets and the theological pillar upon which both depended.

The term דְּבַר־יהוה occurs 241 times throughout the Old

Testament. Of these, 221, or 92 per cent, relate to a prophetic

oracle. On the basis of these statistics it has been concluded "that

this collacation was used as a technical term for an oral prophetic

revelation."[10]   There is, of course, more to it than that. As recent

form-critical studies have shown, the role of the prophet is

strikingly that of a messenger of Yahweh.[11] The characteristic

opening of a prophetic oracle, כֹּה אָמַר יהוה, and the frequent con-

clusion, נְאֻם־יהוה , probably originated in the speech forms used

by a messenger carrying out the commission of his master.[12] The

salient feature here for us is that just as the messenger's significance

resided in the message he brought, so, too, the prophet's importance

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[10]von Rad, op. cit., 87.

[11]See C. Westermann, Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech, trans.
by H.C. White (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), esp. pp. 90ff.;
J. Ross, "The Prophets as Yahweh's Messenger" in B.W. Anderson and W.
Harrelson, ed., Israel's Prophetic Heritage (London SCM, 1st, ed.
1962), pp. 98-107.

[12]It should be noted that Westermann (Basic Forms of Prophetic
Speech, p. 98) limits prophecy as this speech form understands it to
the period of the monarchy. This in keeping with our note on p.3.

was strictly in terms of the דְּבַר־יְהוָה which he was commissioned to bear[13] and, in a real sense, to embody. This last observation is not to be minimized. For the prophet was not only a carrier of the divine word, he was also a creature of it. The word which he brought - either of judgement or salvation - was the same word that had seized him and brooked no alternative to radical obedience.

> The lion has roared;
>   who will not fear?
> The Lord God has spoken;
>   who can but prophesy? (Amos 3:8)

It is not an overstatement to say that in the prophet himself "the word became flesh", so traumatically and so totally did the message enter into his life - physical as well as mental and spiritual.[14]

The point of all this is that the prophets not only <u>interpreted</u> history, they were integrally involved in <u>causing</u> it to happen. A basic tenet of the prophetic interpretation of history and of the prophetic self-consciousness as well, was that only those events previously foretold[15] by the prophets would come to pass as "saving

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[13]See R.E. Clements, <u>Prophecy and Covenant</u>, <u>SBT</u>, No. 43 (London: SCM, 1965), p. 24.

[14]Cf. von Rad, <u>op. cit.</u>, 50-69, 80-98.

[15]By this we do not mean to imply the common misconception that the prophets were simply "fortunetellers" or mere predictors of future events. On the contrary, the word spoken by the prophet was intended for his contemporary hearers only in the context of their present situation. But for the word which he spoke to become event, it must first be uttered, or foretold.

history" (Amos 3:7). This is made particularly clear in Jeremiah where everything is made to depend upon the power of the prophet's word. To be sure, it was the word of Yahweh that was being spoken through the mouth of the prophet, but one that could not be spoken without the prophet. It was like a fire (Jer. 5:14) burning in his bones (Jer. 20:9) and it gave this son of a Benjaminite priest the power "to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" with respect to nations and kingdoms (Jer. 1:9f). In this regard all of the prophets of the monarchical period were directly involved in politics[16] not so much because they were acute politicians per se,[17] but because politics was the arena in which historical decisions were made. Gad (I Samuel 22:5; II Sam. 24:13,18) Nathan (II Sam. 7:1-7, 12:1-14; I Kings 1), Ahijah (I Kings 11:29-39, 14:1-11) Shemaiah[18] (I Kings 12:21-24), Jehu ben Hanani (I Kings 16:1-4) - they all prophesied before kings in whom they saw concentrated the responsibility for Israel's well-being and destiny under Yahweh. In bringing the religious traditions of Yahwism to bear upon state decisions, there

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[16]For an excellent study of Israelite prophecy and its relation to international politics, see N.K. Gottwald, All the Kingdoms of the Earth (New York: Harper and Row, 1964).

[17]This question has been taken up and briefly discussed by Professor Robinson, (op. cit., p.129).

[18]As Gottwald has suggested, Shemaiah is a "historically doubtful figure...who may well be a duplicate of Ahijah" (op. cit., p.56).

early prophets were makers of history as well as interpreters of it.

The power and efficacy of יְהוָה־דְּבַר was the basis of the prophetic confidence in Yahweh's historical acts. Once the word was spoken, it was as good as done (Ezekiel 12:25,28; Jer. 1:12, 34:4f.; Is. 45:23, 55:11). Nowhere is this made clearer than in the Deuteronomistic [19] account of the history of Israel. Here, as von Rad has shown in his Studies in Deuteronomy, the entire history of the monarchical period is a development in terms of the fulfillment of a prophetic word. Parenthetically, to support what we said above, "the prophet has an unmistakably functional significance in this historical work."[20] It is the rhythm of promise and fulfilment that dominates the Deuteronomist's prophetic interpretation of Israel's Heilsgeschichte. The word of Yahweh spoken and mediated through his messengers the prophets guaranteed the presence of God with his people and his saving acts on their behalf (I Kgs. 8:56). And for the Deuteronomist, it was only this word of Yahweh which gave continuity and aspiration to the phenomenon of history and united the

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[19] The "Deuteronomist" is the name applied to the historian(s) responsible for the great work that extends from Joshua through II Kings. "We call these histories Deuteronomistic because they take as normative for their judgement of the past certain standards laid down either exclusively or chiefly in Deuteronomy." (G. von Rad, Studies in Deuteronomy, trans. by D.M.G. Stalker, SBT, No. 9 (London: SCM, 1953), 75.

[20] W. Zimmerli, "Promise and Fulfillment", trans. by James Wharton in C. Westermann. ed., Essays in Old Testament Hermeneutics, p. 98.

separate and various events to form a whole in the sight of God.[21]

Let us allow Professor von Rad to speak for us here:

> The Deuteronomist's conception is mani-
> festly this: Jahweh revealed his command-
> ments to Israel; in case of disobedience
> he threatened her with severe punishment,
> with the judgement of total destruction,
> in fact. That had now actually taken
> place [i.e. the Exile]. Jahweh's words
> had been 'fulfilled' in history - they had
> not 'failed', as the Deuteronomist is also
> fond of saying. There thus exists, the
> Deuteronomist means, an inter-relationship
> between the words of Yahweh and history in
> the sense that Yahweh's word, once uttered,
> reaches its goal under all circumstances
> in history by virtue of the power inherent
> in it.[22]

The Deuteronomic history was probably composed during the

Exile and, as such, stands closest to Deutero-Isaiah's prophetic

ministry in time as well as in thought. Certainly it is this

Deuteronomistic theology of history, a "theology of the word", that

lies at the heart of Deutero-Isaiah's interpretation of history.[23]

Word and History in Deutero-Isaiah

It is certain that DI regarded himself as standing directly in

the prophetic tradition (44.7f, 45.21).

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[21] von Rad, Studies in Deuteronomy, p.91.

[22] Ibid., p. 78.

[23] This does not mean that DI knew all or any of the Deuteronom-
istic histories, although this is plausible. Certainly he was familiar
with its traditions as we shall see in Chapter Two. Nonetheless, it
is with the essential similarities of thought that we are concerned
here.

The call[24] which comes to him in 40.1ff crystalizes his role

beyond a shadow of a doubt. The prophet is commissioned to proclaim a

message of comfort (40:1), forgiveness (40:2) and deliverance from

exile (40:3-5). None of these, however, constitute the main thrust of

the prophet's word. The transitory nature of human existence (40:6b-8a)

would make such a message by itself shallow and empty of meaning.

Rather, the message of hope comes as a corollary to the main affir-

mation supporting the whole prophetic discourse, namely that

    the word of our God will stand forever (40:8).

The complete certainty and effectiveness of דְבַר־יהוה is the major

note echoing throughout the collection of oracles.

    The call of the prophet provides the basis for DI's assurance

that he is to be the spokesman for Yahweh. But his confidence in

the effectiveness of Yahweh's words and deeds rests, as it does

with his Deuteronomistic contemporary, in his interpretation of

Israel's past history. Yahweh has not merely been a co-ordinator

of the historical process; his words (דְּבָרִים) - the sum and total

of his word (דָּבָר) - are themselves the constituents of history.

To this extent, DI does not depart from the interpretation of history

of his prophetic predecessors. But more than any of them he sees the

history of Israel set within the context of world-history which had

"from the beginning" (מֵרֹאשׁ) been ordered by Yahweh's word (41:4).

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[24]On the call of the prophet see von Rad, Old Testament Theology,
II, 66f.; cf N. Habel "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives",
ZAW, vol. 77 (1965), 297-323, esp. 314ff.

DI thus places the word of Yahweh in a universal perspective: if there is no saving event not foretold (42:9, 46:10, 48:5), it follows that nothing whatsoever takes place on the stage of world-history without having first been declared, if not on earth, at least in the heavenly council. To be sure, Yahweh's exercise of lordship over other peoples is always directly related to the fortunes of his own worshippers,[25] but this merely serves to tighten the connection between promise and fulfilment and allow the latter to be worked out on a grander scale.

Early in the discourses as they have been collected, it begins to emerge that Yahweh's purpose for Israel has been declared "from the beginning" of history itself, namely Creation[26] (40:21, 42:5ff, 43:1, 45:18f.) We shall treat the prophet's use of the Creation tradition in Chapter Two. For the present, what we wish to stress is that the word which was effective in Creation is the same word that has been effective throughout Israel's history. There was purposefulness in the activity of the word in Creation, and that purposefulness has been working itself out historically. The יהוה ־ ר ְ ב ַ ד that went forth at Creation was and remains potent and irrevocable

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[25] So C.R. North, The Old Testament Interpretation of History (London: Epworth Press, 1st ed. 1946), p.72.

[26] In this regard, DI shares much in common with the Yahwist who likewise begins his history at Creation. It is not certain whether the prophet was acquainted with the Yahwistic material, but their strong affinity in this matter of Creation makes it entirely possible.

