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EVANGELICALS & SCRIPTURE

Tradition, Authority and Hermeneutics

EDITED BY
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How Many Isaiahs Were There and What Does It Matter?

Prophetic Inspiration in Recent Evangelical Scholarship

RICHARD L. SCHULTZ

One of the primary threats today to a traditional understanding of biblical inspiration and inerrancy is the unrestricted employment of historical-critical tools by evangelical biblical scholars.¹ In this essay I will examine how some recent evangelical scholars have described the composition of the book of Isaiah because it vividly illustrates contemporary critical approaches and the implications that these can have for one's understanding of prophetic inspiration. It is not my purpose to mount a thorough defense of any particular theory regarding the origin of the canonical book of Isaiah. Rather, I will consider whether the scholars whose work will be examined below have undermined their theological foundation through their interpretation of Isaiah.

THE COMPOSITION OF ISAIAH

The key question that emerges from the critical study of the book of Isaiah is, how many Isaiahs were there, and does the position that one takes on this issue really matter?

View 1. According to a typical contemporary historical-critical reconstruction, there were not merely two or three Isaiahs (i.e., the pre-exilic First Isaiah, the exilic Second Isaiah and the postexilic Third Isaiah).

¹I would like to honor the memory of my colleague Tim Phillips in this essay by addressing several of the topics of his final lecture at Wheaton College and expressing our shared convictions regarding the vital importance of the evangelical doctrine of Scripture and our concern regarding its ongoing erosion.

Rather, as many as a dozen or more individuals might have had a part in producing the present canonical book.²

View 2. According to the Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Baba Batra*, which states that "Hezekiah and his colleagues wrote Isaiah, Proverbs, the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes," there might be no prophet Isaiah who functioned as author of the book of Isaiah.³

View 3. According to the traditional interpretation of 2 Peter 1:20-21, which states that "no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (NIV) presumably only one person stood in the divine council and then proclaimed to eighth-century Judah, "Thus says the Lord."

THE NEW EVANGELICAL PERSPECTIVE

Not too many decades ago, the authorial unity of Isaiah—that is, that there was only one Isaiah—was considered an evangelical litmus test of biblical orthodoxy, as was the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and the pre-Maccabean origin of Daniel. Today the theory that much, if not most, of the present book of Isaiah comprises contributions by a series of later authors, disciples and editors is considered by some evangelical textbook authors to be not merely a viable but even a preferable approach. According to William LaSor, David Hubbard and Frederic Bush, "the traditional view that Isaiah wrote the entire book is held today by exceedingly few scholars."⁴

²See, e.g., Hermann Barth's theory of the "Assyrian redaction" of Isaiah 1—33 in *Die Jesaja-Worte in der Josiazeit*, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 48 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1977), which is adopted by Ronald E. Clements, *Isaiah 1—39*, New Century Bible (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980). According to Otto Kaiser, much of Isaiah 1—39 even stems from the Hellenistic period. Otto Kaiser, *Jesaja 1—12*, 5th ed., Das Alte Testament Deutsch 17 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981); and *Isaiah 1—12*, Old Testament Library, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983).

³*The Babylonian Talmud*, b. *Baba Batra* 15a, ed. I. Epstein (London: Soncino Press, 1935-1948). Joseph Blenkinsopp's recent claim that this text refers to copying rather than authoring or editing, viewing Hezekiah's courtiers as an eighth-century precursor of the modern copying machine, is quite unlikely. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1—39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 19:74-75.

⁴William S. LaSor, David A. Hubbard and Frederic W. Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 281. Marvin E. Tate sees this view as facing a "marginalized future." Marvin E. Tate, "The Book of Isaiah in Recent Study," in *Forming Prophetic Literature: Essays on Isaiah and the Twelve in Honor of John D. W. Watts*, ed. John W. Watts and Paul R. House, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 235:52.

They label the claim that there were four or more authors an "extreme" position, although this has, in fact, been the majority view in the academy since the publication of Bernhard Duhm's influential commentary in 1892.⁵ Most scholars today ascribe to Isaiah of Jerusalem between 20 and 40 percent of the canonical book, with one leading German scholar claiming that Isaiah was responsible only for fragments of Isaiah 28—31!⁶

Raymond Dillard and Tremper Longman, although more reserved in their conclusions, apparently view the following prophetic scenario as acceptable:

Isaiah 40—66 presumes an author living later in the Exile foresaw through divine inspiration what God was about to do through Cyrus, just as Isaiah foresaw through divine inspiration what God would soon do with Tiglath-Pileser III (Isa. 7). This later author saw in Isaiah's prophecies of exile and a remnant events that were transpiring in his own day, and he wrote to develop and apply Isaiah's preaching to his fellow exiles.⁷

Dillard and Longman conclude that authorship questions "should not be made a theological *shibboleth* or test for orthodoxy."⁸ That is, they should not form an evangelical boundary.

However, if one therefore abandons the view that there was only one Isaiah, is something essential being lost? In his insightful essay "Evangelicals, Biblical Scholarship and the Politics of the Modern American Academy," Darryl G. Hart asserts that "what separates evangelical scholars from their liberal Protestant colleagues in the Society of Biblical Literature . . . is the belief that the Bible, though in the words of men, is a divine and direct revelation from the triune God of the universe."⁹ Accordingly, it is evangelical scholars' doctrine of Scripture that has "pre-

⁵Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1892).

⁶LaSor, Hubbard and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 281. See also Marvin A. Sweeney, "The Latter Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel," in *The Hebrew Bible Today: An Introduction to Critical Issues*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and M. Patrick Graham (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 80.

