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INTRODUCTION

Creation, by which God's creative activity in both a cosmological and a historical sense is here referred to, is one of the most significant concepts of the Old Testament (OT). It begins with the assertion that God created everything in the cosmos (Gen 1:1).¹ The first two chapters of Genesis are a narrative presentation of God's activity in bringing the universe, the world, and mankind into existence. This theme is expressed throughout the OT in a variety of ways and it may be argued, as William Kirkpatrick did, that "the doctrine of creation is decisive for Christian theology. It structures, along with the doctrine of eschatology, the entire framework of the Christian's understanding of God."²

A principal source for creation thought in the OT is the book of Isaiah.³ This is

¹Carroll Stuhlmueller suggests that a generic definition of creation should read "God makes someone or something" (*Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah* [Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970], 3). Karl Schmitz-Moormann sees the term "creation" as one "that designates a double aspect of the universe: on the one hand, it points to the created reality; on the other hand, it speaks of the act of the Creator" (*Theology of Creation in an Evolutionary World* [Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1997], xi).

²William David Kirkpatrick, "A Theology of Creation: Confession and Prolegomena," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 32 (1990): 36.

³Bernhard W. Anderson identifies four main sources of OT creation faith: (1) the creation stories of Genesis, (2) "Second Isaiah" (Isa 40-55), (3) the psalms of the Psalter, and (4) wisdom literature (*From Creation to New Creation* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994], 19). In his study of "Second Isaiah," Mathew Howard Hudson concurs with this assessment of Anderson regarding the sources of OT creation

evident in the fact that the Hebrew root word ברא, which is the principal creation term of the OT, appears 21 times in Isaiah out of a total count of 48 for the entire OT.¹ Of these occurrences, ברא appears once in chaps. 1-39, 16 times in chaps. 40-55, and 4 times in chaps. 56-66.² The term is employed mainly in chaps. 40-55 (16 out of 21 instances) and in every instance, God is the subject of the verb and the context is invariably creation.

The other main OT creation words, עשה and יצר, appear 27 and 90 times, respectively, in Isaiah.³ God is the subject of the verb יצר in 18 of these occurrences and, in most cases, the context is creation. As elsewhere in the OT, the verb עשה is used in a flexible manner. Nevertheless, in Isaiah its affinity to ברא and יצר is easily demonstrated by the fact that God is the subject in 49 occurrences, and in 22 of these, the context is explicitly creation. Both עשה and יצר follow a pattern similar to ברא where 14 out of 18 and 14 out of 22, respectively, of the creation occurrences are in chaps. 40-55. Clearly, there is a distinct interest in creation in chaps. 40-55 which is not as evident in the other chapters.

thought ("Creation Theology in Isaiah 40-66: An Expression of Confidence in the Sovereignty of God" [Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995], 2).

¹Abraham Even-Shoshan, ed., *A New Concordance of the Bible* (Jerusalem: "Kiryat Sefer," 1997), 202-203; George Vs. Wigram, *The New Englishman's Hebrew Concordance* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1984), 270.

²This division of Isaiah closely parallels the prevailing historical designations of the various parts of Isaiah as First/Proto-, Second/Deutero-, and Third/Trito-Isaiah. A literary/thematic view of the different parts of Isaiah is supplied in the accompanying Excursus in this paper.

³Wigram, 981-997 and 556-557.

Statement of the Problem

In view of the preceding discussion, there is a need to discover the role and impact of creation thought in the book of Isaiah. The repeated occurrences of the three main creation words throughout the book indicate that creation thought plays a significant role in Isaiah. While creation thought permeates the book, there is an apparent crescendo in chaps. 40-55. Furthermore, there is a definitive climax of creation with the re-creation prophecy of chaps. 56-66. This development of Isaiah's creation thought invites a thorough investigation.

This study involves examination of the possible impact that the creation concept has upon Isaiah's view of God, especially his view of God's salvific work, which involves his creative power. As already noted, Isaiah's creation thought reaches a peak in chaps. 40-55, chapters whose primary focus is salvation.¹ This apparent connection between creation and redemption calls for careful study.

This study also investigates the relationship between Isaiah's creation thought and other significant concepts in the book, such as, holiness, judgement, and eschatology. Throughout the book, God is identified as the "Holy One of Israel," the "thrice" holy God of Isa 6:3, and in several instances (Isa 17:7; 37:16, 23; 41:20; 43:1-

¹These chapters also contain the Servant Songs which describe the life and ministry of God's anointed One (the Messiah), whose mission is the salvation of Israel and the world. For discussion of the Messianic significance of the Songs *vis-à-vis* the New Testament testimony that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, refer to F. Duane Lindsey, *The Servant Songs: A Study in Isaiah* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 139-145. While there is general consensus on the identification of the Servant Songs, not every one is in agreement. One such dissenting voice is Tryggve N. D. Mettinger who is skeptical of the existence of these Songs and insists that the criteria used to identify their existence are not satisfactory ("In Search of the Hidden Structure: YHWH as King in Isaiah 40-55," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah*, ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 1:154).

7; etc.), this divine epithet is placed alongside statements of God's creatorship. Creation thought and judgement are likewise closely linked together. For instance, the first creation passage, Isa 4:2-6, is framed by judgement passages (Isa 3 & 5). Creation thought is also firmly tied to eschatology, as shown by the connection between creation thought and judgement (Isa 17:7; 22:11, 12; 27:11, 12), the declaration of new things (Isa 42:5, 9; 48:1, 6, 7), and the making of new realities (Isa 65:17, 18; 66:22-24).

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of creation thought in the book of Isaiah in order to determine its relationship to Isaiah's concept of God as creator, especially as it pertains to his salvific work for and through Israel.

Review of Literature

This review of literature involves two types of works: (1) those dealing with creation in the OT in general but which may also include discussion about creation in Isaiah; and (2) those that specifically discuss Isaiah's creation thought, inclusive of commentaries on Isaiah that highlight this concept.

Works on Creation in the OT

As already indicated, Isaiah is a principal source of OT creation thought, but it is not the only one. The most obvious creation text is Gen 1-2, which relates the story of God's primordial creation. Creation is a major theme in wisdom literature (especially the book of Job) and in the Psalter. Gnanamuthu S. Wilson has identified Genesis (1:1-3:24), Job (for example, 4:17; 9:8, 9; 28:14, 24-27; 31:15; 34:19; and chaps. 38-41), Psalms (especially chaps. 8, 33, 104, 148), and Isaiah (for example, 40:26-18; 42:5; 44:24-28; 45:7, 12, 18; etc.) as the principal sources of OT creation

thought.¹ Isaiah's creation thought stands within this broader spectrum of OT thought.

In the last century or so, much energy has been invested in the study of OT creation thought. Different interpretational models have been applied in an attempt to elucidate the place and role of the creation concept in the OT. One such model was provided by Herman Gunkel, who utilised a comparative religions approach that highlighted the similarities between the biblical story of creation and the Babylonian Tiamat-Marduk myth. He concluded that Israel's creation story was simply a reflection of its environment.² Gunkel's work opened a virtual floodgate of research into the OT creation concept that would give birth to several significant studies. Current research in OT creation thought can be classified into three principal trends: (1) works that stress the primacy of salvation theology over creation thought, (2) works that stress the foundational nature of creation thought, and (3) works that view creation thought and salvation theology as standing on an equal footing. In addition, there is an interest for an ecological view of OT creation thought.

The Subordination of Creation Thought to Salvation Theology

Arguably the most influential model to date was introduced by Gerhard von Rad. In a paper first published in 1936, von Rad suggested that the primary concern of OT theology is redemption. As he put it, the "Yahwistic faith of the OT is a faith

¹Gnanamuthu S. Wilson, "A Descriptive Analysis of Creation and Themes in the Book of Psalms" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1995), 3, 80-86. He also provided a helpful survey of the major works on each of the four principal sources of OT creation thought.

²Herman Gunkel, "The Influence of Babylonian Mythology upon the Biblical Creation Story," in *Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 44. Gunkel's paper (in German) was first published in 1895.

based on the notion of election and therefore primarily concerned with redemption."¹ Furthermore, while the OT says much about creation, this doctrine does not stand in its own right. It is always related and subordinated to "the interests and content of the doctrine of redemption."² As a consequence, in the OT "the doctrine of creation never attained to the stature of a relevant, independent doctrine," but rather is "invariably related, and indeed subordinated, to soteriological considerations."³

Von Rad then proceeded to apply this basic premise to Isa 40-55 (so-called Deutero-Isaiah). He pointed out that while the doctrine of creation is frequently mentioned in Isa 40-55, its purpose is to provide a foundation for faith. Indeed, "at no point in the whole of Deutero-Isaiah does the doctrine of creation appear in its own right; it never forms the main theme of a pronouncement, nor provide the motive of a prophetic utterance. It is there, but as applied by the prophet in the course of his argument it performs only an ancillary function."⁴ To emphasise this point, von Rad spoke of the complete incorporation or absorption of creation into the complex of salvation thought.⁵

In a later study on the prophets, von Rad continued to maintain his basic belief about creation thought in Isa 40-55, stating:

A special feature in Deutero-Isaiah's thought about creation is, of

¹Gerhard von Rad, "The Theological Problem of the Old Testament Doctrine of Creation," in *Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 53.

²Ibid., 59.

³Ibid., 62.

⁴Ibid., 56.

⁵Ibid., 57, 58.

course, that he does not regard creation as a work by itself, something additional to Yahweh's historical acts. . . . For him creation is the first of Yahweh's miraculous historical acts and a remarkable witness to his will to save. The conclusive evidence for this 'soteriological' conception of creation is the fact that Deutero-Isaiah can at one time speak of Yahweh, the creator of the world, and at another of Yahweh, the creator of Israel.¹

For von Rad, this connection between creation thought and salvation theology in Isa 40-55 is such that "to create" and "to redeem" can be entirely synonymous expressions.²

The impact of von Rad's model is threefold: One, creation thought and salvation theology/salvation history would become inextricably linked together. Two, creation would be viewed almost always in terms of its relationship to redemption rather than independent from it. Three, creation thought in Isaiah would become isolated primarily to chaps. 40-55. This trend is reflected in other studies as well.

John Reumann was concerned not only with creation in the OT but also with biblical creation thought as a whole. He saw the biblical creation concept as not merely about origins but as also about the ongoing dependence of man and the world upon God, that is, *creatio continua*, which is depicted in Gen 2 and 3.³ This ongoing creation of God implies that God is constantly breaking into history redemptively.⁴ In the OT, Israel's concept of God could be "creation-centered" and might even appear to

¹Gerhard von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1962), 208.

²Ibid., 209.

³John Reumann, *Creation and New Creation: The Past, Present, and Future of God's Creative Activity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973), 58.

⁴Ibid., 59.

exist independently of "redemption faith."¹ Yet, it "is the redeemed community that speaks concerning creation. Creation/new creation language turns out usually to be in the service of the redemption motif."² In other words, creation is often to be understood as a type of redemption.³

Reumann's support of von Rad's thesis is also applied to his comments on creation thought in Isaiah (restricted to chaps. 40-55). He stated that the main message of Isa 40-55 is redemption and that creation imagery merely undergirds redemption.⁴ He pointed out that "Deutero-Isaiah presents us with the most massive and amazing use of creation language in the entire Bible. But the primary purpose of it all is to get across a message of redemption."⁵ He also asserted that at one time "the basis for anticipating new acts of God had been the experience of the exodus" but that in "Deutero-Isaiah it sometimes became creation that provided that basis." He added however that it is "not the original creation but God's continuing creative work, which may express itself as redemption in the present," that is the underlying factor of creation thought in Isa 40-55.⁶

Dennis J. McCarthy pursued the question of OT creation thought along different lines. He looked at the OT creation concept from the dual viewpoint of *creatio ex nihilo* and *Chaoskampf*. However, the materials he examined did not

¹Ibid., 61.

²Ibid., 102.

³Ibid., 103.

⁴Ibid., 74.

⁵Ibid., 78.

⁶Ibid., 82.

include Isaiah and were largely confined to the poetic data of the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the historical portions of the OT.

McCarthy insisted that the "so-called creation motifs" of the OT "are introduced in function of something else" and wondered whether it is even appropriate to speak of creation at all.¹ He argued against both *creatio ex nihilo* and *Chaoskampf*.² He concluded that the poems he surveyed do not speak "of absolute origins but rather of the origins of the social order as Israel found it and understood it, these relics do not speak of world origins, if they ever did anywhere. They speak of God's saving Israel, and it may be misleading to seek more from them."³ Like von Rad, McCarthy saw OT creation thought not as a doctrine in its own right but rather as one existing simply in the service of redemption theology or salvation history.

An approach to OT creation thought from the point of view of Biblical Theology is presented by Francis Watson. The author argued that the "notion of creation 'in the beginning' is an indispensable element in a Christian doctrine of creation and in a biblical theology of creation."⁴ Having said this, he went on to say "that the notion of creation in the beginning does not do justice to the total biblical presentation of creation as an ongoing, dynamic activity oriented not towards origins but towards an eschatological goal. 'Creation' would then refer to the totality of God's

¹Dennis J. McCarthy, "Creation Motifs in Ancient Hebrew Poetry," in *Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 75.

²*Ibid.*, 76, 79-80.

³*Ibid.*, 85.

⁴Francis Watson, *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 227. Watson does not specifically discuss creation thought in Isaiah.

activity towards the world."¹

Watson also linked OT creation thought with and made it subservient to redemption theology. He wrote:

For biblical theology, creation represents the beginning of the history of God's covenant-relationship with human kind. It is *only* the beginning of that history, and not the totality; it establishes the foundation or stage upon which the rest of that history can unfold. And it is *truly* the beginning of that history, and not an independent topic that can be considered in abstraction from its narrative context.²

Andreas Angerstorfer's study provided what is perhaps the most extensive survey of the use and meaning of the verb בָּרָא in the OT. His study considered the lexical and grammatical usages of the verb throughout the OT. It focused particularly on pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic biblical literature. Pre-exilic literature covers such OT books as the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and Jeremiah. Post-exilic includes the book of Genesis and Isa 56-66. The exilic period is represented almost exclusively by Isa 40-55. With regards to creation in Isa 40-55, Angerstorfer follows along the same lines as von Rad, stating that Israel's understanding of creation and election appear as thematic variations for the fundamental salvific act of God for his people.³

The most prolific presenter of OT creation thought is Bernhard W. Anderson. His ideas reflected elements of the interpretational models of both Gunkel and von

¹Ibid., 226.

²Ibid., 267.

³Andreas Angerstorfer, *Der Schöpfergott des Alten Testaments: Herkunft und Bedeutungsentwicklung des hebräischen Terminus בָּרָא (bara) »schaffen«* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1977), 149.

Rad.¹ Anderson viewed creation as more of a historical event than a natural one. In an article published in 1955, he argued that the "affirmation that God is creator arose originally out of the worship experience of Israel,"² and that the OT stories of creation presuppose election faith and carry with them "the conviction that God has chosen the history of Israel as the special medium of his revelation."³ Therefore, it is justified to infer "that in Israel's faith redemption was primary, creation secondary" both in terms of theological importance and in the order of appearance of Israel's 'traditions'.⁴ Consequently, to "speak of God as Creator, then, is not to make an affirmation about the manufacture of nature" but rather the biblical understanding of "*the meaning of man's history*."⁵ "The point bears reemphasis that in the Bible creation is not an independent doctrine, but is secondary to *Heilsgeschichte*—the history in which God is the actor and redeemer. Salvation and creation—in this order—belong together."⁶

Anderson maintained his basic premise in later publications as well. In a 1987 work he again argued that "it is proper to say that creation in the larger sense was an inference from the experience of redemption"⁷ and that the central concern of the

¹Fiona Black, "See Who Created These: Yahweh's Creative Activity in Isaiah 40-55" (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1994), 11-13.

²Bernhard W. Anderson, "The Earth Is the Lord's," *Interpretation* 9 (1955): 5.

³*Ibid.*, 6.

⁴*Ibid.*, 7.

⁵*Ibid.*, 9.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Bernhard W. Anderson, *Creation Versus Chaos: The Reinterpretation of Mythical Symbolism in the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 36.

creation narratives is history rather than cosmology.¹ He also argued that the biblical account of creation that opens the Bible "is governed by a historical intention" and so "creation does not stand by itself: it is inseparably related to and a part of history."² With such considerations, Anderson insisted that to detach "creation" from its "historical context and consider it as a separate doctrine . . . violates the intention of the creation stories" because these stories want to speak primarily about history.³

In his latest work, Anderson has continued his main lines of argument. He still argues that redemption is the primary theological and 'traditions' force in Israel's faith,⁴ that to speak of God as Creator is not to speak of the manufacture of things but only of the meaning of human history,⁵ and that creation is not an independent doctrine.⁶ He also reiterates his earlier position concerning the relationship of creation thought to historical concerns, particularly those pertaining to salvation history. Thus, to "speak of the 'first things' in this context is not to reflect on ancient origins but to say something about the source and foundation of the meaning discerned within Israel's history."⁷ Creation faith "affirms that God alone is the author of the meaning that supports all human history and the natural world, which is the theater of the

¹Ibid., 110.

²Ibid., 40.

³Ibid., 33.

⁴Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation*, 4.

⁵Ibid., 6.

⁶Ibid., 7.

⁷Ibid., 4.

historical drama."¹ Thus "creation is the prologue to history. It set the stage for the unfolding of the divine purpose and inaugurates a historical drama."²

This insistence on the historical meaning of creation becomes especially pertinent in Anderson's view of creation thought in Isaiah (namely, chaps. 40-55). While affirming that in Isa 40-55 "Israel's creation-faith comes to its finest and maturest expression in the Old Testament,"³ he also insisted that "not once does Second Isaiah deal with creation by itself, apart from history."⁴ Isa 40-55 has taken creation out of the realm of mythology and rendered it a "historical event in the *now*." From such a historical standpoint the prophet sees "a series of redemptive acts, stretching back even before Israel's *Heilsgeschichte* to the beginning of time."⁵ No other OT writer "grasps as profoundly as Second Isaiah the soteriological meaning of creation and the creative significance of redemption."⁶

This profound relationship of creation and history means that the presentation of God's power not only speaks of what God did in the past but also extends to the new thing God will do in the future. This theme of new creation dominates Isa 40-55 because these chapters speak of the creator God whose power and wisdom in creation, on the one hand, "are the ground for the proclamation of divine redemption," and, on the other hand, supply the confidence to announce that this God can bring about a new

¹Ibid., 3.

²Ibid., 25.

³Anderson, *Creation Versus Chaos*, 119.

⁴Ibid., 120.

⁵Ibid., 131.

⁶Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation*, 27.

beginning in Israel's history, that he can perform a new act of creation.¹

The most complete survey of OT creation thought was conducted by Ethan Theodore Mengers who utilised a Biblical Theology approach and studied some 150 passages.² He concluded that creation held a "very important place in the total thinking" of the OT and that the "creation idea receives emphatic notice in many different books and types of literature."³ He also concluded that creation faith was present in Israel from the earliest times but became more insistent following the Exile.⁴ Furthermore, Israel came by its belief in creation via history. "To Israel God was, first of all, the God of history. And the God of history is then identified with the Creator of the world."⁵ Therefore, the "character of Yahweh as the Lord of history tends to dominate the creation thought of the Old Testament."⁶

Mengers held that Isa 40-55 attaches great importance to the doctrine of creation. The concept suggests a close relationship to the monotheism of these chapters and the idea that God is the transcendent one. Moreover a close relation is maintained between creation of the world and God's redemptive acts in the historical

¹Ibid., 37.

²Ethan Theodore Mengers, "The Idea of Creation in the Old Testament" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1957), xi-xii & 330.

³Ibid., 330-331.

⁴Ibid., 332.

⁵Ibid., 342. Mengers suggested two other ways for arriving at creation: (1) through nature worship as the Near Eastern mythologies did, and (2) through philosophical speculation as the Greeks did (ibid., 343-344).

⁶Ibid., 344.

scene.¹ In seeing creation as born out of a historical encounter with God, Mengers demonstrated that he also followed the general pattern set by von Rad.

The Foundational Nature of Creation Thought

While von Rad's interpretation has influenced a number of other scholars, not everyone has agreed with his conclusions. An opposing view was offered by H. H. Schmid who studied OT creation thought within the context of the other creation views of the Ancient Near East (ANE). He suggested that the ANE and Israel's ultimate frame of reference was creation and the ordering of the world, and that this was the comprehensive horizon against which Israel and its neighbours lived their faith.²

In contrast to von Rad's school of thought, Schmid maintained that all "theology is creation theology, even when it does not speak expressly of creation but speaks of faith, justification, the reign of God, or whatever, if it does so in relation to the world."³ Furthermore, when all the factors are considered, "the doctrine of creation, namely, the belief that God has created and is sustaining the order of the world in all its complexities, is not a peripheral theme of biblical theology but is plainly the fundamental theme."⁴ Schmid asserted that it is safe to conclude "that, for

¹Ibid., 184-187.

²H. H. Schmid, "Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation: 'Creation Theology' as the Broad Horizon of Biblical Theology," in *Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 102-117. This work was first published as "Schöpfung, Gerechtigkeit und Heil. 'Schöpfungstheologie' als Gesamthorizont biblischer Theologie," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 70 (1973): 1-19.

³Ibid., 115.

⁴Ibid., 111.

extensive and major literary contexts of the OT creation-faith in the broad sense is not simply a 'foil', rather, this faith centrally determines their content."¹

While Schmid did not comment at great length on Isaiah, he did speak in passing of Isa 40-55. In these chapters the announcement of imminent historical events exhibits creation motifs. What this means is that here "we do not find that creation motifs have been transferred secondarily to historical statements." To the contrary, "views of creation provide the framework within which assertions about history are made."² The evident primacy of creation thought in Schmid's view stands in stark contrast to the prevailing view engendered by von Rad.

The biblical concept of creation has also been examined from an ecological perspective. Ronald A. Simkins rejected von Rad's subordination of creation faith to salvation history and provides an interpretation that is driven by an interest in the biblical view of the natural order of things.³ He stated that "humankind's status in relation to God and God's activity in redemption are analogous to God's relationship to and activity in creation. Creation in the Bible therefore serves as a paradigm or model of the human condition and of redemption."⁴ While there is an integral connection between humans and the natural world, there is a hierarchical relationship between God and creation. God acts and transforms creation and creation is dependent

¹Ibid., 108.

²Ibid.

³Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 91-92.

⁴Ibid., 91.

upon God.¹

Humans and the natural world are linked in such a manner "that human actions have ramifications in nature. Human actions that are in accord with the order of creation, that follow the stipulations of the covenant, result in the flourishing of creation. But actions that violate the order of creation and transgress God's covenant bring disorder to the creation. They ritually pollute the land and cause the creation to collapse. As a result, God's redemption of humans entails a new creation."²

The Parity of Creation Thought and Salvation Theology

Claus Westermann attempted to mediate between the two extreme views presented by von Rad and Schmid. In his first major work on the subject of OT creation, he proposed that consideration be made of the fact "that ancient Israel spoke of Creation in different ways at different times. The Old Testament knew no definitive teaching on Creation. The reflection on the Creation could vary."³ In Genesis, a bond exists between the inquiry about beginning and end and questions about the history of mankind centered around Israel's history. "The boldness of this conception is that the constricted history of a small people is presented as the leading, saving, preserving action of the same God who created the world and man."⁴

¹Ibid., 118-119.

²Ibid., 253-254. So also Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 102. For a possible Christian ecological doctrine of creation see Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 1985), 1-13.

³Claus Westermann, *Creation*, trans. John J. Scullion (London: SPCK, 1971), 6. The original German work: *Schöpfung* (Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag Stuttgart, 1971). In this work Westermann does not draw much attention to Isaiah.

⁴Ibid., 14-15.

In tackling the question regarding the relationship between creation and redemption, Westermann suggested that these two ideas represent a polarity of thought that pervades the entire Bible and that their relationship to each other is extremely varied. "They cannot be constrained under the one notion, but neither can they be separated from each other."¹ In his later work on OT theology, Westermann commented that references to the Creator in the OT appear in two great contexts:² (1) Israel's encounter with God as its saviour, an experience that was expanded to include all spheres of life; since God is one, the Saviour must also be the Creator; (2) talk "of creation in the Bible, in its roots, reaches far into the history of humanity." With (1) Westermann attempted to include von Rad's main thesis, and with (2) he endeavoured to dialogue with Schmid. He pursued this moderate view by stating that "in the Old Testament the history established by God's saving deed was expanded to include the beginning of everything that happens. The Savior of Israel is the creator; the creator is the saviour of Israel. What began in creation issues into Israel's history."³

In a study that involved Isa 40-55, Job, and the Psalms, Rainer Albertz approached OT creation thought in terms of the creation of the world and of man. The first main section of the book dealt with this issue as it is discussed in Isa 40-55. In these chapters, Albertz identified two types of creation statements, which are identifiable in terms of form critical origins and clearly distinguished functions.⁴ The

¹Ibid., 123.

²Claus Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 86-87.

³Ibid., 86.

⁴Rainer Albertz, *Weltschöpfung und Menschenschöpfung: Untersucht bei Deuterocesajam, Hiob und in den Psalmen* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1974), 6.

first group of statements is comprised of disputation sayings (e.g., 40:12-17, 18-20; 44:24-28), sayings of hymnic origin (e.g., 40:22-24), and creation introductions where verbs are employed to express God's handiwork.¹ The second group consists of salvation oracles (e.g., 43:1), complaints of individuals, and creation introductions.²

Albertz was more concerned with what happens to creation thought in Isa 40-55. He explained that the material in these chapters undergoes great modification. This modification is both stylistic (grammatical modification) and substantial (new function is given to creation statements).³ In essence, Isaiah redefines creation.

In a study that examined the relationship of God's creative act to his other acts in Israel, Karl Eberlein followed the path of moderation set by Westermann. His central point was the indissoluble connection between the universal and particular perspectives regarding creation. Following an exegetical-hermeneutic approach, the study analyzed the function of creation statements in their respective contexts and their role in OT theology. The exegetical portion of the study covered Isa 40-55 and the Psalms.

In his search for a hermeneutical stance on creation, Eberlein pointed out that faith in the creator God is a fundamental premise of the three great monotheistic religions of the world, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.⁴ While recognising this, he also spoke of the particularity of God's act in Christ. Universality and particularity

¹Ibid., 7, 13, 21.

²Ibid., 26, 33, 44.

³Ibid., 20. Albertz's position *vis-à-vis* von Rad is somewhat ambiguous.

⁴Karl Eberlein, *Gott der Schöpfer–Israels Gott: eine exegetisch-hermeneutische Studie zur theologischen Funktion alttestamentlicher Schöpfungsaussagen* (Frankfurt: Peter Long, 1989), 306.

come together in Christ as 'primordial' and 'salvation historical' progress.¹ God as the Creator was with Israel, he was with Christ, but he was also in Christ.²

This universal-particular polarity is also relevant to the creation message of Isa 40-55. The end of the Kingdom of Judah and the exile were not only a great catastrophe but also marked a crisis of faith. The questions engendered by the arising doubt posed a challenge and Isa 40-55 takes up this challenge. In contrast to the assumption that God is idle or dormant, these chapters proclaim God as the creator in all his array of creative activities.³ God's historical act on behalf of his people stands on a universal horizon, and his act in creation and history in a certain sense is seen as a unity.⁴ Thus creation thought in Isa 40-55 reflects both the universality of creation and the particularity of history, Israel's history. Both creation and history are best understood against this backdrop.

What is evident so far is that opinions on OT creation thought take on three principal forms:

1. There are those who stress the primacy of salvation theology (along with its historical counterpart) and view creation thought in a more subordinate role.
2. There are those who emphasise the foundational nature of creation thought and insist that the primacy of creation thought be acknowledged.
3. There are those who see the parity of these two themes, their interrelatedness, and their connection to each other.

¹Ibid., 308.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 183-184.

⁴Ibid., 188.

The second part of this Review surveys works whose primary focus is the book of Isaiah.

Works on Creation in Isaiah

This portion of the Review zeroes in on studies that focus only on Isaiah or parts of Isaiah. It also includes certain commentaries that actually highlight Isaiah's creation thought in some way. Whereas most commentators treat the various creation texts during the course of the commentary, many do not draw special attention to creation. Consequently, this Review focuses only on those commentaries that draw attention to Isaiah's creation thought.

