The Eschatological Implications of Isa 65 and 66 as the Conclusion of the Book of Isaiah

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General Introduction

1. Introduction

“Eschatology”, according to G. B. Caird and L. D. Hurst, is a nineteenth-century German term which was introduced into English in 1845. But F. Neiryntck insists that it rather dates, as far back as 1677, to the twelfth volume of Systema locorum theologicorum of A. Calov, published at Wittenberg. Around 1840, then, it became an internationally generalized theological term.

Even if all scholars are not in accord on the exact origin of eschatology, there still remains the clear fact that it is one concept with which most people, if not all humans, are occupied, from time to time, in one of its forms or another. Such questions as “how will my life end?”; “what happens to me after this present life?”; “What lots await the good and the bad after this present life?”, all border on eschatology – and these are questions we are used to, almost on a daily basis. Thus, eschatological considerations form an important part of every day life as well as that of practically all the major religions of the world.

This study will focus on the eschatology of the last two chapters of the book of Isaiah, Isa 65 and 66. These two chapters show the division that took place within the Judaic community after the Babylonian exile (Isa 65,8–10) between those who tremble at YHWH’s word, his servants, and those who rebel against him (Isa 65,8–16). YHWH promises the former (the servants) everything good, while the latter (the rebels) will receive condemnation and
evil (Isa 65,8–16; 66,22–24). The high point of this “good” is that these servants will live in a new world of YHWH’s new creation (Isa 65,17–18a), with Jerusalem as its centre (Isa 65,18b–25). There will, then, be the complete return of the exiles from Babylon to this new Jerusalem, now acting as a mother (Isa 66,7–14). All the Jews scattered all over the world will also be restored thereto (Isa 66,19–20). This new world will eventually reach its climax in the congregation of all nations in this same Jerusalem in everlasting worship of YHWH (Isa 66,18–23). Here, they will also witness the definitive and shameful end of those who rebel against him (Isa 66,24).

Hence, the hallmark of the relationship of these servants with YHWH is their trembling at his word (Isa 65,24) which will then flow into temple building (Isa 66,1–2), as against the rebels who do not so tremble (Isa 65,1–7.11–12; 66,4–6). Yet, these two groups still live side by side, even though YHWH has irreversibly fixed their respective ends which, none the less, still lie in the future, in a yet-to-be-realized time, the eschaton. Therefore, this book aims at examining the eschatological implications of these two chapters. And since they also conclude the long prophetic book of Isaiah, it will also try to find out how these implications fit in, within this conclusive function.

The canonical book of Isaiah is one of the most important prophetic books of the OT. It touches three highly decisive epochs in the lives of the people of Israel. These are the pre-exilic, exilic and post-exilic periods respectively. Furthermore, it develops themes that are crucial in the social and religious lives of the people of Israel, including their divine election, creation motif, the Exodus and the Temple. Above all, this prophetic book becomes a profoundly fertile ground for the emergence and development of many themes of the NT. Most notable in this direction is the fact that, in the NT,
salvation is now for all in Jesus.7 On that note, one already finds in
the book of Isaiah a reaching-out to the nations, even to the point
of sending missionaries to them, so that they will come to know
YHWH (cf. Isa 66,18–20). It becomes clear, therefore, that any
broad-based study on the book of Isaiah also puts one in touch
with the major themes of the OT, giving one also a good back-
ground to the NT – and this is not less the case in this study of the
eschatology of Isa 65 and 66.

Added to the above is the view of I. Taha concerning the “end-
ing” of a text. According to him, the essential starting point in the
interpretation of a text is its ending, “since only then is the reader
required to invest concentrated effort in the interpretation of the
entire text.”8 Therefore, having a good grasp of the eschatological
implications of the book of Isaiah – even though that is still a dream
for the future for me – would begin by the study of the eschatolo-
gical implications of Isa 65 and 66 which conclude this prophetic
book, hence the topic of this present book.

What becomes evident at this point, then, is that the study of the
eschatology of these two chapters is in no way an isolated venture,
as such a quest is naturally situated within the larger context of the
eschatology of the OT where the book of Isaiah is canonically placed.
One thinks, therefore, that it would be a good start to briefly survey
what has been the case in this larger camp into which this present
study is born.