⁷Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1994), 275. However, Dillard and Longman do not state a clear preference for this compositional theory.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Darryl G. Hart, "Evangelicals, Biblical Scholarship and the Politics of the Modern American Academy," in *Evangelicals and Science in Historical Perspective*, ed. David N. Livingstone, Darryl G. Hart and Mark A. Noll (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 308.

vented their assimilation into the mainline academy."¹⁰ Ironically, however, Hart points out,

at the same time evangelicals have become more comfortable in the university, the evangelical consensus on Scripture that made the movement a distinct and definable community unraveled. . . . To make their way in the academy, evangelical biblical scholars increasingly approach the text from its human side and bracket out, for the sake of academic etiquette, the divine character and canonical nature of Scripture.¹¹

Affirming more than one Isaiah today may in some cases make an evangelical approach to the book indistinguishable from any other. Given, first, the clear assertion in Isaiah 1:1 that what follows is "the vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" and, second, the absence of any additional ascriptions of authorship within the book, the one-Isaiah position may be the only one that takes the book's own claims seriously.¹²

NON-EVANGELICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

Contemporary evangelical approaches to the book of Isaiah illustrate vividly how historical-critical approaches to the book entail a changing doctrine of Scripture. In order to put these evangelical contributions into their proper context, we must first summarize the remarkable developments that have taken place in recent decades within non-evangelical research on the book of Isaiah. Those familiar with the legacy of Duhm in Isaianic studies may be surprised to learn that, for nearly two decades, the dominant emphasis in the historical-critical study of Isaiah has been on the "unity" of the book. Marvin Tate calls this the new "one book" interpretation in contrast to the older "one author" interpretation. In the past, critical scholars have largely overlooked or undervalued the numerous intertextual connections and thematic continuities between Isaiah 1—39 and Isaiah 40—66. Recently, however, these striking features have led a growing number of scholars to posit an intentional relationship, even an interdependence or a mutual influence, between what is

¹⁰Ibid., 309.

¹¹Ibid., 318.

¹²Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

popularly known as First and Second Isaiah.¹³

John Hayes and Stuart Irvine have offered a historical commentary on Isaiah 1—39 in which they claim that, except for chapters 34 and 35, nearly all of Isaiah 1—39 derives from the eighth-century B.C. prophet, since all of these speeches, which are generally arranged in chronological order, can be related to eighth-century B.C. events and conditions.¹⁴ Furthermore, Christopher Seitz has argued the following three points: first, that the historical narrative of Isaiah 36—39 was originally at home among the Isaiah traditions and not in 1—2 Kings, as is frequently asserted; second, that there never was an exilic prophet in Babylon (Second Isaiah having composed his oracles in Palestine); and third, that one can dispense with the postulate of a postexilic Third Isaiah because it lacks an adequate textual basis. Second Isaiah, in his opinion, represents a deliberate extension of First Isaiah's promises regarding Zion into the period of the exile.¹⁵ British scholar George W. Anderson has argued persuasively that there is no compelling evidence in support of the common claim that Isaiah 24—27 is apocalyptic and, hence, among the latest material in the book.¹⁶ Although none of the scholars just mentioned would attribute the entire book to Isaiah of Jerusalem, support for the basic unity of the canonical book has been growing steadily within non-evangelical scholarship.

RECENT EVANGELICAL PUBLICATIONS

Ironically, while critical scholars are moving in a more conservative direction, there is also a growing trend among evangelicals to expand the concept of Isaianic authorship and to embrace views regarding Isaiah

¹³Tate, "Book of Isaiah," 235:43-50. As discussed by Tate, this unity is viewed either as editorial (Rolf Rendtorff, Odil Hannes Steck, Marvin Sweeney) or as thematic (Edgar G. Conrad, Peter Miscall, Ronald Clements) in nature. For a survey of recent work on the unity of Isaiah, see Jacques Vermeylen, "L'unité du livre d'Isaïe," in *Le Livre d'Isaïe: Les Oracles et leurs Relectures Unité et Complexité de l'Ouvrage*, ed. Jacques Vermeylen, Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum Iovaniensium (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 81:11-53; and chap. 1 of Hugh G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

¹⁴John H. Hayes and Stuart A. Irvine, *Isaiah: The Eighth-Century Prophet; His Times and His Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987).

¹⁵Christopher R. Seitz, "Isaiah, Book of (First Isaiah), (Third Isaiah)," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1992), 3:472-88, 501-7; and *Zion's Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah; A Reassessment of Isaiah 36—39* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991). Seitz is not alone in claiming a Palestinian provenance for the entire book.

¹⁶George W. Anderson, "Isaiah XXIV—XXVII Reconsidered," in *Congress Volume: Bonn 1962, Vetus Testamentum Supplements* (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 9:118-26.

that some critical scholars are discarding. To the extent that they hold to evangelical views of Scripture, these scholars are also expanding the boundaries of the doctrine of inspiration. At the same time, we can observe the shrinking role or even the "disappearance" of Isaiah of Jerusalem. In examining the work of several scholars, my purpose is to compare how each of them understands the nature of prophetic inspiration and the role of Isaiah of Jerusalem with regard to the composition of the canonical book.¹⁷

1. *LaSor, Hubbard and Bush: Disciples and the canonical process.* The highly regarded *Old Testament Survey*, first published by Fuller Theological Seminary professors LaSor, Hubbard and Bush in 1982, offers an intriguing and sometimes confusing combination of traditional and historical-critical perspectives and conclusions. On the one hand, Isaiah's substantial contribution to the canonical book that bears his name is defended: "The view taken here . . . sees only one Isaiah, who was responsible for (although not necessarily the final author or editor of) the entire work."¹⁸ On the other hand, they suggest there was not only a foundational prophet but also a lengthy, complex process that spanned more than two centuries: "Isaiah's messages were collected and preserved by his disciples and later edited and put into written form."¹⁹ At this later time, other viewpoints (such as that of an exilic prophet, for example) were introduced using language that was more meaningful to a later readership (e.g., which directly addressed a people exiled to Babylon).²⁰

These coauthors reflect the influence of Brevard Childs of Yale University in their description of the work of Isaiah's disciples, who carried out this canonical process within the context of the believing community. As a result of their editorial work, Isaiah of Jerusalem could speak directly to the specific circumstances of the exilic and postexilic communities. How do LaSor, Hubbard and Bush therefore understand the nature of the inspiration that imbues this human activity with divine authority? In their words, "The entire process may be attributed to the action of God's Spirit, as the ultimate Author, both on the prophet Isaiah and on his 'dis-

¹⁷It is not my intention to question either their evangelical convictions or the value of their work.