Much of the research on Isaiah's creation thought has been largely influenced by von Rad's thesis. This becomes fairly evident in two ways: (1) Most of these studies focus almost exclusively on Isa 40-55 (so-called Second Isaiah), and (2) the majority of the studies favor the primacy of salvation theology/history over creation thought in Isaiah.

The Subordination of Creation Thought to Salvation Theology

Typical of this trend are the comments made by R. D. Napier: "In Second Isaiah, the creation-faith reflects empirical, historical concerns, a faith dependent upon and in explanation of *Heilsgeschichte* and given characteristic form and expression in the liturgy and ritual of a cultus itself focused on history, on Yahweh's mighty acts in history."¹ A similar line of reasoning is followed by T. M. Mauch in his dissertation. In commenting on Isa 40:12-31, he stated:

To speak about Yahweh's activity in history Second Isaiah extends the

¹R. D. Napier, "On Creation–Faith in the Old Testament," *Interpretation* 16 (1962): 37-38.

range of vision to include Yahweh's activity in creation. In this extension, Yahweh's activity in history is primary: this poem concerning creation follows the announcement of Yahweh's imminent theophany in history bringing salvation (40:1-11). . . . This alignment characterizes Old Testament literature. Israel's earliest attention was focused upon what Yahweh had done in history. . . . The sequence in the Old Testament is not: the Creator (subject) is Yahweh (predicate), but rather: Yahweh the covenant God of Israel (subject) is the Creator (predicate).¹

Similar views are also reflected by several other scholars.

Malcolm E. Elliot-Hogg spoke of the "peripheral function of the creation concept" in the OT² and asserted that in the OT creation "is not considered for its own sake but within the broader context of Yahweh's redemptive work."³ This leads to the conclusion that "the creation accounts of Genesis are intended as the starting point not of history in general but of God's gracious dealings with man as introduction to the particular history of the nation of Israel. The creation therefore is inseparably related to the entire salvation history."⁴

In applying this to Isaiah, he explained that creation and the Exodus are juxtaposed in Isaiah in such a manner that through this decisive event in Israel's history one witnessed the creation of the nation.⁵ This means that the use of creation terminology in reference to the Exodus implies that creation is about the history of

¹T. M. Mauch, "The Participial Ascriptions to Yahweh in Isaiah 40-55 as Exemplified in the Participial Ascriptions Concerning Creation" (Th.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 1958), 112.

²Malcolm E. Elliot-Hogg, "The Concept of Creation in Isaiah" (M.Th. thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1983), 45.

³Ibid., 46.

⁴Ibid., 47-48.

⁵Ibid., 56.

Israel. By linking creation and the Exodus together, Isaiah suggests that both events are historical as well as soteriological.¹ Exodus however is not confined to the past because Isaiah also looks forward to a new Exodus, a new creation of Israel. Since the primeval creation is set in the context of the history of redemption, so is this new Exodus underscored by creation.² Consequentially, in Isaiah is witnessed the "absorption of the creation doctrine into the Heilsgeschichte to describe both the beginning and the end of the historical drama of salvation."³

Likewise, David L. Uhl held that the "doctrine of creation held a secondary place in Old Testament thought."⁴ He posited the idea that "Israel could only think of God as creator after she had experienced God's dramatic saving acts in history."⁵ So significant is this sequence of history-creation that the OT consistently portrays this God of Israel as redeemer first and creator second.⁶

This basic OT pattern applies also for Isa 40-55. As Uhl put it, "Creation in Isa 40-55 is never a thought which finds its ultimate meaning in itself. Deutero-Isaiah knows nothing of creation, simply for creation's sake. Yahweh is not just the creator; he is the Lord of history and the redeemer of Israel and all people. . . . Indeed, creation

¹Ibid., 49.

²Ibid., 67.

³Ibid., 72.

⁴David L. Uhl, "A Comparative Study of the Concepts of Creation in Isaiah 40-55 and Genesis 1-2" (Th.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1966), 187.

⁵Ibid., 188.

⁶Ibid., 209.

is embodied within the saving activity of Yahweh in history."¹

In an article on this subject, Rolf Rendtorff generally agreed with von Rad's basic premise and conceded that "we can speak of a 'soteriological' understanding of creation works."² However, he took the creation thought of Isa 40-55 a step further. He pointed out that the picture of creation statements in Isa 40-55 occupies a unique place in the OT. Apart from the Genesis creation account, they present to us a greater, more coherent theological conception than anywhere else in the OT.³ A whole new trait of faith emerges in these chapters with the idea that creation is not just of the world but of Israel, that the creator of the world is the creator of Israel.⁴

Rendtorff proposed that Isa 40-55 elevates creation and that here creation faith has undergone a decided change. God's act of creating the world is no more a thing of the past, but it is, in its highest frame of reference, his present salvific act. This salvation act of God for his people, present or future, stands or falls together in close relationship to the personal creation and election act in the past.⁵ As a result creation faith and salvation faith are really one and the same act of God. "It is not only the same God, who acts now and then, but rather it is *one* act of God, that again and again occurs and to which Israel owes its life and its salvation."⁶ Thus creation faith is

¹Ibid., 80-81.

²Rolf Rendtorff, "Die theologische Stellung des Schöpfungsglaubens bei Deuterjesaja," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 51 (1954): 3.

³Ibid., 3.

⁴Ibid., 8.

⁵Ibid., 12, 13.

⁶Ibid., 13.

placed more or less on par with salvation faith.

The most prolific writer on creation thought in Isa 40-55 is Carroll Stuhlmueller. In an early article on the subject he had asserted that "God's historical intervention imparted a momentum to biblical religion which kept this *Schöpfungsglaube* always subservient to *Heilsglaube*."¹ In a 1967 article on the subject, Stuhlmueller defined creation as "an exceptionally wondrous redemptive act by which Yahweh brings Israel out of a chaotic situation to a renewed, transformed existence."² In the same article, he articulated the notion that Isa 40-55 "introduces the idea of creation for what it contributes to the understanding of who is Yahweh, Israel's Redeemer *now*. It is as *redeemer* that Yahweh *creates*."³ This idea would echo in his other works on the subject.

His most significant work on this subject is his monograph, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah*. While maintaining that Isa 40-55 "speaks at length explicitly about creation," yet it is not a subject that renders itself easily to direct and exclusive investigation.⁴ However, the number and range of creation words utilised and the placement of these words in summarising long poems (e.g., 41:17-20; 43:1-7; 43:16-21; 44:24-45:7) and at the conclusion of the entire Book of Consolation (55:10-11) manifest a singular importance that creation thought holds in Isa 40-55.⁵

¹Carroll Stuhlmueller, "The Theology of Creation in Second Isaias," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 21 (1959): 430.

²Carroll Stuhlmueller, "'First and Last' and 'Yahweh-Creator' in Deutero-Isaiah," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 29 (1967): 189.

³*Ibid.*, 205.

⁴Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption*, 5-7.

⁵*Ibid.*, 4, 39.

Stuhlmüller continued to defend his earlier views that, despite its significance in Isa 40-55, creation thought is still subservient to redemption theology. "Creation, therefore, expresses the end and fulness of what Yahweh is to do redemptively for Israel."¹ What Isa 40-55 means by "creation" is "a redemptive act of Yahweh."² In other words,

we have seen over and over again that Dt-Is introduces creation as an aspect of redemption. . . . In the poems studied until now, therefore, creation refers more immediately to the re-creation of *Israel*, only indirectly to Yahweh's creative action upon the universe.

Our attention now turns explicitly to Dt-Is' appreciation of Yahweh's creation of the *universe*, particularly to its *first* creation. Again creation will occupy a secondary, subservient role to redemption.³

He proposed the idea that Isa 40-55 announces a redemption "so new and so stupendous" that it was entitled "creation."⁴ For Stuhlmüller, creation remains subsidiary to but nevertheless enhances the prophet's conception of redemption. Hence it could be termed creative redemption.

Several commentators, especially those who focus on Isa 40-55/40-66, tend to hold (in one way or another) to the primacy of salvation theology/redemption history as promoted by von Rad. John Scullion stated that "Second Isaiah is an innovator in creation theology in that he unites and constantly underscores God in act as creator and redeemer. Creation for him is the beginning of sacred history; and history itself is

¹Ibid., 40.

²Ibid., 94.

³Ibid., 193.

⁴Ibid., 233.

a continuation of this creative power."¹

Similarly, James Muilenburg asserted that the "purpose of God's coming into history is to effect redemption" and that this idea is primary in Isa 40-66, yet "closely related to it is God's activity in creation."² He suggested that the principal perspective of these chapters is "eschatological" and that this perspective transforms both creation and redemption. Nevertheless, he insisted that "the prophet's interest is by no means cosmogonic or cosmic alone. . . . Repeatedly the prophet appeals to God's creation as the background for history."³

Christopher R. North adopted a position that is unmistakably in agreement with that of von Rad. He explained that the emphasis on Yahweh as the creator in Isa 40-55 is something new in prophecy.⁴ For him Israel first knew God as their deliverer from Egypt and that the "doctrine of creation was something in the nature of an afterthought." Therefore, Isa 40-55 does not conceive of God's "original creation of the world as a finished work, complete in itself and separate from his saving activity in history"⁵ but rather as "the first act in the drama of history."⁶

¹John Scullion, *Isaiah 40-66, Old Testament Messages* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1982), 31. The author obviously leaned towards von Rad's thesis even though he attempted to moderate that view by granting more weight to creation thought.

²James Muilenburg, "The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66: Introduction and Exegesis," *Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1956), 5:401.

³*Ibid.*, 5:401. Muilenburg, like Scullion, was obviously uncertain about von Rad's thesis, yet his own position was not that far from it.

⁴Christopher R. North, *The Second Isaiah: Introduction, Translation and Commentary to Chapters XL-LV* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), 13.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*, 14.

Arguing along the same lines is Richard J. Clifford, who reasoned that even though creation is a leading idea in Isa 40-55,¹ the "prophet speaks only of the creation, or cosmogony, in which Israel comes forth as Yahweh's people standing in his land. . . . For him, creation is the divine act of victory from which Israel emerged as a people."² He added that Israel defined itself by two types of stories, a historic one and a cosmogonic one. "In modern terminology the historic type is called *redemption* and the cosmogonic type is called *creation*. They are however the same event—the emergence of Israel as a people before Yahweh."³ Clifford subsumed creation thought in Isa 40-55 under salvation theology/history so completely that elsewhere he wrote: "First creation in the prophet does not, in my judgment, refer to the act that brought the world of the nations into being; that is the perspective of Gen 1, not of Second Isaiah. Second Isaiah's preaching focuses intensely on Israel."⁴ Among commentators, Clifford is the most insistent on the primacy of salvation theology/history. The view that in Isa 40-55 salvation theology is primary, while creation thought simply serves a subordinate role, is the prevailing view among many writers and commentators.

The Foundational Nature of Creation Thought

This majority view concerning creation thought in Isaiah is not held by everyone. There are those who see the concept as being independent of and/or equal to salvation theology. Dale Brooks is one of those who has defended the primacy of

¹Richard J. Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading: An Interpretation of Second Isaiah* (New York: Paulist, 1984), 59.

²*Ibid.*, 66, n. 7.

³*Ibid.*, 23.

⁴Richard J. Clifford, "The Hebrew Scriptures and the Theology of Creation," *Theological Studies* 46 (1985): 519.

creation thought. He asserted that the "doctrine of a literal creation . . . permeated the thinking of the biblical writers to the extent that God's creatorship is actually used as a springboard from which to launch other theological descriptions and statements about God."¹ Since Isaiah "contains more specific verses which declare creation than any other book outside of Genesis and Psalms," such thinking would be expected in Isaiah.² Brooks concluded that "Isaiah demonstrates that the doctrine of a literal creation is important enough to be placed on par" with other doctrines in the book, inclusive of redemption.³ Moreover, Isaiah "establishes creation as a foundational doctrine. Other doctrines depend upon it."⁴

In a recent study, Hudson vigorously defended the primacy of creation thought in Isa 40-66. He drew attention to the fact that these chapters, along with Genesis, the wisdom literature, and the Psalter, provide the key sources for Israel's creation faith⁵ and insisted that the salvation faith orientation of von Rad does not really do justice to the creation concept in Isa 40-66.

Hudson admitted that these chapters have been "the showcase for evidence that the doctrine of creation in the Old Testament is subordinate to redemptive history"⁶ but repudiated this notion by saying that "such subordination downplays the

¹Dale Brooks, "Theological Contribution of the Creation Motif in Isaiah" (M.Th. thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1985), 1. This study is the only work in this Review that treats all of Isaiah as one book.

²Ibid., 3.

³Ibid., 89, 90.

⁴Ibid., 90.

⁵Hudson, 3.

⁶Ibid., 2.

role creation plays in the prophet's message. It is not a sideline theme interpreted in soteriological language. Creation stands on its own at the center of some of the prophet's key messages."¹ Rather than being a subsidiary theme, "creation serves as the foundation for the prophet's justification for God's acts in history."² He proposed the thesis "that creation theology in Deutero-Isaiah stands as an independent tradition,"³ rendering it highly significant to Isaiah's message and placing it on par with other doctrines in Isa 40-66.

In response to this subordinating of creation thought in Isaiah, especially as advocated by StuhlmueLLer, John N. Oswalt wrote:

Redemption is certainly primary, in terms of both space and focus. But this does not mean that the Lord's role as creator is unimportant to the argument. Indeed, it is critical. He is able to redeem only because he alone is creator. Remove that foundation and the argument falls to the ground.⁴

Creation thought is a significant concept in Isaiah and to subordinate it to any other concept is tantamount to undoing its importance.

The Parity of Creation Thought and Salvation Theology

A third option has been to simply consider the two concepts as inextricably linked together so as to render superfluous any discussion of the primacy of one over

¹Ibid., 146.

²Ibid., 117.

³Ibid., 3. Likewise, Fiona Black maintained that creation thought in Isa 40-55 is independent from salvation concerns (1).

⁴John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 221, n. 75. Even though Oswalt does not specifically highlight creation in his commentary, he is included in this Review because of his rejection of the historical division of Isaiah and of the majority view that maintains the primacy of salvation theology/history.

the other. For instance, Jörg Jeremias argued that in Isa 40-55 creation and history belong indissolubly together.¹

Pursuing a somewhat different argument, Ph. B. Harner conceded that creation thought may still be "subordinate" to salvation theology in Isa 40-55, but, nevertheless plays "a central and essential role." It becomes so important that it serves as the basis for the prophet's belief in God's "imminent redemption of Israel, and so in its turn it gives new vitality to salvation faith."² As such, "creation faith does have a certain independence of its own" and it is "not simply absorbed into the structure of salvation faith."³ "It follows that creation faith here is not simply the supporting basis for salvation faith. Within the total context of II Isaiah's thought, it forms an integral part of his proclamation."⁴ While attempting to elevate creation, Harner has not succeeded in liberating it from its usually stated subordination to salvation/history.

Ben C. Ollenburger also offered a mediating view of Isaiah's creation thought. He pointed out that nowhere "in the Bible does creation assume greater theological significance than in the book of Isaiah."⁵ He also contended that most chapters in Isaiah "do not speak explicitly of creation, and thus do not provide evidence for an Isaianic theology of creation." However, "an understanding of creation is important to

¹Jörg Jeremias, "Schöpfung in Poesie und Prosa des Alten Testaments," in *Schöpfung und Neuschöpfung*, ed. Ingo Baldermann and others (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 30-32. See also Hans-Joachim Kraus, "Schöpfung und Weltvollendung," *Evangelische Theologie* 24 (1964): 462-485.

²Ph. B. Harner, "Creation Faith in Deutero-Isaiah," *Vetus Testamentum* 17 (1967): 306.

³Ibid., 305.

⁴Ibid., 302.

⁵Ben C. Ollenburger, "Isaiah's Creation Theology," *Ex Auditu* 3 (1987): 54.

what Isaiah *does* say about a variety of things."¹ Moreover, creation "cannot be limited to talk of origins, but must include the entire, diverse biblical witness to God the creator."²

The following quotation reveals Ollenburger's attempt to keep creation thought connected to and on a par with other ideas in Isaiah.

In Isaiah, creation and providence are made concrete in relation to Israel, and it is quite impossible for Isaiah to speak of God's plan or God's defeat of chaos or God's preservation and restoration of cosmic order without speaking of Zion and of Israel. In this respect, Isaiah knows of no special providence alongside a general one, and no extraordinary providence alongside an ordinary one; rather, the providential action of God the creator is on behalf of and with respect to Israel and Zion in the presence of the startled nations and witnessed by nature. Isaiah is bound to speak in this way because the God of whom Isaiah speaks as creator is never other than Israel's God, Yhwh. But at the same time, the creator's action in redeeming Israel and restoring Zion is genuinely the restoration and the recreation of cosmic order in which the nations share as well. The earth is genuinely ordered and pacified in this action of the creator on behalf of Israel.³

Another author who attempted a moderate view is C. Greg Long. He admitted that most scholars have concluded that "creation faith occupies a subordinate role in the theology of Isaiah."⁴ He also conceded that "Yahweh's work did not proceed from creation to history, but from history to creation,"⁵ and that from "the first contact with

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 61.

³Ibid., 69-70.

⁴C. Greg Long, "An Investigation of the Work of the Lord in the Book of Isaiah" (Ph.D. dissertation, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 1984), 16. Long's study is not specifically on Isaiah's creation thought but chapter 1 of the work is on creation.

⁵Ibid., 56.

Israel to the last act, Yahweh's divine activity centered around his people."¹ Nevertheless, he cautioned against attempting to establish the primacy of any single concept in Isaiah. All activities, whether creation or preservation or election or redemption, are the work of Yahweh and that "the point of transition from one action to the next was not always easily discernable. Because of this unified view of Yahweh's work, creation cannot be separated from or subordinated to any other aspect of Yahweh's work."²

An attempt to moderate between the two poles of creation thought and salvation theology was also provided by John L. McKenzie. He suggested that the writer of Isa 40-55 was "the first writer to consider creation extensively, and to draw theological conclusions from the belief in Yahweh as creator" and appears to have been the first "to have made this belief meaningful in the whole context of Israelite faith."³ These chapters present something novel or at least recast a traditional belief. The belief in creation is removed from its mythological level, which lies outside of history, and placed within the rubric of history, particularly the historical experience of Israel.⁴ In doing this, however, Isa 40-55 "does not detach the theology of creation from the theology of history."⁵ McKenzie sought to resolve the conundrum of the relationship between creation and salvation by proposing that both creation and

¹Ibid., 65.

²Ibid., 70, 71.

³John L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), lix.

⁴Ibid., lx.

⁵Ibid., 24.

salvation are subordinated to mission.¹

Like McKenzie, Paul D. Hanson also avoided the polarising discussion of the relationship of creation and salvation by proposing another explanation: God as the majestic centre of all creation² based upon a focus on Isaiah's world view. Such an approach would take into account the "relational webs that connect God, Israel, the nations, and the physical universe."³ The writer of Isa 40-55 is addressing a people in turmoil and lets them see that life without this centre cannot exist. He holds before them a compelling vision of their identity, purpose, and place in creation and how this is all held together by God, the holy center.⁴ He presents God "as a dynamic, destiny-shaping presence in the midst of human history" and shows that all existence, physical and human, finds being and purpose in relation to the centre, that is, to God.⁵ God's primary work is "to heal a torn creation and restore a broken community"⁶ and this redemptive movement is primordial, historical, and eschatological.⁷

Other commentators specifically highlight creation thought in Isaiah or part thereof. John T. Willis pointed to the presence of creation thought in Isaiah as a

¹Ibid., lx.

²Paul D. Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1995), 10.

³Ibid., 5.

⁴Ibid., 5, 6.

⁵Ibid., 6.

⁶Ibid., 10.

⁷Ibid., 9.

description of the supremacy and sovereignty of this creator God.¹ Ronald F. Youngblood emphasised two aspects of creation thought in Isaiah, generally as creator of heaven and earth and specifically as creator of Israel.² R. N. Whybray contended that the doctrine of creation in Isa 40-66 "occurs in connexion with a number of themes; but the polemic against the Babylonian gods . . . provided one of the main occasions for its introduction." This was done to prove that Israelite creation traditions were more credible than Babylonian myths.³

We will find, especially in Isa 44:24-45:25, that the primordial creation by God is the factor that undergirds everything he does historically, eschatologically, and even salvifically. All of God's work is brought under the rubric of creation so as to stress the idea that creation is what God does and whatever he does is creation. Creation is Isaiah's consummate conceptualisation of God and his work. That God is the creator accentuates the total sovereignty of God and his complete inviolability. This is especially evident in Isa 45 where such expressions as "I am the Lord and there is no God" (vss. 5, 6, 18, 22) and similar phrases bear out the conviction that God is the one and only God because he is the creator. This belief suggests that without creation thought, Isaiah's concept of God would at best be impoverished. More to the

¹John T. Willis, *Isaiah*, The Living Word Commentary on the Old Testament (Austin: Sweet, 1980), 33-34. Willis highlights Isaiah's creation thought in the introduction of his commentary. Cf. Hudson's dissertation.

²Ronald F. Youngblood, *The Book of Isaiah: An Introductory Commentary*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 125. The author devotes one section of his commentary to "Isaiah's Creator." Inexplicably, he completely bypassed Isa 45, perhaps the most important creation passage in the book.

³R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, New Century Bible Commentary (London: Oliphants, 1975), 36. Like most commentators of so-called Second Isaiah, Whybray's conclusion is based on an exilic date for these chapters.

point, whether God judges or redeems, whether he acts in the past of the future, whether his work is conceived as cosmological, historical, or eschatological, he is above all else the creator and as such reigns supreme over all that he surveys.

Excursus: The Different Parts of Isaiah

The view that Isaiah is a collection of smaller books and the concentration of creation thought in Isa 40-55 calls for a closer examination of the different segments of Isaiah which ultimately impacts the manner in which creation thought is utilised in the book. The prevailing custom today is to divide the book of Isaiah into First/Proto-, Second/Deutero-, and Third/Trito-Isaiah. These are either historical/authorship designations or specifications of collections, and more often than not are considered unassailable.¹ The majority of the research in Isaiah is influenced by this paradigm in one way or another. However, this model has not gone entirely unchallenged. For instance, Christopher R. Seitz pointed out the three most serious objections to this paradigm: (1) The fact that there is only one superscript for the entire collection; (2) the appearance of only one narrative telling of the commissioning of a prophet (Isa 6); and (3) the realization that the literary boundaries between First-, Second-, and Third-Isaiah are not marked in any special way.² There is also the call by Rendtorff to search for a new paradigm for the study of Isaiah: to read the book of Isaiah synchronically rather than diachronically by subsuming issues of redaction or composition to

¹For a more complete examination of these issues, see Willis, *Isaiah*, 20-31.

²Christopher R. Seitz, "Isaiah 1-66: Making Sense of the Whole," in *Reading and Preaching the Book of Isaiah*, ed. Christopher R. Seitz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 109.

questions of themes, expressions, and ideas.¹ This new approach compels another look at the question of the unity of Isaiah. As Rendtorff himself admitted, "the discussion of the last decade has revealed the unity of the book of Isaiah. Of course, it is not a simple unity but a highly complex one."² A similar conclusion was reached by Jacques Vermeylen, who spoke of the exceptionally complex nature of the unity of Isaiah.³

The unity of Isaiah has been defended on the level of authorship. Usually those who do this hold that the prophet Isaiah who lived and preached during the eighth-century B.C. was the author of the book. Among proponents of this view of unity are Edward J. Young,⁴ J. Alec Motyer,⁵ Ronald Youngblood,⁶ John Willis,⁷ Herbert M.

¹Rolf Rendtorff, "The Book of Isaiah: A Complex Unity; Synchronic and Diachronic Reading," in *New Visions of Isaiah*, ed. Roy F. Melugin and Marvin A. Sweeney (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 44.

²Ibid.

³Jacques Vermeylen, "L'unité du livre d'Isaïe," in *The Book of Isaiah, le livre d'Isaïe: Les oracles et leurs réflexions unité et complexité de l'ouvrage*, ed. Jacques Vermeylen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1989), 51.

⁴Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Vol. III, Chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 538. Young also provided an extended survey of the authorship issues pertaining to Isaiah (ibid., 538-549).

⁵J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 25-30. The evidence that Isaiah wrote the book includes evidence from literature, geography, history, prophecy, and theology.

⁶Youngblood, *The Book of Isaiah*, 15-17. The author spoke about compelling reasons for continuing to hold to the traditional view that the prophet Isaiah wrote all 66 chapters of the book.

⁷Willis affirmed the fundamental Isaianic authorship while acknowledging the possibility that words, lines, or verses were added at a later time (*Isaiah*, 31). A similarly modified view of Isaianic authorship was supplied by J. Ridderbos, *Isaiah*, trans. John Vriend, Bible Student's Commentary (Grand Rapids: Regency, 1985), 8, 9.

Wolf,¹ Oswald T. Allis,² John N. Oswalt,³ and Leon J. Wood.⁴ Others, like Barry Webb, prefer to speak of unity in terms of a school of Isaiah's disciples, whose work was responsible for the book in its present form.⁵ Still others speak of a redactional or editorial unity of Isaiah.⁶

Finally, the unity of Isaiah can be considered along purely literary lines as in

¹Herbert M. Wolf, *Interpreting Isaiah: The Suffering and Glory of the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1985), 35.

²Oswald T. Allis saw the following as reasons for accepting Isaianic authorship: the superscript of the book, manuscript evidence, the OT silence on the presence of any other prophet in the book, extra-biblical evidence, and NT attitude (*The Unity of Isaiah: A Study in Prophecy* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1950], 39-42). Allis also discussed the true nature of prophecy as corroborating evidence that Isaiah wrote the book (*ibid.*, 22-38).

³John N. Oswalt is convinced "that the essential content of the book has come through one human author, Isaiah the son of Amoz" even though it is an anthology of sermons, thoughts, and writings of Isaiah (*The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986], 25, 26).

⁴Leon J. Wood provided the following arguments that Isaiah is the author of the book: NT witness, the superscription, ancient authorities (LXX, Ben Sirach, DSS), the author's familiarity with Palestine geography, flora, and fauna in chaps. 40-66, similarities of literary styles, and the nature of predictive prophecy (*The Prophets of Israel* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979], 306-307).

⁵Barry Webb, *The Message of Isaiah: On Eagles' Wings*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1996), 33, 34.

⁶Marvin A. Sweeney believed that "there are a number of lines of evidence, including thematic, literary, and structural considerations, which indicate that the book of Isaiah is a redactional unity" (*Isaiah 1-4 and the Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition*, Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 171, ed. Otto Kaiser [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988], 24). Vermeulen asserted that the book "displays diverse theologies, styles, and historical contexts whose particularities can only be explained by an editorial activity composed of several stages extending over a sufficiently long period of time" ("L'unité du livre d'Isaïe," 27).

the works of John D. W. Watts, Edgar W. Conrad, and R. E. Clements.¹ The most comprehensive examination of the literary links within the book of Isaiah was carried out by Rachel Margalioth. She investigated 15 different subject areas and concluded that there is not a single chapter in 1-39 that is not in some way reflected in 40-66 and that hundreds of words and phrases peculiar to Isaiah occur in both halves of the book.² Additional literary investigation demonstrates that, despite the diversity, certain formulas, particles, and songs of praise are used throughout the book. Apart from chaps. 36-39, each block of material culminates in some kind of celebration hymn (35; 55; 65-66).

In spite of the research carried out in recent years to establish the unity of Isaiah, its inescapable diversity (especially at the structural level) cannot be easily ignored. Usually, Isaiah is divided into three major parts: chaps. 1-39, 40-55, and 56-66. However, in terms of structural diversity, it seems more appropriate to divide the book into four major sections: chaps. 1-35, 36-39, 40-55, and 56-66.³

¹John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, Word Biblical Commentary 24 (Waco: Word Books, 1985), xlii. Edgar W. Conrad suggested that the various literary devices employed in the book, such as vocabulary repetition, recurring motifs, and rhetorical devices, create cohesion in the text (*Reading Isaiah* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], 30). R. E. Clements is convinced that in its present form the book of Isaiah shows a number of significant inherent connections which stretch across the entire work and link together the various divisions of the book of Isaiah (*Isaiah 1-39*, New Century Bible Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 8, 21).