(40:8, 55:11). This, of course, provides the foundation for the polemic

against idolatry that dominates most of Ch. 40-48. If it is true that

> the nations are like a drop from a bucket and
> are accounted as the dust on the scales (40:15)

is it not absurd to put any trust in the gods of the nations?   The

question is argued out in the trial speeches (41:1-5, 21-29; 43:8-15;

44:6ff; 45:11ff, 20-25) where Yahweh and the gods of the nations face

each other in a legal process to determine who is truly God.   The

criterion is no longer military victory on a battlefield, but "the

dependable and unremitting continuity between what a god says and

what he does."[27]   No idol or graven image announced beforehand what

was to happen nor was able to bring it to pass (44:7).   Would it not

be utter folly, therefore, to suggest that the gods of Babylon had

proven mightier than Yahweh besides whom there is no other (45:21)?

DI argues from the absurd intentionally.   His monotheism is not a

philosophical abstraction put forth as a proposition to be believed,

but a matter-of-fact declaration spoken on behalf of Yahweh (45:18f).

Yahweh's claim to divinity is verified by the continuity between his

words and his acts, the same continuity that constitutes his lordship

over history.   Yahweh is, indeed, the first and the last (41:4) because

he has the first and last word (44:6ff).

What had befallen Israel, therefore, could not possibly

have been the triumph of foreign deities.   They are utterly impotent.

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[27]C. Westermann, Isaiah 40:66, trans. by D.M.G. Stalker (London:
SCM, Eng. ed. 1969), p.15.

What Israel has suffered is the judgement of קְבַר־יְהוָה upon her

unfaithfulness, disobedience and apostasy.   This is a conviction

DI shares completely, albeit less explicitly, with the Deuteronomist.

Yahweh's word of judgement had been proclaimed by prophets of old

(Amos 5:2; Is. 9:8ff; Jer. 2:4ff.) and had become event in the fortunes

of Israel again and again.   The word of the sovereign Lord of history

was absolute and irrevocable;   thus the plight of the exiles was

unavoidable.   Yahweh had declared it to be so.   As in the past he had

used Assyria as the rod of his anger   (Is. 10:5) to purge his people,

so now Babylon had been summoned to fulfil the promise of the divine

word in history.   Once the exile was seen as judgement in its

character of fulfilled prophecy, it was no longer an anonymous fate.

The Lord who purposed it might yet purpose new and better things for

his people.

     Judgement was not the only word that Yahweh had injected into

Israel's history.   On the contrary, the very nature of Yahweh's

relationship with his people was articulated as "saving history",

or Heilsgeschichte.   The "word-events" (הַדְּבָרִים) of Israel's saving

encounters with her God are referred to by the prophet as הָרִאשֹׁנוֹת

"the former things" (41:22, 42:9, 43:18, 48:3).[28]   There, too,

Yahweh declared "from the beginning" (48:3-5) and caused to happen.

If there remained any doubt about the power of Yahweh's word to save

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[28]These will be considered in detail in the next Chapter, esp.
pp. 24.

and to deliver, it would surely be dispelled in the recollection of
these saving deeds. We observed earlier in this chapter how the very
recital of past events made the word of Yahweh a present and effectual
reality. How startling it must have been, therefore, for the
assembly of listeners to hear the prophet, having argued from the
past as the foundation for present confidence in Yahweh, exhort them
to

>   remember not the former things
>   nor consider the things of old (43:18)

Yet this is precisely the point of DI's message. Because Yahweh had
been consistent in bringing to pass what he had declared - both
judgement and salvation - the exiles could expect the new word now
being spoken through the mouth of the prophet to be fulfilled in
history. This word, too, will endure not because it calls forth an
echo in the inner realm of the heart, but because Yahweh speaks it
into history and it works creatively on that plane. "Nor will anything
endure except that which this word brings about; for the bewildered
exiles in Babylon, it is the one solid ground under their feet".[29]

When we ask what the new word was that was being injected
into history and what it was intended to effect, we must turn to the
content of DI's message, namely salvation. The prophet "thinks
above all of the return of the community of Israel, the second

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[29] von Rad, <u>Old Testament Theology</u>, II, 93.

Exodus with all its wonder."[30]   Cyrus, the rising star of Persia, had

been anointed (45:1) as the instrument to fulfil Yahweh's purposes

for Israel and the nations round about her.   Regardless of some

opinions to the contrary, Cyrus and his increasing prominence do not

provide "the pivot on which all that is said in the book turns."[32]

In fact, considering the great interest his successive victories must

have been arousing among the deportees in Babylon, as elsewhere,

Cyrus functions in an unquestionably secondary role, completely

subservient to the objectives of the divine word.   The renewed

activity of the word of Yahweh was not a conclusion DI reached

from a politically acute surveyance of the activity of the Persian

monarch; rather, it was the theological premise with which he began

and in terms of which he interpreted contemporary events.   Cyrus

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[30]" 'The anointed one of Yahweh' is the title given the
Israelite king from Saul and David onward, and in particular to kings
of the dynasty of David. The ceremony of anointing consecrated an
object or a person... Cyrus is given the place in the history of
salvation which in pre-exile Israel was given to the king" (McKenzie,
op. cit., p.76).   But, "this is no more than a rousing exaggeration
inspired by the actual situation... Cyrus was Yahweh's instrument in
basically the same way as were the Assyrians for Isaiah of Jerusalem.
So, his emotions kindled as he spoke, Deutero-Isaiah applied to Cyrus
that title which his own preaching had left without any rightful
bearer. If Cyrus had a charisma, its activity is exclusively
restricted to the political field" (von Rad, Old Testament Theology,
II, 244). While there is much to commend von Rad's statement on the
whole, it is strange that DI should use so highly an emotive and
technical term as מָשִׁיחַ without specifically intending that it
should be taken seriously.

[32]Westermann, Isaiah, p.10.

is important not only because he will effect the release of the
exiles from their captivity, but also because as an international
figure he is a living testimony to the earth-shaking power of Yahweh's
word. His activity points to a salvation that is not merely for
Israel but has ultimately universal implications (45:1-7).

What may we conclude from our study so far? In the first
place, DI has a prophetic role in the affairs of Israel, with all of
its functional and interpretative implications for historical de-
velopment, because of the divine word which has unconditionally
grasped him. Secondly, Yahweh's lordship over history and his
unchallenged claim to divinity are legitimized by the continuity
between his words and his deeds. Thirdly, this continuity is attested
by the fulfilment of his promises of judgement and deliverance in
the events of history. Fourthly, a new word even now being spoken
is guaranteed effectual in the history of the chosen people of God
and the affairs of all the nations of the world. Only one thing
remains to be said. There is a sense of immediacy of the fulfilment
upon the promise throughout the oracles of DI. Here again DI shows
his affinity with the Deuteronomist as reflected in the latter's major
thematic source:

> The word is very near you; it is in your
> mouth and in your heart, so that you can
> do it.   (Deut. 30:14)

The new word is being spoken now and even as it is uttered it is being
released into the affairs of men and nations to work the will of the
Lord of history (48:6-8). The exiles can wait with renewd
expectancy, for

the word of God is fulfilled....; it comes
to pass..., it stands forever... without
any co-operation on man's part. The
mystery of God... is to be seen herein,
and its content is irresistable.... Every-
where that the true prophet speaks[33]
things take place

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[33]Procksch, op. cit., 96.

SALVATION AND HISTORY

As we pointed out in the early stages of our discussion, Israel possessed no concept of time or history apart from events.[1] It was the activity of Yahweh in saving events that brought Israel into being. Israel's history, therefore, was "salvation-history" (Heilsgeschichte) through and through, for it was only insofar as Yahweh accompanied her in manifestly saving acts that her history existed at all. It is probably that Israel at first celebrated the event recalled in any given festival[2] as the "once-for-all" saving event. Gradually, however, she went on to recognize a whole series of saving events upon which she truly based her faith. One of the earliest recollections of Yahweh's redemptive acts in history is recorded in Deut. 26:5bff. (cf. Josh. 24:2ff.):

> A wandering Aramean was my father; and he
> went down into Egypt and sojourned, few
> in number; and there he became a nation,
> great,mighty and populous. And the
> Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted
> us, and laid upon us hard bondage. Then
> we cried to the Lord the God of our fathers,
> and the Lord heard our voice, and saw our

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[1] See supra, pp.6ff.

[2] See supra, pp.8f.

> affliction, our toil, and our oppression,
> and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with
> a mighty hand and an outstretched arm,
> with great terror, with signs and wonders;
> and he brought us into this place and gave
> us this land, a land flowing with milk and
> honey.

This primitive confession of faith appears to be cultic in origin and preserves a very early strand of what was recited as Israel's Heilsgeschichte, the basis of her "saving-faith" (Heilsglaube).

There is no doubt that DI was fully familiar with Israel's saving traditions, or, at least, some of them. His role as a prophet of Yahweh was largely legitimized in terms of the extent to which he recognized, affirmed or took over these traditions. Of course, like his prophetic predecessors, he adapted the traditions to suit the peculiarities of his message, and we encounter them in the new Sitz im Leben of his preaching. In Chapter One we noticed how he sums up the events recalled by these traditions under the heading of "the former things (הָרִאשֹׁנוֹת).[3] Our first task, therefore, is to examine the various salvation traditions as they appear in Isaiah 40:55 and attempt to show how DI incorporates them in his own proclamation of deliverance.

The "Former Things"

What precisely does DI mean by "the former things"? It has

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[3] See supra, p.18.

been argued by some scholars, notably among them C.R. North,[4] that

the term refers to events of the relatively recent past, particularly

the early victories of Cyrus. However, as B.W. Anderson has pointed

out, "no mere appeal to the immediate past would support the prophet's

proclamation that Yahweh alone is the sovereign of history and that

his purpose embraces the times from the beginning to the end".[5] Even

where the immediacy of Cyrus' achievements are brought to mind

(41:2f., 41:25, 45:1ff., 48:14), they are set within the context of

and made subject to the word of Yahweh which was spoken מֵרֹאשׁ, מֵאָז.

It is only the fulfilment of the divine word foretold throughout

Israel's history that authenticates the new word being spoken now.