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8 I. Taha, “Semiotics of ending and closure: Post-ending activity of the reader”,
2. Brief survey of studies in OT eschatology

It was G. A. F. Knight who had pointed out that the OT Hebrew thinking sees man as one, although he be made up of body and soul. In the same light, OT eschatology involves all aspects of reality, material and spiritual, heaven and earth, all in one.\(^9\) Even though this may generally be the case, it must also be noted, at this initial stage, that scholars are really divided as to what eschatology in the OT actually consists in.\(^10\) Attempt will be made in the main section of this book to give the definition of eschatology, from where the examination of the eschatological implications of these two chapters under consideration will then be initiated. One just notes here, for the moment – as already hinted – that two groups could be distinguished among the OT scholars in this direction, namely, those who, on the one hand, see eschatology in the narrow sense of dealing with the last things or a definite division between two ages, and those, on the other, who see it as forming part and parcel of the faith of the religion of Israel. This brief survey will mainly view eschatology along these two major lines, apart from the separate consideration that will be given to that of Trito-Isaiah, where Isa 65–66 are contained. It will also take note of other pertinent opinions, different from those already mentioned, which will be important for the eschatological considerations that will be done in this book.

9 G. A. F. KNIGHT, “Eschatology in the Old Testament”, *S/Th* 4 (1951) 355–358. His words: “In other words, Old Testament Eschatology must have to do with both heaven and earth, with both spirit and matter, *pari passu*. By the very nature of Hebrew thinking it cannot be concerned with one and ignore the other. The End must be concerned with the world of things as much as with the world of the spirit.” (p. 357)

10 Still to come in this Introduction are some selected opinions on this matter. Among them are, on the one hand, J. Lindblom and G. Fohrer who emphasize in eschatology the division between two ages. Also, on the other hand, one finds W. Staerk, A. Jepsen and Th. C. Vriezen who see eschatology as anchoring on OT faith.
0.2.1 The narrow sense of eschatology

J. Lindblom was one of the first scholars to largely occupy himself with eschatology, noting, first of all, the lack of agreement among scholars regarding its import.

Beginning with Deutero-Isaiah, he observes that even though scholars have labelled this prophet as an eschatologist, even the originator of the Israelite-Jewish eschatology as a whole, there is no eschatology in Deutero-Isaiah at all – if eschatology means a doctrine, or a message, concerning the end of history and a new age.\(^{11}\) According to him, many passages in the OT have been understood as eschatology instead of simple poetry which they actually are. Hence, a factor generating the difficulty in understanding OT eschatology is that scholars have largely misunderstood the symbolic language employed by the writers of the OT. In opposition to Hebrew modes of expression, they have often treated metaphors, symbols, figurative pictures as precise and exact descriptions of reality. This means, therefore, that the whole question of OT eschatology must be studied afresh along new lines, with answers provided to some crucial questions.\(^{12}\)

As a starting point to this new investigation, he suggests that eschatology be viewed from the division between two ages. Even though the full development between these two ages is to be found in Jewish Apocalyptic, among the Rabbis and in the New Testament, they were already present in the messages of the prophets.\(^{13}\)

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12 Lindblom, *Servant Songs*, 104. These questions, according to this scholar, are: “What is eschatology? In what sense can the term ‘eschatology’ be used in connection with the earlier prophets of the Old Testament? How can eschatology proper be distinguished from poetical descriptions of future history? When does eschatology appear in Israelite-Jewish religion and literature? What is the origin of Israelite-Jewish eschatology?”

Thus, when the prophets speak of something new in the future, different from what obtains in the present, then one can rightly qualify such a future in terms of eschatology. However, all biblical passages do not have the same eschatological thrust, as different aspects of this eschatology could be distinguished. Hence, passages which describe the new age, could be said to be expressive of a positive eschatology; those speaking only of the end express a negative eschatology. Passages referring to Israel have a national eschatology while those dealing with the whole world and all mankind express a universal eschatology.