²Rachel Margalioth, *The Indivisible Isaiah: Evidence for the Single Authorship of the Prophetic Book* (New York: Sura Institute for Research, 1964), 35. For Margalioth all this was evidence not only of literary unity but also of unity of authorship.

³Other suggestions for the division of Isaiah have been offered: F. B. Huey proposed the following chapter divisions: 1-35 containing sayings about judgement; 36-39 consisting of historical narrative; and 40-66 comprising principally of sayings of comfort ("Great Themes in Isaiah 40-66," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 11 [1968]: 45). William L. Holladay found what he termed "massive insertions"

Isaiah 1-35 is perhaps the most intricate segment of the book. It has an unusually complex structure,¹ comprised of several sub-collections, such as the oracles against the nations (13-23) and the so-called Isaiah apocalypse (24-27). It is a virtual "collection of collections." To complicate matters further, chap. 35 reads like "a summarized digest" of chaps. 40-55.² Yet there is a sense of climax with the hymn of the redeemed in 35.

Chaps. 36-39 are formally set apart from their surrounding material, being a narrative block in a sea of poetic material. They are concerned with reporting events, whereas the rest of the book is concerned with proclaiming comfort and restoration.³

The role of these chapters presents a problem with no easy resolution. Frequently

throughout Isaiah so that there is little room left for Isaiah himself (*Isaiah: Scroll of a Prophet's Heritage* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978], 10.f.). Menahem Haran argued that chaps. 40-48 form a separate segment within Isa 40-66 based upon the use of the "fear not" formula, the proclamations of divine uniqueness, and the use of cosmogonic epithets with creation verbs that occur only in these chapters ("The Literary Structure and Chronological Framework of the Prophecies in Is. XL-XLVIII," in *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*, vol. 9, ed. G. W. Anderson and others [Leiden: Brill, 1963], 133-134). Following Haran's lead, Youngblood suggested that Isaiah is a collection of seven books (Isa 1-12; 13-23; 24-27; 28-33; 34-35; 36-39; 40-66) with chaps. 40-66 making up the final book, the Book of Consolation, which itself is made up of three parts of nine chapters each: 40-48 dealing with creation, 49-57 dealing with salvation, and 58-66 dealing with eschatology (*The Book of Isaiah*, 18-19). He also suggested that chaps. 40-66 are divided into these three parts by the refrain "there is no peace to the wicked" which occurs in the final verses of chaps. 48 and 57 (*ibid.*, 111-112).

¹R. E. Clements, "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah," *Interpretation* 36 (1982): 121-122; E. J. Kissane, *The Book of Isaiah*, rev. ed. (Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1960), 1: xxiii.

²Clements, "The Unity of Isaiah," 121; also Holladay, 14. So much does chapter 35 read like the second half of Isaiah that James D. Smart included it as part of this section (*History and Theology in Second Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 35, 40-66* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965]).

³Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 32.

these chapters are simply viewed as a "historical interlude"¹ between 1-35 and 40-55/66 or as a "historical appendix" to the preceding chapters.² They are also depicted as a "bridge" or transition between chaps. 1-35 and 40-66.³ Chaps. 36-39 may also serve a theological role by bringing the preceding chapters to a culmination while raising concerns that are more fully dealt with in the subsequent chapters.⁴ It has been suggested, on the basis of the division between chaps. 33 and 34 in the First Isaiah Scroll from Qumran, that chaps. 36-39 supply a structural parallel, of biographical and historical material, to chaps. 6-8.⁵ The most compelling suggestion was offered by Oswalt. He argued that Isa 36-39 serves as the theological and historical pivot between the questions raised by and the revelation of God's glory in the preceding

¹Wolf, 39; Ridderbos, 139; John H. Walton, "New Observations on the Date of Isaiah," *The Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 28 (1985) 129. On the basis of the reverse chronology of Isa 36-39 in comparison to its counterpart in Kings, Walton argued that the book had to have been finished no later than the time of King Josiah and Jeremiah and that it was already one book by then. He also held that a post-exilic date does not fit the data (*ibid.*, 129-132).

²Holladay, 14; Owen C. Whitehouse, *Isaiah I-XXXIX*, The New Century Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, n.d.), 68. Jacques Vermeylen strongly denied the "appendix" theory for chaps. 36-39. ("Hypothèses sur l'origine d'Isaïe 36-39," in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Festschrift Willem A. M. Beuken*, ed. J. Van Ruiten and M. Vervenne [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997], 118).

³Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 33; Conrad, 50-51; Richard J. Clifford, "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah and Its Cosmogonic Language," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55 (1993): 2; Christopher R. Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah, A Reassessment of Isaiah 36-39* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 34; *idem*, *Isaiah 1-39, Interpretation* (Louisville: John Knox, 1993), 9; Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, Vol. II, *Chapters 19-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 457.

⁴Seitz, "Isaiah 1-66," 111; *idem*, *Zion's Final Destiny*, 208; P. R. Ackroyd, "Isaiah 36-39: Structure and Function," in *Von Kanaan bis Kerala*, ed. W. C. Delsman and others (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 20.

⁵William Hugh Brownlee, *The Meaning of the Qumran Scrolls for the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 249. See also Ackroyd, 17-20, for a listing of the parallels between the two segments of Isaiah.

chapters and the questions answered by and the revelation of God's grace in the subsequent chapters. These chapters also transition from the threat of Assyria to the future threat of Babylon.¹ Whatever may be the understanding of the role of chaps. 36-39 within the book, one thing is certain: these chapters are a discernable block of material.

The third segment of Isaiah is comprised of chaps. 40-55. Not only do these chapters "provide the longest single coherent block of prophecies in the whole book,"² they are also "marked by a literary unity that is greater than is usually true of a prophetic book of this scope."³ Rendtorff went so far as to say that Isa 40-55 forms the core or heart of the entire book and that the rest of the book takes its cue from these chapters.⁴ The unity of these chapters can be looked at also from the perspective of the framing effect of chaps. 40 and 55. This is particularly true of 40:1-8 and 55:6-13 which, through a series of parallels, form an inclusio.⁵ Furthermore, 40:1-8 serves as a

¹Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, 54-57. He suggested that an untrusting king, Ahaz (who in 7:10-12 refuses a sign from God), in the preceding chapters is followed by a king, Hezekiah (who in 38:7-8 receives a sign from God), who chose to trust God in 36-39. However, even this king is not infallible (he uses the miracle of God unwisely) and the subsequent chapters then reveal a Servant whose obedience to God is perfect. This is how Isa 36-39 serves as the historical and theological pivot of the book. See also Wolf, 45-46.

²Clements, "The Unity of Isaiah," 122.

³Ridderbos, 27.

⁴Rolf Rendtorff, "Zur Komposition des Buches Jesaja," *Vetus Testamentum* 34 (1984): 319; idem, *Canon and Theology: Overtures to an Old Testament Theology*, trans. and ed. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 167.

⁵Roy F. Melugin, *The Formation of Isaiah 40-55*, Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 141, ed. Georg Fohrer (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1976), 87. Melugin isolated three pairs of parallels: 40:1-2//55:6-7, 40:3-5//55:12-13, and 40:6-8//55:8-9. Scullion noticed the following parallels: 40:2//55:6-7, 40:3-5//55:12-13, 40:4//55:12, and 40:8//55:10-11 (129). See also J. Blenkinsopp, "Second

microcosm of chaps. 41-48 and 40:9-11 corresponds to chap. 49 onwards.¹ There is a sense of cohesion that pervades these chapters.

The final segment of Isaiah, chaps. 56-66, begins with a "distinct and highly distinctive oracle"² (56:1-8). There is also a sense of letdown in these chapters, especially after the triumphant ring of the hymn in 55, and the material in these chapters seem much more miscellaneous than in chaps. 40-55.³ Nevertheless, the segment displays a symmetrical, chiasmic structure with a series of concentric circles centred around chaps. 60-62, the centrepiece or nucleus.⁴ Again a sense of cohesion is conveyed.

Further analysis of the literary style and thematic content of Isaiah enhances our understanding of both the unity and the diversity of the book and its parts. Two things in particular are noted here: the use of introductory and/or closure formulas and thematic shifts in Isaiah. There are seven such formulas used for introduction or closures in Isaiah. The seven introductory/closure formulas are: (1) the use of an imperative as in 1:2, and 10; (2) the use of an interjection or particle, usually הן or הנה, as in 1:21; (3) the use of a divine speech form, אָמַר יְהוָה, דִּבֶּר יְהוָה, כִּהֲאָמַר יְהוָה, אָמַר יְהוָה, or יְהוָה אָמַר as in 8:1, 5, and 11; (4) the use of the eschatological marker, בְּיוֹם הַהוּא or its

Isaiah—Prophet of Universalism," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 41(1988): 156.

¹Melugin, 85.

²Blenkinsopp, 156.

³Holladay, 18.

⁴Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 465; Scullion, 147; Grace I. Emmerson, *Isaiah 56-66*, Old Testament Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 20 & 63.

equivalent, as in 2:2; (5) the use of a historical marker (a historical statement) as in 36:1; (6) the use of הויי in a woe formula as in 5:8, 11, 18, etc.; and (7) the use of מִשָּׂא in an oracular formula as in 13:14.

Chaps. 1-35 employ all seven types, but 40-55 and 56-66 prefer the imperatival and divine speech types and 36-39 use only the historical marker type. Chaps. 1-35 carry three superscriptions (1:1; 2:1; 13:1) while the other segments carry none. Chaps. 1-35 utilise relatively fewer closures, 40-55 have more closures, 56-66 employ the greatest number of closures, and 36-39 contain no closures. Chaps. 40-55 display a penchant for the double imperative introduction which is used only once in 56-66 and never used in the earlier segments.

The book also displays certain thematic shifts. The two dominant thematic strands have to do with judgement/punishment and salvation/hope. Chaps. 1-35 oscillate between judgement and hope, 36-39 contain both judgement and salvation, 40-55 focus almost exclusively on salvation/hope (however, judgement is not entirely absent), and 56-66 oscillate between as well as juxtapose the two thematic strands. While each segment displays its own unique pattern, there is also a thematic commonality between them.

Hopefully this Excursus has demonstrated that while it is appropriate to speak of the unity of Isaiah, its structural diversity cannot be denied. There are literary elements and thematic concerns that provide cohesiveness to the book, while also underscoring the fact that the book is composed of several distinctive segments. Therefore, a synchronic study of the whole book is justifiable, but it must take into account the elements of diversity characterizing the various parts of Isaiah.

Justification for the Research

As already evident from the Review, studies of Isaiah's creation thought are invariably limited to Isa 40-55. The rarity of the word ברא in chaps. 1-39 and its minimal usage in chaps. 56-66 may partially account for this. However, the prevailing multiple authorship theories that dominate Isaianic studies in general may also be a factor. It is equally evident that most of the discussion of Isaiah's creation thought has been dominated by the idea that creation thought plays a subordinate role to salvation theology and/or redemption history. Most of these studies, it seems, bring into the treatment of Isaiah's creation thought a framework that builds from without rather than one that seeks to discover from within. With an *a priori* decision concerning authorship, certain significant aspects are sidelined in the course of such studies. For instance, ברא is used in Isa 4:5 in a salvation context and yet it is virtually ignored in discussions that connect creation to salvation because the text is not part of Isa 40-55.

Especially in Isaiah, creation thought provides a significant source of theological reflection. Although there have been several studies of Isaiah's creation concept, most of these have limited themselves to Isa 40-55. As far as can be ascertained, only the studies by Brooks and Elliot-Hogg directly address the creation thought of the whole book of Isaiah. Regrettably, both works discuss Isaiah's creation thought only in comparison to other selected biblical segments such as Genesis. Consequently, there is still a need for a thorough exegetical investigation that approaches the entire book of Isaiah.

The most significant contribution that this study makes is to clarify biblical evidence for the development of the relationship between creation and redemption.

Delimitations

In order to maintain focus and clarity, while attempting to do justice to the complexity of Isaiah's thought, the following parameters have been selected to guide this study:

1. Analysis of Isaiah's creation vocabulary focuses primarily upon the three main Hebrew words that denote creation, **ברא**, **יצר**, and **עשה**. Other related terms, especially those that are unique to Isaiah, are examined as necessary.
2. Significant figures of speech that evoke or imply creation concepts are also examined.¹
3. Exegetical analysis of extended passages (for example, 4:2-6; 43:1-7; 44:24-45:25; and 65:17-25) is limited to those that address creation thought directly, with special attention paid to passages where the three main creation words appear together (43:1, 7 and 45:7, 12, 18).
4. A synchronic approach to the book of Isaiah guides this study.²

¹While creation vocabulary has been examined fairly extensively by others, figures of speech with a creation content have generally been ignored.

²The approach employed here is indebted to the "canonical approach" to OT studies which owes its existence to proposals made by Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979). He suggested that the task of canonical analysis is descriptive, seeking "to understand the peculiar shape and special function" of the texts of the Hebrew canon (72). He maintained that the canonical approach focuses attention on the final form of the text and its concern is "to study the features of this peculiar set of religious texts in relation to their usage within the historical community of ancient Israel" (73). OT texts are to be studied as historically and theologically conditioned writings with normative and religious function (73). Childs takes great pain to differentiate his approach from that of a strictly literary approach, kerygmatic exegesis, and traditio-critical approach. See also Seitz, "Isaiah 1-66," 105. Along the lines suggested by Childs, "synchronic approach" here refers to the study of the book of Isaiah as a whole within the context of the biblical canon as Scripture and with a focus on the final form of the book (for other

Methodology

The procedure followed in this study is principally exegetical and theological. First, the use of creation language in the entire book of Isaiah in terms of semantic range (including metaphorical usage), syntax, and literary context is studied. This initial analysis is highly significant to the study as it provides the necessary data for theological reflection.

Second, an exegesis of selected passages of Isaiah that make special contributions to Isaiah's creation thought is conducted. This exegesis serves as a complement to the above-mentioned analysis, allowing for a broader theological perspective. It also involves an investigation into the connections between Isaiah's creation thought and the creation narrative of Gen 1-2.

Third, this study examines the contribution of creation thought to Isaiah's understanding of God's nature and character. Included in this, is an investigation of the relationship between Isaiah's creation thought and God's salvific work for and through Israel and other possible links to significant ideas in Isaiah, such as holiness, judgement, and eschatology.

synchronic suggestions see Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* [Leicester: Apollos, 1995], 273; Rendtorff, "The Book of Isaiah," 45; John D. W. Watts, "Reading Isaiah in a New Time," *Review and Expositor* 88 (1991): 132.).

CHAPTER I

CREATION LANGUAGE IN ISAIAH

The book of Isaiah is a principal source of OT creation thought, a fact underscored by the use of creation language throughout the book. This use of creation language by Isaiah is presented in two different forms. On the one hand, Isaiah utilises commonly used verbs that embody recognisable creation nuances, while, on the other hand, the book employs certain metaphors or figures of speech that allude to creation. This chapter investigates three principal creation verbs and three specific creation metaphors as they are utilised in Isaiah.

Explicit Creation Vocabulary in Isaiah

There are several Hebrew words that are employed to convey the OT concept of creation.¹ Yet, there are three verbs, *ברא*, *יצר*, and *עשה*, that play a more crucial role in this respect. These three verbs appear in the creation narrative of Genesis (chaps. 1-2) and are very prominent in the book of Isaiah. They provide the principal framework in any investigation of OT creation thought.

¹Eberlein pointed out nine different Hebrew verbs that are employed for creation in the OT and Isaiah: *ברא*, *יצר*, *עשה*, *פעל*, *נשא*, *יסד*, *רקע*, *צמח*, and *בון* (75-82). Hudson concurred by stating: "The complex of language employed by the Old Testament for the expression of creation involves a rich array of terms and phrases" (9).

ברא The Verb

The Hebrew verb ברא is used 48 times in the OT.¹ Despite the absence of agreement regarding the etymology of the word,² the verbal root ברא is universally accepted as the technical, theological creation term of the OT whenever it functions in the Qal and Niphal stems.³ Its prominence in the Genesis creation narrative and in Isaiah, both of which are major sources of OT creation thought, supports this basic function of the verb. Yet, there is uncertainty as to whether the root is found in any of the older Semitic languages⁴ and there are differing views concerning its use in different historical periods. Conservative scholarship generally posits a pre-exilic date for the word whereas critical scholarship supports an exilic or post-exilic date.⁵ Despite these interpretational ambiguities, the verb ברא is usually translated by "create."⁶

¹A complete listing of the occurrences of ברא in the OT is supplied by Mengers, 24, n. 6.

²Some Hebrew Lexicons list two different roots for ברא, ברא 1 ("to create") and ברא 2I ("to be fat"). See Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1979), 135.

³Hudson, 11; Elliot-Hogg, 11; Michael J. Gruenthaner, "The Scriptural Doctrine on First Creation," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 9 (1947): 50. Howard E. Hanson conceded this view that ברא in the Qal stem "is a technical, theological term for creation" which "has received received almost universal acceptance" ("Num XVI 30 and the Meaning of Bārā," *Vetus Testamentum* 22 [1972]: 354). But, based on his study of how the term is used in Num 16:30, he argued that "it cannot be assumed as axiomatic" that the verb always means "create" in the Qal (ibid., 358).

⁴Karl-Heinz Bernhardt, "ברא bārā," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 2:245.

⁵Elliot-Hogg, 10. Such dating is of course contingent upon how the periods themselves are dated. Bernhardt asserted that the word makes its appearance primarily in texts that date to the exilic period or later. Included in such texts are Isa 40-55, Genesis (P source), Isaiah 56-66, Ezekiel, Malachi, and Ecclesiastes (2:245).

⁶Howard Hanson, 353.

Undoubtedly, ברא is *the* pre-eminent creation term of the OT.

Semantic and Syntactic Elements of ברא

The basic meaning of ברא is "create." Even though, as Howard Hanson suggested, this meaning cannot always be assumed and the word is a theological term only if the context warrants it,¹ nevertheless, it seems best to retain the meaning of "create." What is rather clear is that ברא is a special term for creation because it is a uniquely non-metaphorical, non-anthropomorphic verb.² Its usage bears this out in several ways. First, when used in the Qal and Niphal, the verb is restricted to divine activity³ and God is always the subject of the verb.⁴ Moreover, ברא is never used with foreign gods as subject.⁵ Second, the word does not provide any indication as to the material employed in the creation it describes.⁶ Third, the verb takes on the accusative of object (things created) and points to a variety of such created objects.⁷ Things that God created include the cosmos (Gen 1:1), humankind (Gen 1:27), Israel (Isa 43:1),

¹Ibid., 359.

²Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "ברא," *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1:731.

³Gruenthaner, 50; Long, 18; Mengers, 27. Elliot-Hogg concurred with this assessment but added that the semantic development through which this happened can no longer be traced (11).

⁴Elliot-Hogg, 12; Hudson, 9-10; Scullion, 30; Eugene Carpenter, "עשה," *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 3:548.

⁵Paul Humbert, "Emploi et portée du verbe bârâ (créer) dans l'Ancien Testament," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 6 (1947): 409-410; Van Leeuwen, 731.

⁶Van Leeuwen, 731; Elliot-Hogg, 12; Carpenter, 3:548; Gruenthaner, 50; Scullion; 30-31; and Mengers, 27.

⁷Mengers, 27; Hudson, 10; Scullion, 30-31; Elliot-Hogg, 12.

and something new (Isa 48:6). Also included are historical events (such as the Exodus), conditions (like praise and righteousness), and new life.¹

In Isaiah, the verb ברא is used 21 times, always with God as the subject.² The things created include cloud and fire (4:5), heaven and its starry hosts (40:26; 42:5; 45:18), the earth (40:28; 42:5), mankind (45:12), the nation of Israel (43:1, 7, 15), and new things such as a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem (65:17, 18). However, it is not only things that are created. The verb also takes as objects of creation such states of being as righteousness and prosperity and "peace and calamity" (45:7, 8) and natural phenomena such as light and darkness (45:7) and the environment (41:20).

As already noted, ברא with the sense of "create" is used largely in the Qal and Niphal. With the exception of 48:7, which is in the Niphal, the 21 instances of the verb in Isaiah occur in the Qal, either as perfect or participle. The participial form referring to God as the "creating one" is used 12 times in Isaiah and comprises the majority of the instances of ברא in the book.³

Distribution of ברא in Isaiah

The verb ברא is distributed throughout the book of Isaiah but a particular pattern emerges. The word is used once in chaps. 1-35 (in 4:5), 16 times in chaps. 40-55, and 4

¹Hudson, 10.

²Stuhlmüller, *Creative Redemption*, 212.

³See the dissertation by Mauch for a full treatment of Isaiah's use of such participials of ascriptions. Stuhlmüller also maintained that in Isa 40-55, "34 different verb roots are used to form 88 participial ascriptions . . . or epithets to Yahweh," and that these participles are located in opening and climactic lines of poems where creation references frequently occur, for example, 42:5; 43:1, 15; 44:2, 24; 45: 7,9, 18; etc. (*Creative Redemption*, 48).

times in chaps. 56-66 (in 57:19; 65:17, 18 [2x]).¹ It is not used in chaps. 36-39 at all. Furthermore, the participial form does not appear in chaps. 1-39, but is employed 8 times in chaps. 40-55 and 4 times in chaps. 56-66. This distribution of ברא reveals a concentration of the verb in the latter part of the book, especially in chaps. 40-55.²

Isaianic Concepts of ברא

ברא speaks about the creator God and the things he has created. It does this in a general way by showing what the entire OT says about this God. It also does this in a specific way by conveying the concepts that Isaiah attaches to it. This specific application of the word by Isaiah is discussed next.

The verb is first used in the OT in the Genesis creation narrative. In that text, ברא is employed at specific junctures of the account, namely in the introduction and conclusion of the first creation pericope (1:1 & 2:4), in the first mention of living creatures (1:21), and in the creation of man (1:27).³ A primary concept attached to ברא pertains to the original account of the creation of the universe and the world, what is sometimes termed first creation.⁴ Perhaps the word serves as the technical term for this primordial creation. As Elliot-Hogg put it, "in each case in Genesis where it is used, therefore, the verb appears in its cosmogonic sense only, and it is evidently a

¹ברא appears in Isa 4:5; 40:26, 28; 41:20; 42:5; 43:1, 7, 15; 45:7 (twice), 8, 12, 18 (twice); 48:7; 54:16 (twice); 57:19; 65:17, 18 (twice).

²Combined with multiple authorship theories, this fact has led most researchers to limit their investigation of Isaiah's creation thought almost exclusively to chaps. 40-55.

³Elliot-Hogg, 12; Anderson, "The Earth Is the Lord's," 11.

⁴See Gen 1:1, 21, 27; 2:3, etc.

theological technical term for the primordial creation."¹ This however does not restrict its secondary usage in describing subsequent divine activity such as redemptive and historical acts² which also portray the limitless power of the sovereign creator.³ Thus it can be said that ברא serves as the technical term for the biblical doctrine of creation.⁴

In attempting to grasp the concepts nuanced by ברא, the issue of *creatio ex nihilo* frequently comes to the forefront. There are different opinions as to whether the word conveys the concept of *creatio ex nihilo* or not. On the one hand, it could be argued that the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* is not innate to the word ברא, which appears to focus more on the result of God's act than on the process of creation.⁵ To suggest that ברא addresses this issue would overstep the bounds of legitimate deduction as far as the meaning of the word is concerned.⁶ On the other hand, it could also be argued that ברא is a legitimate candidate for expressing the idea of creation out of nothing⁷ and that it comes as close to speaking of creation in this way without actually using the expression.⁸ It seems that the term is related to the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* even though this idea itself is not necessarily inherent in ברא.

¹Elliot-Hogg, 12.

²See Pss 51:10; 102:18; Isa 42:5; 43:1; Jer 31:22; Eze 21:30.

³Ibid., 16. See Exod 34:10; Jer 31:22; Ps 89:12.

⁴Hudson, 11.

⁵Ibid., 10.

⁶William R. Lane, "The Initiation of Creation," *Vetus Testamentum* 13 (1963): 69.

⁷Brooks, 9-10.

⁸Anderson, "The Earth Is the Lord's," 11

The verb emphasises the result of creation more than the process. The primary emphasis of ברא is that creation is the result of divine activity and, as such, it is original, it manifests the power of God, and it demonstrates the sovereign liberty of the Creator. It speaks of the miraculous and extraordinary works of God in creating the universe and in events of history.¹ It focuses "on the newness of the object created and the incomparable divine action by which it came to being"² and portrays the effortless divine creation by which God brings something absolutely new, extraordinary, and marvelous into existence.³ In this sense it comes as close to *creatio ex nihilo* as possible.

In Isaiah, this basic nuance of divine activity is maintained, but this is done in two ways. First, Isaiah is very much interested in the idea of newness. The book speaks of several new things that are brought into existence by God: new society and environment (4:5 & 41:20), new things (48:7),⁴ a new heaven and a new earth (65:17), and a new Jerusalem (65:18). Isaiah finds that in speaking about God's past creation, primordial or historical, there is an assurance of things that he will yet create.

Second, not only is Isaiah interested in what is new, but also in how ברא itself portrays the whole concept of creation. Isaiah's creation thought exists on three different dimensions: the cosmological (primordial), the historical, and the

¹J. van der Ploeg, "Le sens du verbe hébreu–arb bārā' étude sémasiologique," *Le Muséon* 59 (1946): 157; Long, 19.

²John Stek, "What Says the Scripture?" in *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World's Formation*, ed. Howard J. Van Till and others (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 208.

³Gruenthaner, 50.

⁴The context here seems to indicate the telling of new truth that only God can provide, in the same way that only he can make new objects (Motyer, 378).

eschatological.¹ Contextually, ברא exists on these three dimensions, which are distributed throughout the book, and it portrays this three-dimensional creative activity of God.

Cosmological creation concerns primordial creation and, whenever used by Isaiah, refers or alludes to the Genesis creation narrative (perhaps the idea of *Urgeschichte* or *Urzeit* is implied). Thus there are references to the heavens and the earth, the light and darkness, and so on. It is God who created the fundamental cosmic and other realities of the world, including man (40:26, 28: 42:5: 45:18),² and the word is definitely applied to the creation of the universe.³

Historical creation pertains more specifically to God's activity in Israel's history (along the lines of salvation history, *Heilsgeschichte*). Isaiah focuses on God's historical creation and says that God not only created Israel but he also acted throughout the history of the nation to effect redemption on its behalf.⁴ In this respect, Isaiah refers to the election and salvation of Israel as the creation of God.

Eschatological creation refers to the new reality that God promises to create (the *Endzeit*), with its environmental, societal, and cosmic transformations. The first (4:5) and the final (65:17-18) occurrences of ברא in Isaiah carry definite eschatological

¹Anderson argued for a tripartite division of God's creative acts: primordial, historical, and eschatological (*Creation Versus Chaos*, 124-126).

²Eberlein, 75.

³Mengers, 105.

⁴Ibid. Stuhlmüller pointed out that in only three verses in Isa 40-55 (40:26; 42:5; and 45:18) is the material universe the object of creation (*Creative Redemption*, 211). He argued that in these chapters ברא's historical orientation and connection to the theology of election supplies it with an entirely soteriological character (ibid., 247).

overtone and envelope Isaiah's use of the word. ברא not only denotes God's creative activity in the remote past, or in the present, but also in the imminent future.¹

Angerstorfer's observation about Isa 40-55 is also pertinent to the book: "Dt-Is uses this creation term in a very refined way. With it he looks back to the beginning, the creation of the world and of man. Over and above that ברא expresses precisely Yahweh's future creative acts for the deliverance of his people."²

The Verb יצר

The second main creation verb is יצר, which appears about 70 times in the OT. About 23 of these occurrences are in the participial form.³ Etymologically, the verb is related to similar West Semitic forms and appears to have the same meanings as these forms. "The basic meaning of the Semitic root *ysr* is 'shape, form'. In West Semitic (Ugaritic, Phoenician), we find nouns with the meaning 'potter'. . . . In Akkadian we find the analogous root *esēn*, meaning 'form, sketch', or the like, but also with the secondary meaning 'plan, determine'.⁴ It has been suggested that the root and its derivatives pervade the pre-exilic prophetic texts, the post-exilic prophetic texts, and the Psalter.⁵ The word is used more often than ברא and yet, in many instances, it stands

¹Bernhardt, 2:247.