¹⁸William S. LaSor, David A. Hubbard and Frederic W. Bush, *Old Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1982), 365.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 375-76.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 378.

ciples,' whoever they were and whenever and however they put the work in its canonical form."²¹

2. *Schneider: Under authority of Isaiah.* Dieter Schneider, a German evangelical and Lutheran pastor, offers a similarly nuanced understanding of the unity of Isaiah in his two-volume commentary, which was completed in 1990. In the forward to his first volume, he states that the entire prophecy is under the authority of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, who should be regarded as the intellectual source (*geistiger Urheber*) of the various interdependent sections of which the book is composed. However, for Schneider, this claim regarding Isaiah's role does not exclude the independent but limited involvement of disciples who *continue* rather than *contradict* Isaiah of Jerusalem's original historical vision. Thus, according to Schneider, we can say with good conscience regarding each chapter that "Isaiah is speaking here."²² Accordingly, we cannot deny to Isaiah of Jerusalem any particular verse and attribute it instead to a Deutero-Isaiah, even if the passage under consideration consists of an exilic addition by the prophet's circle of students.

Wherein lies the authority of such unmarked additions to Isaiah's words? Schneider, quoting Odil Hannes Steck, states, "They are legitimized by their inclusion in the book of Isaiah."²³ According to Schneider, later sayings are not simply being passed off as Isaiah's; to the contrary, Isaiah of Jerusalem is speaking through the words penned more than a century later! The transmitters of Isaiah's words so closely identify themselves with him in their self-understanding that they are simply expounding, clarifying, systematizing, extending and applying his message in terms of their own later setting. Thus, their creative new interpretations are correctly described as Isaianic. But are they inspired? Schneider affirms that they are indeed, for the prophet Isaiah is viewed as the bearer of a divine vision, a unique understanding of God (*eine Wahrnehmung Jahwes*), through which God continues to disclose himself and give meaning to his disciples' day as well. As stewards of the enduring truth that originated

²¹Ibid.; see also 13. Compare Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 328-33.

²²Dieter Schneider, *Der Prophet Jesaja: Kapitel 1—39*, Wuppertaler Studienbibel (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1988), 17-18.

²³Ibid., 19 (author's translation), citing Odil Hannes Steck, *Bereitete Heimkehr—Jesaja 35 als redaktionelle Brücke zwischen dem Ersten und dem Zweiten Jesaja*, vol. 121, Stuttgarter Bibelstudien (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1985), 88.

with Isaiah, they participate in the timeless relevance of God for the world and his people.²⁴

3. *Meade: Inspired reinterpretation.* In 1986, while teaching at Houghton College, David Meade published his Nottingham dissertation under the title *Pseudonymity and Canon*.²⁵ In his thesis, Meade offers a theological argument for the presence of pseudonymous letters in the New Testament. In other words, he seeks a biblical justification for his claim that Ephesians, the Pastoral Epistles and 2 Peter, though falsely attributed to an apostle, nevertheless merit their canonical status. He finds his strongest support in the attribution of later prophetic material to Isaiah of Jerusalem. Meade accepts all of the common historical-critical conclusions regarding Isaiah: the existence of a Second Isaiah as author of 40—55, Third Isaiah as a multiauthored collection, the later addition of chapters 36—39 from 1—2 Kings, the secondary insertion of promise oracles into First Isaiah, and the consistent reinterpretation of First Isaiah in the light of the Babylonian exile. How does Meade understand *inspiration* in Isaiah? According to his analysis, each of the individual prophetic figures who contributed to First, Second and Third Isaiah were equally conscious of inspiration and of participating in the council of Yahweh. Their legitimizing "call" narratives (found in Isaiah 6, 40 and 61, respectively) serve to affirm "their participation in an ongoing revelation and their dependence on previous revelation." Why do Second and Third Isaiah remain anonymous? Because they both claim to be "part of one revelation and one tradition, whose recognized head is Isaiah of Jerusalem."²⁶ Inspiration guarantees that their reinterpretations of Isaiah's words in order to actualize them (i.e., to make them apply to later audiences) will cause Isaiah of Jerusalem's prophecies to speak to future generations just as he originally had intended.

4. *Watts: A half-millennium of Isaianic "drama."* A more radical view of the origins of the book of Isaiah is found in J. D. W. Watts's 1987 two-volume contribution on Isaiah to the Word Biblical Commentary, a series that describes itself as representing the best in evangelical scholarship—evangelical "in its positive, historic sense of a commitment to scripture as divine

²⁴Ibid., 19-20.

²⁵David G. Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon: An Investigation into the Relationship of Authorship and Authority in Jewish and Earliest Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1987).