G. Fohrer took up the notion of the two ages of eschatology and developed it extensively. According to him, the distinction between two ages is the essential idea in eschatological expectations. It was with Deutero-Isaiah, towards the end of the exile, that eschatological prophecy actually began, drawing upon the traditions of the great individual prophets and the optimistic professional prophets. Tersely put, the first decades of the exile saw the incipient movement towards the eschatological reformulation of theological thought (cf. Ezekiel 38–39). But it was Deutero-Isaiah who first developed this new direction fully, bringing to the fore this distinction between two ages. Eschatology, therefore, became authoritative for

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14 L INDBLOM , “Gibt es eine Eschatologie bei den alttestamentlichen Propheten?”, 88, expatiates: “Wenn die Propheten von einer Zukunft reden, die nicht nur eine Fortsetzung der in dieser Zeit waltenden Verhältnisse bedeutet, sondern etwas Neues und ganz anderes mit sich bringt, da haben wir das Recht, den Terminus Eschatologie zu verwenden.”
the prophets coming after him and influenced the future development of Yahwism.¹⁸

Consequently, the distinction between two ages and the sense of standing on the borderline between them distinguished eschatological prophecy following Deutero-Isaiah from both traditional Yahwism and the pre-exilic individual prophets. These prophets saw deliverance in terms of the transformation of man through repentance and return to YHWH or through his redemption, projecting an “either/or of destruction or deliverance as an ever-recurring decision. Eschatological prophecy reinterpreted the either/or, making of it a temporal before/after.”¹⁹ Good examples between this two-age distinction and standing on the borderline between them could be seen in Hag 1,15a; 2,15–19 as well as in Zech 1,1–6.²⁰

However, Fohrer further distinguishes five features of the eschatological event outside what is found in Deutero-Isaiah, besides the notion of the two sequential ages which is fundamental to the structure of eschatological prophecy. They often follow one upon another

¹⁸ Fohrer, History of Israelite Religion, 327–328. He maintains that one sees this distinction between the ages in the three introductory discourses of Deutero-Isaiah: Isa 40,1–2, 3–5, 6–8. These sketch the end of the transitory age of distress and sin and the emergence of the future age of redemption and deliverance. This distinction also appears where the prophet contrasts what is new with the former things of the past (Isa 45,18–19), seeing them as a “time of favour” and a “day of salvation”; or even having this contrast with the image of a “cup of wrath” and “bowl of staggering” (Isa 51,17–23).

¹⁹ Fohrer, History of Israelite Religion, 328.

²⁰ G. Fohrer, “Die Struktur der alttestamentlichen Eschatologie”, in Studien zur alttestamentlichen Prophetie (1949–1965) (BZAW 99; Berlin: Verlag Alfred Töpelmann, 1967) 32. In the former passage, Hag 2,15–19, the prophet calls the attention of the people on how they are standing between two ages: Before the foundation of the new temple was laid, how the people fared badly (Hag 2,15–17). But since the foundation of YHWH’s temple was laid, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month (in September, 520 BC) how their lot has changed for the better, from the blessing of YHWH (Hag 2,18–19). Also in Zech 1,1–6, the prophet calls the people’s attention to the unrepentant stance of their ancestors, to YHWH’s displeasure (Zech 1,1–5). But YHWH’s words live on in the time of the present generation who should then act on them to secure a blessed future from him (Zech 1,6).
like the acts of an eschatological drama, but differ clearly in the treat-
ments given to the nations. They share the following common
traits: 1) the destruction of the power of the nations or the world
empire; 2) deliverance and liberation of Israel as the eschatological
community, as well as the purification of the community and as-
sembly, in Jerusalem, of the Diaspora; 3) the creation, for the com-
munity, of paradisal and wonderful circumstances; 4) inauguration
of the reign of the Messiah or YHWH’s direct sovereignty; 5) the
conversion of the nations or a remnant from among them.

What has been given above gives some idea of Fohrer’s view on
the eschatology of the OT. It is after the above that he enunciates
what he calls the structure of eschatology, which considers more
aspects especially in Deutero-Isaiah and the rest of the eschatologi-
cal prophets.