²Angerstorfer, 166.

³A. H. Konkel, "יצר," *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 2:504. Konkel also pointed out that the verb occurs mostly in the Qal, with only three occurrences in other stems: once each in Niphal (Isa 43:10), Pual (Ps 139:16), and Hophal (Isa 54:17).

⁴B. Otzen, "יצר, *yāsar*," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 6:258. Otzen also concurred with Konkel's observation that the word is used mostly in the Qal.

⁵Ibid. Otzen listed 20 times, 30 times, and 10 times respectively for the three types of texts. Of course this count is subject to the dating applied to particular texts.

in parallel to that word. "In this way the root *yāsār* is an appropriate surrogate for *bārā'* but not an exact synonym."¹

Semantic and Syntactic Elements of יצר

The basic meaning of יצר is "shape, form, create."² This forming or fashioning is most often associated with the work of a potter and "indicates a rather specialised technique as opposed to that of forming objects by pressing them into a mold or modelling them freehand."³ McComiskey suggested that in its secular usage the term, used in the participial form, means "potter."⁴ Likewise Hudson held that when the term "is used secularly, it indicates craftsmanship, particularly that of a potter."⁵ Unlike its counterpart ברא, God is not solely the subject of יצר, since the verb can take human subjects. Nevertheless, when God is the subject of יצר, creation is in view. As such, it takes on such objects as man and beasts (Gen 2:7-8, 19), the earth (Jer 33:2), the universe (Isa 45:18), and natural phenomena (Amos 4:13). In the Genesis creation narrative, the term is especially applied to the creation of man.⁶ "The function of *ysr* is to describe that which is a specific object of God's design and care. It is particularly significant in the creation of humans, both in terms of their unique relation to God and

He also noted that the root and its derivatives is employed 20 times in Isa 40-55.

¹Thomas E. McComiskey, "יצר," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:396.

²Ibid.

³Howard Hanson, 357.

⁴McComiskey, 1:396.

⁵Hudson, 16.

⁶McComiskey, 1:396.

God's purpose for them."¹

In Isaiah, יצר is employed predominantly or almost exclusively for the creation and election of Israel. "The prophet Isaiah uses the vb. *ysr* almost exclusively to speak of the creation and election of Israel, utilizing both senses of formation and purpose."² Isaiah's use of the word is unique as it is applied to the notion of bringing the nation of Israel into existence. This seems to be the main sense in which Isaiah uses the word.³ This use of יצר for the creation and election of Israel is underscored by the fact that Isaiah prefers other verbs for the creation of the world.⁴ This verb appears some 27 times in Isaiah and, with few exceptions,⁵ it is employed in the Qal, with the participial form, "the forming one," being used 12 times.

God is the subject of יצר in 18 instances where the context is clearly creation. The verb takes a variety of objects of God's creation including water (22:11), light (45:7), the earth (45:18), and mankind (64:7 [E8]). The majority of the occurrences pertain to the forming of the nation of Israel. In Isa 45:18 יצר is associated with the creation of the cosmos and the world. However, in most of the passages (for example, 43:1, 7, 21; 44:2, 21, 24; etc.) Israel is the immediate object of creation.⁶ This

¹Konkel, 2:504.

²Ibid., 2:505.

³McComiskey, 1:396.

⁴Otzen's contention that in Isa 40-55 this is the exclusive use of the word, and that in these chapters the "many passages that speak of the creation of the world in general make use of other verbs" (6:262), fails to take into account the use of יצר in chap. 45 where the word is associated with the creation of the world.

⁵In 43:10 the Niphal is used and in 54:17 the Hophal is used.

⁶Eberlein, 78. See also Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption*, 215, and Hudson, 16.

association of יצר with the history of Israel provides a special flavour to the word.

Distribution of יצר in Isaiah

The 18 creation references of יצר occur 3 times in chaps. 1-35 (in 22:11; 27:11; 29:16), 14 times in chaps. 40-55, and once in chaps. 56-66 (in 64:7 [E8]). It is not used in chaps. 36-39. The participle appears in three sections of Isaiah, but these are concentrated in chaps. 40-55 where they occur 8 times (in 40:28; 42:5; 43:1, 15; 45:7 [2x], 18; 48:7). Apart from the participial usage, the term is also used in the Qal Perfect whose occurrences are also found mostly in chaps. 40-55 (for example, 43:7; 44:21; etc). The distribution of this verb also indicates an apparent concentration of creation thought in Isa 40-55.

Isaianic Concepts of יצר

It has been recognised that even though יצר is a surrogate for ברא, it is not an exact synonym.¹ The following observation by Hudson about Isa 40-66 can also be applied to the whole book: "The majority of the theological expressions of the term occur in the prophets, especially in Deutero-Isaiah. When he employs the term, it is usually in a salvation oracle and has Israel as its subject."² Similarly, Stuhlmüller remarked: "The idea of creation is not presented as a cosmic act of long ago, never again repeated, but as a redemptive act continuing in the history of Israel."³ Konkel

¹McComiskey, 1:396.

²Hudson, 16.

³Stuhlmüller, *Creative Redemption*, 215. It should be noted that Stuhlmüller, following the lead of von Rad, almost completely subsumes creation thought to salvation theology. Hudson however arrives at the opposite conclusion, one that is more in harmony with the tenor of the whole book of Isaiah. Nevertheless, both Stuhlmüller and Hudson are limited by the fact that they deal only with Isa 40-55.

reached a similar, though slightly different, conclusion: "This creation terminology is not applied to creation as such, but rather to declare God's redemptive purpose for the people he created (43:1-7, 16-21) to be his servant (44:1-5, 21-28)."¹

At the very least, these observations show that יצר carries different creation connotations from ברא. Unlike ברא, the word encapsulates the concept that God is forming whatever he brings into existence and the word has more to do with the process of creation. The term captures the essence of the divine activity as one who is immanently involved in what he creates.²

For Isaiah, יצר has special implications. The predominance of the historical dimension of God's creative activity³ indicates that this type of creation is more about history (that is, *Heilsgeschichte*) than about cosmology or eschatology. This is not to say that the other dimensions portrayed by ברא are absent in Isaiah's use of יצר, because the references to the forming of water, light, and the earth do allude to primordial creation, whereas the forming of the servant of the Lord (49:5) is contextually imbued with eschatological overtones. Yet the historical references of יצר do take pride of place in Isaiah. The historical dimension of God's creative activity is clearly highlighted by the use of this verb.

¹Konkel, 2:505.

²See Gen 2:7-8, 19; Jer 33:2; Isa 64:7.

³See Isa 27:11; 29:16; 43:1, 7; 44: 2, 21, 24; 45:9, 11; etc. In all these passages the historical creation of Israel is in view.

The Verb עשה

Of all the creation words in the OT, עשה is the most frequent.¹ It is used over 2,600 times in the OT² and is employed with a fair degree of flexibility (see below). The verb עשה "is a very general, all-purpose word."³ When used in a creation context, it often stands in parallel with either ברא or יצר or even both. This kind of parallelism is employed in the Genesis creation narrative and also in Isaiah.⁴

Semantic and Syntactic Elements of עשה

The verb עשה connotes the idea of "doing" or "making" and is translated with "do," "make," "prepare," or "create." Its semantic range is enormous and its scope is broader than either ברא or יצר.⁵ The term is used extensively outside of creation contexts and its exact "meaning is determined by the function its context assigns to it."⁶ The word is used 32 times in Gen 1-11 and 7 times in chap. 1 alone.⁷ In the Genesis account of creation, עשה is interchangeable with ברא even though it "differs significantly from ברא in its range of use. Whereas ברא is reserved for divine activity, עשה is used

¹It should be noted that עשה is not always used for creation since it is associated with any kind of "making."

²Long asserted that it is used 2900 times in the MT (4). Carpenter listed 2,627 occurrences, of which 2,527 are in Qal, 99 in Niphal, and once in Pual/Qal Passive (3:547).

³Stuhlmüller, *Creative Redemption*, 216.

⁴For example, Gen 2:4 and Isa 43:7.

⁵Carpenter, 3:547. Carpenter also suggested that not all uses of the word are theologically crucial or relevant.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

extensively outside of creation contexts."¹ The verb is not restricted to God as subject, but when God is the subject, עשה is "the most general word used to describe his creative acts."² Its use in Gen 1:31 suggests that this word summarizes the entire creation account.³ Outside of Genesis and Isaiah, עשה is the main verb in the expression "maker of heaven and earth" which occurs frequently in the Psalter.⁴ When used in this phrase, עשה provides a description of "the entire universe."⁵

When used in Isaiah, עשה displays the flexibility it does elsewhere in the OT. The word is used 90 times in Isaiah and in 49 instances (for example, 37:16; 45:12; 57:16; etc.), God is the subject. Its affinity to ברא and יצר is demonstrated by the fact that in 22 instances God is the subject and the context is explicitly creation.⁶ Throughout the book, the Qal stem is preferred,⁷ with the Qal Perfect accounting for the majority of the occurrences.⁸ Yet, like the other creation terms, עשה also displays a preference for the participial form (12 times) when referring to God as the creator (for example, 17:7; 22:11; 43:19; 4:2; etc.). In a manner reminiscent to the way ברא and יצר utilise the participle, the term refers to God as the "making one." "In sum the Lord is

¹Hudson, 13, 14.

²Carpenter, 3:547.

³Ibid.

⁴For example, Pss 115:15; 121:2; 124:8; 134:3; etc.

⁵Hudson, 14.

⁶Isa 43:7; 45:18; etc. Brooks correctly explained that Isaiah uses the word in the same fashion as it is used in Gen 1-2 (54).

⁷Isa 3:11 and 46:10, which use the Niphal, are the only non-Qal use of the word.

⁸The Qal Perfect accounts for about 38 of the uses of עשה in Isaiah.

the doer (*δśeh*) of all things and the proper subject of this ubiquitous vb. in the OT."¹

As a creation verb, עשה takes on several different objects of creation as do the other two creation verbs. In the creation account of Genesis, עשה and ברא "are used interchangeably to describe the creation of man, animals, land, and plant life."² In Isaiah, things made include both inanimate objects such as water (22:11), heaven and earth (37:16), and breath (57:16), as well as people (27:11; 29:16; 43:7; etc.). The objects of this making include Israel (44:2; 45:7, 9), world affairs (40:23; 41:4), and cosmic first creation (44:24; 45:12, 18).³ In short, it is God who makes all things, who forms all things, who creates all things.

Distribution of עשה in Isaiah

The distribution of עשה in Isaiah closely resembles the distribution of ברא and יצר. In its creation applications, it is used 4 times in chaps. 1-35 (in 17:7; 22:11; 27:11; and 29:16), once in chaps. 36-39 (37:16),⁴ 14 times in chaps. 40-55, and 3 times in chaps. 56-66 (in 57:16; 66:2, 22). Moreover, the participle also occurs largely in chaps. 40-55. Without belaboring the point, the use of עשה, like that of ברא and יצר, likewise underscores the apparent concentration of creation thought in these chapters.

Isaianic Concepts of עשה

עשה frequently emphasises God's work in history, especially as it enunciates the

¹Carpenter, 3:549.

²Hudson, 13.

³Stuhlmüller, *Creative Redemption*, 217-218.

⁴The use of עשה in 37:16 is significant. It reflects Hezekiah's faith in the creator, a faith heightened by the sign of the sun moving backwards (an act of the same creator) in 38:8. Creation is very much present in Isa 36-39.

signs and wonders that God performs in the course of history.¹ It also signifies various aspects of God's creative work² and it is this creative aspect of its meaning that is of interest at this stage. Analogous to its use in Gen 1:31, עשה is the final creation verb in Isaiah (in 66:22) and in this capacity it is the word that summarises the creation thought of Isaiah (see below). God is a doer, a maker, the preeminent subject of creation.

Like ברא עשה, encompasses the cosmological (for example, 37:16), historical (for example, 43:7), and eschatological (for example, 41:20) dimensions of creation. Isaiah alludes to primordial creation in referring to water (22:11), breath (57:16), and heaven and earth (37:16). He also speaks about God's historical creativity by mentioning Israel (43:7; 44:2) and anticipates the eschatological creation by referring to the new heaven and new earth that God is making (66:22). What is distinctive to Isaiah's use of the verb is that the idea of the "making" of the heaven and the earth (66:1-2) and the "making" of a new heaven and a new earth (66:22) provides an envelope for the last chapter of Isaiah, thus encapsulating Isaiah's entire creation discourse in a temporal continuum between primordial and eschatological creation.

In summary, it should be pointed out that three principal concepts arise from this investigation of Isaiah's use of explicit creation language. First, the three main creation verbs display a definite preference for the participial ascription when referring to God. The primary focus appears to be the person rather than the work of God, that is, that God is the Creator, rather than that he created, is of prime import to Isaiah's

¹See Josh 24:17; Ps 98:1.

²See Pss 86:9; 95:5; 96:5.

thought. Second, Isaiah's creation thought displays a three-dimensional stance that incorporates cosmological (that is, primordial), historical, and eschatological creation. The language of the book suggests that creation is Isaiah's consummate conceptualisation of divine activity and that whatever God does, in any sphere, is an act of creation. Third, creation language in Isaiah is concentrated in chaps. 40-55. While there are scattered references to creation throughout the book, these chapters supply the bulk of the data. Attesting to this crescendo of thought clearly visible in these chapters is the fact that all three creation verbs appear together only in this section of the book, in 43:7 and 45:7, 18.¹

Indirect Creation Metaphors in Isaiah

The use of creation language in Isaiah is however not limited to creation vocabulary alone. Isaiah also employs certain metaphoric images that indirectly refer or allude to creation. In particular, three such metaphors stand out and they are the subject of investigation in this section of the study. Each of the three metaphors under consideration resonates uniquely with the Genesis creation narrative and Isaiah's use of these particular metaphors intentionally seeks to evoke creation imagery.²

"Breath/Spirit" Metaphor

¹Germane to the debate on the role of creation thought in Isaiah are these two passages, which portray God's creative activity through acts of salvation (historically and eschatologically) and through works of cosmic creation. In a sense, Isa 43 and 45 encapsulate the entire spectrum of Isaiah's creation thought. These passages will be further discussed in the exegesis that follows.

²Most studies have treated Isaiah's creation thought almost entirely from the perspective of vocabulary. A quick browse through most of the works surveyed in the Review highlights this approach. A definite lacuna in the current research on this subject is the absence of any extended investigation into Isaiah's use of creation images and how this impacts on the book's concept of creation. This section of the study seeks, in a small way, to address this issue.

A clear allusion to God's primordial creation is embodied in the *breath/spirit* metaphor that Isaiah employs. The Hebrew terms involved are נשמה (breath) and רוח (spirit). Both terms play an important role in the Genesis creation narrative. In Gen 1:2 the phrase רוח אלהים is encountered, while the phrase נשמת חיים occurs in Gen 2:7. In the former, Genesis is describing the hovering "spirit" as a prelude to creation while, in the latter, it is describing the creation of man, the climax of God's creative activity. Direct creative divine involvement is entailed in both expressions.

Elsewhere, נשמה and רוח are co-joined to convey an even more incisive understanding of life's reality inasmuch as it is dependent or conceived to be dependent upon divine energy for its existence. In Gen 7:22 the construct chain נשמת-רוח חיים (literally, "the breath of the spirit of life") is employed to spell out the destruction by the flood of every living creature. The creation sense of this metaphor is heightened in Gen 8:1 with the blowing of רוח to clear the flood waters, indicating a re-creation of the world. The story presents the flood as a chiasmic reversal of creation, which in turn is followed by re-creation.¹ The intimate connection between נשמה and רוח and their distinct echo of creation is further borne out in Job 33:4 and 34:14. In the first text, the two terms stand in synonymous parallelism and read רוח-אל עשתי ונשמת שדי תחיני "the *spirit* of God made me" // "the *breath* of the Almighty gave me life."² In the second text, they function as a hendiadys joined by a conjunction to read רוחו ונשמתו "his *spirit*

¹Isaac M. Kikawada and Arthur Quinn, *Before Abraham Was: The Unity of Genesis 1-11* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 85ff. This chiasmic reversal adds weight to the creation thought of Isaiah and its relationship to judgment (as will be seen in chapter 3).

²The use of the verb עשה supplies the verse with distinct creation overtones and the verse echoes the Genesis creation story.

and his *breath*."¹ Moreover, in Gen 2:7, *breath* is used with "nostrils" to describe the creation of man, whereas in Ps 33:6 רוח is used to refer to God's primordial creative activity. All these usages point clearly to a strong creation echo in these passages even though the terms *breath* and *spirit* themselves are also used with other nuances.²

The term נשמה occurs 4 times in Isaiah,³ with 3 of those occurrences offering clear allusion to creation. In 2:22 the expression באפו נשמה, "breath in his nostril," appears as a reminder of the futility of trusting mortal man. The "breath in his nostril" which man possesses is the divine initiation of life and its extrication is a reminder of man's mortality (see Job 34:14-15 and Eccl 12:7). The absence of "breath in his nostrils" is a reminder that man's *breath*, unlike God's, is not generative because man is mortal.⁴ To put this differently, man is a living creature because God has put his *breath* in him and the removal of that *breath* means the end of life. The phrase "breath in his nostril" is a strong allusion to creation, for man is a created being and does not have life in and of himself. "Man's life breath comes from God" the creator.⁵

¹The verse reads (literally) as a simple chiasm: "If he (God) should take back [a] to himself his heart [b], his *spirit* and his *breath* to himself [b'] he should gather [a']." The immediate context is clearly about creation. The preceding verse states that God laid the world while the verse that follows speaks about man's demise if God withdraws his creative power.

²נשמה, *breath*, is used with reference to God's creative power but it is also used of man's breath in a general sense. רוח, *spirit*, also means "wind, air" and need not always have creative allusions (Brown, Driver, and Briggs, 675, and 924-926).

³Oswalt found only three instances where this word is used in Isaiah: 2:22; 42:5; 57:16 (*The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 484, n. 55). The word is also used in 30:33 but, unlike the other instances, it is employed in a context of divine judgement.

⁴Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 32.

⁵Kissane, 1:37. Kissane drew attention to Gen 2:7; Job 34:14; and Eccl 12:17 as passages that parallel the Isaianic references to *breath*.

The second use of נשמה in Isaiah occurs in 42:5. The second half of the verse reads: נתן נשמה לעם עליה ורוח להלכים בה "who gives *breath* to its people and *spirit* to those who walk on it."¹ The entire verse is a creation verse, one of the most explicit creation statements in Isaiah. First, *breath* and *spirit* are placed in synonymous parallelism as observed in other creation passages. Second, the verse intimates that it is God who is the source of this *breath/spirit*. The verse clearly resonates with the creation use of this metaphor in the OT.

The third creation use of נשמה is found in 57:16 where God clearly proclaims: כִּי־רוּחַ מִלִּפְנֵי יַעֲזוּבָה וְנִשְׁמוֹת אֲנִי עֲשִׂיתִי "for the *spirit* from me proceeded and the *breath* I have made." The use of עשה (a principal creation verb in Isaiah) in this verse serves as a distinct reference to creation. The *spirit* and *breath* involved in the first creation of man appear in Isaiah as a reminder of that creation.

The word רוח, as noted earlier, often in creation contexts stands directly parallel with נשמה. In Isaiah, רוח is used some 42 times. Significantly it is used as a direct parallel of נשמה in two creation passages, 42:5 and 57:16. In both passages the word is part of and reinforces the metaphor. "The Lord is the source of the *life-breath*, that is, every breath of life comes from God. He gives life and it is his spirit that upholds and energizes creation."²

When viewed against the backdrop of Isaiah's use of creation language, this *breath/spirit* metaphor provides a significant piece of evidence for Isaiah's creation

¹The verse employs a series of participles to describe the creative acts of God: *creating* בורא the heavens, *spreading out* רקע the earth, and *giving* נתן breath to the people.

²John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, Word Biblical Commentary 25 (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 263.

thought. First, the metaphor resonates strongly with the Genesis creation narrative and recalls that creative act of God. It embodies the cosmological aspect of creation in a strong way. Second, it is found in all the major segments of Isaiah and indicates a unity of concept that the book seeks to portray.¹

"Work of His/My/Your Hand" Metaphor

As suggested by Long, the idea of the work of the Lord in Isaiah implies three things: God's creative act, his judgement work, and his salvific activity.² Here the focus is on the creative act of God especially as that act is portrayed by the substantive מעשה (work). As Long put it: "A complete understanding of the work of the Lord as creation must take into consideration the relationship between Yahweh as creator of the cosmos and Yahweh as the creator, redeemer, and recreator of his people."³ Similarly, Angerstorfer argued that the "expression 'work of Yahweh' (מעשה) describes simultaneously and distinctively the creative and historical work of Yahweh."⁴

In Isaiah the term is used mainly in two ways: (1) with the 3rd person pronominal suffix where the intent is largely judgement (see 5:19; 10:12; 28:21; etc.), and (2) with י carrying pronominal suffixes where the intent is more about what God makes. This use of מעשה appears five times in Isaiah: in 5:12; 19:25; 29:23; 60:21; and 64:7 [E8]. "Work of his hand" מעשה ידי appears in 5:12, "work of my hand" מעשה ידי in

¹The absence of the metaphor in chaps. 36-39 is not entirely surprising, as will be seen later in this study.

²Long, 166-167. For Long, Isaiah's creative work of God refers to both the creation of the cosmos and the creation of Israel.

³Ibid., 17.

⁴Angerstorfer, 131.

19:25; 29:23; and 60:21, and "work of your hand" ידך מעשה in 64:7 [E8].

Isa 5:12 is an indictment against Israel for their failure to comprehend the historical acts that God had done—"the deeds of Yahweh they do not regard, the work of his hands they do not see."¹ Israel was impervious to God's historical creative activity. Isa 19:25 refers to Assyria as the work of God's hands and the context is clearly eschatological as seen in the constant repetition of the phrase "in/on that day" in 19:16-25. A threefold formula of blessing is seen here with Egypt as God's people,² Assyria as the "work of his hands,"³ and Israel as his heritage⁴ being parallel expressions. The text portrays the eschatological creation of a "single new and permanent people of God."⁵

In 29:23 and 60:21, God speaks about the work of his hands. In the first text God speaks about his new (eschatological) work for Israel, which is preceded by judgment. In the second text he speaks about the eschatological transformation of Israel

¹John H. Hayes and Stuart A. Irvine suggested that "deeds of Yahweh" and "work of his hands" here should be understood as reference to events in the international affairs of the area (*Isaiah the Eighth-Century Prophet: His Times and His Preaching* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1987], 104). However, the whole chapter is an indictment against the sins of Judah. This reference to God's work does not preclude creation but it probably includes all of God's works.

²See also Hos 2:15; Jer 7:23; 11:4; etc.

³See also Isa 60:21; 64:8; etc.

⁴See also Pss 28:9; 94:5; Mic 7:14; etc.

⁵Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, trans. R. A. Wilson, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 111. Watts noted that whereas 19:25 speaks of Assyria as the work of God's hands, 64:7 says Israel is the work of God's hands. Both however are creation references (*Isaiah 1-33*, 260).

where "work of my hands" parallels "shoot of my planting,"¹ both appositions to the ארץ that God is giving Israel to possess. The final reference, 64:7, refers to man as the work of God's hands who is the divine "potter" (a Qal participle of יצר). The creation overtones of these passages are unmistakable.

The following pattern emerges from the use of this metaphor: First, the metaphor appears with creation verbs when it is not speaking of judgement. Second, the metaphor is not used in chaps. 40-55. Third, the metaphor employs at least two of the three dimensions of creation—the historical and eschatological. Fourth, the first (5:12) and final (64:7) incidences of the metaphor have historical creation as context, whereas the other three references have eschatological contexts. The metaphor lends further support to the multi-dimensional understanding of creation and the conceptual unity of Isaiah's creation thought.

"Heaven-Earth" Merismus

The most significant creation metaphor in Isaiah is the *heaven-earth* (שמים וארץ) merismus, a metaphor whose polar structure encapsulates the totality of creation.² Throughout the OT various statements are encountered concerning the origin of heaven-earth. Such expressions as the "spreading of the earth" (for example, Ps 136:5-6), the "stretching out of the heavens" (for example, Jer 10:12; 51:15; Zech 12:1; Ps 104:2; and Job 9:8), the "foundation of the earth" (for example, Job 38:4; Ps 78:69; Zec 12:1) overtly allude to the creation of heaven-earth. The Hebrew verbs most frequently employed are רקע, נטה, and יסד respectively. While the root רקע does appear in the

¹Young maintained that these "phrases teach the profound and necessary truth that Zion the Church is the creation of God" (*The Book of Isaiah*, 3:456).

²Hudson, 116; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 205.

Genesis creation narrative, the other two verbs do not appear in Gen 1-2. However, all three verbs with their accompanying phrases do appear in Isaiah and in explicitly creation passages (see below). These appearances are distributed throughout the book and exhibit varying patterns. To capture the significance of this merismus, the various segments of Isaiah should be considered separately.

In chaps. 1-35, the *heaven-earth* merismus appears three times. Isa 13:10 tells of the darkening of the "stars of the heavens" that accompanies the day of YHWH, a day of judgement. This darkening plays upon and reverses the narrative of Genesis' fourth creation day and by doing so intimates judgment as the reversal of creation. This creation reversal judgement is again spoken of in 34:4.

However, the most significant use of the merismus in this part of Isaiah occurs in 24:18. The chiasmic juxtaposition of "windows of heaven" and "foundations (participle of יסד) of earth" (in Hebrew, [a] נפתחו [b] וירעשו [b'] מוסדי ארץ [a']¹) is a clear reference to creation despite its judgement context. On the one hand, the verse creates allusions to the flood narratives of Genesis. There, the flood executed divine judgement against a sinful world; here a new flood executes similar judgement.² On the other hand, the text evokes creation as the events depicted by the verse are an abrogation of what God created on the third day of creation.³ As Brueggemann said: "Creation is nullified."⁴ This nullification of creation as a result of judgment is further

¹Here מרום is a synonym for heaven as also in 32:15; 33:5; 57:15; 58:4 (Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, 453).

²Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 180-182; Kissane, 1:283. The apocalyptic nature of chaps. 24-27, the so-called Isaiah Apocalypse, enhances this judgemental aspect of the text.

³Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13-39*, 193.

⁴Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 194.

stressed in the fourfold repetition of ארץ "earth" in vss. 19-20. In an alliterative wordplay depicting this judgment, the total reverse of creation is spelled out:

The earth is breaking, breaking;
The earth is crumbling, crumbling;
The earth is tottering, tottering;
The earth is swayed like a drunkard.¹

In chaps. 36-39, the *heaven-earth* merismus is used in the prayer of Hezekiah, 37:16. Among the things that Hezekiah ascribed to God in this verse is that he made heaven-earth: אַתָּה עָשִׂיתָ אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ, "You have made the heavens and the earth." The combination of the verb עָשָׂה and the *heaven-earth* merismus supplies one of the clearest creation statements in Isaiah and is an excellent example of how creation language works in the book.²

The metaphor is used 7 times in chaps. 40-55.³ In these chapters the *heaven-earth* merismus reaches its most sustained observable usage. God's creative act in relation to heaven-earth is portrayed in two main ways—"the stretching (נָטָה)" of the heavens and "the founding/foundations (יָסַד)" or "the spreading (רָקַע)" of the earth.⁴ The verb נָטָה is used 5 times in these constructions. In 40:22 "stretching of the heavens" stands by itself. In 42:5 and 44:24, "stretching of the heavens" parallels "spreading of

¹Hayes and Irvine, 303.

²Willis, 337; Ridderbos, 304. This study contends that this combination of explicit vocabulary and metaphoric images provides a fuller view of Isaiah's creation thought.

³Norman C. Habel, "He Who Stretches Out the Heavens," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 34 (1972): 417.

⁴Theodore M. Ludwig contended that there are other creation formulas in Isa 40-55 that use six different verbs (רָקַע, יָסַד, עָשָׂה, בָּרָא, יָצַר, כּוֹנֵן) with אָרֶץ ("The Traditions of the Establishing of the Earth in Deutero-Isaiah," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92 [1973]: 347, 355).

the earth." Here God is introduced as creator of the cosmos and the world.¹ In 48:13 and 51:13 and 16, "stretching of the heavens" stands parallel with "foundations of the earth." In 45:12 and 18, the *heaven-earth* merismus appears in conjunction with several different creation verbs, and the tenor of these verses is distinctly cosmological.