The dejected exiles can be certain of "the new things" (הֶחֳדָשׁוֹת).

primarily because "the former things" have come to pass. It seems

certain, therefore, that הָרִאשׁוֹנוֹת are the events of Israel's

total <u>Heilsgeschichte</u> recalled in the memories preserved in her saving

traditions.[6]

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[4]"The 'Former Things' and the 'New Things' " in H.H. Rowley,
ed., <u>Studies in Old Testament Prophecy</u> (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1st
ed., 1946), pp. 111-126.

[5]"Exodus Typology in Second Isaiah" in Anderson and Harrelson,
ed., <u>Israel's Prophetic Heritage</u>, p.187.

[6]"By the former things he [i.e., DI] can hardly mean anything
other than that saving history which began with the call of Abraham
and the exodus from Egypt and ended with the destruction of Jerusalem"
(von Rad, <u>Old Testament Theology</u>, II, 246).

Anderson summarizes the motifs of the sacred history recorded in the Deuteronomic Credo and acknowledged by DI as follows: a) the promises to the fathers; b) the deliverance from Egypt; c) the journey through the wilderness; d) the entry into the promised Land.[7] To this basic outline we shall add the David-Zion and Creation traditions which do not form part of the Credo. Let us proceed to an examination of each of these in their turn.

Patriarchal Tradition

The oldest form of the patriarchal history that we possess is the opening words of the confessional Credo,

> A wandering Aramean was my father.
> (Deut. 26:5)

It is probable, as von Rad suggests, that the Aramean in question is Abraham.[8] Several stages of tradition lie between this simple cultic formulation and the more complex history of the patriarchs which appears in the Genesis accounts. The various strands of patriarchal

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[7] Op. cit., pp.182ff.

[8] Old Testament Theology, vol I, trans. by D.M.G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, Eng. ed. 1963), 122. There is some dispute about this and about von Rad's entire treatment of the 'little historical credo'. He accepts its present form as very primitive and does not question its origin in the Deuteronomic context of the festival of the offering of first fruits (Deut. 26:10ff). Against this, see A. Weiser, The Old Testament: Its Formation and Development, trans. by D.M. Barton (New York: Association Press, Eng. ed. 1961), pp. 83ff.; R.E. Clements, God's Chosen People (London: SCM, 1968), pp.55ff.; C. Carmichael, "A New View of the Origin of the Credo". VT, 19 (1969), pp.272-289.

material achieve their cohesion pimarily through the recurrent promise

of Yahweh which, in short, included the gift of the land and innumer-

able progeny (Deut. 26:56,9; cf. Gen. 12:2f., 15:5, 17:6ff., 28:14,

35:11f.). Careful study shows how the Yahwist, the Elohist and the

Priestly writer interpreted the patriarchal traditions and the divine

promise in accord with their own situations, interests and theological

considerations.

DI does essentially the same. Relevant passages in this regard

are 41:8, 43:27, 48:19, 49:19f., 51:2 and 54:3. The first[9] reference

clearly associates the election of Israel with Abraham.[10] The

reference to אַבְרָהָם אֹהֲבִי may reflect the Yahwist's account of

the special character of Abraham's relationship to God (Gen. 18:17-19).

Abraham is also called "friend" in II Chronicles 20:7, which suggests

that the "friend of God" motif was one of the strands of tradition

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[9]Although some scholars have seen הֵעִיר in Is. 41:2 as
possible reference to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12; 14:14f.), it is our
contention that Cyrus is intended (cf. 41:25, 45:1ff). See L.G.
Rignell, A Study of Isaiah, Ch. 40-55, LUA, 9th Ser., Vol. 52, No. 5
(Lund: Gleerup, 1956), 25.

[10]"Israel's election is carried back to the patriarchs, 'the
offspring of Abraham my friend". The words are proof positive that
the historical traditions of his nation were the source of Deutero-
Isaiah's inspiration and that, in particular, he knew the Yahwist in
whose work election goes right back to Abraham, for the pre-exilic
prophets never mention him" (Westermann, Isaiah, p.70). Cf. McKenzie:
"Second Isaiah is perhaps the earliest of the prophets to place the
beginnings of Israel's election in Abraham, outside of Second and
Third Isaiah, the name of the Patriarch occurs only in Mic. 7:20;
Isa. 29:22; Jer. 33:26; Ezek. 33:24, and the originality of these
passages is questionable" (op. cit., p.31).

concerning the first patriarch.[11]   It should be noted that the

important word   עַבְדִּי, "my servant", also occurs for the first

time in this context. In the theophany recorded in Gen. 26:24, Yahweh

informs Isaac that he will bless and multiply Isaac's descendents

בַּעֲבוּר אַבְרָהָם עַבְדִּי . The honorific that belonged to Abraham

by virtue of his election belongs now to Israel for the same reason.

Just as Abraham received the promise, so now Israel is heir to that

promise.[12] Here, as elsewhere in the collection of oracles, we must

assess the certainty of Yahweh's promises in terms of the effectiveness

of his divine word which cannot be retracted once it has been sent

forth (45:25).

In the second patriarchal reference (43:27), it is not exactly

clear who is meant by   אָבִיךָ הָרִאשׁוֹן. The balance of scholarly

opinion, however, favours Jacob.[13] The point here, of course,

is that from the beginning of Israel's inception, her history had

been marred by transgression. By right, Israel should forfeit her

blessing. Nonetheless, by an act of pure grace - it does not appear

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[11]Further support for this is gained from the New Testament
reflection upon the tradition in James 2:23.

[12]Rignell, op. cit., p.26.

[13]This is the view expressed by Westermann: "The reference is
certainly to Jacob, and Deutero-Isaiah takes his stand on a tradition
concerning him which is also presupposed in Hos. 12:3-5, a tradition
in which, clearly, the Jacob stories are tried and found wanting
(Isaiah, p.133). This position is generally preferred by G.A.F. Knight,
Deutero-Isaiah (New York/Nashville: Abingdon, 1965), p.107; McKenzie,
op. cit., p.59; Rignell, op. cit., p.40. In favour of Abraham see
J.D. Smart, History and Theology in Second Isaiah (London: Epworth,
1967), p.109.

that it is out of deference to the patriarchal promise in this instance - Yahweh pledges in the courts before his witnesses that he will blot out Israel's transgressions and no longer remember her sins (43:25).

Isaiah 48:19, 49:19f and 54:3 share essentially the same elements. Specifically they recall the two-fold promise of land and posterity. In Gen. 15:5ff. we have the promise to Abraham that his offspring shall be as numerous as the stars and that he shall go in and possess the land by the power of Yahweh. This is repeated in Gen. 17:5ff. and re-affirmed to Jacob in Gen. 28:14 and 35:11ff. The language of Is. 54:3 reflects that of Gen. 28:14 suggesting that this strand of the tradition, at least, was well-known by DI. Conscious as they were of being a dispossessed people, the exiles must have chaffed at hearing that the promise had been made null and void by their sins. Yet in the same breath, the prophet announces that Yahweh gives the promise anew. The people of Israel shall again go in and possess the land and fill it according to the word of Yahweh.

Aside from the reference in 41:8, the only other mention of Abraham by name is in 51:2. As was the case in the former instance, this passage associates the election of Israel with Abraham. The hearers are urged to recall Yahweh's blessing upon the first of the patriarchs (Gen. 12:2f.) and how, because of that blessing, Israel had, indeed, multiplied in number. Sarah is likewise mentioned here, the only time her name occurs outside of the Genesis accounts. Undoubtedly the story of Sarah's barrenness and conception in old-age accompanied at least one strand of the Abraham tradition. The point of the story is the creative power of the will (and, hence,

the word) of Yahweh and his ability to create practically ab nihilo.[14]

The figures of   צוּר and   מַקֶּבֶת are unparallelled in the sense

used in 51:1,[15] but they strongly suggest creation motifs. Since

verses 1b and 2a are in obvious parallel structure, it would appear

that the poet-prophet "wishes to give Israel's descent from Abraham

and Sarah the status of an act of creation, on a par with Deutero-

Isaiah's description of the nation's election at the Exodus as

creation".[16]

What can we conclude from DI's use of the patriarchal traditions?

One, the prophet definitely associates Israel's election with Yahweh's

two-fold promise to Abraham: land and progeny. Two, by an common

standard Israel had surrendered her right to Abraham's blessing by

virtue of her transgressions which marked her history from its begin-

ning. Three, "for the sake of his name", Yahweh restates the promise

and overlooks the sins of Israel's past. He unconditionally offers

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[14]This appears to be the Apostle Paul's point in Romans 4:16ff.;
cf. Hebrews 11:12.

[15]"The figure of the rock and the quarry for the ancestor is
unparallelled" (MCKenzie, op. cit., p.123).   Knight is much more
specific in his contention that DI is "quoting what must have been
a well-known metaphor" in which the rock refers to God's faith in
Abraham and the quarry to Sarah's barren womb!   (op. cit., pp.208ff).
The theory is fascinating but scarcely tenable on the basis of the
evidence - or lack of it.

[16]Westermann, Isaiah, p.36.

his people a new beginning.[17]   Four, the election of Israel with

Abraham was an act of creation whereby Yahweh brought Israel into

being.   To sum up, Israel's _Heilsgeschichte_ had ostensibly ended

in 587 B.C. with the destruction of Jerusalem and the subsequent

deportation. The prophet recalls how Yahweh created and elected,

blessed and fulfilled in former times.   Now Yahweh was disclosing

his intention to make a new beginning with his people.   The

faithfulness of his word in the past guaranteed its effectiveness

in the future.   The patriarchs call out from that past as silent

witnesses to the "new thing" that is about to be.

Exodus Tradition

The most dominant motif from Israel's _Heilsgeschichte_ is

the Exodus tradition. This is not surprising, for Israel's

Heilsglaube regarded the Exodus as the "saving-event"   _par_

excellance.   It forms the heart of the Deuteronomic Credo, and

its confessional formula,   יוֹצִיאֵנוּ יְהוָה מִמִּצְרַיִם ,

"is probably the earliest and at the same time the most widely used

of these confessional formulae" which include the designation of

Yahweh as one who called the partriarchs and promised them the

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[17]The unconditional nature of the promise to Abraham is the
major premise of the Yahwist's history of the relationship between
God and Israel.

land.[18]   The appeal to the Exodus is a characteristic note of the

canonical prophets (Hosea 11:1, 12:9,13, 13:4; Amos 3:3; Is. 11:16;

Micah 7:15, Jer. 2:6, 7:22; Ezek. 20:5ff.) who apply and interpret

the tradition according to the situation in which they address their

word.