21 F OHRER, History of Israelite Religion, 338–340, outlines them: 1) The views of
Haggai and Zechariah are similar in this direction. This involves the preserva-
tion of a good and pure Israelite community (Hag 2,10–14; Zech 1,17; 2,5–9
[Eng. 2,1–5]; 5,1–11) and the destruction of the powers of the nations (Hag
2,22; Zech 2,1–4 [Eng. 1,18–21]). 2) In the Isaiah Apocalypse (Isa 24–27),
YHWH’s enemies will be deprived of their powers followed by a universal ban-
quet in Zion where YHWH will reign (Isa 24,21–25,12) – after the eschato-
logical and universal judgement (Isa 24,1–20), Israel being protected from
the universal battle and its Diaspora assembled from all over the world (Isa 27,1–
6.12–13). 3) Deutero-Zechariah (Zech 9,11–17; 10,3–12) shared the basic forms
in the expectation that the prisoners would be released to return home, and the
Diaspora would be assembled and paradisal fertility would be created. 4) Joel,
roughly contemporaneous with Deutero-Zechariah, depicted two phases: a) The
eschatological judgement on the nations by YHWH in the form of an annihila-
ting battle near Jerusalem, described in the image of a harvest (Joel 4,13–17 [Eng
3,13–17]). b) This final judgment would be followed by paradisal blessings
and peace (Joel 4,18–21 [Eng. 3,18–21]). 5) The late oracles (Zech 12,1–13,6;
13,7–9), however, seem to presuppose the dawn of the age of salvation, arrived
at peacefully without any defeat of the nations. Their defeat would, however,
come later followed by the deliverance of Jerusalem and the purification of the
community (On these, cf. also, F OHRER, “Die Struktur der alttestamentlichen
Eschatologie”, 36–40).

22 F OHRER, History of Israelite Religion, 340; cf. also F OHRER, “Die Struktur der
alttestamentlichen Eschatologie”, 40–41.

23 On this, cf. F OHRER, History of Israelite Religion, 340–347; also, F OHRER,
0.2.2 The wider sense of eschatology

I begin with Staerk whose opinion was one of the earliest in this direction. For him, eschatology formed part and parcel of Israel’s religion, and is based on the hope of YHWH’s intervention in her future life, following from such interventions in her life in the past. Thus, OT eschatology takes much of its bearing from OT beliefs in YHWH’s creation and salvation of the world. Nothing in nature and history stands outside this creating and saving will of YHWH. But it is in and through Israel that YHWH will achieve the renewal of creation. It is on this that the OT pronouncements of salvation and judgement on Israel, by the prophets, is rooted. Yet, it is YHWH himself who realizes the eschatology of the OT as he acts in history, including the history of sinful Israel and sinful man in general.24

A. Jepsen also sees OT eschatology as tied up with the religious history of Israel and it is this aspect that distinguishes it from other religions rather tied to natural cycles. This history embraces Israel’s essential hope in YHWH. It involves her belief in YHWH’s promise in her inheritance of the land “flowing with milk and honey” (Exod 3,8). Above all, it involves the expectation that YHWH will bring his salvation to Israel, a hope also taken up by the prophets. He will right all wrongs (Mal 3,1–4).25

Still in the same line is E. Jenni, who sees eschatology as being, right from the start, an essential and integrating constituent of the OT faith in God. It is that part of the history of salvation which is still in prospect, pressing for realization. According to him, the central idea of OT eschatology is the coming of YHWH. This is because it is the same God who manifested himself from time to time in history, and who still does so in the present, who will still reveal himself victoriously in the future. Hence, history and eschatology go together.26

In his own contribution to OT eschatology, Th. C. Vriezen dwelt on the prophets. He notes the lack of agreement in ascribing eschatology to OT prophets for various reasons. Among these reasons is the failure of some scholars, e.g. Wellhausen, to ascribe eschatological ideas to these prophets on account of what they perceive as the lack of the expectation of salvation on their part. Also, although some of these scholars admit that these Israelite prophets entertained this hope of salvation, they would not describe this hope as eschatological because their notion of eschatology does not include such a hope. And finally, there are others who ascribe to these prophets both the expectation of salvation and eschatology, because their preaching of doom and salvation qualify their message to be so described.\(^{27}\) Yet, in spite of its ambiguity, continues Vriezen, it is properly the word “eschatology” that should qualify the prophets’ expectation of salvation, because “there is, indeed, no other word in our vocabulary, phenomenological and theological, to characterize this expectation.”\(^ {28}\) It is, however, the wider sense of eschatology that takes care of the eschatology of the OT prophets, as could even be gleaned from OT prophecy itself. Two examples justify his stand. The first is that OT prophecies use the term ‘aharit hayyamim again and again. This expression has a more general meaning, denoting the future in general, as well as a more restricted meaning, the last days. The second is that in Israel, there was no fundamental distinction, so to speak, between the things to come – indicating the speaker’s horizon – and the future, absolutely taken. Thus, if eschatology has to be restricted to the specific group of data that demonstrate a cosmic-dramatic destruction of the world, this would naturally boil down to the \textit{a priori} exclusion of all pre-exilic prophetic ideas together with all post-exilic prophetic ideas, all giving the wrong meaning of OT prophetic eschatology. The only possible exceptions would then be the few apocalyptic pieces within these prophetic writings.\(^{29}\)