Habel commented that the formula about the stretching out of the heavens as it appears in Isa 40-55 is a recurring titular ascription "designed to identify and magnify Yahweh as the unique all-powerful creator."² Ludwig went a step further. He argued, on the basis of his study, that the various formulas concerning the establishing of the earth in Isa 40-55 demonstrate that creation thought "is not merely subsumed under election or redemption theology" but stands as "an independent doctrine" which provides an important basis for the proclamation of the prophet.³ He also claimed that when the writer of Isa 40-55 "mentions the creation of the cosmos, he does not use the phrase 'heaven and earth' with a verb of creating; instead he customarily quotes parallel formulae of the creating of the heavens and the founding of the earth."⁴ While Ludwig's claim about creation verbs cannot be substantiated from the perspective of the entire book, his statement does highlight the creation overtones of the *heaven-earth* merismus.

In the final segment of Isaiah, chaps. 56-66, the *heaven-earth* merismus occurs in 65:17 and 66:22. In both instances, the reference is to the eschatological re-creation

¹Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 119. The second verse also speaks about Israel's creation. The verb רקע (in participle form) in these verses uses the same root as רקיע "firmament" in Gen 1 (Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:117).

²Habel, 429.

³Ludwig, 357.

⁴Ibid., 347.

of heaven-earth and states that God will "create" (ברא 65:17) and "make" (עשה 66:22) a new heaven-earth. The ultimate creation of God is an eschatological one.

The *heaven-earth* merismus, like the other creation metaphors and the creation language of Isaiah, follows a specific pattern. First, the metaphor is used in all segments of Isaiah. Creation is not limited to any one portion of the book. Second, there is an observable concentration of creation thought in chaps. 40-55 and the *heaven-earth* merismus receives its most sustained cosmological creation sense in these chapters. The merismus connotes a primary meaning of cosmic creation that undergirds the creation of the earth and its contents. In this sense it is employed to mean 'universe' and 'world/earth'. Third, the metaphor is employed in Isaiah with the same three-dimensional property common to other aspects of Isaiah's creation language. Fourth, it supports the conceptual unity of the book's creation thought.

In summary, as a result of this examination of the three creation metaphors in Isaiah, a certain pattern emerges. One, the *breath/spirit* metaphor is used in three of the segments of Isaiah (it is not used in chaps. 36-39). The metaphor resonates strongly with the Genesis creation narrative and stresses the cosmological dimension of creation. Two, the "work of his/my/your hand" metaphor is encountered only in the first and last segments of Isaiah, thereby producing a framing effect. The metaphor emphasises the historical and eschatological dimensions of creation. Three, the only creation metaphor to appear in all segments of Isaiah is the *heaven-earth* merismus. It is the most wide-ranging metaphor as it includes all three dimensions of creation. Like so much of the data in Isaiah, this metaphor is concentrated in chaps. 40-55, simulating the general pattern of the explicit creation language of Isaiah. Four, the three metaphors, on the one hand, complement each other rather well, and, on the other

hand, they depict the conceptual unity of Isaiah's creation thought.

Structural Impact of Isaiah's Creation Language

Not only is creation language distributed throughout the book, it leaves an indelible imprint on the structure of the book. Arguably, any discourse on structure may appear selective, yet it is incumbent upon this research to attempt to decipher the literary impact of the theme at hand. That creation thought in Isaiah may not only have a theological function but a formal one as well requires investigation.

Several suggestions have been made concerning the structure of the book of Isaiah. Edmond Jacob proposed an envelope structure, with chaps. 1 and 66 forming the *inclusio*, based upon the high frequency of linguistic and literary elements and certain essential themes that are shared by the two chapters. He asserted that such coincidences reveal that the book bears the imprint of a structural intent whose passages enclose a unity within a single envelope.¹ In fact, another secondary *inclusio*

¹Edmond Jacob, *Esaïe 1-12*, Commentaire de l'ancien testament, vol. 8a (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1987), 18. This view is also shared by others: Marvin A. Sweeney concluded that Isa 1 and 65-66 serve as introduction and conclusion, respectively of the book, thereby providing it with a literary envelope ("Prophetic Exegesis in Isaiah 65-66," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah*, ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 1:455, 472). Likewise, Conrad also spoke about the connection between chaps. 1 and 65-66 (116). So also William J. Dumbrell, "The Purpose of the Book of Isaiah," *Tyndale Bulletin* 36 (1985): 112. David M. Carr conceded that the parallels between Isa 1 and 65-66 suggest that chap. 1 introduces the book while 65-66 conclude it. However, he also questioned the validity of such a conclusion because he thought that Isa 1 and 65-66 fail to anticipate or summarise, respectively, much of the intervening material. He stated that this produces both a thematic conflict and a rhetorical conflict that prevents Isa 1 and 65-66 from functioning cohesively as introduction and conclusion of the book ("Reaching for Unity in Isaiah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 57 [1993]: 73, 75).

Anthony J. Tomasino expands the *inclusio* to include the parallels between 1:2-2:4, on the one hand, and 63:7-66:24, on the other hand ("Isaiah 1:2-2:4 and 63-66 and the Composition of the Isaianic Corpus," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 57 [1993]: 84-88, 93). R. E. Clements has noticed a second envelope, what he termed a "hermeneutic *inclusio*," for the book of Isaiah comprising chaps. 2 and

can also be observed in 1:2 and 66:24, where the expressions "they have rebelled against me" and "the men that have rebelled against me" are used. This inclusion, utilizing the root פָּשַׁע, provides additional support for the envelope effect of chaps. 1 and 66.

Motyer proposed a structure for Isaiah that follows an "extended doublet" pattern in which some area of truth is presented in two consecutive steps. For example, 7:1-9:7 is followed by 9:8-11:16. Both passages simply repeat similar themes. This pattern also holds true for 42:18-43:21 with its double 43:22-44:23.¹ Motyer also pointed out that this pattern is not applied to chaps. 56-66 which employ an 'arch' or 'trajectory' pattern instead.²

Oswalt suggested a structure that is made up of 10 distinct units (1-6, 7-12, 13-23, 24-27, 28-35, 36-39, 40-48, 49-55, 56-59, 60-66) with an overarching theme of servanthood. He also suggested that chaps. 1-5 serve as overall introduction for the entire book.³

60-62 ("Arise, Shine; for Your Light Has Come": A Basic Theme of the Isaianic Tradition," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah*, ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 1: 454).

Besides seeing the literary frame of the book of Isaiah, it is also important to note that chap. 1 serves as the introduction of the book in that it contains the basic themes of the book (Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, Vol. I, *Chs 1-18* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965], 27), it summarises these major themes and provides a cross-section of the book (Georg Fohrer, "Jesaja 1 als Zusammenfassung der Verkündigung Jesajas," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 74 [1962]: 253), and it introduces the judgement and hope pattern of the book (Alex Luc, "Isaiah 1 as Structural Introduction," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 101 [1989]: 8).

¹Motyer, 24.

²Ibid.

³Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, 54.

Frequently, a bifid (two-part) structure has been applied to the book. Walter C. Kaiser, for example, maintained that the book is divided into two parts, chaps. 1-39, which are "keyed to judgment," and chaps. 40-66, which emphasise comfort.¹ The most complex bifid structure was provided by Avraham Gileadi who divided the book into chaps. 1-33 and 34-66. His study, which involved structural, rhetorical, and typological analyses, found that the bifid structure of Isaiah is arranged chiastically containing seven categories of parallels.² He examined the effect of the structure on the various themes of Isaiah and concluded: "The composition of the Book of Isaiah according to the bifid model binds inseparably all its parts. . . . Within the Bifid Structure, all these concepts cohere and are established cumulatively from beginning to end."³

A bifid structure with a difference was proposed by Brownlee. Based upon his study of the Qumran Isaiah scroll, he suggested a two-part division of the book along the lines in which the Qumran Scroll was divided, that is, chaps. 1-33 and 34-66. Using this argument, Brownlee noticed that the book consists of two panels, with seven segments in panel one that are paralleled in panel two (for example, 1-5, which speak of ruin and restoration, are paralleled by 34-35, which speak of paradise lost and

¹Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1978), 204.

²Avraham Gileadi, *The Literary Message of Isaiah* (New York: Hebraeus Press, 1994), 10, 15-16. He also supplied a full breakdown of the structure (33-40) Gileadi's work was based upon his dissertation work ("A Holistic Structure of the Book of Isaiah," Ph.D. dissertation [Brigham Young University, 1981]). Since then, he has also released a lay person's version of the same work (*The End from the Beginning: The Apocalyptic Vision of Isaiah* [Cave Junction, OR: Hebraeus Press, 1997]).

³Gileadi, *The Literary Message of Isaiah*, 40. Wilhelm Vischer supported the tripartite division of Isaiah based upon the Immanuel message of the book (*Die Immanuel-Botschaft im Rahmen des königlichen Zionsfestes* [Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag AG, Zollikon, 1955], 11-16).

regained).¹ Brownlee concluded that this structure is evidence that the book of Isaiah existed as a two-volume edition of Isaianic material that is the product of an Isaianic school.²

Other alternatives to the bifid structure have been proposed. Dumbrell preferred a pendulum structure that oscillates between two major themes, history and eschatology. He noted that the book opens and concludes with an *inclusio* containing both history and eschatology (chaps. 1-12 and 56-66) while the other chapters alternate between history and eschatology.³ A somewhat more radical proposal for Isaiah's structure was made by Watts, who argued that the vision "is much more dramatic and less realistic in setting than other books. . . . The Vision is much more suited to the artificial setting of a stage."⁴ Based upon this drama hypothesis, he proceeded to demonstrate that the book is comprised of 12 Acts divided into two Parts. Both Part I and Part II are made up of 6 Acts each, with the former emphasising judgement and curses while the latter stresses salvation and blessing.⁵ Sweeney advanced an altogether different structure pattern. He held that chap. 1 is the prologue of the book and chaps. 2-66 are the elaboration. The elaboration segment follows an A-B-A pattern. Chaps. 2-35 give the announcement of God's plan for a new world order, chaps. 36-39 serve as

¹Brownlee, 247-249. His conclusions lead to a parallel between chaps. 6-8 and 36-40, both of which he labelled biographical. This engenders an unusual (and unique) explanation for the placement and role of chaps. 36-39. An even more curious fact is the placement of ch. 40 with 36-39. Brownlee's explanations for these anomalies are not entirely satisfactory.

²*Ibid.*, 247.

³Dumbrell, 123.

⁴Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, xlv.

⁵*Ibid.*, li.

transition to explain the delay in the implementation of the plan, and chaps. 40-66 are an exhortation to participate in God's renewed covenant.¹

Webb, who pays close attention to the shifts in the literary styles of the book, provided a more compelling analysis of Isaiah's structure. According to his analysis, chaps. 1-35 and 40-66 are predominantly verse, while chaps. 36-39 contain the only extended block of predominant prose.² Chaps. 36-39, which serve as structural pivot, are preceded by three units (1-12; 13-27; 28-35) which terminate with the redeemed singing God's praises in Zion or on their way to Zion, and are followed by three units (40:1-51:11; 51:12-55:13; 56-66) which also end the same way, with singing.³

Adapting the analysis of Webb, while taking into consideration the other proposals, it seems that another structure, one informed by Isaiah's creation language, is in order. There is little doubt that Webb is probably correct in pointing to Isa 36-39 as the structural pivot of the book. These chapters differ from the rest of the book both in form⁴ and function⁵ and serve as a hinge to the prophecies of Isaiah. From the standpoint of creation thought, there is one explicit reference to creation in these

¹Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 98. An A-B-A structural pattern was also suggested by Wolf. He held that Isaiah's scheme consists of poetry-prose-poetry. This schematic arrangement is also seen in the books of Job (prose prologue-poetry dialogue-prose epilogue) and Daniel (Hebrew text-Aramaic text-Hebrew text) and in Hammurabi's Law Code (poetic prologue-prose section-poetic epilogue) (41).

²Webb, 30.

³Ibid.

⁴They are predominantly prose, the only extended prose section in the book.

⁵See the Excursus on the various parts of Isaiah. Webb's proposal that chaps. 36-39 serve as structural pivot seems to offer the best of all worlds in understanding the role of these chapters in the book of Isaiah.

chapters (37:16).¹

As already observed, Isaiah's creation language is concentrated in chaps. 40-55 and the three principal creation verbs are used together only in this section of the book.² These chapters also present the most sustained use of creation language in the book.³ Nevertheless, as demonstrated, Isaiah's creation thought (via explicit vocabulary and indirect metaphors) is found throughout the book and is present, in differing degrees, in every major segment of the book except in the historical interlude, where there is only one reference to creation. Creation references are scattered throughout chaps. 1-35 but there is no sustained use of such language. The principal creation verb ברא appears only once in these chapters and creation talk here is largely dependent upon the occurrences of indirect creation metaphors. Notably however all three metaphors examined in this study do appear in chaps. 1-35. Creation thought reaches a climax in chaps. 56-66 with the creation of new heaven-earth, that is, new reality and new paradigm that is presented in chaps. 65-66. Isaiah's creation thought or language moves from an introductory phase in chaps. 1-35, through a crescendo in chaps. 40-55, to a notable climax in chaps. 56-66.

There is one direct reference to creation (37:16) in the historical pivot (chaps.

¹This is part of Hezekiah's ascription of creatorship to God by employing the *heaven-earth* merismus, one of the major creation metaphors of Isaiah (see above).

²In Isa. 43:7 and 45: 7, 18.

³A Babylonian/Persian setting is usually posited for these chapters by those who adhere to a Second Isaiah theory and even those who subscribe to the view that these chapters speak proleptically admit that this is the most likely setting (prophetically speaking) for Isa 40-55. These chapters intentionally deny the cosmic creative powers of the Babylonian gods, thus the emphasis on the creatorship of YHWH (cf. the discussion on universal concerns in chapter 3).

36-39). Nevertheless, the power of the creator is evident in two acts of God: the miraculous deliverance foretold in chap. 37 and the 10 degree reversal of the sun (38:7-8) which God had created (cf. Gen 1:14-19). Apart from this historical interlude, creation thought provides the book of Isaiah with a three-part collage of prophecies. The interweaving of prophecies about the nations and Israel in chaps. 1-35 gives way to a view of YHWH's anointed messiah and the redemption he brings in 40-55. This is then followed by a dramatic sketch of new realities in 56-66. In each stage of prophecy there are references to God as the creator and to his creative activity: cosmologically, historically, and eschatologically. The entire book bears the imprint of a "symphonic structure"¹ comprised of a first movement (1-35), a bridge (36-39),² a crescendo (40-

¹The expression "symphonic structure" is here adopted as it accounts for three things operational in Isaiah's structure: (1) the book consists of various movements, each one sufficiently distinctive, yet the whole is bonded by common literary and thematic strands (see Excursus); "symphonic" recognises this multi-movement feature of Isaiah; (2) Isaiah is also characterised by frequent and sudden transitions via ideas that oscillate and recur, thus "symphonic"; (3) the book is also "symphonic" because a theme is presented and briefly discussed, a second theme is introduced, which in turn may lead to a third theme, and then the preceding themes are reiterated (see Allan A. MacRae, *The Gospel of Isaiah* [Chicago: Moody, 1977], 31). While MacRae's suggestions were applied only to Isa 40-55, they seem even more appropriate for the whole book.

²A particularly contentious point in Isaianic studies concerns the placement and role of chaps. 36-39. In this study, it has been observed that these chapters stand as a separate segment in the book, set apart from the rest of the book by form and content. It has also been noted that these chapters function as a sort of historical interlude in the book. These facts call for greater elucidation. If the "symphonic structure" of Isaiah can be accepted as a plausible explanation for its structural paradigm, then chaps. 36-39 have a crucial function. As noted in the Excursus, Isa 35 appears to be a mini-digest of Isa 40-55. In Isa 40-55 the most sustained use of creation language is encountered (the latter part of this study will demonstrate that the same phenomenon holds true when applied to other significant themes in Isaiah). On either side of this movement, a preparatory stage is met in chaps. 1-35, while a finale is encountered in chaps. 56-66. It appears that Isaiah's proclamation pauses a while before committing to a final thrust that culminates in the new heaven-new earth prophecy. It seems plausible that Isa 36-39 prepare the listener for the sustained

55), and a finale (56-66).

Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that Isaiah's use of creation language is both rich and significant. First, Isaiah employs several of the principal creation verbs used in the OT, particularly *ברא*, *יצר*, and *עשה*. These terms are used throughout the book but they are concentrated in Isa 40-55. Isaiah also employs indirect metaphors whose presence complements the explicit creation language of the book. Like the verbs, these metaphors also intimate a concentration of creation thought in chaps. 40-55. Together, the creation verbs and the metaphors provide a fuller picture of what Isaiah means by creation.

Second, Isaiah's creation language portrays a three-dimensional stance. Both the explicit vocabulary and the indirect metaphors suggest that creation can be spoken of as cosmological (primordial), historical, and eschatological. Cosmologically, creation is a reference to the original creation of the cosmos, the world, and mankind. Historically, it refers to the creation of the nation of Israel. Eschatologically, it anticipates the new creation of God inasmuch as this entails a new heaven and a new earth, a new Jerusalem and a new Israel, and new realities and paradigms.

Third, Isaiah's creation thought impacts the literary structure of the book. It produces a multi-movement work with a "symphonic" imprint. It organises the book into a first movement, a bridge, a crescendo, and a finale. Creation thought in Isaiah begins with scattered references (1-35), and via a bridge (36-39), thrusts into a

message of 40-55 and the finale of 56-66. In chaps. 1-35, the listener is being primed with all the major themes of the book, including creation, and then by means of a well-tempered "bridge" he is launched into the sustained development and discussion of those same themes.

sustained discussion (40-55), and culminates with a finale (56-66), new heaven-new earth.

Fourth, Isaiah's creation thought hints at an extremely significant theme at work in the book, one that is subordinate to no other theme. Creation is the primary conception of God and Isaiah is far more interested in who this God is than in what he does. That God is the *creator* rather than the fact that he *created* is of prime concern for Isaiah. It may be said that Isaiah provides the most theological conception of the creator in the OT. Rather than serve an ancillary role to other topics, creation thought undergirds everything else that Isaiah says about God. This God is able to save or to promise new realities or to produce new things because he is the creator. As such, creation thought is a dominant theme in Isaiah.

CHAPTER II

CREATION PASSAGES IN ISAIAH

Isaiah's expression of creation thought is not limited to vocabulary or metaphors that refer to creation. The book also contains passages that embody a sustained discussion of creation thought. To understand the full complexity of Isaiah's creation thought, these passages must be investigated. This chapter exegetes four pre-selected passages from Isaiah—4:2-6; 43:1-7; 44:24-45:25; and 65:17-25.¹ As will be seen, these selected passages are both representative of and crucial to Isaiah's creation discourse.

Isa 4:2-6

On the surface, there is some credence to the notion that creation thought appears to play a minor role in Isa 1-39. Apart from some scattered references to creation, mostly by means of indirect metaphor (see chapter 1), the theme achieves no sustained presentation in these chapters. In terms of explicit expressions, it must be admitted that apart from Isa 4:5, where the verb ברא is utilised, and 37:16, creation is

¹The basis for selecting these particularly is briefly discussed in the Introduction and is also dealt with during the course of this exegesis.

virtually absent from this segment of the book of Isaiah.¹ Nevertheless, creation thought is not entirely absent nor are these chapters completely silent about creation. As Ollenburger put it, "although rarely explicit, creation is theologically implicit in I Isaiah."² This is especially true when the use of creation metaphors is taken into account.³

The first instance of the verb ברא in Isaiah occurs in chap. 4 and this is the principal reason for choosing Isa 4:2-6⁴ in this investigation. This passage also contains the first notable mention of creation in the book and, in a sense, is the launching pad for Isaiah's creation thought. Moreover, Isa 4:2-6 is the most significant creation passage in the first segment of Isaiah (that is, chaps. 1-35) and its placement here is crucial to this investigation.

¹Clifford contended that apart from Isa. 4:5 there is no such creation language in the old Isaian tradition ("The Unity of the Book of Isaiah," 5). Clifford's position does not take into account the use of indirect metaphors that is significant to chaps. 1-39.

²Ollenburger, 63.

³All three creation metaphors examined in chapter 1 of this study appear in the first segment of Isaiah (Isa 1-35) and at least one of them, the *heaven-earth* merismus, appears in chaps. 36-39 in a rather explicit creation verse (37:16) with a creation verb.

⁴For some, Isa 4:2-6 cannot be treated as an authentic Isaianic passage, that is, it cannot be accepted as coming from the pen of the eighth-century prophet, even though it is part of chaps. 1-39. For instance, Joseph Jensen held that this passage is a non-Isaianic addition whose insertion here was intended to mitigate the harshness of Isa 3:16-4:1 (*Isaiah 1-39*, Old Testament Message [Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984], 70). A similar view is propagated by Kirsten Nielsen: "Isa 4:2-6 is a *redactional composition* from the *Exilic period* whose purpose it is to balance and interpret the preceding chapters" (*There Is Hope for a Tree: The Tree Metaphor in Isaiah*, JSOT Supplement Series, vol. 65 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989], 180). Such observations however are contingent upon theories concerning authorship and composition and the arguments presented are not necessarily convincing. As will be demonstrated, Isa 4:2-6 is a significant part of both the literary and conceptual framework of the first section of prophecies in the book.

Translation

The following is a translation of Isa 4:26 that seeks to capture both the literary patterns and the structure of the text:

- 2 On that day (ביום ההוא) shall be (יהיה)
the Branch of the Lord (צמח יהוה), beautiful and glorious
and the fruit of the earth (ופרי הארץ), the pride and glory of the survivors
of Israel.¹
- 3 And it shall be (והיה),
whoever is left in Zion
and remains in Jerusalem
will be called holy,
everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem;
- 4 when (אם) YHWH
will have washed away (רחץ)
the filth of Zion's daughters,
and the bloodstains of Jerusalem
[will have] cleansed (ידיה) from its midst,
by a spirit (ברוח) of judgement
and by a spirit (וברוח) of burning.
- 5 And YHWH will **create** (ברא)²
over the entire (על כל-) site of Mount Zion
and over (יעל-) its assemblies,
a *cloud and smoke by day* (ענן יומם ועשן)
and the *shining of a flaming fire by night* (אש להבה לילה)
for over all (כי על-כל-) the glory [there will be] a canopy (חפה)
- 6 and a tent (וסכה) it shall be (תהיה)
for shade (לצל) by day from the heat and
for refuge (למחסה) and shelter (למסתור) from the storm and ruin

Contextual Considerations

The first segment of Isaiah (chaps. 1-35) is organised around the oscillation between judgement and redemption passages.³ This juxtaposition of judgement thought and salvific concepts provides chaps. 1-35 with a certain unmistakable flavour. The

¹DSSIsa adds "and Judah."

²LXX reads κατ' ἑξῆς "he will come" for Heb. ובא. This would echo the OT instances where God comes in a cloud and fire (Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 48, n. 5a).

³Refer to the discussion about the structure of the book of Isaiah in chapter 1.

entire segment begins with a lengthy statement of divine disgust over Israel's sins, which includes the implied threat of judgement that such sin carries (see Isa 1), and concludes with a hymn celebrating the redemption of God's people (Isa 35).

Isa 4:2-6 is the second salvation passage in the book (the first being 2:2-5) and it is framed by judgement passages, 2:6-4:1 and 5:1-30. The former pronounces the divine indictment against Israel that accompanies the "day of the Lord" (with 4:2-6 being the third "day of the Lord" passage and the only positive one)¹ while the latter contains the Song of the Vineyard (vss. 1-7) and the subsequent proclamation of "woes" (vss. 8-30) that would befall the nation. These two passages sandwich the redemption promise of 4:2-6. The same "day of the Lord" that is a precursor of judgement in chaps. 2 and 3 is good news in 4:2-6.

Furthermore, Isa 4:2-6 is a clearly delineated pericope within the book and provides the second leg of a frame or *inclusio* that encompasses a set of judgement oracles. "Commentators in general regard Isaiah 2-4 as a complete unit which forms an *inclusio*, two salvation oracles (2:2-5 and 4:2-6) surrounding the judgement oracles which fall between them (2:6-4:1)."² Other scholars have reached similar conclusions. Young concurred that the "present section, 4:2-6, forms a conclusion of the prophecy, 2:1-4:6."³ Likewise, Rendtorff agreed that Isa 2:6-4:6 is one unit which is itself a part of the larger context of chaps. 1-12 encircled by the Zion/Jerusalem theme.⁴ Willis

¹Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 49.

²Linzy H. "Bill" Hill, "Reading Isaiah as a Theological Unity Based on an Exegetical Investigation of the Exodus Motif" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993), 54.

³Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 1:172.

⁴Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, 156-157.

pointed out that not only do Isa 2:2-5 and 4:2-6 form an inclusio, they also enclose a prophetic complex with the following pattern: hope (2:2-5), doom (2:6-22), doom (3:1-15), doom (3:16-4:1), hope (4:2-6).¹

Contextually, Isa 4:2-6 can be seen either as part of a salvation inclusio with 2:2-5 or as a salvation prophecy framed by judgement oracles. Either way, the passage fits well into the judgement-hope scheme of this particular segment of the book of Isaiah.

Structural Analysis of Isa 4:2-6

The passage opens with a statement, using the Qal Ip of הִיָּה (vs. 2), of the salvific "day of the Lord" that accompanies the coming of the "Branch" of the Lord.² Regardless of how the "Branch" is interpreted in this text, the intent of the statement is

¹John T. Willis, "The First Pericope in the Book of Isaiah," *Vetus Testamentum* 34 (1984): 65.

²The imagery of the "Branch" צֶמַח in this passage has given rise to contrasting opinions. Some maintain that this Branch is messianic, while others claim it is not. The expression also appears in other OT texts, Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12. Based on the parallels with these other texts, Motyer concluded that the phrase "Branch of the Lord" "is always a title pointing to the Messiah in his kingly and priestly offices" (65). Young also saw the passage in question as being clearly messianic (*The Book of Isaiah*, 1:181, 190-191). See also Jensen, *Isaiah 1-39*, 70. However, not everyone sees a messianic reference here. Nielsen suggested that a messianic interpretation of these verses should be carried out more cautiously since the expression "Branch of the Lord" may be only an image of kingship, present or future (185). Willis is more sceptical and gave three reasons why a messianic interpretation is rather unlikely: (1) a messianic reading is not the most natural reading of the text; (2) the ambiguity of the phrase itself; and (3) the fact that the NT neither quotes nor alludes to Isa 4:2-6 (*Isaiah*, 125-126). S. H. Widyapranawa came to a similar conclusion: "But the sudden appearance of any idea of Messiah is out of context here. . . . So it is more likely that the reference is to the remnant of Israel, now redeemed and purified" (*Isaiah 1-39: The Lord Is Saviour, Faith in National Crisis*, International Theological Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 19). To argue from the silence of the NT or the ambiguity of the expression (which is expected when imagery is used) or the sudden appearance of an image or thought does not provide sufficient grounds for necessarily rejecting a messianic interpretation of Isa 4:2-6.

quite clear—the "Branch" is the glory (כבוד) of God for the sake of the people of God. This glory of the "Branch" is accentuated by the parallelism of כבוד with צבי and תפארה whose essential connotation is that of "beauty." This first statement evokes the creation story by the parallel use of צמח (as in Gen 2:5, 9) and פרי (as in Gen 1:11, 12) both of which speak of the bounty of the earth in the Genesis account. The passage closes with vs. 6 which also employs the Qal Ipf of היה followed by a pair of lines that parallel "shade" with "refuge" and "shelter." This closing sentence evokes memories of the historical work of God through the Exodus.

In between the opening statement¹ and the closing verse are two verses marked by Qal Pf plus the ו conjunction (vss. 3 & 5). Vs. 3 focuses upon the redeemed remnant who are called "holy," קדוש (vs. 3), and who are holy by virtue of the purifying act of God (vs. 4). The Qal Pf verb היה is followed by three parallel lines, using participles that refer to the remnant. This statement is clearly eschatological in its intent as it anticipates a new creative work of God. Vs. 5 reverts to the "glory" of the Lord theme of the opening statement where the glory of God is depicted as a "canopy" (הפנה) over his people. The verse opens with the Qal Pf verb ברא, a clear echo of the Genesis creation story, accompanied by three parallel lines using the על כל or על על construction that allude to the pillar of cloud and fire that accompanied Israel in the wilderness (see Exod 40:36-38). The entire pericope bears the "glory-holy-glory" structural imprint with the spirit-driven purification of God's people in vs. 4 as the centre. This "glory-holy" continuum provides the theological framework of the passage.