The "salvation-history" recited in Josh. 24:2ff makes more

explicit the "signs and wonders" of Deut. 26:8.   The importance given

to Yahweh's deeds in war suggests that destruction of the Egyptians

and the crossing of the Sea of Reeds constitute the most elemental

data in the confession concerning the deliverance from Egypt.[19]

These appear to be the main constituents of DI's reminiscences of the

Exodus as well.   Yahweh has proven himself   גִּבּוֹר   and   מִאישׁ

מִלְחָמוֹת as the language and imagery of several passages attest

(40:10, 51:9, 52:10; cf. Ex. 6:6).   This is particularly brought out

in the clearest allusion to the Exodus that occurrs in Deutero-Isaiah:

> Thus says the Lord who makes a way in the
> sea, a path in the mighty waters, who
> brings forth chariot and horse, army and
> warrior; they lie down, they cannot arise,
> they are extinguished, quenched like a wick.
> (43:16f.)

If any significance can be attached to verses 16ff and the verse that

immediately precedes, it seems that the redemption (and election) of

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[18] von Rad, Old Testament Theology, I, 121.   Cf. Robinson,
op. cit., p.150.   This statement needs some qualification.   The
patriarchal traditions are, in fact, older than the Exodus tradition.
It is their inclusion into the Heilsgeschichte which is later.

[19] von Rad, Old Testament Theology, I, 176.

Israel that took place at the Exodus was also an act of creation.
Elsewhere, in passages that do not necessarily reflect the Exodus,
the verb גָּאַל, "to redeem", is used in a sense that suggests
creative as well as redemptive activity on the part of Yahweh.
Similarly, בָּרָא "to create", connotes redemption as well as
creation (44:24, 54:5).[20] The point to be stressed is that election
and creation belong together as the saving act of Yahweh manifest in
the Exodus tradition as well as in that of the patriarchs.

There are certainly other allusions to the Exodus. While
there are no specific references to the plagues[21] or to the Passover,
52:12 does reflect a possible awareness of the latter tradition as
recorded in Ex. 12:11 and Deut. 16:3. In the same verse, it is
possible that the reference to Yahweh as מְאַסִּפְכֶם alludes
to the protection and guidance of Yahweh who accompanied his people
in their flight from Egypt (Ex. 13:20f., 14:9f.). We do not intend to
dwell at length on this matter because the major significance of the
Exodus tradition for DI is the fact that it provides a "type" for the
new saving event dramatically about to unfold. Since we shall treat
this in more detail later in the chapter, let it suffice to say here
that DI appealed to the Exodus tradition primarily because he knew
that "in the deliverance from Egypt Israel saw the guarantee for all

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[20]von Rad, Old Testament Theology, II, 241.

[21]Against this, see J. Kahlmann, "Die Heilszukunft in der
Beziehung zur Heilsgeschichte nach Jes. 40:55", Biblica, vol. 32
(1951), 81.

the future, the absolute surety for Yahweh's will to save, something like a warrant to which faith could appeal in times of trial."[22]

Wilderness Tradition

While not all Old Testament form critics are agreed that the allusions to Israel's wanderings in the desert should be regarded as a tradition distinct from the Exodus itself, a good case can be made out for an independent wilderness tradition in which Yahweh and in which Israel was totally faithful to Yahweh. Echoes of it may be heard in Hos. 9:10, Deut. 32:10, Jer. 31:2f., and similar passages.[23] The Credo in Deuteronomy treats the events from the Exodus to the Conquest without mention of the wilderness. Joshua 24:2ff., however, gives the wandering a place of its own alongside the miraculous crossing of the Sea of Reeds (Josh. 24:76). It probably should be pointed out here that it is erroneous to isolate any of these themes to the complete exclusion of an idea of the whole. Von Rad is correct in asserting that "guidance in the wilderness cannot be thought of apart from the deliverance from Egypt",[24] and that the

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[22] von Rad, Old Testament Theology, I, 176.

[23] The exponent of this primitive wilderness tradition, which is in distinction from the "murmuring traditions", was R. Bach, Die Erwahlung Israels in der Wuste, an unpublished dissertation (Bonn, 1956). von Rad refers to it in Old Testament Theology, I, 177ff.

[24] von Rad, Old Testament Theology, I, 122.

"tremendous picture of a people's journeying... is, as far as the history of tradition goes, the final outcome of a very long process of growth and combination of traditions."[25]   How or when the wilderness wanderings become associated with the Exodus tradition as a whole, we do not presume to say.   Nonetheless, it is clear that the leading through the wilderness did become an essential element in Israel's Heilsgeschichte and that it constitutes the basis for a great deal of DI's appeal to the saving acts of Yahweh in the past.

B.W. Anderson outlines DI's recollection of the journey through the wilderness as follows:[26]   1) Yahweh prepared a "way" through the wilderness and led his people over it (40:3-5, 42:16, 43:19).   2) On route, he supplied his people with food and drink (41:17-20, 43:19-21, 49:10) causing water to flow from a rock (48:21; cf. Ex. 17:2-7, Numbers 20:8).   3) Although DI does not mention Sinai, the revelation of the law is presupposed (42:21,24; 48:17f., 51:7).[27] It is in these wilderness passages that DI often soars to the heights as a poet.   And his main concern in reciting them is to assure the Babylonian exiles that Yahweh who proved himself able to sustain and lead in bygone times was the same Yahweh who could and would again lead his people "in a way that they know not, in paths that they have

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[25]Ibid., 280.

[26]Op. cit., p.183.

[27]This last point is seriously debatable.   In the passages indicated there is no reason to assume that   תּוֹרָה refers to Sinai. It may mean little more than "instruction".

not known" (42:16).

Conquest Tradition

In the _Heilsgeschichte_ of the Credo and related texts, the
granting of the land of Canaan is the last of Yahweh's saving acts.[28]
As with the events already mentioned, many historical and theological
variations developed about this Conquest-tradition.[29] Two obviously
variant accounts are provided by Judges 1:1ff. and Josh.2-9.[30] The
former regards the entry into the land as the activity of the tribes
acting independently of each other. In the latter, _all_ Israel took
possession of the land under Joshua's leadership "because the Lord
God of Israel fought for Israel" (Josh. 10:42). The reference betrays
the theological consideration of its narrator. The land formerly
belonged to other nations; but in fulfilment of his promise, Yahweh
gave the land to Israel. This promise of the land, so we saw above,
was central to the historical traditions of the patriarchs, and the
fulfilment of promise was the _Leitmotif_ of the Deuteronomist who edited
the Joshua sources. His editorial comment in Josh. 21:43-45 provides
the clue to understanding both the Joshua history of the conquest and

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[28]"Form-critical research has made it absolutely certain that
the old picture of the history ended here, and that it was not extended
through the conquest into the period of the judges and the kings" (von
Rad, _Old Testament Theology_, I, 296).

[29]_Ibid._, 297ff.

[30]Even within each of these two accounts we find separate
strands of unrelated tradition. However, for our present purposes
we shall consider each of the two as "separate" in a general sense.

the use which DI makes of the tradition:

> Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land
> which he swore to give to their fathers;
> and having taken possession of it, they
> settled there. And the Lord gave them
> rest [הֲנִיחַ] on every side just as he
> had sworn to their fathers; not one of all
> their enemies had withstood them, for the
> Lord had given all their enemies into their
> hands. Not one of all the good promises
> [הַדָּבָר מִכֹּל הַדָּבָר הַטּוֹב]
> which the Lord had made to the house of
> Israel had failed [נָפַל]; all came
> to pass.

This is a profound reflection upon the relationship between promise

and fulfilment in terms of the efficacy of Yahweh's   דָּבָר   .

Once uttered, it came to pass. "Not one word from every good word"

(lit.) failed; each was fulfilled in Israel's saving history of

Yahweh's dealings with his people.

In Deutero-Isaiah, the return to the land and its repossession

follow as fulfilment upon the divine promise.   The sons and

daughters of the Exile (43:6) can be confident that they will again

establish the land (49:8) in keeping with Yahweh's promise.   No

matter that the land is devastated; so powerful is the word of Yahweh

that the Land will be refurbished and bring forth children so plentiful

that they will want for room.   Ultimately the land of the new

possession will encompass the whole earth of which Yahweh is God (54:5).

What is lacking in all this, however, is the element of "rest"

(הֲנִיחַ) as the reward for conquest.   In Deuteronomy (12:9f.,

25:19), "rest" is the ultimate gift that comes with the land. This is

likewise the case in Josh. 21:44, referred to above, and throughout

the Deuteronomistic histories. Isaiah of Jerusalem gives a classic

description of this "theology of rest" in Is. 30:15, a note that

Jeremiah echoes in Jer. 6:16:

> In returning and rest (בְשׁוּבָה)
> you shall be saved; in quietness and in
> trust shall be your strength.
> (Is. 30:15)

> Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for
> the ancient paths, where the good way is;
> and walk in it, and find rest (מַרְגּוֹעַ)
> for your souls. (Jer. 6:16)

Nowhere, however, does the word בְשׁוּבָה appear in Isaiah 40:55,

although the idea is present in the opening oracle, 40:1ff. In the

other texts cited, מְנוּחָה is equivalent to שָׁלוֹם . It is

the <u>summum bonum</u> that can be experienced in the world and <u>follows</u> the

warlike conquest of the land. But for DI, joy and peace <u>herald</u> the

"new Exodus" (54:12), an event so significant in itself, that re-

entry to the land has no more to offer. It merely affirms the

absolute fidelity of the word of Yahweh that must accomplish its

purpose.