\(^{27}\) Th. C. Vriezen, “Prophecy and Eschatology”, in \textit{Congress Volume, Copenhagen 1953} (VTS 1; Leiden: Brill, 1953) 199.
\(^{28}\) Vriezen, “Prophecy and Eschatology”, 223.
\(^{29}\) Vriezen, “Prophecy and Eschatology”, 202–203.
With this understanding, he goes on to demonstrate all Israelite prophets, from Amos to Haggai and Zechariah, as expressing the future hope of Israel.  

Vriezen then classified the eschatological ideas of Israel according to the periods of their development. These stages cover the pre-eschatological, proto-eschatological, actual eschatological and transcendent-eschatological, and hence apocalyptic, periods.

The first period, the pre-eschatological period, is the time before the emergence of the classical prophets. This period may not really be called eschatological, except that Israel was already certain of being the people of YHWH which fact, among others, is also found in all the four stages of eschatology. It is the time Israel expected the yom YHWH, a day looked upon, from even before the time of Amos, as the day of salvation in which YHWH will reveal himself anew as the Lord, by his glorious deeds, for Israel’s sake. He will restore Israel to its full glory and authority as was the case in the time of David. Hence, Israel’s hope in this period seemed more political and national, than spiritual. The second period, proto-eschatological, is the period of awakening eschatology covering the time of Isaiah (Amos to Jeremiah). It is the time that saw the beginning of Israel’s vision of herself as a new people and a new kingdom resting on YHWH’s spiritual powers. This will however, embrace the whole world. The third period, the actual eschatological, is that of Deutero-Isaiah and Ezekiel. The kingdom of God is seen as coming in visions and it is experienced as coming. The world is to be changed. Israel is to be a light to the world and the nations while the nations are invited to share in Zion’s glory. The fourth period, the transcendental-eschatological, is the apocalyptic period during which time dualistic eschatology sprang up – especially during the Persian period –

30 VRIEZEN, “Prophecy and Eschatology”, 222–223.
32 Cf. Gen 49; Num 24; Deut 33.
bringing with it the separation between the eternal world of God above and reality on earth below which is doomed.33

Le Roux notes that the eschatological views of Vriezen, which have been summarized above, influenced scholars for many years.34 The basic ideas that kept recurring among these scholars include the labelling of the period prior to the prophets as pre-eschatological as well as the notion that true eschatology only began with the prophets in Israel.35 This last opinion is expressly stated, for instance, by K. Koch.36 He, however, situates this eschatology within history and not outside it or at the end of it.37

But other scholars, although also situating OT eschatology within the history of Israel, disagree that it began with the prophets. The structure of promise and fulfilment which has all the time characterized the relationship between YHWH and Israel belongs properly to OT eschatology. Hence, H. Groß points out that with that first intervention of YHWH in Abraham’s life in Gen 12,1–3, there be-

37 K OCH, Prophets, II, 199. He explains: “It is an eschatology within history, not an eschatology at the end of history. The new era of salvation that has been proclaimed is expected to bring with it a better history for all mankind. A new salvation history will begin and in this sense the primordial era will return in the form of the End-time; but the new age will go far beyond anything that has existed hitherto. It will not merely evoke marvellous changes in nature. It will also fundamentally transform the structures of man.”
gan the new way of salvation with which Israel stayed in her history under the law of YHWH’s promise and its fulfilment. On that note, Jepsen emphasizes the promise of the gift of “the land flowing with milk and honey” (Exod 3,8), a land of blessings. These promises and blessings form part of the religion of the patriarchs, as can be seen from Jacob’s blessing of Judah (Gen 49,8–12), Moses’ blessing of Joseph (Deut 33,13–16) and Balaam’s blessing of Israel. These indicate what are actually involved: rich, productive dwelling place overflowing with water, a large population and victory over the enemies. Groß also notes these promises from the call of Abraham (Gen 12,1–3), to the promise of the gift of the land (Exod 3,8) and the freeing of Israel from Egypt (Exod 3,17) – all substantiating the fact that YHWH is with Israel (Num 23,21). He then concludes that it is, indeed, that structure of promise and fulfilment in YHWH’s relation with Israel that forms the source and origin of OT eschatology.