¹Brueggemann called this introductory statement a "promissory formula" that begins a new unit (*Isaiah 1-39*, 41). Otto Kaiser wondered whether vs. 2 is not poetry even though the rest of the passage is clearly prose (*Isaiah 1-12*, translated by John Bowden, 2d ed, Old Testament Library [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983], 85).

The passage displays the following chiastic structure:

4:2	A Shall be Branch of YHWH Fruit of the earth	יהיה צמח יהוה ופרי הארץ
4:3	B shall be who is left [who] remains who is recorded	והיה הנשאר והנותר כל-הכתוב
4:4	C when YHWH washed the filth and the bloodstains cleansed	אם רחן אדני את צאת ואת-דמי ידיה
4:5	B' YHWH will create over all over for over all	וברא יהוה על כל על כי על-כל
4:6	A' Shall be Shade Refuge and shelter	תהיה לצל למחסה ולמסתור

Conceptual Complex

The passage is introduced by the phrase "day of the Lord," ביום ההוא, with its distinctive eschatological overtones.¹ The passage anticipates a new work, an eschatological work, of God that is forthcoming and that is the counterpart of judgement. If the "day of the Lord" is a precursor of judgement (as indicated by the surrounding context), it is also a promise of redemption.

However, since this redemption is still in the future, its certainty is guaranteed by the analogy of history. "In the description of the coming salvation Isaiah uses language descriptive of the time of the wilderness wandering."² The references to a "cloud of smoke by day" (ענן יומם ועשן) and a "flaming fire by night" (ונגה אש להבה לילה)

¹The full eschatological implications of the phrase "day of the Lord" are discussed in the next chapter of this study. Suffice it to say at this stage that the phrase embodies marked eschatological overtones, stressed by its parallels to Isa 28:5-8, 15-17 and 65:18 (Wolf, 81).

²Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 1:186.

intentionally evoke memories of the Exodus experience and the wilderness sojourn.¹ That historical event is being portrayed here as the very paradigm for any future salvation, as if to imply that this new redemption being promised is analogous to that historical salvation. The Exodus motif underscores the soteriological character of the passage.² The occurrence of ברא here is in a redemption context.

The text goes a step further. In speaking about this new eschatological redemption, along with its historical analogy (the Exodus), Isaiah depicts this work of God as creation. Vs. 5 "begins with a verb 'create', which portrays Yahweh doing an utterly new thing, but a new thing reminiscent of the old tabernacle of Moses."³ The "cloud" and "fire" which become the symbols of the saving work of God and serve as the canopy over his people are the products of God's creative handiwork. They are what he creates (vs. 5). In the words of Young:

The coming glory is comparable only with the creation. It is pictured as a return to the beginning, the absolute beginning. So great is the majesty and glory of that salvation that the most suitable comparison for it is that of creation. To emphasize this fact, Isaiah employs a word which Moses had used in the first verse of Genesis. To create! What an appropriate word for the description of the work of God in introducing salvation. The verb *bara* 'is the most suitable for expressing the doctrine of absolute creation and it is also the ideal word to picture that work of salvation which is attributable to the immediate activity and agency of God.⁴

This eschatological redemption and, by extension, its historical counterpart, the

¹Exod 40:36-38.

²Elliot-Hogg, 15.

³Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, 43. It should be noted that while Isa 4:5 in the MT reads "then he will create," the LXX reads, "then he will come and stand," apparently for the Hebrew וּבֵא יְהוָה. Clements asserted that the LXX reading is preferable (*Isaiah 1-39*, 54).

⁴Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 1:184-185.

Exodus, are the product of the work of the creator God; they are creation. The historical nature of the Exodus also implies that the primordial and eschatological acts of God referred to here are viewed as equally factual. Whether seen historically or eschatologically, creation is God's consummate act.

While Isa 4:2-6 carries an undeniable soteriological character, yet it is creation that is the undergirding factor in that salvation. The passage commences with allusions to the Genesis creation narrative and, by intentionally employing a word that describes primordial creation, seeks to portray that act of God as the pre-eminent divine work from which ensues other divine acts such as salvation. God created the world, he had created Israel, and now he promises a new, eschatological creation. In a subtle way the text encapsulates all three dimensions—cosmological, historical, and eschatological—of Isaiah's creation thought.

Isa 43:1-7

The precise delimitation of this passage is a matter of debate¹ but vss. 1-7 are here accepted as forming a discrete unit within the chapter, as will be presently demonstrated. This pericope is chosen because it contains one of only three verses in Isaiah where all three principal creation verbs are found.² The presence of all three creation verbs in vs. 7 requires careful consideration as this has an immediate impact upon Isaiah's creation thought.

¹Smart contended that vs. 8 should be added to the pericope (95-98) and claimed that: "To omit the verse or to separate it from vs 1-7 is to obscure disastrously the thought of the prophet" (98). See also Kissane, 2:48-50, and Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 52.

²The other two being Isa 45:7 & 18.

Translation

The following translation shows both the literary patterns and structure of the text.

- 1 But now, thus says YHWH (כה־אמר יהוה),
your *Creator* (בראך), Jacob,
your *Former* (ויצרך), Israel;
"Fear not (אל־חירא) for
I have redeemed you (גאלתיך);
I have called you by name (קראתי בשמך);
you are mine.
- 2 When you pass through the waters, I am with you (אתך־אני);
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through *the fire you shall not be burned*
and *the flame shall not consume you*.
- 3 For I [am] YHWH, your God; the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour;
I give [as] your ransom Egypt,
Ethiopia, and Seba in exchange for you (תחתיך).
- 4 Because you are precious (יקרה) in my eyes, honored (נכבדה), and I love you
(אהבתיך);
I give men¹ in return for you (תחתיך),
peoples in exchange (תחת) for your life.
- 5 Fear not for (אל־חירא כִּי־)
I am with you (אתך־אני);
from the east I will bring your offspring,
and from the west I will gather you (אקבצך).
- 6 I will say to the north, 'Give up,'
and to the south, "Do not withhold;
bring my *sons from afar*
and my *daughters from the end of the earth*';
- 7 everyone who is called by my name (הנקרא בשמי)²
[and]³ for my glory whom I *created* (בראתי), I *formed* (יצרתי), indeed I *made* (אֶ־עשיתי)."

Contextual Considerations

A word about the genre (*Gattung*) of the passage is in order here. Stuhlmueller

¹MT אדם. DSSIsa האדם. LXX ανθρωπους πολλους "many men." Tg עממיא
"peoples." There is not compelling reason to reject the MT reading in favor of these
alternatives (Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 127, n. 4b).

²Articulated Niphal Ptc of קרא, "the one who is called."

³The ו conjunction is present in both DSSIsa and MT but is absent in several
other manuscripts., e.g., Syr Vg (Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 127, n. 7b).

proposed that the unit is an example of a salvation oracle (*Heilsorakel*).¹ Unfortunately, this designation unnecessarily subordinates the creation thought of the passage to its salvation concept. Perhaps it is sufficient to observe with MacRae that there are sharp transitions throughout Isa 40-48 that provide this section with a special tone.²

One such transition occurs between chaps. 42 and 43,³ and a smaller shift also occurs in 43:8.⁴ This allows 43:1-7 to be treated as a discrete unit. Isa 42 is composed of two "hymns" that celebrate the salvific work of God. Isa 42:1-9 is the first Servant Song and describes the redemption that the Servant of the Lord will usher in. "The first Servant song introduces the Servant and highlights the successful completion of the task to which He is divinely called."⁵ The rest of chap. 42 is a hymn of praise to God for his work, which is both salvific (vss. 10-17) as well as judgemental (vss. 18-25).⁶ Isa 43:8-28 is a call to know the incomparable God of Israel (vss. 10-13) whose unique sovereignty and power are demonstrated by his acts in the history of Israel (vss. 16-17).

¹Stuhlmüller, *Creative Redemption*, 111. He argued that the *וַיְהִי* in vs. 1 is a transition phrase typical of *Heilsorakel*. Claus Westermann concurred with this genre identification (*Isaiah 40-66*, trans. David M. G. Stalker, The Old Testament Library [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969], 115).

²MacRae, 17. See chapter 1 for the discussion on the "symphonic structure" of Isaiah. MacRae pointed out that this structural paradigm is especially explicit in chaps. 40-55.

³*Ibid.*, 77.

⁴Thus separating vss. 1-7 from what follows. This evidences the fact that Isa 43:1-7 is a discrete unit.

⁵Lindsey, 57.

⁶The juxtaposition of salvation and judgement in this segment of Isaiah suggests that judgement is somehow salvific. This is however not true for the rest of the book where the two are often contrasted. See the earlier discussion on the structure of Isaiah and the discussion on judgement in chapter 3.

The chapter concludes with a reminder that this mighty God will hold his people accountable for their response to him (vss. 18-25).

The creation passage of 43:1-7 is framed by these passages of salvation.¹ This immediate context of the text hints at the decidedly historical focus of Isaiah in this passage. The context reveals that God's creation is very much a historical, and therefore ongoing, work.

Structural Analysis of Isa 43:1-7

Isa 43:1-7 displays a marked sense of symmetry that highlights its structure, and therefore, its message. There is a consistent use of 1st and 2nd personal pronouns and of synonyms (for example, ברא, יצר, and עשה are used in vss. 1 and 7; להבה/אש and נהר/מים are used in vs. 2; and בער/כזה and כבד/יקר in vss. 2 and 4 respectively).² The passage exhibits a well-defined structure, despite Whybray's assertion that Isa 43:1-7 is actually made up of two separate salvation oracles.³ Of all the proposed structural analyses of the passage, the ones supporting a chiasmic structure are the most compelling.⁴ The

¹Mauch provides an alternate suggestion on the context of Isa 43:1-7. He stated that 40:1-11 is the prologue to Isa 40-55 and announces salvation. This prologue is then followed by four poems, 40:12-31; 41:1-42:4; 42:5-17; and 42:18-43:7. The first two poems establish God's authority as Creator of the cosmos and the ruler of history. The last two poems supply the claim of God as Creator of the cosmos and Israel in covenantal new creation and salvation (131-132). Mauch's analysis highlights the salvific tone of Isa 43:1-7.

²Bernd Willmes-Osnabrück, "Gott erlöst sein Volk: Gedanken zum Gottesbild Deuterocesaja nach Jes 43, 1-7," *Biblische Notizen* 51 (1990): 70. These stylistic elements show that the passage is well-constructed, cohesive, and a unity (Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 129).

³Whybray, 82. Also Scullion, 48-49. Mauch held that the passage is a single salvation oracle composed of two strophes, vss. 1-3 and 4-7. (131)

⁴Motyer spoke of a concentric pattern made up of three pairs of parallels (330, 334). Paul Hanson drew attention to the intricate structure of the passage and pointed out that vss. 1 & 7 provide a first-level frame depicting God as creator of Israel; that

structural pattern suggested here follows the chiasmic structure proposed by others.

The entire pericope is framed by a creation inclusio (vss. 1 & 7).¹ This inclusio is accompanied by inner frames that depict realized history with its echoes of the Exodus and election of Israel (vs. 1-3) and proleptic history which anticipates the gathering of Israel from exile (vss. 5-7). The center of the passage (vs. 4) provides the assurance of God's love for his people which is the basis of a special relationship with him.

The following basically chiasmic structure for Isa 43:1-7 is suggested:

43:1a.	A Creator and Shaper		בראך ויצרך
43:1b	B "Fear not"		אל־חירא
43:1c	C Redeemed		גאלתיך
43:1d	D Called by name		קראתי בשמך
43:2	E "I am with you"		אתך־אני
43:3	F Nations in exchange	נחתי . . . תחתך	
43:4a	G Precious, honoured, loved		יקרת נכבדת אהבתיך
43:4b	F' Peoples in exchange	תחתך	
43:5a	B' "Fear not"		אל־חירא

vss. 1b-3 & 5-6 with their "Do not fear" phrase supply a second level frame describing God's redemptive activity within history; that vs. 4 is the heart of the passage because it reveals the basis for God's creative and redemptive acts (60). Mark Worthing's chiasmic proposal is the most complete one. He suggested that vs. 4a-b is the keystone verse as it speaks about God's love for Israel. Moving outward, four rings are encountered: nations and peoples in 4c-d and 3c-d; "fear not" statements in 5 and 1d; God's calling by name in 7a and 1e; and, creation statements in 7b-c and 1a-c (cited in Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 129). Also Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 137. Melugin saw a three-part structure: vss. 1-3a as a salvation-assurance oracle that refers to God's relationship with Israel; vss. 3b-4 which is an announcement of salvation that speaks about foreign nations becoming Israel's ransom; and, vss. 5-7 which is another salvation-assurance oracle referring to God's gathering of Israel (105). Westermann however proposed a two-part structure for Isa 43:1-7 in which both parts are delineated by the phrase "Fear not." He explained that both parts reflect the following general pattern: an assurance of salvation, substantiation by a perfect tense and nominal clause, and proclamation in the future tense. A metric count (vss. 1-4 use mainly a 3+3 metre; vss. 5 & 7 a 2+2+2 metre; vs. 6 a 3+2 metre) of the passage indicates a shift in vs. 5 that separates vss. 1-4 from vss. 5-7 (*Isaiah 40-66*, 115).

¹Scullion, 49.

43:5a	E' "I am with you"	אתך-אני
43:5b-6	C' Gathering	אקבצך
43:7a	D' Called by name	הנקרא בשמי
43:7b	A' Created and Shaped	בראתיו יצרתיו

The passage reveals the following structural progressions. The first progression is the creation inclusio of vss. 1 and 7 with the use of the verbs ברא and יצר in both verses. The verb עשה is added in vs.7¹ and it is preceded by the particle אף, denoting that it is serving as summary to the creation thought of the passage as it does in the Genesis creation narrative (Gen 1:31) and at the end of Isaiah.² The use of ברא and יצר in this text also reflects the same progression of creation as in Genesis; the first verb refers to the general creation of the planet whereas the second verb refers to the specific creation of mankind.

The second progression (vss. 1-3) deals with realised history with its "Exodus-election" motif. It takes the idea of divine creation into the historical realm. It refers back to the Exodus and the choice of Israel as God's elect people. This movement is accentuated by: (1) the use of the verb נאל in vs. 2 with its clear reference to the Exodus;³ (2) the phrase "I am the Lord your God" (which is also employed in Exod

¹StuhlmueLLer, *Creative Redemption*, 114.

²Refer to the discussion about עשה in chapter 1.

³Motyer pointed out the movement of verbs in vs. 1 as follows: "create" ברא a general creation term; then "formed" יצר a more intimate term that indicates painstaking care (Gen 2:7); lastly, "redeemed" נאל a verb more intimate still with its covenant allusions (cf. 35:9 & 41:14) (330-331). See David L. McKenna, *Isaiah 40-66*, The Communicator's Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1994), 450. The verb is used in the Exodus narrative to speak about the redemption of Israel from Egyptian bondage (Exod 6:6; 15:13). The word is also used in the story of Ruth, and there it refers to the act of Boaz as kinsman in redeeming Ruth (Ruth 3:13). The verb carries legal connotations and may have been originally a technical term of family law (Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 116). The basic meaning of the verb signifies redeeming or liberating by making a payment or by providing a substitute (MacRae, 78). In

20:2) with its unique covenantal overtones;¹ and (3) the reference to the giving of a name in vss. 1 and 7.² It was Karl Barth who best captured the significance of the Genesis creation account as the platform for the covenant. He suggested that Gen 1 develops the idea that creation is "the external basis of the covenant" while Gen 2 suggests that covenant is "the internal basis of creation." In other words, creation

Isaiah, this meaning is heightened by the association of נָאֵל with יָשַׁע "to save" and כָּפַר "to ransom." The nominal derivative of יָשַׁע means "saviour" and is used 17 times in the OT with 11 instances, 5 of which occur in Isa 40-49, referring to God (ibid., 80). The word כָּפַר is a clear allusion to the Levitical sacrificial system. The word expresses a willingness to pay a price (Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66*, 140) and is legal language of a business transaction for the freedom of slaves (McKenna, 451). The Exodus-election motif of Isa 43:1-3 is inescapable.

¹The covenantal significance of this expression is borne out by its use in such covenant-rich passages as Exod 19-20; Deut 5-6; Josh 24; etc. The phrase is used in Exod 20:2 in the giving of the law that was integral to the making of covenant. In essence this phrase establishes the elect status of Israel, not only as a people who are created by God but also as a nation redeemed by him. This is why God says, "You are mine!" (43:1). In several contexts, Isaiah intertwines Israel's redemption with creation thought (41:8-20; 43:1-7; 44:1-2; 45:15, 17; etc.). See Brooks, 80.

²The act of naming has certain connotations: (1) An election or covenantal meaning. When God cut a covenant with Abraham he also changed his name (Gen 17:5). Similarly, when Jacob became a recipient of the covenant promises, his name was also changed (Gen 32:28). The same is true of Moses the chosen servant of God (Exod 33:12, 16). The act of God giving a name hints at election and covenant. This act of giving a name carries legal connotations. Parents give names, and so does God. (2) The calling by name, especially in the use of קָרָא, carries a decidedly creation connotation. At creation, God called by name the luminaries, the sky, the land (Gen 1:5, 8, 10), and the stars (Isa 40:16; Ps 147:4, cf. Amos 5:8). The affinity of the language in 43:1 & 7 to Isa 40:26 suggests an important link between creation and salvation history. The same God who named the stars, also names Israel. In employing this election imagery, God's address to Israel at Horeb is in view here. God states: "I have called you by name." In naming something, God is also determining its destiny, an idea that was understood in the ANE as illustrated by the story of the creation of the pickax (Samuel Noah Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology: A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millennium BC*, rev. ed. [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961], 51-53).

already prefigures the covenant.¹ This connection between creation and covenant becomes heightened in Isaiah.

The third progression (vss. 5-7) in the passage addresses proleptic history with its theological anticipation of a new dawn in the experience of Israel via the use of the "gathering-from-exile" motif as intimated by the verb קָבַץ.² This nation of God not only has a past with him, it is also promised a future with him. The God who created, formed, and redeemed Israel goes one step further in promising them a future.

The heart of Isa 43:1-7, the *raison d'être* of the passage, and of God's creative and salvific activities, is recorded in vs. 4a: "Because you are precious in my eyes, you are honored, and I love you." This divine statement not only affirms the election of Israel,³ it supplies a rationale for God's own activities. God creates and shapes because he loves. He redeems and gives a name because he loves. The idea that Israel is precious and honoured echoes similar words pronounced at Sinai (Exod 19:4-6). Here, God's claim of his love for Israel is reminiscent of a similar claim he made in Deut 7:7-9. Both creation and salvation history find their reason in the heart of God.

Conceptual Complex

The first concept arising from Isa 43:1-7 concerns the relationship of creation to

¹Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, III/1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), 96 & 231-232.

²The verb קָבַץ is frequently employed for this purpose, especially in the prophets (see Pss 106:47; 107:3; Isa 11:12; 54:7; Jer 23:3; 29:14; 31:8, 10; 32:37; Eze 11:17; 20:34, 41; 28:25; 33:13; 36:24; 37:21; 39:27; Mic 2:12; etc.). Here in vss. 5-6 a clear "promise of the return of the diaspora from exile" is made (Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 119; Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 133; McKenna, 452). Even though God sends his people into exile, as a punishment for their sins, their restoration in the future is also guaranteed. Israel's fortune and election will be restored.

³Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 133.

history. It is commonly held that in Isa 40-55, creation thought is held to be ancillary to salvation theology.¹ Yet, throughout this segment of Isaiah, the ideas of God the redeemer and God the creator are integrated.² It could be said that God's work is twofold, creation and salvation, and that both are historical events. In vocabulary "so reminiscent of Genesis 1-2" Isaiah establishes "God's ability to create as part of His credentials as rightful Lord of man's present history and final destiny."³ Concerning this use of the creation language of Gen 1-2, Oswalt commented:

Although the emphasis is not on the doctrine of creation, there can be no question that that doctrine is in the background. The argument that Israel is a particular creation of God could have force only if the hearers understood the allusion to creation.⁴

The primary intent of Isa 43:1-7 is to speak of the forming (historical) and re-forming (eschatological) of Israel. "The three verbs used in Genesis 1-2 to describe the creation of the world are used by the prophet to affirm the divine origin of Israel."⁵ "Moreover, the nation was also formed of God, and here the prophet takes a word from the creation of man (Gen. 2:7). All the care and thought that went into the formation of the original man was also expended in bringing Israel to be a nation."⁶ This "creating

¹This idea was proposed by von Rad and has since been adopted by the majority of scholars in Isaianic studies. Refer to Review in this study.

²StuhlmueLLer, *Creative Redemption*, 109.

³Walter Kaiser, 214.

⁴Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 137. Oswalt is correct insofar as he seeks to stress the creation of Israel. However, the creation of the world is the underlying paradigm here, thus the duplication of the same creation language as in Genesis.

⁵Willis, *Isaiah*, 369.

⁶Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:139.

and forming would then refer to an actual historical act of God, the saving act by which he brought Israel into being."¹

The passage also looks forward to another creation of Israel, an eschatological one. As Long put it: "Yahweh would accomplish his purpose through a new work: the creation of a new people. This new creation was compared to his original work of creation to stress the magnificence and importance of Yahweh's action."² Isaiah is here speaking about God's redemptive acts in terms of creation and the new redemptive act is to be regarded as nothing less than a new creation.³ In explaining the need for this new forming of Israel, Young had this to say:

Isaiah is speaking of an utterly new and supernatural work, the creation from an Israel that was such in name only and hence no Israel, of an Israel that is one in deed and truth. To compare this work with the original work of creation is to stress its magnificence and importance.⁴

Both acts of God are illustrated with historical analogies (the Exodus and the exile) and both are framed within the rubric of creation thought by the use of all three creation verbs. God's work through time, historical and proleptic, is creation. Isa 43:1-7 understands creation in historical terms and that it is conceived as and illustrated by historical events. Creation frames history and salvation, while history and salvation illustrate creation.

A second major concept embedded in Isa 43:1-7 is the idea that creation is both

¹Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 117. See also Long, 65.

²Long, 65.

³Whybray, 82.

⁴Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:146.

divine word as well as divine activity.¹ The text begins with: ועתה כה־אמר יהוה, "But now, thus says the Lord." The idea of the "word of God" is a key concept in Isa 40-55 and emphasizes "that creation was effected by the might of God *who speaks*."²

Anderson added to this by saying that creation "by the word came to be the normative expression of the mode of God's creative work."³ This "creation-by-the-word" is also reflected in 42:5 and 52:6.⁴ The text clearly alludes to the Genesis creation account where the phrase "and God said" is employed 11 times in Gen 1.⁵ The idea of creation by the word of God is also found elsewhere in the OT (see Pss 33:6, 9; 148:5).

Elsewhere in Isaiah the idea of creation by word is also used in places like 40:26 and 41:4.⁶ Because God creates by his "word," he is therefore separated from his world. He stands above the world and when he speaks, his will is performed.⁷

While the verb ברא suggests the idea of divine power in creation, the use of the verb יצר depicts God's creative control over the development of each of his creatures and suggests that all the elements that enter into the life of God's people are supervised

¹Altogether, this short passage contains 11 verbs. Activity is evidently affirmed.

²Stuhlmüller, "The Theology of Creation in Second Isaias," 454. Stuhlmüller insisted that Isa 40-55 adds to the theology of the word the notion of *creative power*. This is the idea that creation is by the divine word. While Stuhlmüller applied this strictly to Isa 40-55, his comments are equally pertinent to the entire book of Isaiah.

³Anderson, *From Creation to New Creation*, 29.

⁴Isa 42:5 begins with: "Thus says the Lord God who created the heavens . . ." and Isa 52:6 contains the phrase ". . . and it is I who speaks . . ." The latter is a verse in a context that hints at eschatological creation.

⁵Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 29.

⁶Isa 40:26 and 41:4 speak of God "calling" the universe into existence.

⁷Uhl, 109, 110.

and controlled by the creator.¹ Likewise, the verb עשה here implies God's ongoing implementation of his original creative choice with regard to Israel.² Creation as divine activity means that "the creation of the world is therefore not simply an occurrence of past history, but an ever present event"³ and, it may be added, the assurance of future creation.

While the historical and eschatological dimensions of creation are the principal foci of Isa 43:1-7, the primordial dimension undergirds the entire passage. The point is that the same God who is the creator of the world is also the creator of Israel. History provides the framework in which the creator God reveals and performs his creative acts for redemption and re-creation. This God created the world, formed Israel into an elect nation, and promises a new eschatological beginning.

Isa 44:24-45:25

Arguably the most significant creation passage in Isaiah is 44:24-45:25.⁴ Not only do the three main creation verbs come together in this passage, they do so twice (45:7 and 18). Besides the appearance of these three creation verbs, other creation terms also occur in this chapter (see below). The creation impact of the passage is further accentuated by the fact that two of the Isaianic appearances of the *heaven-earth* merismus occur in this passage in 45:12 and 18. This concentration of creation

¹MacRae, 77.

²Motyer, 333.

³Uhl, 191.

⁴Watts situated this unit within a larger setting of Isa 44:24-48:22 (*Isaiah 34-66*, 147) while Oswalt pointed to the fact that from 44:23 to 47:15 there is a frequent recurrence of the phrase "Thus says YHWH" (*The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 193). Ridderbos suggested that 44:24-45:25 is a unit relating to Israel's liberation by Cyrus (*Isaiah*, 405). Ridderbos's suggestion is followed here.

language in Isa 44:24-45:25 is unparalleled anywhere else in the book.

Translation

The following translation displays the intricate structure and the variety of literary patterns in the passage.¹

44:24 Thus says YHWH (כה-אמר יהוה)
your *Redeemer* (גאלך)
your *Former* (יצרך) from the womb
I am YHWH (אנכי יהוה)
Who made (עשה) all things;
Who stretched out (נטה) the heavens, alone;
Who spread out (רקע) the earth.
Who was with me?²

¹Whether this passage can be treated as a complete unit is a somewhat perplexing issue. Several scholars consider that parts of it belong to a unit comprising portions of chaps. 44 and 45. Paul Hanson considered 44:24-45:7 as a unit making up the Cyrus oracle (93f.). Westermann saw two distinct Cyrus oracles, 44:24-28 and 45:1-7. He demonstrated that the two oracles form a larger unit encompassed by the self-predication frame, "I am Yhwh" (44:24 & 45:5-7). He also pointed out the presence of two short hymns on either side of the unit, 44:23 & 45:8 (*Isaiah 40-66*, 157, 163). Following Westermann's suggestion, Whybray concluded that Isa 44:24-45:7 must be accepted as an independent unit (102). Watts however expanded the unit to include 45:8-13 as well and argued that the unit is made up of three parts: an address to Israel in 44:24-28; an address to Cyrus in 45:1-7; and another address to Israel in 45:8-13 (*Isaiah 34-66*, 154). Kissane pointed to a larger unit, 44:24-46, made up of three poems. Isa 45:1-13 is part of the first poem while 45:14-25 belong to the second poem (2:73, 74, & 83). In a similar way, Motyer maintained that Isa 45 belongs to a larger unit, 44:24-48:22, which directly paralleled another unit, 49:1-53:12. Within this larger unit is a smaller unit, 44:24-45:8, which is framed by "who made all these things" in 44:24 and "do all these things" in 45:7 (352-353). In contrast Smart asserted that chap. 45 "is a magnificent unity" but only if the name Cyrus is excised from the text (120-121). Perhaps a more moderate view is preferable. Willis suggested that it is preferable to keep chaps. 43-46 together. However, they can be separated into smaller units only to be better digested (*Isaiah*, 381). This exegesis of Isa 44:24-45:25 follows this suggestion by Willis and, while recognising a larger unit that chaps. 44 and 45 belong to, treats the entire passage as a unit.