²⁶Ibid., 42-43.

revelation." Watts conceives of the book of Isaiah as the work of one writer-composer-editor living in Jerusalem around 435 B.C., a date late enough to include all of the historical references that Watts identifies in the book within a past or present perspective.²⁷

In Watts's presentation, Isaiah of Jerusalem is not important as the inspired prophet; instead, Isaiah's prophecy and prophetic ministry inspired the book. That is, the locus of inspiration is not in the *prophet* but in the *book* as a postexilic work of literature. "The dramatic vision of Isaiah," as Watts terms it, spans twelve generations, providing "a divine perspective on the history of Israel and Judah through speeches by Yahweh himself and by his non-human representatives."²⁸ It is through this vision that "God calls on Jews to discover their place in his new order."²⁹

EVALUATION: EXPANDING THE BOUNDARIES OF BIBLICAL INSPIRATION

How should we evaluate these recent evangelical contributions to the study of Isaiah? To a greater or lesser extent, each of these scholars apparently either has embraced the use of historical-critical tools in analyzing Isaiah or has accepted the results of others employing those tools (literary, form, tradition and redaction criticism); and they have discovered a complexity, even a disarray, in Isaiah that they may not have discovered without the use of these tools. Indeed, in their assessment, there is hardly a textual photograph in the prophet's canonical album that has not been touched up by a later editorial artist! However, on the basis of my analysis of the scholarly literature devoted to the book of Isaiah, there is reason to suspect that many of these "blemishes" in the texts—like scratches on the camera's lens—are *produced* rather than *discovered* by using these critical tools. Since there are as many explanations of the complex composition of the book of Isaiah as there are those who seek to explain it, these evangelicals become very vague and cautious about specifying the extent of these later additions, corrections and revisions.³⁰ Then, maintaining their evangelical view of Scripture, they simply stretch the doctrine of inspiration to

²⁷J. D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1—33*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1985), 24:xxiv.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 24:xxviii.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 24:xliv.

³⁰A good example of this, with regard to another Old Testament book, is Timothy R. Ashley's comments about Numbers in *The Book of Numbers*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1993), 7.

cover what they have just proposed. One wonders, however, whether any and every historical-critical theory of the origin of biblical literature can be made evangelically acceptable as long as one affirms the "substantial participation" of the traditional author in the process.

To be sure, the book of Isaiah presents the interpreter with a tremendous challenge, but I remain unconvinced that intellectual honesty and the textual evidence demand that the evangelical acknowledge what most Old Testament scholars today claim about the complex compositional history of the book of Isaiah. Let us examine some of the issues that these recent evangelical publications raise.

PROPHECY AND INSPIRATION

Most evangelical treatments of the prophetic books have surprisingly little to say concerning the nature of prophetic inspiration. John Goldingay offers a helpful summary:

Inspiration involves a providential oversight of the development of the person whom God will call to be a prophet and of the speaking and writing that that person will actually do. The result is that they speak and write as they are inclined to do, not necessarily aware of special divine prompting or authority, but with the effect being that exactly what God wants is said and written.³¹

This neglect is understandable because if one closely examines the prophetic literature itself, one finds only a few references in the classical prophets to their dependence on the activity of the Spirit (e.g., Is 59:21 and Mic 3:8). What is noticeably absent in these texts is any reference to the Spirit's involvement in inspiring the production of prophetic literature. Indeed, we know very little about the process involved in turning prophetic oracles into prophetic books, though presumably the same Spirit who revealed to the prophets the divine plan (Amos 3:7) would be concerned with guaranteeing the accurate preservation of such revelation for future generations of God's people.³²

³¹John Goldingay, *Models for Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1994), 248. However, Is 8:11 suggests that the prophet could be keenly aware of that oversight. For a fuller discussion, see Edward J. Young, *My Servants the Prophets* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1952), chap. 9, "The Prophets as Recipients of Revelation."

³²See Walther Zimmerli's helpful article, "Vom Prophetenwort zum Prophetenbuch," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 104 (1979): 481-96; and the recent collection of essays in *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Michael H. Floyd, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000).

However, as a result of more than a century of historical-critical analysis of the prophetic literature, most Old Testament scholars, including many evangelicals, have adopted a much broader understanding of inspiration and canonicity. In the second edition of their textbook, LaSor, Hubbard and Bush write:

In fact, the production of prophetic books was a much more prolonged and complex process than the inspiration of a speaking prophet. It is now recognized that behind prophetic literature lies the work of editors and arrangers and circles who preserved oral traditions and presented them to later generations of God's people. . . . [I]t was within the community of Israel and in response to its successive needs that the books of the Old Testament gradually grew to their present form. Neither a single prophetic author nor a final redactor may be credited with a monopoly on inspiration.³³

In the process of superintending the writing of the prophetic books, did God's Spirit inspire a series of editors, or even entire communities (as LaSor, Hubbard and Bush appear to suggest) or simply individual authors? Formerly, inspiration was viewed as primarily *vertical*—God's Spirit working in and through one individual. Today, it increasingly is being viewed as *horizontal*—God's Spirit continuing to work for generations, even centuries, through a series of anonymous individuals and groups.

Millard Erickson, in his *Christian Theology*, also speaks of the role of divine inspiration operating during the period when "the community of faith was transmitting, selecting, amplifying, and condensing the received tradition."³⁴ But do we really know that this actually occurred in the manner he describes it? Some scholars draw a distinction between *prophetic* and *editorial* inspiration. Goldingay states, in part quoting Paul Ricoeur,

We must not "generalize in univocal fashion the concept of inspiration derived from the prophetic genre and assume that God spoke to the redactors of the sacred books just as he spoke to the prophets," any more than we should flatten the notion of inspiration so that the way it applies to such redactors determines the way it applies to prophets.³⁵

³³LaSor, Hubbard and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 2nd ed., 595.

³⁴Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1998), 205. In the 1983 edition, Erickson also describes the community as "modifying" the tradition (p. 205).

³⁵Goldingay, *Models for Scripture*, 254; quoting Paul Ricoeur, "Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation," trans. David Pellauer, in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 77, 92. According to Goldingay (250), the Spirit of God dwells in the community but *inspires* individual prophets.