G. von Rad is another scholar who sees OT eschatology from the point of view of time and history in Israel. He distinguishes between the concept of time for the modern Western mind and for that of Israel. For the Western mind, time is reckoned within an infinitely long straight line on which the individual marks past and future events as he recognizes them. Our own present day is the mid-point of this time-span, and it is from it that the past stretches back and the future forwards. He intimates that Israel was not capable of thinking of time in the abstract, time that is not attached to specific events, but only conceived time as containing events. Hence, the most important term here, apart from יִשְׂרָאֵל which means

39 Jepsen, “Eschatologie II. Im AT”, 656.
the distant past or future, is הָעָלָה which means “time” as “a point in time” or “a period of time.”

However, the meaning of time for Israel found its perfection in her cultic life because it is the rhythm of festal and non-festal time which gave the lives of Israelites their rhythm in time, as, for example, in the Sabbath, the Tabernacles and the Passover. Abandoning the Canaanite natural and agrarian cycle, Israel historicized these feasts seeing them from the point of view of YHWH’s salvific interventions in their lives. Hence, from these saving acts right from the Patriarchs, through the Exodus from Egypt to their occupation of the land of promise and their day-to-day lives as a people, there developed for Israel a historical time.

The prophets in Israel shared this same understanding of history. Convinced that YHWH has accompanied Israel along her road through history, these prophets adapted this conviction to new, present historical and political phenomena. Therefore, they always called forth to their contemporaries, who may have had the danger of forgetting the implications of this, about the obligations involved in it. The new historical reality which YHWH brought about, these

42 VON RAD, Old Testament Theology, II, 100. The following are some of the examples he gives: there is a time of giving birth (Mic 5,2[3]), a time to gather animals together (Gen 29,7), a time when kings go for battle (2Sam 11,1). The tree produces fruit “in its time” (Ps 1,3) while God gives his creatures food “in due time” (Ps 104,27). This is also clearly expressed in Ecclesiastes, as there is time for every matter under the sun: a time to be born, to die, to plant, to reap, to kill, to heal, to break down, to build up, to weep, to laugh, to mourn, to dance, to throw away stones, to gather stones together, to embrace, to refrain from embracing, to seek, to lose, to keep, to throw away, to tear, to sew, to keep silence, to speak, to love, to hate, for war, for peace (Eccl 3,1–8).

43 VON RAD, Old Testament Theology, II, 100–107. He makes this matter of history for Israel very precise (p. 106): “What we see here is not what we are accustomed to understand as history: the idea of history which Israel worked out was constructed exclusively on the basis of a sequence of acts which God laid down for her salvation. Thus, Israel’s history existed only in so far as God accompanied her, and it is only this time-span which can properly be described as her history. It was God who established the continuity between the various separate events and who ordained their direction as they followed one another in time.”
prophets also projected to the future in the conviction that YHWH was bringing about a new era for his people, which would surpass and supersede the old. It is this future projection that marks out the prophets as special representatives of Yahwism; and it is this that marks them out as eschatological.\footnote{VON RAD, \textit{Old Testament Theology}, II, 112–113.} Von Rad then concludes: “The characteristic feature of the prophet’s message is its actuality, its expectation of something soon to happen. This should be the touchstone of the use of the term ‘eschatological.’”\footnote{VON RAD, \textit{Old Testament Theology}, II, 115.}

0.2.3 Eschatology in Trito-Isaiah

One of the scholars who have made very valuable contributions to the study of the eschatology of the Post-exilic period, and especially of Trito-Isaiah, is Paul D. Hanson. He interprets the post-exilic conflict that is evident in Trito-Isaiah, especially in the unit of Isa 65–66, as between the priestly Zadokites, who led the returnees from the exile, and the visionary group loyal to Deutero-Isaiah. The hierocratic party had the political power and was in charge of the cult. Having lost in this conflict to this hierocratic party, the visionaries developed an apocalyptic hope and expectation when YHWH would definitively intervene in their course. For Hanson, therefore, apocalyptic eschatology developed from prophetic eschatology in Trito-Isaiah.\footnote{P. D. HANSON, \textit{The Dawn of Apocalyptic} (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975) 217–220.} As much reference will be made to this thesis of Hanson in the major parts of this book, I just make do here with this main point of his thesis.