David-Zion Tradition

Although separate strands of development occur with respect

to the David and Zion traditions, there can be no doubt that Zion

received its specifically Israelite characteristics from David's

choice of the city as his capital. At any rate, Zion-Jerusalem is

the focus of an important election tradition[31] that appears often in
the prophetic writings and discourses. The great oracle of Isaiah
of Jerusalem[32] well illustrates the central motifs of the tradition:

> It shall come to pass in the latter days
> that the mountain of the house of the
> Lord shall be established as the highest
> of the mountains and it shall be raised
> above the hills; and all the nations shall
> flow to it and many peoples shall come and
> say "Come, let us go up to the mountain of
> the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob;
> that he may teach us his ways and that we
> may walk in his paths." For out of Zion
> shall go forth the law and the word of the
> Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between
> the nations, and shall decide for many
> peoples; and they shall beat their swords
> into plowshares and their spears into
> pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up
> sword against nation neither shall they
> learn war any more. (Is. 2:2-4).

The form of the oracle, indebted as it is to the enthronement psalms",[33]
supports its content which celebrates Zion as the "city of God", the
place of Yahweh's enthronement as judge and ruler of the nations.
Isaiah was by no means the first to allude to Jerusalem as the centre

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[31] on this, with particular respect to the lateness of the
tradition, see von Rad, Old Testament Theology, I, 46ff.

[32] For a discussion of the authenticity of the oracle and its
relation to Mic. 4:1-4, a matter that does not concern us here, see
Gottwald, op. cit., p.196.

[33] Ibid. On the "enthronement festivals" from which setting
these psalms arose, see W. Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament,
vol. I, trans. by J.A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1st, Eng.
ed., 1961), 123ff.

of nations who would one day submit to Israel.[34]   Perhaps Daivd
himself succeeded in attracting this strand of the tradition to the
monarchy if not to his own person. If not, the two nevertheless
became associated relatively early.[35] What is of primary importance
here, however, is the fact that this particular tradition finds a
place for "the nations" (הַגּוֹיִם) in the purposes of Yahweh, the
Holy One of Israel. Their gods are nothing, when the nations realize
this and turn to Yahweh at Zion as their arbiter, "there will be no
more need for the peoples of the Near East to crush one another in
the terrible threshing floor of war."[36]

It is the kingship of Yahweh, rather than of David or of a
Davidic monarch, that DI celebrates in his hymn to Zion (52:7-10).
DI affirms with his great predecessor that Yahweh's victory at
Jerusalem is a victory before "all the ends of the earth" (52:10;
cf. 45:14f., 49:18,22f.; also Mic. 5:4; Jer. 16:19; Zechariah 9:10).
The new note struck in Deutero-Isaiah is that Zion's pre-eminence
is not to be gained by her victory in battle, but by the grace of
Yahweh's saving deeds. Yahweh's victory in Zion is the outcome of
his promise of salvation inherent in the everlasting covenant he made
with David (55:3). But the prophet does not see the fulfilment of

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[34]Gottwald, op. cit., p.197.

[35]von Rad, Old Testament Theology, I, 46.

[36]Gottwald, op. cit., p.208.

the promises made in II Samuel 7 in terms of a new David[37] - in this

he breaks with tradition. Rather, DI interprets Yahweh's "steadfast,

sure love for David" (חַסְדֵי דָוִד הַנֶּאֱמָנִים) as a covenant made

with the whole nation. Isaiah herself (Zion could surely be substituted

here) will be the leader (נָגִיד) to whom the nations shall flock

because, Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel, has acted in her history and

glorified her with his presence.

Here, as with the other saving traditions we have examined,

we discover the accompanying motif of creation-in-election. Nowhere

is this more vividly expressed than in 49:14-18 with its image of a

woman and her sucking child. Even though a mother might forget the

son of her womb (בֶּן־בִּטְנָהּ,), yet Yahweh will not forget Zion whom

he has graven on the palms of his hands (עַל־כַּפַּיִם חַקֹּתִיךְ).

Jerusalem can take heart, for Yahweh has promised to bring her

children home.

Creation Tradition

Deutero-Isaiah, notwithstanding the Yahwist and the Priestly

Document, is commonly regarded as the Old Testament's chief exponent

of a Creation theology. In Chapter One we saw that the "word of

Yahweh" possesses a creative aspect of fundamental importance.

Furthermore we have seen in this chapter how Creation motifs are

integral to the basic events of Israel's _Heilsgeschichte_. But it seems

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[37]It is worth noting here that "the Messianic hope had no place
in his prophetic ideas" whatever (von Rad, _Old Testament Theology_, II,
240).

certain that DI was also acquainted with a tradition that gave Creation

a singular place among "the former things" of Israel's historical

experience.[38]   That the early Credo makes no specific mention of

Creation is obvious; although in the confession's "ontological wonder",

we do discover the seed of Israel's creation faith (Schöpfungsglaube).[39]

In Nehemiah 9:6-31, a much later historical summary, Creation is the

first "event" recounted, suggesting that a "creation-faith" tradition

had found its way into the accepted historical confessions of Israel.

Herman Gunkel was the first to draw serious attention to the

relationship between Israelite religious traditions and the ancient

myths of the Fertile Crescent.[40]   The uniqueness of Israel's adaptation

of Mesopotamian and Canaanite traditions lies in that she "demythologized"

them.   That is, Israel removed Creation from the realm of cataclysmic

primordial warfare, and interpreted it in the light of history.   Nature

itself was desacralized and the festivals once rooted in rites adoring

the soul of nature now praised the Lord of history who transcended

nature and made it subject to his historical purpose.   In this manner,

as studies of the history of Israel's traditions have shown, the

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[38] Perhaps it should be mentioned that the David-Zion and Creation traditions have a common origin - Jerusalem.

[39] B.W. Anderson, Creation verses Chaos (New York: Association Press, 1967), p.37.

[40] Schöpfung, und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895).

Urgeschichte, or "primaeval history" became inseparably linked to

Heilsgeschichte, or "saving history".

As we pointed out above, there is a close affinity between

אָרָב , "to create", and גָאַל , "to redeem", as DI uses the terms.

For the prophet, creation and redemption are all of a piece (42:5-9,

44:24, 51:0-11, 54:5). No doubt it was the new situation in which

he found himself and his people that caused him to interpret the

Creation traditions in this way. Surrounded by the power of Babylon

and the pretentious claims of her gods, it was necessary for Israel

to see that her saving history - indeed, her own existence - was

directly related to Creation both as the first mighty act of Yahweh

in world-history and as the accompanying motif of the formulative

saving events of her own peculiar destiny. The Catholic scholar,

C Stuhlmueller, has put it this way:

> Dt. Is.... introduces the idea of creation
> for what it can contribute to the under-
> standing of who is Yahweh, Israel's re-
> deemer now. It is as redeemer that
> Yahweh creates.[41]

No wonder, then, that Stuhlmueller concludes in an earlier essay,

"Creation... is an act of salvation, an indissoluble part of

Heilsgeschichte."[42]

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[41]"'First and Last' and 'Yahweh-Creator' in Deutero-Isaiah",
CBQ, vol. 29 (1967), 511.

[42]"The Theology of Creation in Second Isaiah", CBQ, vol.
21 (1959), 467.

Let us summarize our observations so far. DI was acquainted
with definite saving traditions which he adapted under his review of
"the former things" of Israel's past. These, as we have identified
them are, a) the Patriarchal tradition, b) the Exodus tradition,
c) Wilderness tradition, d) the Conquest tradition - all of which are
the basic events cited in the early Deuteronomic Credo; and e) the
David-Zion tradition, f) the Creation tradition - both of which are
later, but have nonetheless been incorporated as important events among
the central motifs of Israel's Heilsgeschichte. Uniting these various
strands is the conviction that each saving event which they recall
foretold by Yahweh and that once the divine word had been uttered it
came to pass. Significantly, the Creation tradition which possesses
its own line of development, as do the others, is interwoven into
central election traditions concerning the Patriarchs, the Exodus,
and David-Zion. The word of Yahweh, therefore, creates and elects;
or, as we might say, it creates-in-election. This is the essence
of Israel's saving faith. Yahweh has created and chosen a people for
his pleasure and to fulfill his purpose for the world in history. The
crisis of DI's prophetic ministry, however, was that in 587, Israel's
Heilsgeschichte came to an end. With the fall of Jerusalem her
Heilsglaube suffered an indescribable blow. Cut off from the very
traditions that had created, saved and sustained her, and in doing
so had given her an identity, Israel virtually ceased to exist as the
people of God. It was the task of the prophet, bearer of the "word
of Yahweh", to call Israel into a new existence, a new history, a new
relationship with her God. This he did in his proclamation of "the

new thing" (הַחֲדָשָׁה) that Yahweh was about to do for his name's

sake and in the presence of all the nations of the world.

The "New Thing"

There is little doubt among scholars that the "new thing" to

which DI alludes again and again is the "triumphal release from Babylon

and the journey home across the desert which is conceived as a new and

even more wonderful Exodus"[43] Yahweh's saving activity that is about

to break forth, ending the long spiritual drought of Israel's exile,

is constantly described in terms reminiscent of the Exodus tradition.

This is not surprising when we realize the supreme importance of the

"former things" chief among which was the Exodus. Furthermore, the

exiles must have felt a strong identification with their ancestors

enslaved in Egypt. In spite of the difficulties that accompany the

term, we can say that the Exodus from Egypt provides a "type" of the

deliverance from Babylon, "the furnace of affliction" (48:10).

Anderson has helped us to see this as "historical typology" in which

"the prophet discerns a correspondence between the 'former things'

and the 'new things'. There is a meaning common to the old Exodus and

the new. This parallelism, however, is not based upon mere political

analogy: it is an expression of the unity and certainty of history in

Yahweh's purposive and dynamic will."[44]

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[43]North, "The 'Former Things' and the 'New Things'", p.116.

[44]"Exodus Typology in Second Isaiah", p.189.