This raises a fundamental question: are the *words* or the *authors* inspired? The traditional evangelical doctrine of Scripture has emphasized the latter more than the former. Are the texts reliable because of a specific ability imparted to the authors, or does the Spirit's superintendence of the entire process of inscripturating divine revelation guarantee the intended results regardless of how many and which individuals are involved? There is no inherent reason why the Spirit of God could not have inspired any number of writers and editors who contributed to the composition of a given biblical book. In canonical books such as Psalms and Proverbs, this was clearly the case: the superscriptions in these books explicitly acknowledge the involvement of multiple authors. Some would argue that a prophetic book such as Isaiah is also an anthology, spanning several centuries, analogous to the book of the Twelve (the Minor Prophets).³⁶ However, the real issue here is not whether such an understanding of inspiration is consistent with an evangelical doctrine of Scripture. Rather, the issue is whether we can legitimately posit a series of inspired authors or editors when the involvement of multiple prophets is *not* acknowledged in the text and when one of the reasons for positing such a complex compositional process is the claim that the Spirit of God *could not* (or at least probably *did not*) reveal the diversity of contents identified in the book of Isaiah to just one individual. In order to address this issue, we must briefly consider the basis and implications of the claim that there were, in fact, two or more Isaiahs.

PROPHECY AND PREDICTION

Nearly every discussion of Isaiah 1–39 and Isaiah 40–66 notes the differences between these two sections in their historical setting, their vocabulary and style, and their theological emphases; these differences, it is claimed, preclude authorial unity.³⁷ Numerous passages throughout the book are viewed as describing circumstances or upcoming events that an eighth-century B.C. prophet could not address in such detail. The most notable example is the defeat of Israel's captor, Babylon, by Cyrus the Persian, who is even mentioned twice by name (Is 44:28; 45:1). It usually is

³⁶See Edgar G. Conrad, "Reading Isaiah and the Twelve as Prophetic Books," in *Writing and Reading the Book of Isaiah: Studies of an Interpretive Tradition*, ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans, *Vetus Testamentum Supplements* 70 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1:3–17.

³⁷Although Blenkinsopp (*Isaiah*, 82) also emphasizes the extensive diversity to be found within Is 1–39. For a helpful recent summary of the differences between Is 1–39 and Is 40–66, see Dillard and Longman, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 269–71.

claimed that prophets never made such specific predictions so far in advance.³⁸ (The name of Josiah in 1 Kings 13:2 is dismissed similarly as a later addition.) Robert Pfeiffer writes sarcastically, "Of course this anachronism offers no difficulty to those who believe that God predicted through Isaiah's pen what was to happen two centuries later."³⁹ Similarly, Tate claims that John Oswalt's "fundamental reason" for affirming the Isaianic authorship of the entire book is "theological and is postulated on the defense of specific prophetic prediction," and he criticizes Alec Motyer's "shopworn appeals to verbal inspiration."⁴⁰ Childs accuses conservatives of turning Isaiah into "a clairvoyant of the future."⁴¹ More importantly, however, Childs claims that even if the prophetic prediction of such distant events actually occurred, "the coming of Cyrus is not presented as a future prediction, but rather as proof that the prediction of him has been fulfilled," that is, that Cyrus is already on the scene.⁴²

The troublesome reference to Cyrus is probably a primary reason why many evangelical scholars have abandoned, or at least are questioning, the one-author interpretation. However, in Isaiah 41–42, the presentation of Cyrus is juxtaposed with that of the servant, both portraits using similar expressions.⁴³ If Cyrus is already on the scene, must the servant also be a

³⁸See Ronald E. Manahan, "The Cyrus Notations of Deutero-Isaiah," *Grace Journal* 11 (1970): 22–33, for a critique of various approaches to this problem.

³⁹Robert H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), 25.

⁴⁰Tate, "Book of Isaiah," 26–27. See John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1986), 17–29; and *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 3–6; and Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), pp. 25–33; also "Three in One or One in Three: A Dipstick into the Isaianic Literature," *Churchman* 108 (1994): 22–36.

⁴¹Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 3–4.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 290. It is not uncommon, however, for prophecy to portray future events as if they already had or are occurring, as in the traditional interpretation of Is 9:1–7. As Oswalt correctly discerns, "the issue here is clearly not whether a transcendent deity could have revealed the deliverer's name many years in advance, as he would if Isaiah is the author of these words, but whether the book leads us to believe that he did." In Oswalt's assessment, the Cyrus predictions are "made the specific evidence that God can and does tell the future." Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, 196.

⁴³Although Cyrus and the servant can be contrasted with regard to their use of force (Is 41:2, cf. 42:3), both are called in righteousness (Is 41:2; 42:6), called by name (Is 45:4; 49:1), grasped by the hand (Is 45:1; 42:6), and both accomplish the Lord's will (Is 44:28; 53:10; Heb. *chephetz*, lit. "pleasure"). See Richard L. Schultz, "The King in the Book of Isaiah," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1995), 158–59.

contemporary of the posited prophet Second Isaiah? Since the latter passage is explicitly linked in the New Testament to the ministry of Jesus (cf. Is 42:1–3 with Mt 12:18), one must then ask, did any Old Testament prophet issue a genuinely messianic prophecy that found its primary focus and fulfillment in the coming of Jesus? Or is such future prediction ruled out a priori?⁴⁴ However, if it was possible for a prophet to speak of the coming of the spiritual deliverer, Jesus, seven centuries in the future, is it problematic to conceive of Isaiah of Jerusalem's speaking of Cyrus, his political precursor, merely two centuries in the future? The book of Isaiah repeatedly uses predictive prophecy as a proof of the unique sovereign power of Yahweh (Is 44:6–8, 25–28), and the prediction of Cyrus's conquest of Babylon would serve as a powerful example.⁴⁵

In sharp contrast with this traditional interpretation of Isaiah, biblical criticism has reduced the Israelite prophets' abilities until they basically conform to Goldingay's description:

They are people who can bring together what they read in the newspapers, what they see in worship and in society, and what they know from Israel's gospel story. When a Bishop of Liverpool warns a Prime Minister that calamity is imminent in his city because of the way in which local government is being exercised, he acts like a prophet insisting that nightmares be faced, without necessarily prescribing what is the detailed nature of the political action that needs to be taken.⁴⁶

If that is the case, then any capable political science major at a Christian college could have been a good stand-in for Isaiah!