²MT מני implies a dropped נ and would read "from me" but DSSIsa has מיא which implies a pointing of מי, "who." Most modern translators prefer emending the reading to an interrogative, a reading rejected by Watts (*Isaiah 34-66*, 151, n. 24c). Oswalt suggested that this MT reading is preferable because of the MSS evidence in

- 25 [Who] *frustrates* (מפר) the omens of liars and diviners
 He *makes fools* (יהולל) of those who turn
 wise men back
 and their knowledge
 He *makes foolish* (ישכל);¹
- 26 Who *confirms* (מקים)
 the word of his *servant* (עבדו)
 and the counsel of his *messengers* (מלאכיו)
 he *performs* (ישלים)
 Who *says* (האמר) *of/to Jerusalem*, "She shall be inhabited;"
 and *of/to* the cities of Judah, "They shall be built
 and their ruins I will raise up."
- 27 Who *says* (האמר) *of/to* the deep, "Be dry!"
 and your rivers, "I will dry up."
- 28 Who *says* (האמר) *of/to* Cyrus, "He is my shepherd
 and all my purposes he shall fulfil."
 And *saying* (ולאמר)² *of/to Jerusalem*, "She shall be built
 and the temple shall be built."
- 45:1 Thus says YHWH (כה-אמר יהוה)
 to his anointed³, to Cyrus: Whose right hand
I grasped, (החזקתי)
 to *subdue* before him *nations*
 and loins of *kings*
 I *open* (אפתח)
 to *open* before him
*doors*⁴
 and *gates*
 will *not be closed*.
- 2 [I] Before you, *I will go*, (אלך)

its favour and its parallel in 40:13 (*The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 189, n. 78).

¹MT ישכל "make wise." DSSI_{Isa} has יסכל "make foolish" and is supported by Lss, Syr, Tg, and Vg. The chiasm in vs. 25 suggests that the second reading is preferable.

²MT has the infinitive לאמר whereas the preceding three lines use the participle with the article: האמר. Despite the emendation suggested by LXX and Vg there is no compelling reason to drop the MT reading (Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 152, n. 28c).

³LXX has "my anointed," "probably to agree with the the other two 1st person verbs referring to God in this sentence" (Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 197, n. 1).

⁴MT has דלתים, a dual, whereas DSSI_{Isa} דלתות is plural as in vs. 2 (Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 152, n. 1d).

and the mountains¹ *I will level* (אִישַׁר)
 the bronze doors *I will break in pieces* (אֲשַׁבֵּר)
 and the iron bars *I will cut asunder* (אֲגַדֵּעַ).
 3 *I will give* (וְנָתַתִּי) to you
 the treasures of darkness
 and the hoards in secret places;
 that you may know
 that it is I YHWH (כִּי־אֲנִי יְהוָה),
 who *called you* (הִקְרָאתִי) by your name,
 the God of Israel.
 4 for the sake of *my servant* Jacob and Israel *my chosen one*.
I will call (וְאָקְרָאתִי) you by your name,
I will surname (אֲכַנֶּךָ) you though you do not know me.
 5 I am YHWH (אֲנִי יְהוָה) and there is no other,
 beside me there is no god.
I will gird (אֲאַזְרֶךָ) you
 though you do not know me
 6 that men may know from the rising of the sun and from
 the west
 that there is none beside me
 I am YHWH (אֲנִי יְהוָה) and there is no other.
 7 *I form* (יִצְרֶה) light
I create (וְיִבְרָא) darkness;
 I *make* (עֲשֶׂה) weal (שְׁלוֹם)²
 I *create* (וְיִבְרָא) woe (רָע);
 I am YHWH (אֲנִי יְהוָה) who *does/makes* (עֲשֶׂה) all these things.
 8 Shower,
 O *heavens* from above,
 and *skies*, let righteousness
rain down.
Let the earth open up that may sprout forth
salvation
 and *righteousness*
let it cause to spring up also.
 I YHWH (אֲנִי יְהוָה), have *created* it (בְּרַאתִיו).
 9 Woe: to him who strives with his Former (יִצְרוֹ)

¹MT וְהַרְרִים is a strange and difficult reading. Perhaps the DSSIa reading of וְהַרְרִים "and the mountains" followed by LXX fits best here. See discussions by Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 197-198, n. 4, and Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 152, n. 2c.

²DSSIa has טוב "good" to balance with רָע "evil" instead of MT שְׁלוֹם "well-being."

- a vessel among earthen vessels¹
 does clay say to its Former (ליצרו): "Why are you making me?"
 or, "Your work has no handle!"
- 10 Woe: to him who says to a father, "What are you begetting?"
 Or, to a woman, "Why are you in pain?"
- 11 Thus says YHWH (כה-אמר יהוה)
 the *Holy One of Israel* (קדוש ישראל)
 and *his Former* (יצרו)
 of things to come, will you question me?
 about my children or the work of my hands, will you command me?
- 12 I *made* (עשיתי) the earth, and man upon it, I *created* (בראתי)
 My hands *stretched out* (נטו)
 the heavens
 and all their starry hosts
 I *commanded* (צויתי)
- 13 I *have aroused* (העירתי) (אנכי) him in righteousness
 and all his ways I *will make straight* (אישר);
 He *shall build* my city and my exiles he *shall set free*,
 not for price or reward,
 says YHWH of hosts (אמר יהוה צבאות).
- 14 Thus says YHWH (כה-אמר יהוה)
 The wealth of Egypt
 and the merchandise of Cush
 and the Sabaens.
 Men of stature shall come to you and be yours,²
 after you they shall follow in chains;
 they shall come over to you and bow down to you;
 they shall make supplication [with you].
 Surely, God is with you, and there is no other, no god beside
 him.
- 15 Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God of Israel,
 Saviour.
- 16 They are put to shame and confounded, all of them;
 together they go in confusion, those who make idols.
- 17 Israel is saved by YHWH with *everlasting salvation*
 You shall not be put to shame or confounded to *all eternity*.
- 18 For thus says YHWH (כי כה-אמר יהוה)

¹Oswalt pointed out that the "text of this verse is notoriously difficult. LXX and Targ. differ markedly from MT but also from one another. This suggests that neither has a clear textual tradition on which it depends but is simply trying to make sense of a difficult original, which the MT probably represents accurately" (*The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 206, n. 30). The second line literally reads "an earthen vessel with/among the vessels of earth."

²LXX has "and will be your servants."

Creator [of] (בּוֹרֵא) the heavens, he is God;
 Former [of] (יִצֵר) the earth,
 its *Maker* (עֲשָׂה).
 He *established* it (כּוֹנֵן),
 He did not *create* it (בְּרָאָה) empty (תָּהוּ),
 He *formed* it (יִצְרָה) to be inhabited.
 I am YHWH (אֲנִי יְהוָה) and there is no other
 19 in secret I *did not speak* (דִּבַּרְתִּי)
 in a dark land I *did not say* (אִמַּרְתִּי) to Jacob's offspring,
 "In emptiness, seek me."¹
 I, YHWH (אֲנִי יְהוָה), speak (דִּבַּר) the truth
 and declare (בְּנִיד) what is right.
 20 "Assemble yourselves and come,
 draw near together, fugitives from the nations;
 They have no knowledge,
 those who carry about wooden idols
who keep praying to a god that cannot save.
 21 Declare and present your case,
 let them take counsel together.
 Who told this long ago? Who declared it from of old?
 Was it not I YHWH (אֲנִי יְהוָה),
 and there is no other god beside me
 – a righteous God and a saviour –
 and there is none beside me.
 22 Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth
 for I am God (כִּי־אֲנִי־אֵל) and there is no other.
 23 By myself I have sworn
 and has gone forth in righteousness a word that shall not return;
 to me *shall bow every knee, shall swear every tongue*.
 24 Only in YHWH, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength
 they *shall come and be ashamed, all who are incensed against*
him;
 25 In YHWH they *shall triumph and praise, all of Israel's offspring*.

Contextual Considerations

Isa 44:24-45:25 is framed by two units whose principal thematic strand is the incomparable nature of God. The content of chap. 44, with its distinct underlying creation overtone (as indicated in vs. 24), can be summed up in the divine

¹LXX has "seek vanity" while Tg reads "seek the fear of me in vain." MT reading בְּקִשׁוֹנֵי תָהוּ has no preposition and could be read as simple accusative. BHS suggests בתָהוּ which serves as a direct parallel to אֶרֶץ חֶשֶׁךְ in the previous line.

proclamation: "I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God" (vs. 6). Similarly, chap. 46 carries the pronouncement: "I am God, and there is no other; I am God and there is none like me" (vs. 9). Both chapters also reveal that this divine self-predication¹ is held against the backdrop of idolatry and projects a paradigm concerning the total inviolability of Israel's God over and against any other philosophical or religious paradigm.

Isa 44:10f. pours out divine ridicule upon those who depend on man-made gods, who are abjectly unable to save. Isa 45:15-17 guarantees eternal disgrace on other systems of faith by which man may live. Isa 46:1f. stridently polemicises against the gods of Babylon and derides their impotence. Throughout, God asserts his incomparable sovereignty with the expression "there is no other god beside me" and challenges man's ability to find an equal to him (44:7; 46:5). Creation is the reversal of idolatry in that, whereas idol makers make "gods" in the likeness of man, God makes man in his own image (Gen 1:26-28).

This context denotes the relative weight that creation thought is adjudged to have in this segment of Isaiah. This one and only God is none other than the creator himself. That God is the creator is what distinguishes him from all other self-proclaimed or perceived deities. The present passage indicates that creative power is the central defining characteristic of God.

Structural Analysis of Isa 44:24-45:25

¹For a more complete discussion of the use of the divine self-predication in Isaiah, refer to Wann M. Fanwar, "God's Holiness in Leviticus and Isaiah: A Biblical Response to Hinduism" (M.Th. thesis, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies, 1990), 63-66. This self-predication will be further discussed in chapter 3 of this study.

The structure of this passage is somewhat complex¹ yet clearly defined by the divine speech structural marker כה-אמר יהוה, "thus says YHWH," in 44:24; 45:1, 11, 14, and 18.² This structural marker divides the passage into 5 units: 44:24-28; 45:1-10, 11-13, 14-17, and 18-25.³ Whereas the first, second, and fifth units are lengthy ones, the second and third units are relatively short and the entire passage is presented as reported speech with God as the speaker. Of the five units, creation expressions play a major role in the first, second, third, and final units while the fourth unit contains no direct creation statement. Each unit needs to be considered separately.

Isa 44:24-28 commences with the formula אמר יהוה that is immediately followed by a statement of identification "your Redeemer and your Former."⁴ The unit then employs the divine self-predication אני יהוה to present its thought.⁵ This self-predication

¹As demonstrated in the translation above. McKenzie divided chap. 45 into two parts, vss. 1-13 and 14-25 (75f.). Such division however is far too simplistic and fails to take into account the variety of literary patterns that the chapter exhibits.

²Vss. 9-10 could also be seen as a smaller unit since the verses use a different introductory formula, the Woe formula. It may be better to view these verses as a subset of the larger pericope, 45:1-10.

³Oswalt recognised the role of this structural marker and rightly pointed out that in 45:18 the phrase appends כי, unlike the other occurrences (*The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 193, n. 89). He explained: "While no explicit reason for this occurrence is given in the text, a study of the other occurrence in this part of the book shows that the phrase is used to engender confidence in God's promises to redeem and deliver" (ibid., 193). He also pointed out that the phrase is not used in chaps. 40-41 or 46-47 (ibid., 193, n. 90). Significantly, the phrase is used thrice in 43, twice in 44, and four times in 45. These chapters witness the most concentrated use of this particular structural marker. Elsewhere in Isaiah, the phrase is employed in significant numbers in chaps. 49, 56, and 65-66.

⁴The same pattern is replicated in units three and five. Units two and four apply the structural marker without any identifying statement. The entire passage gives the impression of thoughtful construction and coherence.

⁵With the exception of unit four, this pattern is maintained throughout the passage.

is accompanied by nine statements that refer to the work of this God. These statements employ eight participles plus an infinitive to speak of God's work.¹ The first three participles address God's primordial creation. Commencing with the participle עשה (in a summary creation statement), there are two statements about the creation of heaven and earth, respectively (vs. 24). The next two participles (vss. 25, 26), מופר and מוקים, speak of God's historical work against the so-called wise of the world and through his servants. The last three participles plus infinitive (vss. 26b-28) employ the verb אמר followed by a nominal form with the ל preposition. An envelope emerges when the name Jerusalem is considered. The first participle and the concluding infinitive read "who says/saying to Jerusalem." The second and third participles read "who says to the deep" and "who says to Cyrus" respectively. The drying up of the deep and rivers (vs. 27) alludes to the Exodus, while the rebuilding of Jerusalem (vss. 26b, 28b) and the reference to Cyrus (vs. 28a) are proleptic, speaking of the eschatological work of God.

Isa 45:1-10 is a divine address to Cyrus, the anointed servant of God.² The dominant feature of this unit is the frequent repetition of the divine self-predication (five times in vss. 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8) and the preference for 1st person finite verbs (see above).³ In this unit, God stresses his incomparable nature (vss. 5-6, see also vss. 18,

¹See the Translation above. The final infinitive should be understood in the same sense as the preceding participles.

²As earlier pointed out, Smart opined that 'Cyrus' be excised from chap. 45. He asserted that the presence of 'Cyrus' here affects the unity of the chapter, the integrity of the prophet, and the metrical symmetry of the chapter. According to Smart, the name Cyrus here is a later insertion due to the respect that the later Jewish community had for Cyrus as the great alien benefactor (121-122). Such arbitrary excision of the text seems entirely unnecessary. This is especially true when 45:1f. is viewed as a continuation of the Cyrus prophecy begun in 44:24.

³Participial forms are limited to vs. 7.

21, 22) and reminds the listeners that he alone is God and there is none like him. In appointing Cyrus as his chosen servant, God exercises his sovereignty over the affairs of the world and of his people (vss. 1-4). The passage however employs creation language to emphasise this sovereignty of God. The creation language of the unit reaches a climax with the contrasts in vs. 7¹: "I form (יצר) light and create (ברא) darkness;² I make (עשה) weal (*shalom*) and I create (ברא) woe (evil)." The verse covers two areas of existence, nature and history, with the word pairs "light/darkness" referring to primordial creation³ while "weal/woe" points God's historical work.⁴ Polar opposites (light-darkness and weal-woe) are used for both nature and history. Each parallel pair begins with a verb that expresses a specific, concrete action by God (form, make) which is then followed by the more theologically expressive verb "create."⁵

Otzen suggested:

One must understand this passage either as an attempt to comprehend the totality of creation, in which case the pairs of opposites are merely

¹Paul Hanson called this verse a "summary statement" (110).

²Light here is a "symbol of God's creative and saving purpose" (as in Gen 1:3-4; Pss 19; 27:1; 37:6; 104:2; Isa 2:5; 42:6) while darkness "is symbolic of all that is negative and contrary" (as in Gen 1:2; Eccl 2:14; Isa 9:2; Joel 2:2). God is in control of both (see Gen 1:4-5; Deut 5:23; Job 12:22; Pss 18:28; 104:20; 139:12). "Both light and darkness are therefore instruments of his will" (George A. F. Knight, *Servant Theology: A Commentary of the Book of Isaiah 40-55*, International Theological Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984], 90). Light/darkness is also a typical theme in Zoroastrianism and this has led some to say that the verse reflects a Persian milieu. However, the Zoroastrian light/darkness dualism dates to about 1200 BC. If anything, Isaiah is attacking either the inherent dualism of polytheism or the sinful dualism of the human heart rather than Persian dualism (Motyer, 359).

³Vs. 7 is the concluding verse of the scene and it recalls Gen 1:3 when God said, "Let there be light!" (Smart, 125).

⁴Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 77.

⁵Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 204.

merisms meaning "everything" . . . or as deliberate polemic against Persian dualism.¹

Similarly, Mauch contended that the participles utilised here "categorically assert that Yahweh the true Creator, with sovereign initiative constitutes the entire panorama of life."² The two pairs are inclusive and encapsulate "everything from A to Z in creation and history."³

The verse reaches its own zenith with the summary use of עשה, "I am the Lord who *does/makes* all these things,"⁴ and if the use of ברא in vs. 8 has the earth as its antecedent,⁵ then this unit uses language reminiscent of primordial creation. The unit tapers off with a double pronouncement of "Woe!" (vss. 9-10) whose curse is brought about by the anti-creator attitudes of mankind and Israel. The people's adverse attitude is as incomprehensible as the opposition of pottery (what is made) to the potter (the maker) and of children (the ones born) to their parents (those who give birth).⁶

The next unit, 45:11-13, opens with a statement of historical creation (vs. 11) when God refers to himself as the one who formed (יצר) Israel and to Israel as the "work of my hands" (vs. 11). The unit closes with another statement concerning

¹Otzen, 264. Otzen's exilic dating for Isa 40-55 accounts for his idea about polemics against Persian dualism.

²Mauch, 144.

³Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 77.

⁴A similar use of עשה is seen in Gen 1:31; Isa 43:7 and 44:24 (see above).

⁵The translation of 45:8 has ארץ "earth" as the immediate antecedent of the pronominal suffix (ו "it") at the end of the verse.

⁶The verb יצר is used in reference to the Potter. The sequence of vs. 8, a verse with strong cosmological creation overtones, and vss. 9-10 is reminiscent of the sequence of Gen 1-2 and 3. Here as there, the sequence is creation followed by curse.

another historical work of God, the call of Cyrus. In between these two verses is the reminder to the listener, in vs. 12,¹ about God's primordial or cosmological creation. "The irony of verse 11 . . . is crowned by the reference here to the Creator."² God says: "I made (עָשִׂהָ) the earth and created (בָּרָא) mankind upon it; with my hands I stretched out the heavens and I commanded all their starry hosts." The use of the emphatic 1st personal pronoun (twice) coupled with the use of creation terms and the *heaven-earth* merismus³ denotes an intentional creation underpinning, that God is creator and that whatever he does is creation.

Furthermore, the verse also brings together God's creatorship and his salvific acts in history. As Westermann put it:

Here praise of God as creator is particularly detailed: he created the heavens and the stars in them, the earth and man upon it (cf. 44:24 ff.). As creator, he is lord of his creation; he commands the host of the stars (cf. 40:26). This is the basis of his lordship of history.⁴

Long also observed: "Yahweh's great redemptive acts in history and his mighty act in creating the cosmos coalesce to strengthen one another in verse 12."⁵ God creates cosmologically, historically, and eschatologically.

The unit of 45:14-17 contains no explicit creation statement and focuses instead upon salvation. However, this salvation discourse is framed by creation statements.

The passage reverts to creation language in the final unit, vss. 18-25. Whereas, vss. 1-

¹The first line in vs. 12 is chiasmic with the pattern verb and object, then object and verb (Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:205).

²Motyer, 362. The verse is also reminiscent of Isa 37:16.

³Hudson, 116.

⁴Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 168. See also Hudson, 116.

⁵Long, 37.

10 and 11-13 reach an internal creation climax, vss. 18-25 commence with a creation statement. Vs. 18 reads: "Thus says the Lord, who created (ברא) the heavens, he is the God who formed (יצר) the earth and made (עשה) it."¹ The verse employs both ברא and יצר twice each and supplements them with another creation term, כון (establish).² Vs. 18 is made up of a triad of participles referring to creation followed by three finite verbs of creation and displays a pyramid-type construction—one participle (about the creation of heaven), two participles (about the creation of the earth), three finite verbs (also about the creation of the earth).³ All this considered, vs. 18 is the single most significant creation text in the book of Isaiah.

Primordial creation is also very much in evidence here. The "language of vss. 18-19 is that of the creation narratives of Gen 1:1-3 and Gen 2:4-7."⁴ The text refers to the fact that God did not create the world to be "chaos/empty" but to be inhabited. The word "empty" is תהו (used in both vss. 18 and 19) and in Gen 1:2 it designates "the formless waste which the world was before the creative word of Yahweh was spoken."⁵

¹Young suggested that the two participles "forming" and "making" in this verse function as a hendiadys to read "he who made the earth by forming it" (*The Book of Isaiah*, 3:211). It seems better however to read the use of עשה as a summary verb in the same way that it does in Gen 1:31 and Isa 43:7.

²Motyer thought that the order of the verbs in vs. 18 teaches four ideas about God's creation: initiated, moulded, till all was done, imparted stability (334).

³Mauch, 147, 173.

⁴Scullion, 76. Scullion explained that this did not mean that Isa 40-55 knew the creation narratives in the precise form that we now have but that such creation formulas were already a part of Israelite tradition (ibid.).

⁵McKenzie, 83. The use of this word in Isa 40-55 reflects both creation accounts of Gen 1:28 and 2:4-10 (ibid.). See also Ridderbos, 413. Brueggemann wondered whether it is possible to determine the precise meaning of the word in this context, and thought that the intention of the text is deliberately unclear (*Isaiah 40-66*, 83).

The verse also makes use of the customary merism of *heaven-earth* which also appears in Gen 1:1.¹ The verse then climaxes with yet another affirmation of God's inviolable sovereignty. It compels "the undisputed proposition that Yahweh is sole God and sole creator"² and underlines this fact by the use of four different creation verbs, two of which are repeated twice.³

In the rest of the chapter (vss. 19-25), God speaks about his revelatory (vs. 19) and salvific (vss. 20-22) work. The unit flows from creation to revelation to salvation and culminates in affirmation (vss. 23-25).⁴ The apparent intent of the text is to indicate that both of these divine activities stem from and are informed by God's creative activity.

The structure of this passage can be diagrammed as follows:

44:24-28

24a	Thus says YHWH	כה-אמר יהוה
24b	I YHWH	אנכי יהוה
	Who made	עשה
	Who stretched out	נטה
	Who spread out	רקע
25	Who frustrates	מפר
26a	Who confirms	מקים
26b	Who says	האמר
27	Who says	האמר
28	Who says	האמר
	Saying	ל-אמר ⁵

¹Clifford, *Fair Spoken and Persuading*, 125.

²Whybray, 110.

³Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 217-218.

⁴Motyer, 364.

⁵Normally לאמר functions as quotations marks. Here the parallelism between לאמר לבורש and לאמר לירושלם suggests that לאמר functions the same way as the preceding participles.

45:1-10

1a	Thus says YHWH		כה-אמר יהוה
1b	I grasped	החזקתי	
	I open	אפתח	
2	I will go	אלך	
	I will level	אושר	
	I will break	אשבר	
	I will cut asunder	אנדע	
3a	I will give	נתתי	
3b	I YHWH		אני יהוה
	Who called	הקורא	
4	I will call	ואקרא	
	I will surname	אכנך	
5a	I YHWH		אני יהוה
	I will gird	אאזרך	
6b	I YHWH		אני יהוה
7a	Forming	יוצר	
	Creating	בורא	
	Making	עשה	
	Creating	בורא	
7e	I YHWH		אני יהוה
	Making	עשה	
8c	I YHWH		אני יהוה
	I created	בראתיו	
9-10	Woe . . . Woe		הוי . . . הוי

45:11-13

11a	Thus says YHWH		כה-אמר יהוה
12	I made	עשיתי	
	I created	בראתי	
	My hands stretched out	אני ידי נשו	
	I commanded	צויתי	
13	I have aroused	אנכי העירתי	
	I make straight	אישר	
	says YHWH of hosts		אמר יהוה צבאות

45:14-17

14a	Thus says YHWH		כה-אמר יהוה
14b	[Israel's exaltation]		
15-17	[Israel's salvation]		

45:18-25

18a	For thus says YHWH		כי כה-אמר יהוה
18d	I YHWH		אני יהוה
19	I [did not] speak	דברתי	
	I [did not] say	אמרתי	

19c	I YHWH	אני יהוה
19d	Speaking	דבר
	Declaring	מגיד
21c	I YHWH	אני יהוה
22b	for I God	כי אני-אל
23	[God's promise]	
24-25	[God's praise]	

Conceptual Complex

Isa 44:24-45:25 is undoubtedly the richest source of Isaiah's creation thought.

Not only are the three main creation terms used liberally, but other creation terms and metaphors are employed. The passage is clearly focused upon the primordial creation of God as the undergirding factor of everything else that God does historically, eschatologically, and even salvifically. All of God's work is brought under the rubric of creation so as to stress the idea that creation is what God does and whatever he does is creation.¹ More than any other data in the book, this chapter reveals that creation is Isaiah's consummate conceptualisation of God and his work.

That God is the creator accentuates the total sovereignty of God and informs his complete inviolability. In refrain-like manner, expressions such as "I am the Lord and there is no other" in 45:5, 6, 18, 22 and similar expressions in 45:7, 8, 14, 21, bear out the conviction that God is the one and only God because he is the creator. Such a belief

¹It is the contention here that creation is Isaiah's consummate conceptualisation of God and his activity. It may be argued that not all acts of God are creation in the classic sense. Nevertheless, all acts of God are the acts of the Creator. In that sense, whatever God does is creation since creation is the work of the Creator. Moreover, God's creative activity is multi-dimensional: cosmological, historical, and eschatological. As such it encompasses every facet of existence, whether heavenly or earthly. God provides and sustains life as the creator; he directs history as the creator; he promises a better world as the creator. God is the Creator; his work is to create. For a cultic connection between God's sustaining power and his creatorship, see Roy Gane, "'Bread of Presence' and Creator-in Residence," *Vetus Testamentum* 42 (1992): 179-203.

flies in the face of any other paradigm that would seek to place an equal before God and hints that without creation thought, the Isaianic concept of God would at best be impoverished. Whether God judges or redeems, whether he acts in the past or the future, whether his work is conceived as cosmological, historical, or eschatological, he is above all else the creator and as such reigns supreme over all that he surveys.

An extension of the sovereignty of God that creation thought stresses is the concept of relational reciprocation. First, those whom God chooses for his purposes (as Cyrus was) are servants of the Lord (vs. 4), and that is their relational position. As creator, God can and does command his creatures.¹ Second, because God is the creator, man should not question his maker. God's purposes are inviolable and mankind does not have any right to question God and what he does (vss. 9-10). Man's relationship to his creator is akin to that of the clay to the potter or of the child to its parents. To incur the wrath of the creator is to invite a curse upon oneself (see vss. 9-10). Third, mankind is called to turn to the creator for his sustenance and salvation (vss. 22-25). As God of Israel, he promises to place himself alongside his people and to provide for their needs. He is able to do this because he is the creator. Thus, creation language also becomes the basis of relational abstraction.

Isa 65:17-25

Isaiah's creation thought reaches its ultimate climax with a vision of re-creation as portrayed in 65:17-25. The passage is "dominated by the three times repeated

¹Of note is the use of the root צוה "command" in parallel with creation verbs in 45:12.

present participle of create, *bārā*."¹ It is also delineated from the preceding discussion by the emphatic expression כִּי־הִנְנִי, "for look I . . . !" What follows is a description of something both new and astounding. God's creation is not merely a thing of the past or the present but also a thing of the future, and it is this forthcoming future that becomes the focus of Isaiah's last two chapters.

Translation

The following is a translation of Isa 65:17-25:

- 17 For see, I am *creating* (בֹּרֵא)² new heavens and a new earth,³
and the former things shall not be remembered or come to
mind.⁴
- 18 But be joyful (שִׂישׂוּ) and rejoice (וְגִילוּ) forever in that which I am *creating*
(בֹּרֵא);
for see I am *creating* (בֹּרֵא) Jerusalem as rejoicing (גִּילָה) and her⁵ people a joy
(בְּשִׂישׂוֹ).⁶
- 19 I will rejoice (וְגִלְחִי) in Jerusalem
and be joyful (וְשִׂישׂוּ) in my people.
No more shall be heard in it
the sound of weeping and the cry of distress
- 20 No more shall there be in it

¹Scullion, 202. This threefold repetition of בֹּרֵא (this is the second largest concentration of the verb in Isaiah after chap. 45) and the introduction of a new heaven and a new earth make this passage highly significant to any discussion of Isaiah's creation thought. Moreover, with this poem and what follows in chap. 66, a definite climax is reached in Isaiah, structurally and conceptually.

²LXX paraphrases here and in the following occurrences so that בֹּרֵא does not appear. There is no real support for this (Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 652, n. 58).

³Apart from the addition of הָרִשׁ, the *heaven-earth* merismus here is virtually identical to Gen 1:1.

⁴Lit. "heart" לֵב. Unlike modern thought, the "heart was not so much the seat of emotion and affection as of the will and the decision-making processes" (Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 652, n. 60).