This leads us to ask more precisely what constitutes this new

saving event, this "new thing", which Yahweh is about to perform? As

we have said, the saving event proper is the departure from Babylon

and the return to Jerusalem. In this respect, it is deliverance pure

and simple (40:1f., 42:6f., 43:14ff., 45:17, 46:13, 51:86).   It is

deliverance from Babylon and from the judgement of Yahweh in terms

of which the exile had been understood. It was a "message of

salvation and nothing but salvation which Deutero-Isaiah had been

commissioned to declare", and his preaching was "entirely under the

aegis of God's forgiveness."[45] This is what makes the form of the

"salvation oracle"[46] so appropriate to his message. Although DI

stands in the traditions of the pre-exilic prophets of doom by virtue

of the divine word that has summoned him to his task and the

traditions upon which he depends, both the form and content of his

utterances are clear indications that he preaches a gospel of

salvation. The time of her warfare is now over, and, having paid

double for all her sins (40:2), Israel is about to see her deliverance

executed by the mighty arm of Yahweh (40:10). The mountains and hills

are about to be made low and a way in the wilderness cleared to take

the exiles home to Zion.

The corollaries of this basic saving event are, in some ways,

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[45] Westermann, Isaiah, p.199.

[46] For an excellent discussion of the form of the "salvation
oracle" in Deutero-Isaiah, see Philip B. Harner, "The Salvation
Oracle in Second Isaiah" JBL, vol. 88 (December, 1969), 418-434.

As significant for DI's theology as the event itself. The first of
these is that Israel's deliverance is initiated by the advent of
Yahweh himself who is to accompany his people (43:2, 52:12). The
destruction of Jerusalem, the dwelling-place of the Holy One of
Israel, had virtually decreed the absence of God from the midst of his
people. It may well be that "men have to be prepared to walk in
darkness, remembering what God has been to his people in the past and
trusting that what he has been he will again show himself to be...."[47]
But the children of Israel had never been known for their "blind faith".
On the contrary, theirs had been a history of infidelity in the very
presence of Yahweh's saving deeds. Thus the pre-exilic prophets had
been sent to recall Israel to her saving traditions and to remind
her of her covenant responsibilities.[48] Now the Babylonian captives
tottered on the brink of despair. At this crucial moment in her
history, the prophet of the exile announces that the time of Yahweh's
hiddenness is over:

> Behold the Lord God comes with might, and
> his arm rules for him; behold, his reward
> is with him, and his recompense before
> him. He will feed his flock like a
> shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his
> arms, he will carry them in his bosom,
> and gently lead those that are with young.
> (40:10f.)

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[47]Smart, op. cit., p.48.

[48]North, Old Testament Interpretation of History, p.186.

This is no mere revival of ancient history or a stirring of forgotten memories. This is a proclamation that Yahweh's coming is to effect a radically new thing, previously unheard of (48:6), and thereby to begin a new history for his people. Recollection of the "former things" merely provides the guarantee of Yahweh's effectiveness in the present. As far as her salvation is concerned, however, Israel is to forget the "former things" (43:18) and anticipate a new beginning in what even now springs forth (43:19) from the creative word of Yahweh.

The advent of Yahweh leads directly to the second corollary of the prophet's announcement of salvation, namely the re-habitation of Zion. For "he who comes" comes to his holy city to restore it and to establish its place before the nations. Again, this is not simply a reaffirmation of the former David-Zion covenant; it is the geographical realization of Yahweh's new act of deliverance and restoration. To be sure "the revelation of Yahweh and his cult cannot be detached from the place where his name should dwell."[49] However, to interpret this as mere "restoration" is to miss the radical implications of the theology of re-creation which is from first to last the dominant theme of the prophecy. The "new Zion" is essentially an ideal community (52:1), a city of righteousness where there can dwell neither sin, poverty, defeat nor disaster.[50] It is not only

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[49]McKenzie, op. cit., LXII.

[50]Ibid.

the place where Yahweh shall resume his abode, it is also the dynamic

centre from which he shall execute his judgement and salvation to

the ends of the earth (52:7-10).   Just as there is a heightening

between the old Exodus and the new,[51]   so there is a heightening of

historical meaning in the return to Zion.   The soteriological

implications are radicalized and universalized to include all nations

who will come of their own accord to confess and make supplication

to the God of Israel, their Saviour (45:15f., 22ff.).

A third aspect of the "new thing" about to break forth is

that Cyrus is to be the instrument of Yahweh's saving activity (44:28,

45:1ff.).   Yahweh has chosen (בָּחַר) not an Israelite, but a

pagan Gentile to fulfill all his purpose (44:28)[52]   This is the

ultimate proof that Yahweh is God not only of Israel, his chosen

people, but of all the world.   Yahweh has called Cyrus by name (45:3)

in spite of Cyrus' ignorance of him who calls,

> that men may know, from the rising of the
> sun and from the west, that there is none
> besides me; I am the Lord, and there is
> no other.   (45:6)

Yahweh's lordship over history is lordship over total history.   As

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[51]Anderson, "Exodus Typology in Second Isaiah", p.190.

[52]See supra, pp.24f.

far as DI is concerned, Cyrus' victorious campaigns are a testimony
to this one, irrefutable fact. It is Cyrus who shall free the exiles
and rebuild Zion, the city of God (45:13);[53] although, it is not as
clear as Gottwald suggests that the prophet envisaged "that Cyrus
would become a Yahwist and use his office to establish Yahwism as
the official faith of the empire".[54] The important fact for DI is
that Cyrus was the means whereby Yahweh would establish the historical
foundation for the deliverance of his people and the ultimate
salvation of the world. The work of salvation is from first to last
the work of Yahweh (41:4, 45:17, 51:5ff.). If Cyrus does the will
of Yahweh "not for price or reward" (45:13), he does so not because
he is a dedicated Yahwist or an example that Israel should follow,
but because he is unable to oppose the omnipotent word of Yahweh.

We have agreed that the "new event" *par excellance* is the
"new Exodus", deliverance and return. We have also argued, however,
that redemption cannot be seen in Deutero-Isaiah apart from creation.

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[53]Gottwald's observation should be noted at this point: "His
[i.e., DI's] specific premonition that Cyrus would repatriate the
Jews to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple was not dependent on the
pro-Cyrus Marduk priesthood [i.e., in Babylon] but rather on a
combination of the prophet's assessment of Cyrus prevailing imperial
policy and his deep belief in the guiding purpose of God for his
exiled people" (op. cit., p.335).

[54]Ibid., p.338. The reference cited by Gottwald, i.e.,
’ מ שׁ ב   א ר ק י (41:25), is scarcely sufficient grounds for
concluding that "the prophet anticipates the monarch's conversion"
(p.336).

It follows, therefore, that this new saving act also has inherent in it an element of creation. But as the new event is a <u>new</u> election-in-redemption, so it is a <u>new</u> creation-in-election. Israel had been created through her saving history which had ceased with the exile. Now that exile was coming to an end. Yahweh's new saving act would elect Israel anew and give her a new beginning, a new creation. This is not to deny that there is continuity between the events of the <u>Urzeit</u> and those of the <u>Endzeit</u>. There is consistency of purpose and of the divine word that is responsible for both. Inasmuch, however, as Israel is now bidden to forget the "former things" which were the basis of her existence and identity, it is seriously open to debate that the continuity between the pre-exilic community and the new people of God is one of <u>wirkliche Kontinuität</u> and <u>wesentliche Identität</u> as Kahlmann would have us believe.[55] It is equally erroneous to regard the new Exodus as an expression of the pattern of cyclical repetition in the ancient Near East. We must protest with Anderson that "although there is a correspondence of meaning between the first things and the last things, the new Exodus is not a return to the old in a great historical cycle. It is anew event, a new creation"[56]. The way in the wilderness over which the exiles are to journey is the way to a new destiny in the purposes of God.

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[55]<u>Op. cit.</u>, p.81.

[56]"Exodus Typology in Second-Isaiah", p.192.

The new event must be foretold in order to be authenticated as "saving event" deserving of a place in Israel's Heilsgeschichte. This, in short, is the mission of Deutero-Isaiah: to inject Yahweh's new word into history so that, once foretold, it might be fulfilled. Westermann's reflection on DI's utterance in 48:6ff. is correct in this regard. He concludes:

> the argument used in the trial speeches against the other gods, the reliable connection between what God proclaims and what he performs, is here spoken to Israel, the purpose being to give her confidence in the new proclamation and its fulfilment. Verses 20f. leave no doubt about the end which the utterance is designed to serve. It's purpose is to help Israel step out on the way home.[57]

The word is uttered and the silence of God is broken. Israel is given an opportunity to become a people again. In the last analysis, this is the essence of Yahweh's "new thing", and it assures his people of a new way into the future.

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[57]Westermann, Isaiah, p.196.

ISRAEL AND THE FUTURE

In Chapter One we argued that the "prophetic faith" of Israel

interpreted history as the succession of "events" (דְּבָרִים)

actualized by the "word (דָּבָר) of Yahweh" injected into human

affairs. In Chapter Two we went on to examine the traditions which

had developed about the particularly saving events which brought

Israel into being, and how these traditions were applied by Deutero-

Isaiah. It now remains to ask the question, what view of the future,

if any, did DI hold for the exiled community beyond its "new begin-

ning" now breaking in upon the stage of world history? This is the

eschatological question; however, before we can pursue it with

relation to Isaiah 40-55, we must give some thought to the problem

of eschatology and prophecy.

Eschatology and Prophecy

The problem of Old Testament eschatology is by no means a new

one. Many of the difficulties have arisen as a result of confusion

concerning the definition of the term itself. In its narrowest sense,

eschatology means "the (dogmatically firmly established) doctrine of

the (dramatically conceived) end of history and of the course of the

universe and the beginning of the time of eternal salvation".[1] Used

in this sense, "eschatological" can describe only those events which

lie beyond history, and, with respect to the Old Testament, can properly

be applied only to Apocalyptic.[2] Therefore, to refer to the preaching

of the prophets as "eschatological" is to misuse the term since the

prophets, including DI, see the process of judgement and salvation as

taking place within history.

Some scholars,[3] however, have reacted against this limited

definition of "eschatology". To accept it dogmatically would be to

leave "the most outstanding element in the prophetic message...

without proper explanation and without a name."[4] Accordingly, the

term is modified and broadened to refer "to a future in which the

circumstances of history are changed to such an extent that one can

speak of a new, entirely different, state of things, without in so

doing, necessarily leaving the framework of history."[5] So defined,

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[1] E. Jenni, "Eschatology of the OT", IDB, VOL. 11 (Nashville; Abingdon, 1962), 126. This view is essentially that expressed by S. Mowinckel, He That Cometh, trans. by G.W. Anderson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1956), pp.125ff.