⁴⁴For a discussion of the historical-critical viewpoint, see Ronald E. Clements, "The Messianic Hope in the Old Testament," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 43 (1989): 3–19. For a more balanced presentation, see J. Gordon McConville, "Messianic Interpretation of the Old Testament in Modern Context," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1995), 1–17.

⁴⁵For example, Oswalt writes: "Isaiah claims that the evidence for the uniqueness of God, that he is the sole creator, rests on his ability to predict novel turns of history in advance, an ability the idols and their technicians do not have. Specifically those predictions included Assyria's all but total conquest of Israel and Judah, Assyria's failure to capture Jerusalem, the fall of Assyria, the fall of Jerusalem and Judah to Babylon, the exile, the fall of Babylon to Cyrus, Cyrus's proclamation of freedom and encouragement to rebuild, the return of a remnant, and the establishment of a messianic kingdom. . . . One must either accept the evidence as given and adopt the conclusion, or else admit that the evidence has been tampered with and deny the conclusion. One cannot accept the conclusion while denying the evidence." Oswalt, *Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, 192.

⁴⁶Goldingay, 369.

However, the problem goes beyond the mere mention of Cyrus (since one could simply eliminate the name as a late gloss, as many do).⁴⁷ According to Roger Whybray,

It is a simple fact that the content of the prophet's message from start to finish is quite inappropriate to the circumstances of the eighth century B.C. . . . when the people of Jerusalem and Judah were still living at home under the rule of their own kings; when Babylon . . . merely was one of the cities of the Assyrian Empire.⁴⁸

However, it must be remembered that during Isaiah's years of ministry, the inhabitants of Israel's northern kingdom were exiled by the Assyrians under Sargon II, and then Sennacherib claimed to have conquered forty-six walled cities in Judah and deported more than 200,000 of its citizens. Therefore, in Isaiah's day a significant percentage of his fellow countrymen were already in exile and appropriately could be addressed as such. Furthermore, Babylon already was a growing power and threat to Assyria.⁴⁹

PROPHECY AND PROPHETIC BOOKS

Despite the fact that scholars such as Avraham Gileadi, Craig Evans, Robert O'Connell and David Dorsey have identified elaborate overarching structural patterns in the book of Isaiah, many scholars have a much lower estimation of the book's design.⁵⁰ Joseph Blenkinsopp views the book of Isaiah "as a kind of deposit for miscellaneous prophecies dealing with the destiny of Jerusalem and Judah."⁵¹ According to Richard Coggins, John Sawyer's book of Isaiah is "an enormous bran-tub, containing the most wonderful variety of goodies," while William McKane compares a pro-

⁴⁷This is Ronald K. Harrison's suggestion, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1969), 794-95.

⁴⁸Roger N. Whybray, *The Second Isaiah*, Old Testament Guides (Sheffield: JSOT, 1983), 4.

⁴⁹See James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 287-88. For a fuller discussion of this historical background, see Seth Eriandsson, "The Unity of Isaiah—A New Solution?" in *A Lively Legacy: Essays in Honor of Robert Preus*, ed. Kurt E. Marquart et al. (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1985), 33-39; and Hayes and Irvine, *Isaiah*, 227-29.

⁵⁰Avraham Gileadi, "A Holistic Structure of the Book of Isaiah" (Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1981); Craig A. Evans, "On the Unity and Parallel Structure of Isaiah," *Vetus Testamentum* 38 (1988): 129-47; Robert H. O'Connell, *Concentricity and Continuity: The Literary Structure of Isaiah*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series 188 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994); David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis—Malachi* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1999), 217-35.

⁵¹Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah*, 73. He also describes Is 1—39 as "a collection of compilations" (82).

phetic book to a snowball, "which expands by picking up and incorporating new material into itself as it goes on its way."⁵² Are we as evangelicals comfortable with such descriptions to characterize divine revelation and the product of divine inspiration?

As already noted, despite the type of internal diversity that has spawned the multiple-Isaiahs view, there is sufficient stylistic and thematic unity to lead to a one-book interpretation. The proponents of the one-book interpretation (such as Rolf Rendtorff) cite numerous themes, phrases and motifs that are repeated and developed throughout the book, such as the highway of the return and the accompanying blossoming of the desert.⁵³ Somewhat ironically, Dillard and Longman have noted that "arguments from conservatives for unity of authorship based on common themes and vocabulary have now in large part been taken over and pressed into service as arguments for a redactional unity in the book."⁵⁴ However, according to Blenkinsopp, even within what is commonly referred to as First Isaiah, the "degree of consistency of language, subject matter, and theme throughout 1—39" need not point to authorial unity. Rather this serves as an indication that the Isaian tradition was effectively "carried forward by means of a cumulative process of reinterpretation and reapplication."⁵⁵

In fact, the dominant explanation today for the contents of the book of Isaiah is that an eighth-century B.C. core of prophetic oracles was repeatedly supplemented and reinterpreted for centuries in the light of new developments in Israel's history. According to Blenkinsopp, the prophet in Isaiah 1—39 "has been buried under an exegetical mountain."⁵⁶ Childs offers an explanation for this extensive growth: "The editors conceived of

⁵²Richard J. Coggins, "Do We Still Need Deutero-Isaiah?" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 81 (1998): 91; referring to John F. A. Sawyer's presentation of Isaiah in *The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). William McKane, vol. 1 of *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Jeremiah*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), as summarized by John Barton, *Isaiah 1—39*, Old Testament Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 24.