Hanson’s propositions are to be seen from the background of the sociological approach to the OT.\footnote{LE ROUX, “Eschatology and the Prophets”, 16.} For, over and above the biblical accounts of the origin and composition of Israel, sociologists have also been studying this origin as well as the social and religious life

\bibitem{44} VON RAD, \textit{Old Testament Theology}, II, 112–113.
\bibitem{47} LE ROUX, “Eschatology and the Prophets”, 16.
of Israel. Their studies have pointed out the important role of social factors in shaping OT religion and literature. Both OT religion and literature are divinely inspired, but this was through the mediation of human agents thoroughly integrated into their societies and moulded by social forces. All this boils down to the fact that it is no longer possible to engage in OT theological studies without taking into account the role of the OT social matrix, the complex cultural system that influenced both Israel and the sacred text that she produced.

Hanson himself details other influences to his thoughts, taking as his point of departure the catastrophe of 587 B.C. which made peers of ruler and subject in Israel, the result being rivalry and struggle that tended to polarize and throw into bold relief the divergent forces lying at the heart of the society in question. The first is Max Weber, who, in his “The Sociology of Religion,” points out that in the realm of religion and in politics, polarization tends to develop between the ruling classes and the alienated and oppressed ones. The former has interest in the institutions of the immediate past. They seek for the restoration of those disrupted structures in order to preserve their supremacy. The latter look to the more distant past, adopting models which challenge the power of the ruling class in order to bring about a revolution that would lead to the change of the status quo. They often adhere to prophetic figures who propel them towards this goal of revolution and change, deriving comfort in the intervention of a divine authority in this their longed-for change. On the contrary, the ruling class uses religion to legitimate its own life pattern and situation. Two other scholars that have also influenced Hanson’s thoughts are K. Mannheim and E. Troeltsch – and, in summary, both of them could also be said to be dealing, like

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50 Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 212.
Weber above, with the conflict existing between the ruling classes in society and the impoverished and oppressed masses.  

Essentially, however, Hanson seems to have been influenced by O. Plöger. Stated most briefly, Plöger also believes that apocalyptic eschatology developed from prophetic eschatology and it is the eschatological aspect that is the essential connecting point between them. Although this shift also occurred during the post-exilic period, the whole process began with two groups mentioned in 1Macc 2, the Maccabees (1Mac 2,29–41) and the Hasidim (1Mac 2,42–48), who had fought Antiochus Epiphanes. After going into passive resistance, these Hasidim eventually developed “apocalyptic” ideas as seen in Daniel (Dan 12,1–3), as opposed to the other group who saw that as part of their ordinary but theocratic religious history. Both points of view, however, historically go back to the work of Ezra and Nehemiah and are further traceable to the theocratic community of faith established at Sinai. It is on the life and expectations of this community in her relationship with YHWH that the preaching of the prophets was concentrated – hence, prophetic eschatology. From this common ground, that apocalyptic developed from prophecy among the conflicting groups of the post-exilic period, one can then say that Hanson went his own way to develop his own thesis. On that note, E. W. Nicholson comments on the views of Hanson and Plöger, and the scholars in the same camp with the latter, noting

53 O. Ploeger, Theokratie und Eschatologie (WMANT 2; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1959) 38–39.
their points of contact and difference. According to him, Hanson’s over-all understanding of the origin and development of apocalyptic differs in some major respects from that of Plöger and these other scholars. With them, Hanson shares the view that apocalyptic developed out of prophecy during the post-exilic period. He denies the influence of foreign ideas in this development, holding the view that influences from Persian dualism and Hellenism were late, coming, as they did, only after the full development of the essential character of apocalyptic. He, thus, concludes that apocalyptic was a native product of post-exilic Judaism which emerged as the result of an unbroken pattern out of pre-exilic and exilic prophecy. It depended for the source of its main ideas and characteristics on traditions and beliefs which have long since been at home in Israel, some of them being inherited from the nation’s Canaanite environment.57