[2] Some qualification is necessary even here, "for Apocalyptic envisages the continuation of time and history after the historical consummation: (von Rad, Old Testament Theology, II, 114.)

[3] Notably among these: von Rad, Old Testament Theology, II, 1120119; R.E. Clements, Prophecy and Covenant, 103-118.

[4] von Rad, Old Testament Theology, II, 114f.

[5] Jenni, op. cit., 126.

it is felt that "eschatological" becomes a suitable designation for much of the preaching of the Old Testament prophets.

There are, to be sure, methodological problems, whichever definition one accepts. Not least among these is the danger of imposing a presupposed structure upon the theology of the prophets - which, after all, is not a neatly singular, unified system - rather than letting the texts speak for themselves.[6] It is doubtful, however, that this problem is overcome by substituting "future hope"[7] or "future expectations"[8] for the term "eschatology", though the former expressions admittedly carry less technical connotations than does the latter. Fully aware of the difficulties, therefore, we shall adopt a broad definition of eschatology rather than adhere to its limited etymological meaning. For our purposes, Clements' definition will suffice: "Eschatology is the study of ideas and beliefs concerning the end of the present world order, and the introduction of a new order."[9] We believe that this will enable

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[6]This objection is raised by T.R. Hobbs in an unpublished "exercise": "The structure, or concept of eschatology is first established, then this structure is looked for in, or denied to the Old Testament text. Thus the contradictory conclusions arrived at are determined not by the nature of the material dealt with, but by the presuppositions concerning the nature of eschatology with which the writer begins" (McMaster, 1970), p.3.

[7]Mowinckel, op. cit., p.125.

[8]Hobbs, op. cit., p.4.

[9]Prophecy and Covenant, p.105.

us to consider the "eschatological" element in the prophets generally
(without presupposing what those elements are) and in Deutero-Isaiah
especially. No false unity need be assumed and, in every case, each
prophet may be permitted to speak for himself.

A characteristic feature in the preaching of all of the prophets
is the expectation of something about to happen. For the pre-exilic
prophets, the coming event was primarily one of judgement and doom.
However important the normative election traditions[10] had been in the
past, the impending judgement would cancel out the security they had
provided and seal the end of Israel's present existence (Amos 7:7-9,
8:1f., 9:1; Hos. 3:4, 4:1ff., 10:2; Is. 3:1ff., 5:8ff.; Mic. 3:12;
Zeph. 1:4; Jer. 2:35ff., etc.). The only hope lay in God's doing a
"new thing", a decisively different saving event however analogous to
his former saving activity. Glimpses of this hope, albeit anticipated'
and articulated in different ways, are seen even in pre-exilic
prophecy (Amos 5:15, 9:11-15;[11] Hos. 3:1, 11:1ff.; Is. 1:26, 7:3, etc.;
Mic. 5:2ff.; Zeph. 2:9, 3:11-13; Jer. 3:12f., 24:5-7, 29:10-14, 31-34).

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[10]The traditions are not, of course, the same in every case.
Hosea stands within the exodus tradition as does Jeremiah. For Isaiah
of Jerusalem, the saving institutions of the David-Zion tradition are
prominent.

[11]This oracle has been frequently denied to Amos and regarded
as a post-exilic interpolation. Clements (Prophecy and Covenant,
pp.111f.) and others are recent defenders of its authenticity.

In this turning towards the future, the prophets did not anticipate

a progressive improvement of the situation based solely upon re-

pentance; rather they proclaimed a radically new beginning when the

old order would be judged and brought to an end. With Clements, we

are justified in calling this an "eschatology", as we have defined

it, "because this expectation meant the ending of the existing order,

and the breaking in of a new divinely created order", albeit within

history and not beyond it.[12]

On this view, it is entirely possible - indeed probable -

that Amos had a different eschatology from Hosea, or Jeremiah from

Isaiah, and so forth. But their preaching can be described as

"eschatological" insofar as it regarded the old historical bases of

salvation null and void. We accept bon Rad's warning that to be

consistent here we must not apply the term to cases where Israel

gives a general expression of her faith in her future or in the future

of one of her sacred traditions: "The prophetic teaching is only

eschatological when the prophets expelled Israel from the safety of

the old saving actions and suddenly shifted the basis of salvation

to a future action of God."[13]

Recalling our discussion of the new saving event, the "new

thing", proclaimed by Deutero-Isaiah, there can be no doubt that his

preaching was emphatically eschatological in the sense we have just

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[12]Prophecy and Covenant, p.114.

[13]Old Testament Theology, II, 118.

outlined. Indeed, it can be said that eschatology reaches its full flowering in the OT in the oracles of this great prophet of the exile. The significant change in DI's utterances as compared with those of his predecessors is that his represent a "pure eschatology of salvation."[14] The judgement had already taken place in the exile and all that lay ahead was a new and glorious manifestation of divine power - salvation pure and simple which would come unmerited and in which all the nations of the earth would have a share. At the risk of misusing a much debated expression from New Testament theology, there is an element of "realized eschatology" in DI's future expectations. The new creation was even now breaking in upon the disillusioned exiles giving them cause for hope in the power of Yahweh's word to perform its purpose.

Nowhere is this made clearer than in the most important eschatological figure in Isaiah 40-55, namely the "servant of Yahweh". It is to this important subject that we must now finally turn.

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[14]Jenni., op. cit., 131.

Servant of Yahweh

Servant Songs

In 1892, Bernhard Duhm[15] isolated a group of texts (42:1-4
49:1-6, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12) which he proposed were not from Deutero-
Isaiah but from a later author, more or less contemporary with Trito-
Isaiah. Since that momentous contribution to Old Testament research,
an inordinate amount of discussion has surrounded these "Servant
Songs". It is accepted by almost all modern critics that the four
poems do form a literary unit by themselves;[16] but apart from this,
there is little consensus about their origin and interpretation.
Since there is such an impressive bibliography of the main lines of
opinion,[17] we shall merely state our own conclusions as a basis for
what follows. First, we recognize the existence of the four poems
as identified by Duhm. Secondly, we believe that in diction and in
theological subject-matter they share much in common with the rest

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[15] Das Buch Jesaia übersetzt und erklärt (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck
& Ruprecht, 1892).

[16] On form critical grounds, very few, if any, of the oracles
in Is. 40-55 constitute a neat "literary unit" since all were likely
collected and edited later than their original settings. Nonetheless
the "Servant Songs" can be categorized as a "unit" separate from the
rest of the prophecy for literary convenience.

[17] For extensive literature on the subject, see W. Zimmerli
and J. Jeremias The Servant of God, trans. by H. Knight, et. al.,
Studies in Biblical Theology, No. 20 (London: SCM, rev. ed., 1965),
105ff.

of Deutero-Isaiah; hence unlike Duhm, we see no reason to think that
their author is other than DI himself. Nonetheless, the fact that we
are prepared to recognize their separate existence illustrates that
the "servant songs" possess peculiar characteristics and pose dis-
tinctive problems that can be considered only through study of the
songs in comparative isolation. Finally, we are convinced that the
enigmatic figure of the "Servant of Yahweh" provides the clue to the
whole and that a study of his role and function is the only final
solution to a proper understanding of the songs as DI intended them.

Servant of Yahweh

The identity of the Servant of Yahweh (עֶבֶד־יהוה) has
long been a much belaboured dispute (Acts 8:34). C.R. North[18] has
provided the classic guide to the history of interpretation, and,
in general, we concur with his conclusion that the picture is a
composite one.[19] But a more adequate description can be achieved
by concerning ourselves primarily with the _mission_ of the servant as
DI conceived it. For it is here that the prophet's eschatological
hope for Israel's historical destiny is most fully expressed.

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[18]_The Suffering-Servant in Deutero-Isaiah_ (London: Oxford
University Press, 1st ed. 1948). Cf. H.H. Rowley, _The Servant of
the Lord and Other Essays_ (London: Lutterworth, 1952), pp.3-57.

[19]_The Suffering Servant_, pp.215ff.

In the first song (42:1-4),[20] Yahweh is speaker and Mowinckel

may be correct in regarding the form of the poem as "an oracle in

which a prophet receives his call, a direct word from Yahweh in which

the prophet is told of his call and of the character of his special

task".[21]   The word "prophecy", however, is nowhere used in the song,

and North has correctly pointed out the indecisiveness of   עַבְדִּי

("my servant"),   בְּחִירִי ("my chosen one") and the expression

נָתַתִּי רוּחִי עָלָיו ("I have endowed him with my spirit") as

bases for implying either prophetic or kingly attributes to the

servant.[22]   In any case, the song is the designation of Yahweh's

Servant: vss. 2-3a suggest the manner in which the mission is to be

carried out, while vss. 1b, 3b-4 bespeak the mission proper. The key

word for understanding the whole passage is   מִשְׁפָּט which occurs

three times. It is difficult to translate into English. Strictly

speaking, it could be taken as "a legal decision, or judgement,

pronounced by a šōpēṭ, or judge".[23]   A more likely view in its present

context, however, is the general sense of God-given rules for cult and

life, in short, "true religion".[24]   It appears that the Servant has

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[20]Many scholars include vss. 5-7. But see _ibid_, pp.133ff.

[21]_Op. cit._, p.190. The form more closely resembles that of the
"presentation oracle". For a description see Westermann, _Isaiah_, pp.93f.

[22]_The Suffering Servant_, p.139.

[23]_Ibid._

[24]So von Rad, _Old Testament Theology_, II, 252; Cf. Mowinckel,
op. cit., p.190.

been appointed mediator of the revelation of Yahweh and this is his

mission, a mission which is clearly to the nations (בְּרִית אֹיִים).

If vss. 5-7 can be considered as a "response to the poem" in which the

ideas of the song are repeated and simplified,[25] then this mission is

much more clearly annotated in vs. 6:

> I have given you as a covenant to the
> people a light to the nations to open
> the eyes that are blind to bring out
> the prisoners from the dungeon, from
> the prison those who sit in darkness.