⁵³Rolf Rendtorff, "The Composition of the Book of Isaiah," in *Canon and Theology: Overtures to an Old Testament Theology*, ed. and trans. Margaret Kohl, Overtures to Biblical Theology (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 146-69; and "The Book of Isaiah: A Complex Unity; Synchronic and Diachronic Reading," in *New Visions of Isaiah*, ed. Roy F. Melugin and Marvin A. Sweeney, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 214:32-49.

⁵⁴Dillard and Longman, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 274. See, e.g., Williamson, *Book Called Isaiah*.

⁵⁵Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah*, 74.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 90.

their task as forming a chorus of different voices and fresh interpretation, but all addressing in different ways, different issues, and different ages a part of the selfsame, truthful witness to God's salvific purpose for his people."⁵⁷ This sounds helpful, but should we not also expect a prophet with a fifty-year public ministry to reinterpret and reapply his own oracles to changing circumstances?⁵⁸ More problematic is James Crenshaw's suggestion that a primary reason for the later reinterpretation of prophetic oracles (or texts) was that "predictions that seemed to have gone awry, for some unknown reason, retained their power, making it necessary to wrest their hidden meaning by hook or crook,"⁵⁹ apparently thereby rescuing the prophet's (or God's) reputation!

Are there only two possible evangelical approaches for understanding the nature of inspiration in the book of Isaiah? Must one either defend the position that Isaiah penned every word in the book that bears his name, or allow that any number of authors or editors, disciples or dilettantes, commentators or committees over any period of time could have contributed any amount to the present book of Isaiah and still have their efforts labeled divinely "inspired" simply because they were ultimately canonized? One ancient tradition regarding the origin of the book of Isaiah already mentioned suggests a third option. The oft-cited Talmudic tractate *Baba Batra* 14b-15a claims that "Hezekiah and his men wrote Isaiah."⁶⁰ How are we to understand this statement? Is it possible that the same men who, according to the superscription in Proverbs 25:1, ordered the individual proverbs in Proverbs 25-29 were also the canonical editors of the prophetic speeches and narratives of Isaiah?⁶¹ Certainly the claim of the superscription in Isaiah 1:1 does not preclude this possibility.

⁵⁷Childs, *Isaiah*, 4.

⁵⁸This is a view espoused throughout Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979-1983), but it is generally rejected when applied to Isaiah.

⁵⁹James L. Crenshaw, "Transmitting Prophecy Across Generations," in *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Michael H. Floyd, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 36-37.

⁶⁰See n. 3 above. Evangelical introductions frequently quote this tractate when defending traditional views regarding the authorship of the Pentateuch, Psalms or 1-2 Samuel, but they seldom consider it when discussing Isaiah.

⁶¹See Michael Carasik, "Who Were the 'Men of Hezekiah'?" *Vetus Testamentum* 44 (1994): 289-300. Even John Calvin suggested that after Isaiah wrote, recorded and posted his oracles on the temple gates, a priest later took them down and preserved them (hence the seemingly disordered juxtaposition of individual texts). John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Volume First*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1979), xxxii.

Nothing in an evangelical doctrine of inspiration excludes the contribution of inspired, even if anonymous, authors and editors to a book such as Isaiah, for we probably are in their debt for the production of most, if not all, of the Old Testament historical books. Who were more directly involved in Isaiah of Jerusalem's promises and threats, were more concerned with the future of God's people and had a greater interest in preserving his prophetic teaching and testimony than Hezekiah and his contemporaries? However, this perspective is quite different from any of the recent evangelical proposals surveyed above!

PROPHECY AND AUTHORITY

A contemporary editor or group of editors could legitimately frame and order Isaiah's oracles, adding brief explanatory comments whenever they considered them to be necessary. But is there any inherent reason why "an unknown prophet of the exile" who chose not to identify himself should share in Isaiah of Jerusalem's divinely bestowed authority? A favorite approach of twentieth-century scholars has been to posit a continuing circle or "school" of disciples, possibly including Second and Third Isaiah, to whom was committed the task of carrying on the prophetic tradition. This could account for the elements of stylistic and thematic continuity between the various collections within the book of Isaiah and justify the claim of maintaining the "authentic Isaianic" tradition.

However, this theory, which originated with Sigmund Mowinckel in 1926, is rejected by an increasing number of leading Isaiah scholars today—including Ronald Clements, Christopher Seitz, Hugh Williamson, John Barton and Joseph Blenkinsopp—for several reasons:

- It lacks firm textual support, being based primarily on a questionable interpretation of Isaiah 8:16 and the description of Baruch in Jeremiah 36.
- It lacks logical cogency, since the existence of the group is deduced from the existence of the book.
- It lacks historical plausibility. What basis is there for assuming that an Isaianic school could exist for two centuries?⁶²

⁶²John Barton justifiably asks, "How and where might their members have lived? Were they in effect 'prophets' themselves, or 'laymen'?" Barton, *Isaiah*, 23. See also the critique of this theory in Richard L. Schultz, *The Search for Quotation: Verbal Parallels in the Prophets*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 180:77-82.

In the light of this general trend, it is rather ironic that this theory has been embraced recently by two of the evangelical scholars whose treatments of Isaiah I summarized above. According to Martti Nissinen, frequently prophetic oracles in the ancient Near East were immediately written down by a scribe and delivered to the addressee. If deemed worthy of preserving, the written record was then stored in an archive or was reinscribed, later being copied and compiled into collections of prophetic oracles and often quoted, paraphrased and reinterpreted according to the needs of the interpreters.⁶³ Why should the situation with regards to Israelite prophecy be radically different?