Of importance in this survey of opinions on eschatology, also, is the view of R. P. Carroll. In line with Hanson, he believes that “apocalyptic” developed from prophecy but systematically uses the theory of “cognitive dissonance”, a theory put forward by Leon Festinger in 1957, in its explanation.58 “Cognitive dissonance theory is essentially about psychological inconsistency between cognitions associated with attitudes and behaviour.”59 Thus, if someone (S) believes strongly that smoking is bad for his health (cognition or attitude A) but still smokes heavily (behaviour B), conflict between A and B could bring tension or dissonance for S. S will then be driven to modify or resolve his experience of dissonance, provided the cognition and the practice are strongly held and incompatible.60

59 R. P. CARROLL , “Prophecy and Dissonance: A Theoretical Approach to the Prophetic Tradition”, ZAW 92 (1980) 108. He explains further: “When two cognitions are inconsistent or contradictory a person experiences tension or discomfort which constitutes a sense of dissonance. Dissonance theory maintains that when behaviour is inconsistent with an attitude or belief a person will be motivated to change either the attitude or the behaviour. Often dissonance may occur when a person’s self-concept is threatened by behaviour that is inconsistent with such a self-concept.”
60 C ARROLL , “Prophecy and Dissonance”, 109.
This theory of dissonance can be very valuable in studying the prophets. After the account of the call of young Samuel, he is described thus: “Yahweh was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground” (1Sam 3,19). He, thus, presents the picture of the ideal prophet. Yet it is not uncommon knowledge that many of the predictions by the prophets from Amos to Malachi did not materialise. Thus, prophecy could be said to have failed, bringing with it tension or dissonance. To that end, Prophet A, who believes that he is divinely inspired in having a strong belief or cognition (B), proclaims a divinely revealed prediction that some event will take place in the near future (C). The failure of this event (C) to take place as proclaimed may produce tension or dissonance in this prophet on account of the conflict arising between cognition B and the absence of C. Failure to resolve this dissonance on the part of prophet (A) could threaten him with such a crisis of identity and confidence that his continued existence as a prophet is called into question. Standard responses to resolve this dissonance include the reinterpretation, or rationalization, of the original prophecy; and the extension of the time factor in the prediction, allowing an open-ended expectation to constitute its meaning. By so doing, it becomes impossible to criticise a prediction as being unfulfilled. Rather, at best, it is yet to be fulfilled – it is delayed. Hence, “dissonance gives rise to hermeneutic.”

Applied specifically to the book of Isaiah, Carroll observes that the amount of inner tradition shifts in meaning in that book reveals how much the Isaiah tradition was constantly edited and reinterpreted. The attachment of Isa 40–55 and Isa 56–66 to Isa 1–39 also forms part of this process of reinterpretation of the prophetic tradition. This process modifies or expands it in accordance with the changing fortunes of history, thereby making it relevant to each generation. And in line with Hanson, Carroll concludes that eventually prophecy was transformed by apocalyptic which is “yet...
another attempt to show how unfulfilled expectations must of necessity be realised.”65 And on that same token, the oracles of Trito-
Isaiah “certainly seem to be a series of desperate measures designed to retrieve the expectations created by the proclamation of Second
Isaiah by explaining the causes for the delay of national salvation.”66

0.2.4 Other pertinent opinions

As already hinted above, there are other pertinent opinions in OT
eschatology which may not be strictly categorized under the three
foregoing groups already treated, but which are important for the
eschatological considerations in this book. Two of these opinions,
especially, call for consideration, on account of their importance to
the eschatology of Isa 65–66.

Thus, D. E. Gowan sees Jerusalem, Zion, as being in the centre of
OT eschatology, as it is centrally involved with all the major escha-
tological terms in the OT: transformation of human society, trans-
formation of the human person and transformation of nature.67

On his own part, H. Schwarz, although agreeing on the impor-
tance of Jerusalem in OT eschatology, yet, disagrees with Gowan in
seeing that city at its centre. He maintains that the eschatological
hopes of the OT became eventually focused on individual human
destiny and on the renewal, or rather re-creation, of nature. For
him, three main areas are decisive for eschatological thinking in the
OT: human destiny, the last judgment and the promise of and hope
for a Messiah.68

Some aspects of these views will still come up in the main part of
this book.

65 Caroll, “Prophecy and Dissonance”, 118
66 Caroll, “Prophecy and Dissonance”, 119.
67 D. E. Gowan, Eschatology in the Old Testament (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark,
1987) 5–19.