If it is objected that we cannot assume even this much relationship

between the first song and what immediately follows, it must be

admitted that the ideas and phrases in vss. 5ff. are woven together

in such a way as to suggest a powerful coincidence with what precedes.

Whatever the identity of the Servant of this first song - and no hint

is given - or the exact nature of his task, he is introduced as

already present, though, his mission, and certainly its fulfilment,

belong to the future.

If there was any doubt about the prophetic ministry of the

Servant in the first song, and if there exists a connection between

it and the others, that doubt is surely dispelled in the second poem

(49:1-6).[26]   Here the Servant himself is the speaker. He tells of

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[25]McKenzie, op. cit., p.39f.

[26]As with the first song, we accept the "short text" in this
instance. See North, The Suffering Servant, pp.129f.

his election "from the womb" (מִבֶּטֶן) in terms strongly reminiscent

of the call of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5). He has been equipped with the

power of the spoken word (1:2; cf. Jer. 1:9) which accomplishes what

it utters (cf. 45:23; Jer. 1:12; Ezek. 12:28). Nonetheless, it

appears that the Servant, in the very exercise of his office, has

been unsuccessful and has "laboured in vain" (49:4; cf Jer. 11:18ff.,

15:10ff., 18:19ff., 20:7ff.). Yahweh announces his complaint in very

specific terms. His mission had been to Israel, to restore the tribes

of Jacob to Yahweh. Now - and here we again encounter the universalism

of the first song - Yahweh will extend his Servant's task to bring

the word of salvation to the ends of the earth (49:6). In this

future mission lies the vindication of the prophetic word which must

effect its promises.

It must be noted in passing that the phrase "you are my servant,

Israel" (עַבְדִּי אַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל) in 49:3 is insufficient

evidence to identify the Servant with Israel. Westermann[27] and others

have made a respectable case for suspecting that "Israel" may well be

a gloss, in spite of North's defensible objections to the contrary.[28]

Even if deletion of the "Israel" in vs. 3 is not allowable, it must

somehow be qualified so that it may have a mission to the Jacob

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[27]Isaiah, p.209.

[28]The Suffering Servant, pp.144f.

(Israel) of vs. 5. Whatever qualification we adopt, the prophetic

nature of the Servant's summons and commission remain irrefutable.

The third song (50:4-9)[29] is also reminiscent of Jeremiah's

"Confessions" and has been defined as a "prophetic psalm of trust".[30]

In this poem, as with the second, the role of the Servant is that of

a prophet. He has an obedient tongue to sustain the weary with a

word (50:4) and a wakeful ear to be ever alert to receive new reve-

lations (50:45). If the Servant's ministry in the second song was

unsuccessful, here it has brought definite suffering. Who his most

virulent opponents were, the text does not say. We sense only that

he has been left alone and utterly forsaken. But as is the case with

Jeremiah, the Servant turns from lamentation to an affirmation of

complete trust in Yahweh who will vindicate (מַצְדִּיקִי) him

before his oppressors (50:7ff., cf. Jer. 11:20, 20:11f.). The

Servant still has no expectation of untimely or violent death; in

fact, even his oppression is more of the nature of the vulgar insult

which does no real physical harm. What is of primary importance

is this element of trust, based upon his unwavering acceptance of

what he believes to be Yahweh's will, that enables him to set his

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[29]Most agree with this delimitation of the song though von Rad
prefers to include vss. 10-11a "in view of what they say about the
Servant's suffering and his faith" (Old Testament Theology, II, 254).

[30]In this regard, von Rad cites Elliger (Old Testament
Theology, II, 253). It's form is recognizably that of an "individual
lament" (Westermann, Isaiah, p.226).

face like a flint toward the future, confident that he will not

ultimately be put to shame (50:7).

We come now to the fourth and most distinctive of the servant

songs, 52:13- 53:12.   It begins with what is really the end of the

whole Servant saga, namely the Servant's future exaltation and the

recognition of his significance for the world (52:13-15).[31]   What

follows is a retrospective reflection, from this eschatological

perspective, upon the events and tribulations through which the

Servant suffered and endured.   The text in places is seriously

corrupt contributing to the obscurity of the ultimate meaning of the

passage.[32]   Nonetheless, certain things are quite clear concerning

the Servant's sufferings.   He grew up without commendatory features

(53:2); he was afflicted with pains and disease (53:3f) and

entirely rejected by men.   Yet he suffered to the bitter end without

complaint (53:7ff).   Even his interment was not spared the accompani-

ments of shame (53:9).   According to the theory of "just desserts",

the person who suffered was disclosed as a sinner.   His torment was

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[31]von Rad, Old Testament Theology, II, 256.

[32]The many difficulties in the passage are cited and discussed
by North, The Suffering Servant, pp.147ff.

God's manifest judgement upon his wickedness.[33] Now the prophet reveals a great new truth: the Servant did not suffer for his own sins (53:9b), but for the transgressions of others (53:46, 10f.). The Servant's suffering, therefore, is purposeful, and finds its origin in the will of God (53:10). But the Servant's "vicarious suffering" was ultimately an act of God's grace. For inasmuch as he suffers, others are released from pain. Furthermore, only thus does either Israel or the world hope to be accounted righteous (53:11). Nor is the Servant himself left simply to a martyr's ignominy. A great miracle will occur whereby others will realize the righteousness of the Servant and that he suffered on their behalf. There is scarcely a full-blown resurrection theology[34] in the song, but 53:10ff. offer sufficient evidence that DI was not without glimpses of a future hope that transcended the grave.

What can we conclude about the mission of the Servant? It is certain that DI conceived him as having been elected by Yahweh for a special task. His is a prophetic service, a ministry of the word. His message is salvation which is universalistic in scope but not without particular reference to Israel and her hope for restoration.

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[33] it was with this simplistic theory, the subject of so much of traditional Wisdom literature, that Job's friends confront him and accuse him of sin.

[34] As Mowinckel would have it (op. cit., p.205). Against this, see Westermann, Isaiah, p.267.

The salvation that will be ushered in with the "new Exodus" will ultimately find fulfilment only in the Servant's expiatory suffering and exaltation. In the Servant, iniquity finds its pardon, and Yahweh his glorification.

Herein lies the connection between the Servant of Yahweh and all that we have said about the "word" and "salvation history." The "new Exodus" is the radically new "word-event" which affects the break with the past saving traditions and ushers in the new age. The figure that fulfils God's purposes _in_ the new age, the "eschaton", is the Servant of Yahweh. Just as there is a degree of "eschatological tension" between the event _even now_ breaking in upon history with the activity of Cyrus and the restoration _not yet_ realized, so there is tension in the Servant figure. He is both present and future. Such an enigma is possible because the Servant is an ideal portrait both of what must be accomplished on Israel's behalf and what Israel her- self must become. Hence the highly composite nature of the portrait: the Servant is and is not Israel. For Israel to become the instrument of universal salvation she must herself first receive the Servant's ministry and then seek to incorporate that ministry into the enduring reality of her own existance.

If there is a telescoping of the prophet's vision it is to be credited to his complete confidence in the power of Yahweh to bring to pass what he has purposed and declared. The rhythm of promise and fulfilment is a vital to the age to come as to the _Heilsgeschichte_ that has gone before. However, there is a finality in Yahweh's plan

for Israel's new beginning.   It is the finality of the new relationship

with his people that the "new Exodus" begins and the Servant makes

complete.   It is the finality of a world-shaking deliverance whose

totality can only be celebrated with songs of thanksgiving and lived

out in peace (55:12f.).   Israel's orientation is now steadfastly upon

her future for which the past is merely prologue.

CONCLUSION

In the introduction, it was hoped that our study of the

interpretation of history in Isaiah 40:55 would suggest some guide-

lines for twentieth century man's quest for meaning and identity.

It was suggested that such "meaning" and "identity" could be found

only in the recovery of an "historical consciousness", a "theology

of history" from which to interpret our crisis and our hope. But

how can our study help us?   The modern mind no longer interprets

history as "events" actualized in response to a previously spoken

divine "word". Nor does it share in the Heilsgeschichte of a sixth

century prophet and his religious community.   Even the modern

Christian is a "man come of age", stripped of the language, mythology

and authoritative traditions of the ancient world.   Yet for all the

boldness of our immolation of the past, the fact remains that we share

some of the lostness, some of the nostalgia, and some of the guilt

experienced by the exiles in Babylon.

There is a temptation, in the moments of our deepest estrange-

ment from the God of our fathers, to yearn for the "former things"

of an Apostolic age or a Reformation era.   But the truth is that

these times are past and cannot be recalled; the very pulse of the

world we live in reminds us that we are inexorably bound to the pull

of the future. Still, there is a way of appropriating the past, "a

way that acdepts the past without being bound by it, that views

past history not as a prison to escape or as an antique to be pre-
served but as a dimension of reality that enlarges and illuminates
the present."[1] This "way" is essentially what we learn from Deutero-
Isaiah. We can affirm the activity of God in our Christian traditions
and celebrate that activity with joy and thanksgiving. For us, as for
DI, the "former things" can provide assurance that God has acted
faithfully in the past and can be paradigmatic for the "new things"
faith trusts God is doing in the present and will do in the future.
The silence of God has admittedly been heavy for us, and the times of
his absence hard to bear. But there are signs that the silence is
being broken and that the Lord of history is again disclosing himself
in previously unheard of ways. In "coming of age" the Church has had
to suffer the judgement of being caught between two worlds, one dead
and the other powerless to be born. It may well be that the interim
is over, and we can once again celebrate the "One who comes" with
affirmation and with hope.

The task of the Church, saved by the suffering of a Servant
whom DI's shortsightedness could not have seen but no less truly
anticipated, is to point all men to the signs of God's presence in
the "new things" breaking in at the growing edges of faith's experience.
Herein lies the essence of Christian hope: Whatever shape the future
will take, it remains God's future. In the echoes of "Maranatha!"
we find our strength to live and learn and celebrate our waiting.

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[1]Cox, op. cit., p.32.

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