Some evangelical scholars suggest biblical analogies in support of their view of the book of Isaiah's compositional history. LaSor, Hubbard and Bush compare the book of Isaiah to the anonymous epistle to the Hebrews and to the Gospels, in which the teachings of Jesus were written down by his disciples.⁶⁴ However, this involves a confusion of categories and genres. No compelling reason can be made for positing the existence of anonymous prophecies in Isaiah, in contrast to Hebrews; and, unlike Isaiah, Mark does not claim that his book is simply a collection of the sayings of Jesus.⁶⁵ Similarly, Dillard and Longman compare the anonymous additions to Isaiah with the historical books or with Deuteronomy 34, which was added after Moses' death.⁶⁶ More problematic is Duhm's comparison of the book of Isaiah to the scroll of the Twelve Minor Prophets or his viewing Isaiah's association with the book that bears his name as similar to the traditional associations of Moses with the law, David with the psalms and Solomon with wisdom.⁶⁷ The book of the Twelve distinguishes twelve prophetic voices through its superscription; the book of Isaiah acknowledges only one prophetic voice. Furthermore, historical-critical scholars have concluded that Moses, David and Solomon contributed little if any literature to the collections to which they are linked, a claim that only the most radical Isaiah scholars, such as Otto Kaiser, make.

⁶³Martti Nissinen, "Spoken, Written, Quoted and Invented: Orality and Writtness in Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy," in *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Michael H. Floyd, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 268.

⁶⁴LaSor, Hubbard and Bush, *Old Testament Survey*, 2nd ed., 282, 286-87.

⁶⁵Perhaps it would be better to "stretch" our view of Isaiah of Jerusalem rather than to stretch our view of inspiration.

⁶⁶Dillard and Longman, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 275.

⁶⁷Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaia*, 7.

After a century of dividing up the texts of Isaiah atomistically between three or more authors, many historical-critical scholars today have adopted, as a result of their compositional analyses of the book of Isaiah, a more holistic interpretive approach. Steck reminds us that the final editors intend for us to read Isaiah 1—66 as "a book concerned with Isaiah in its entirety," and Seitz has written a lengthy essay concerning the prophet Isaiah's "presence" in the latter half of the book.⁶⁸ Some critical scholars today admit that Second Isaiah, along with his supposed call narrative in Isaiah 40, is simply a scholarly invention intended to provide a proper historical context for the powerful poems of Isaiah 40—55, thus saving them from the onus of anonymity. And some have already announced the imminent funeral of Second or Third Isaiah.⁶⁹

If we are to read the book of Isaiah on its own terms, it is necessary to take its superscriptions seriously. Isaiah 1:1 claims that all that follows does not simply *include* but rather *is* "the vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah," a prophetic ministry spanning more than half a century. The use of the term *vision* (Heb. *hazon*) indicates that the origin of the prophecy is supernatural, not derived from human insight. The same term also occurs in Isaiah 2:1, introducing the familiar "swords into plowshares" passage. It thereby designates Isaiah's description of Jerusalem's future exaltation in Isaiah 2:2-4 as a divinely imparted vision and not simply the product of wishful thinking or political propaganda; and this prophetic height is not reached again in the book until Isaiah 60—62. Finally, it is used in Isaiah 13:1 to introduce Isaiah's oracle regarding Babylon's future in Isaiah 13—14, a passage that critical scholars almost universally deny as being written by Isaiah of Jerusalem.⁷⁰

There is no reason to restrict this divinely imparted vision to just one section of the book, nor is there any justification for positing numerous helping hands who later confirmed the accuracy of this vision by adding historical

⁶⁸Odil Hannes Steck, *The Prophetic Books and their Theological Witness*, trans. James D. Nogalski (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 23; Christopher R. Seitz, "How Is the Prophet Isaiah Present in the Latter Half of the Book? The Logic of Chapters 40—66 Within the Book of Isaiah," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115 (1996): 219-40.

⁶⁹See esp. Coggins, "Do We Still," 77-92.

⁷⁰For a defense of the Isaianic authorship of Isaiah 13—14, see Seth Erlandsson, *The Burden of Babylon: A Study of Isaiah 13:2—14:23*, trans. G. J. Houser, *Coniectanea biblica: Old Testament Series* 4 (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1970); and Hayes and Irvine, *Isaiah*, 220-34.

detail or even saving it by reinterpretation. Can we simply dismiss the claim of the very first verse of the book of Isaiah as being merely the misguided or misleading effort of a later editor to claim the authority of Isaiah of Jerusalem for the work of a host of later voices? Or must we see it as an inspired and trustworthy confirmation of the divine origin and compositional integrity of the book that bears Isaiah of Jerusalem's name?⁷¹

We return to our initial question, how many Isaiahs were there and what does it matter? Dillard and Longman assert that "in some respects the end results of the debate are somewhat moot."⁷² On the contrary, I have sought to demonstrate that there are significant consequences of adopting historical-critical conclusions regarding the nature of prophetic inspiration, predictive prophecy, rhetorical coherence and theological development in the prophetic books—consequences that are ignored, downplayed or denied in the recent evangelical (and non-evangelical) literature that we have surveyed.

CONCLUSION

In this essay I have focused on just one book, but the examples could be multiplied. The gates have been opened wide, and applications of historical-critical methods and conclusions are flooding evangelical biblical studies. Such irrigation can foster growth initially, but ultimately it may cause destruction, and I believe that the prophet Isaiah is a potential victim. Evangelical biblical scholarship has come of age. We as evangelicals have been given a place at the table at the Society of Biblical Literature's annual meetings, and many of our publications are reviewed positively and used with benefit by our non-evangelical colleagues. But may we never yield to the temptation to sell our soul for a mess of academic respectability. Instead, let us heed the inspired warning of the prophet Isaiah: "To the teaching and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn" (Is 8:20 NIV).

⁷¹To mount a full-length defense of the Isaianic authorship of Isaiah 40–66, or even of Isaiah 1–39 for that matter, is clearly beyond the scope of this essay. However, much has been written by non-evangelicals scholars during recent decades that offers further support for the one-author position. See especially the bibliography cited in nn. 12–15 above.

⁷²Dillard and Longman, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 275.