⁵LXX has "my" as in vs. 19.

⁶Note the chiasmic structure of vs. 18: rejoicing-joy-creating-creating-joy-rejoicing.

- an infant (that lives but a few) days¹
 or an old man who does not fill out his days;
 the child a hundred years old shall die²
 and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.
- 21 They shall *build* (וּבְנוּ) houses and inhabit,
 they shall *plant* (וַיִּטְעוּ) vineyards and eat their fruit.
- 22 They shall *not build* (לֹא יִבְנוּ) and another inhabit,
 they shall *not plant* (לֹא יִטְעוּ) and another eat;
 for like the days of a tree³ [shall be] the days of my people,
 and my chosen one shall long enjoy the work of their hands.
- 23 They shall not labour in vain or bear children for calamity;
 for the offspring of those blessed of YHWH they shall be, they and their
 children with them
- 24 [and it shall be]
 Before they call, I will answer,
 while they are speaking, I will hear.
- 25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together;
 the lion, like the ox, shall eat straw;
 and the serpent, dust [shall be] his food.
 They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,
 says YHWH (אֲמַר יְהוָה)

Contextual Considerations

The precise delineation of this passage is somewhat of an issue, depending on the larger context assigned to it. Watts thought that the poem belongs to a larger unit, 65:17-66:5.⁴ Sweeney found Isa 65-66 to be an entire pericope made up of three units, 65:1-7, 65:8-25, and 66:1-24.⁵ Margaret Dee Bratcher saw the larger context as also comprising chaps. 63-64 and suggested this division: 63:7-64:12 (a lament), 65:1-16

¹עַל יְמֵיִם lit. means "a child of days."

²LXX omits "shall die."

³LXX and Targ have "tree of life," an apparent gloss on tree (Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 653, n. 70).

⁴Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 353.

⁵Sweeney, "Prophetic Exegesis in Isaiah 65-66," 459. He further divided the unit of 65:8-25 into two subunits, vss. 8-12 and vss. 13-25 (Ibid., 460-461).

(judgement), and 65:17-66:2 (re-creation).¹ Unfortunately, these suggestions fail to take note of the emphatic interjection (כִּי־הִנְנִי) that commences vs. 17 (a literary device akin to that employed in the preceding paragraph where הִנֵּה appears four times in vss. 13-14) and the use of the closure formula "says YHWH" in vs. 25. Moreover, the use of the divine speech introductory formula (כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה) in 66:1 hints at the start of another unit. It seems preferable to retain 65:17-25 as a separate unit.

The passage is preceded by a lengthy discourse on judgement and salvation (65:1-16). God threatens punishment for Israel's sins (see vss. 6-7, 12) and then promises redemption (see vss. 13-15). Immediately following the creation passage of 65:17-25, Isaiah resumes the discourse of judgement and hope (66:1-16). The threats of punishment (see vs. 4) are accompanied by more promises of hope and redemption (see vss. 12-16). This juxtaposition of judgement and redemption, of punishment and hope, is typical of the last segment of Isaiah. Oswalt captured the flow of this segment of Isaiah best:

This poem introduces the final section of this division of the book (65:17-66:24). Here, as in chaps. 1-5, judgment and hope are juxtaposed. As chaps. 1-5 begin and end with judgment, this section begins and ends with hope (65:17-25; 66:18-24). In between these segments are two judgment passages (66:1-6, 15-17), with a hope passage between them (66:7-14). Thus the pattern is: hope, judgment, hope, judgment, hope, which is the reversal of the pattern in chaps. 1-5.²

Framed by these two discourses on judgement and salvation is the final significant creation passage of the book. Unlike any other passage in Isaiah, this

¹Margaret Dee Bratcher, "Salvation Achieved (Isaiah 61:1-7; 62:1-7; 65:17-66:2)," *Review and Expositor* 88 (1991): 182-183.

²Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 654. This argument is crucial not only to the present passage but also to the overall structure of the book itself.

creation text faces squarely the issue of God's future act. The context portrays a definite view of the eschatological work of God, the re-creating of heaven and earth, and the ushering in of new realities.

Structural Analysis of Isa 65:17-25

The passage can be divided into two smaller units with vss. 17-18 as the first unit and vss. 19-25 making up the second unit.¹ Vss. 17-18 proclaim the new creation of God. They speak about a new heaven and a new earth (cosmological and general), and also about a new Jerusalem (historical and specific).² Significantly, only ברא is employed in these verses. God "creates" a new heaven and new earth, God "creates" all things, and God "creates" a new Jerusalem. This threefold use of the verb suggests a

¹The precise division of the unit into smaller units has engendered several different opinions. Bratcher would divide as follows: vss. 17-19a and 19b-25 (182-183). Motyer divided the passage into two units, vss. 17-20 and 21-25 (529-530). Ulrich Mauser separated vs. 17 from the rest of the passage and pointed out that, while vs. 17 introduces a universal vision of new heavens and new earth, the remaining verses concentrate on Jerusalem ("Isaiah 65:17-25," *Interpretation*, 36 [1982]: 184). Eberhard Semsdorf provided a far more complex structure for Isa 65:17-25, as follows: vss. 16b-19 (promise of creation of new world and new Jerusalem), vs. 20 (explanation 1 that in Jerusalem premature mortality no longer is heard), vss. 21-22a (explanation 2 that in Jerusalem one no longer works for free), vss. 22b-23 (summary made up of E1+E2/E2+E1), and vss. 24-25 (explanation 3 that on God's holy hill general peace prevails) ("Studien zur Redaktionsgeschichte von Jesaja 56-66 [I]," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 84 [1972]: 519). Semsdorf's analysis appears far too convoluted and cumbersome. A more concise two-part division is here employed.

²This move from cosmic/general to historical/specific creation is reminiscent of the same pattern in Gen 1:1-2 (see Mauser, 184; Whybray, 276). The language of the passage is also reminiscent of the language in other parts of Isaiah. It echoes the language of chaps. 40-55, recaps the great promises found in chaps. 26, 30, 32, 33, and 65:25 recalls 11:6-9 (Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 654, n. 78; also Semsdorf, 520-521, and Whybray, 278). Isa 65:18-19 also parallels, by using almost identical words, 35:10 and perhaps 51:11 (Mauser, 181).

sense of finality or completeness about this creation of God.¹ The second unit, vss. 19-25, describes the conditions that prevail as a consequence of this new creation of God.

The sense of the finality of this creation is conveyed in two ways. First, in the description of conditions that are radically different from what once existed,² there is a promise that the "former things" will not come to mind (vs. 17). Second, the syntactic construction, where the emphatic negative particle לא plus an imperfect is utilized 8 times (vss. 19, 20, 22, 23, and 25), accentuates this sense of finality and completeness.

This structure is sketched below:

65:17-18 New Creation

17	For see I am creating	כִּי־הֵנְנִי בּוֹרֵא
18	I am creating	אֲנִי בּוֹרֵא
	For see I am creating	כִּי הֵנְנִי בּוֹרֵא

65:19-25 New Creation Conditions

19a	I will rejoice	וְגִלֵּיתִי
	I will be joyful	וְשִׂשְׂתִּי
19b	Not heard	לֹא־יִשְׁמָע
20a	Not be	לֹא־יִהְיֶה
21	They shall build	וּבְנוּ
	They shall plant	וְנִטְעוּ
22	They shall not build	לֹא יִבְנוּ
	They shall not plant	לֹא יִטְעוּ
23	They shall labour	לֹא יִנְעוּ
	They shall not bear	וְלֹא יִלְדוּ
	for [They are] blessed	כִּי בְרוּכִי
24	They will call	יִקְרְאוּ
	[They] speak	מִדְּבָרִים
25	wolf and lamb shall feed	יִרְעוּ
	lion and ox shall eat	יֹאכְלוּ
	They shall not hurt	לֹא־יִרְעוּ
	They shall not destroy	לֹא־יִשְׁחִיתוּ

¹In Isa 6:3 the seraphs around the throne of God proclaim a threefold holy God. This threefold repetition expresses the completeness of God's holiness.

²These radically altered conditions include changes in man's longevity and in the environment. There are also drastic behavioural changes in both the human and animal worlds.

Conceptual Complex

This final creation passage stresses two principal ideas. First, the passage stresses the concept of newness. Whatever God creates in the future is going to be substantially different from what once existed. This new creation of God involves several new things:¹ a new cosmos (vs.17), a new nation (vs.18), a new humanity (vs. 20),² a new lifestyle (vss. 21-22),³ a new relationship with God (vss. 23-24), and a new environment (vs. 25).⁴ This eschatological work of God, first intimated in Isaiah's first creation passage (4:2-6), comes to full fruition with the creation of new realities.

Undoubtedly the "use of the term ברא, which appears three times in vss. 17 and

¹Watts highlighted a series of contrasts that describe this new creation of God: joy instead of crying, longevity, the absence of premature death, the ability to build and plant undisturbed, the prosperity of life, a new relation with God and one another (*Isaiah 34-66*, 354).

²The exact meaning of this verse is unclear and the last line of the verse is rather obscure. Perhaps, as Oswalt suggested, the verse is an allusion to the great ages of the antediluvian peoples as recorded in Gen 5 (*The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 658). Ridderbos thought that this verse simply attempts to portray the idea that long life is everyone's destiny, and describes, in terms of this earth, the distant splendour of life in the new earth (*Isaiah*, 572). For Young, the depiction here is of the blessings of the new age built around the promise of Gen 6:3. Here we have the conditions of Paradise restored and surpassing Paradise itself (*The Book of Isaiah*, 3:515). Motyers' suggestion has great merit. He proposed that "verse 20 expresses a double thought: death will have no more power and sin no more presence" (530). Perhaps, Isa 65:20 is simply part of a process leading ultimately to the complete restoration of nature, including the eradication of death. The ambiguity of the text renders any further discussion somewhat speculative.

³The use of נטע here is reminiscent of God's planting (נטע) the garden of Eden at creation (Gen 2:8).

⁴The new environment of these verses with regard to the harmony between animals and their diet echoes similar conditions in the Genesis account (1:29-30).

18, heightens the sense of newness in God's actions."¹ There are however different opinions as to what constitutes this new heaven and earth that God creates. O. H. Steck argued that the reference here is not the setting up of something new but the creating of a new quality, perhaps a completed state of salvation (*Heils*).² Mauser maintained that the use of ברא in this text represents a daring innovation of Isa 40-66 and that a word normally reserved for God's creative activity is here used "to describe a deed of God in history which would rejuvenate an old and dying world."³ Bratcher also said that in this text "the language must be understood as a powerful metaphor for the complete transformation of Jerusalem within history."⁴ Similarly, Willis believed that the phrase 'new heaven and new earth' "has reference to changed conditions on *earth*, not to the destruction of the present world and the beginning of a new heavenly kingdom. . . . More likely, however, Yahweh has in mind a change in the physical and spiritual conditions of the *people*."⁵ Along the same vein, Westermann argued that the phrase in this text does not imply apocalyptic re-creation as in Rev 21:1 or Isa 66:22. "Instead, the world, designated as 'heaven and earth', is to be miraculously renewed."⁶

¹Hudson, 137.

²O. H. Steck, "Der neue Himmel und die neue Erde. Beobachtungen zur Rezeption von Gen 1-3 in Jes 65, 16b-25," in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Festschrift Willem A. M. Beuken*, ed. J. Van Ruiten and M. Vervenne (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 360.

³Mauser, 181. The author sees no cosmic transformation in Isa 65:17f., only rejuvenation of an old world. He found support for this idea in Isa 41:18-20.

⁴Bratcher, 183.

⁵Willis, *Isaiah*, 473.

⁶Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 408. Westermann also suggested that the phrase is "meant to be taken figuratively, as the language of exaggeration," or that it is a later addition as the basic idea is seen in later apocalyptic works (*ibid.*).

In contrast to this, it should be pointed out that the *heaven-earth* merismus utilized here represents the totality of things as in Gen 1:1¹ and that the text creates the impression of radical cosmic transformation.² The radical transformation of nature spoken of here is characteristic of apocalyptic literature.³ There is no compelling reason to hold that this text does not suggest an actual re-creation of the cosmos. Instead, the way ברא and the *heaven-earth* merismus is used, the tone of the passage, and the radical transformation of life clearly suggest something substantially different is in view for which the language of creation is called into service.

Second, Isa 65:17-25 places creation squarely in the future, as an eschatological fulfilment. This passage is clearly eschatological⁴ and the eschatological framework of Isa 40-66 comes into full view here in that the prophet envisages a new creation, a universal new beginning.⁵ Yet in doing this the passage avails itself of two important elements from primordial creation texts: the use of the term ברא and the *heaven-earth* merismus. Both elements played a significant role in the Genesis creation narrative and in Isaiah's creation thought. As God "created" the first heaven and earth, he now promises to "create" a new heaven and earth. "The one who created the *heavens* and the

¹Motyer, 530.

²Whybray, 275.

³Ibid., 278.

⁴George A. F. Knight, *The New Israel: A Commentary of the Book of Isaiah 56-66*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 98. Knight's concept of realised eschatology does not necessarily entail a cosmic re-creation. The new creation is really a continuation or outflow of Gen 1:1; it is an expression of God's loving purpose for the universe he created for the good of mankind (ibid., 96-97, 99).

⁵Smart, 280.

earth (i.e., the whole universe or cosmos) in the first place certainly has the ability to do something *new*"¹ and "only that Creator who spoke creation into existence in the first place has the power to create new heavens and a new earth."² As God made a whole universe at the beginning, he now promises to make a whole new cosmos. "That power which was displayed at the original creation is again to be displayed in a new work of creation."³

This eschatological creation of God is linguistically and theologically dependent upon God's cosmological creation, for the latter is analogous to the former. Creation therefore achieves a complete cycle in Isaiah from primordial to new creation.

Summary of Isaiah's Creation Texts

This exegesis has involved only certain selected passages. However, Isaiah's creation thought is not limited to these passages and can be found in many other texts, where the primary elements of creation thought also appear. The following table demonstrates Isaiah's creation language and the portrayal of creation dimensions (cosmological, historical, eschatological) throughout the book.

TABLE 1

ANALYSIS OF CREATION TEXTS IN ISAIAH

Text	Creation Term	Creation Metaphor	Creation Dimension ¹
2:22	----	נשמה באפו	cosmological
4:5	ברא	----	eschatological
5:12	----	מעשה ידיו	historical

¹Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 655.

²Ibid., 656.

³Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:513.

17:7	עשה	----	cosmological
19:25	----	מעשה ידי	eschatological
22:11	עשה, יצר	----	cosmological
24:18	----	heaven-earth	cosmological
27:11	עשה, יצר	----	historical
29:16	עשה, יצר	----	historical
29:23	----	מעשה ידי	eschatological
37:16	עשה	heaven-earth	cosmological
40:22	נטה	heaven-earth	cosmological
40:26, 28	ברא	[heaven]-earth	cosmological
41:4	עשה	----	historical
41:20	עשה, ברא	----	eschatological
42:5	רקע, נטה, ברא	heaven-earth, רוח, נשמה	cosmological
42:16	עשה	----	eschatological
43:1	יצר, ברא	----	historical
43:7	עשה, יצר, ברא	----	historical
43:15	ברא	----	historical
43:19	עשה	----	eschatological
43:21	יצר	----	eschatological
44:2, 21, 24a	יצר	----	historical
44:4	עשה	----	historical
44:24b	רקע, נטה, עשה	heaven-earth	cosmological
45:7	עשה, יצר, ברא	----	cosmological
45:8	ברא	----	historical
45:9	עשה	----	historical
45:11	יצר	----	historical
45:12	נטה, עשה, ברא	heaven-earth	cosmological

45:18	כּוֹן, עֲשֵׂה, יִצַּר, בְּרָא	heaven-earth	cosmological
48:7	בְּרָא	----	eschatological
48:13	נִטָּה, יָסַד	heaven-earth	cosmological
49:5	יִצַּר	----	eschatological
51:13	יָסַד, נִטָּה, עֲשֵׂה	heaven-earth	cosmological
51:16	יָסַד, נִטָּע	heaven-earth	cosmological
54:5	עֲשֵׂה	----	historical
54:6	בְּרָא	----	historical
57:16	עֲשֵׂה	רוּחַ, נִשְׁמוּת	cosmological
57:17	בְּרָא	----	historical
60:21	----	מַעֲשֵׂה יָדַי	eschatological
64:7	יִצַּר	מַעֲשֵׂה יָדָךְ	historical
65:17, 18	בְּרָא	heaven-earth	eschatological
66:2	עֲשֵׂה	----	cosmological
66:22	עֲשֵׂה	heaven-earth	eschatological

1. The creation dimensions suggested in this table are the ones that dominate each text. This is not to imply that the other dimensions are missing in that particular text. Frequently more than one creation dimension is in view, but one is dominant.

Structural Impact of Isaiah's Creation Passages

As discussed earlier in chapter 1 of this study, the book of Isaiah exhibits a "symphonic structure" comprised of three principal movements and an intermezzo. This structural analysis of the book highlights the fact that Isaiah's creation thought is largely concentrated in chaps. 40-55. However, the analysis also indicates the presence of creation thought in the first segment of the book (chaps. 1-35) and the climactic nature of the theme in Isaiah's final segment (chaps. 56-66). The analysis also highlights the virtual absence of creation thought from the transition segment of Isaiah (chaps. 36-39).

The preceding treatment of creation passages in Isaiah further accentuates this "symphonic structure" of the book. Not only is creation thought concentrated in chaps. 40-55, but also this segment of Isaiah contains the richest source of creation thought in 44:24-45:25 (see above). Whereas only one extended treatment of creation is found in chaps. 1-35 (in 4:2-6)¹ and chaps. 56-66 portray the ultimate climax of creation thought, chaps. 40-55 provide the most fully orbbed discussion on the subject, with rich linguistic and metaphoric elements and the connections made between creation thought and other significant themes or concepts of Isaiah.²

Connections of Isaiah's Creation Thought to Gen 1-2

Throughout this chapter, it has been intimated time and again that there are certain connections between Isaiah's creation thought and the Genesis creation narrative. These connections are perhaps to be expected since the Genesis account provides the biblical record of the creation of the world whereas Isaiah is more

¹Isa 4:2-6 is placed at the end of the first major cycle of prophecies in Isaiah (2:2-4:6), where the eschatological introductory formula predominates (e.g., 2:2; 3:1, 18; 4:1) and the dominant theme is judgement. Likewise Isa 43:1-4 and 44:24-45:25 (exegeted in this study) are placed in the first cycle of prophecies in Isa 40-55 (i.e., 40-48). Here the divine speech introductory formula is most frequently employed (e.g., 43:1, 14, 16; 44:6, 24; 45:1, 11, 14; etc.) and the principal theme is salvation. Isa 65:17-25, the final passage treated in this study, is part of the final prophetic collection of the book and of the segment 56-66. This section is also dominated by the divine speech introductory formula and the theme of salvation.

²That Isa 40-55 is kind of the theological centrepiece of the book is made even more evident in chapter 3 of this study where the thematic connections in Isaiah are discussed. Suffice it to say at this stage that from every angle, Isa 40-55 provides the most sustained presentation of any of the themes of the book, creation thought included. The "symphonic structure" of the book bears this out. Chaps. 1-35 provide a preliminary treatment of ideas; chaps. 36-39 supply a theological/structural bridge; chaps. 40-55 present Isaiah's theology in full force; and chaps. 56-66 bring everything to a grand finale.

interested in the world as creation and, more significantly, God as the creator.¹ The precise nature of these connections is the subject of exploration in this portion of the study. Three main areas of connections are observed, and the similarities and differences between the two texts are commented on.²

The Use of Creation Terms

As noted throughout this study, the three main creation terms in the OT are ברא, יצר, and עשה. In a general sense, all three terms are utilised in the creation narrative of Gen 1 and 2, and Isaiah's terminological reverberation of Genesis is more than coincidence. This is especially true when the more exact uses of the individual terms are considered. When speaking of the general creation of planet Earth, ברא is the preferred term in both Genesis and Isaiah (see above). The term, with its primordial creation connotations, and with only God as its subject, is consistently used in both texts to refer to cosmological creation.³

However, יצר is preferred by Genesis in speaking about the specific creation of mankind and by Isaiah in describing the historical creation of Israel.⁴ It should be noted that יצר, as used by Isaiah, differs somewhat from Genesis's usage as it assumes a narrower meaning, with Israel as the object of creation rather than the whole of

¹See Ollenburger's comments on this (55).

²Uhl suggested three areas of commonality between Genesis and Isaiah: (1) overlapping creation concepts; (2) shared historical time period; and (3) extensive use of the three main creation verbs. He also stated that the differences were determined by the context and by the author's purpose (122-123).

³This is most clearly evident by comparing Gen 1 and Isa 44:24-45:25, where cosmological creation is best expressed in Isaiah.

⁴This is best seen in the comparison between the second creation account of Genesis and Isa 43:1-7.

humanity as in Genesis.¹ Nevertheless, in both texts, the term reflects the idea of divine immanence in creation and of the specificity of the creation itself.

The third, and most frequent, creation term is עָשָׂה. First, the term is used in both texts as a synonym of the other two terms and frequently in parallel with them (see above). It is the most general creation term and is used interchangeably with either or both of the other terms. Second, both Genesis and Isaiah also reflect a unique function of the term. In both texts, עָשָׂה is used in a summary manner: (1) it is used in Gen 1:31 to summarise the entire creation narrative; and (2) it is the last creation term in Isaiah and, in this capacity, summarises Isaiah's creation thought.² Furthermore, unlike בָּרָא and יָצַר, the term exhibits a flexibility that allows it to be applied more freely as a parallel to other creation words and as a summary term.

The Use of Creation Metaphors

Another area of connection between Genesis and Isaiah concerns the use of certain creation metaphors in both texts. Three such metaphors have been identified in this study: (1) the "breath/spirit" metaphor; (2) the "work of his/my/your hand" metaphor; and (3) the *heaven-earth* merismus (see chapter 1). Of these three, the second metaphor is not used in the Genesis creation narrative and so attention has to focus upon the other two creation metaphors.

The phrases "spirit of God" (Gen 1:2) and "breath of life" (Gen 2:7) play a crucial role in the creation account of Genesis. The former serves as a prelude to creation while the latter describes the creation of man. Both phrases indicate that direct

¹Compare Gen 2:7 and Isa 43:1.

²As pointed out, the word also functions in this summary capacity in Isa 43:1-7 where it is both the last creation term and the summary term in vs. 7.

creative divine involvement is entailed. This is further accentuated by the occurrence of the compound expression "the breath of the spirit of life" in Gen 7:22 to denote every living creature that is destroyed by the flood.¹ The metaphor is found in at least two creation passages in Isaiah—42:5 and 57:16. The metaphor resonates strongly with its use in the Genesis creation narrative and recalls that creative act of God. Its appearances in Isaiah reinforce the connections between the two books, where the metaphor underlines divine source and involvement in creation.

The most significant creation metaphor in Isaiah is the *heaven-earth* merismus. The Genesis creation account opens with the creation of "heaven-earth," while Isaiah's creation discourse reaches a climax with the creation of new "heaven-earth." Isaiah's use of the merismus complements Genesis. However, Isaiah uses the metaphor more broadly than Genesis and employs more verbs to capture the essence of this cosmos that God creates. Only one of these verbs utilised by Isaiah appears in Genesis.² Also, whereas Genesis uses the metaphor for primordial creation only, Isaiah utilises it for both primordial and eschatological creation. Nevertheless, the overriding cosmological overtones of the metaphor is evident in both books—the "heaven-earth" merismus is a reference to the cosmos.³

Dimensions of Creation

The story of creation in Genesis is a story of cosmological beginnings, a story

¹See Kikawada and Quinn, for the chiastic pattern of creation, creation reversal (the Flood), and re-creation (85ff.).

²See chapter 1 for the use of the root קָרַע .

³Uhl contended that a notable difference between Isa 40-55 and Gen 1:1-2:4 is that these chapters nowhere contain a cosmogonic picture (103). If by cosmogonic, Uhl means primordial, then he has not adequately explained the cosmological dimension of creation that Isa 45 presents.

about primordial creation. This sense of primordial creation is prevalent throughout Isaiah as observed in the use of creation terms and creation metaphors. Frequently, when ברא is used in Isaiah, primordial creation is very much in evidence. Similarly, when the *heaven-earth* merismus is employed, creation in a cosmological sense is intended.

On the cosmological dimension, both Isaiah and Genesis have much in common, as already demonstrated. A major point of departure occurs when dealing with the historical dimension of creation. In Genesis, this dimension of creation is implied in the second creation account (Gen 2:4-25), the creation of the human race. It could be maintained that the Genesis creation narrative moves from cosmological or primordial creation in chap. 1 to historical creation in chap. 2, and that this shift is indicated by the verbal shift in the story.¹ A similar shift also occurs in Isaiah as the book not only reflects upon cosmological creation but also historical creation, and does so by employing a Genesis-like linguistic shift. However, Isaiah follows a slightly different path: (1) it limits the historical dimension to the creation and election of Israel; and (2) by sheer force of evidence, it places greater weight upon historical creation than Genesis does.

What is added in Isaiah is the development of an explicit understanding of creation thought in the eschatological dimension. This dimension anticipates the future and new creative work of God.² It looks forward to a new heaven and new earth and

¹At the very least the story moves from general creation in Gen 1 to special creation in Gen 2.

²The arguments presented by Kikawada and Quinn suggest that the post-flood world is a kind of new beginning. However, Isaiah is very specific about this new beginning in that it is analogous to the first beginning, yet also substantially different.

everything that this entails. It elevates God's work beyond both the past and the present. It demonstrates that God's creativity transcends primordial and historical creation and thus supplements these dimensions. This eschatological dimension of creation which is already implicit in the Genesis creation account is rendered explicit in Isaiah.¹

Summary

This chapter has included two things: an extended exegesis of selected passages in Isaiah that have creation as their dominant theme and comments on the connections between Isaiah's creation thought and the Genesis creation narrative. First, this chapter has demonstrated the pre-eminence of creation thought in Isaiah. Creation is Isaiah's consummate conceptualisation of God. It not only dominates the exegeted passages, it reverberates through the book (see table 1).

Second, Isaiah's creation thought is multi-dimensional. It is comprised of the cosmological (primordial), the historical, and the eschatological dimensions. What is evident however is the fact that the various passages of Isaiah exercised considerable latitude in drawing upon one or more of the dimensions. Isa 4:2-6 and 65:17-25 focus largely on eschatological creation; 43:1-7 concentrates on historical creation; and 44:24- 45:25 points primarily to cosmological creation. Nevertheless, in each case the other dimensions are not absent, they simply play a more minor role.

Third, the exegeted passages highlight some important connections between

¹John H. Sailhamer argues that the use of *בראשית* in Gen 1:1 speaks of the commencement of history that also anticipates that history's consummation in the end of time, an idea expressed by the word *באחרית*. He believes that these two words form a word pair and that the growing focus on the times of the end in the biblical canon is an appropriate extension of the "end" that is anticipated in the "beginning" (*The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992], 83). So Jacques B. Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1978), 235-240. Cf. Gen 49 as a counterpart to the language of Gen 1.

Isaiah's creation thought and Genesis's creation account. These connections exist on three levels: linguistic, structural, and conceptual. At the linguistic level there are verbs, terms, and metaphors that the two books share. On the structural level, creation inevitably proceeds from the general to the specific or special and the verb עשה is used by both books as a creation summary term. At the conceptual level, creation operates in more than one dimension and it is conceived to be the result of divine word and activity.¹

The exegetical investigation of chapters 1 and 2 has established that creation thought is a dominant concept in Isaiah. This calls for a closer examination of the impact that Isaiah's creation thought has on other important concepts in the book.

¹Uhl claimed that creation by means of the word is clearly attested by both Gen 1:1-2:4 and Isa 40-55 (109). It seems the same holds true for all of Isaiah.

CHAPTER III

CREATION THEOLOGY IN ISAIAH

As already established, creation thought is one of the most significant thematic strands in Isaiah. Its prevalence and predominance in the book is demonstrated by the extended use of creation language (both direct and metaphoric) and by the presence of the concept in several significant passages. This has an immediate impact upon the theology of Isaiah. If God is viewed as the creator, how does Isaiah conceive of this creator God? The importance of this conception of God as creator is the subject of this chapter.

Creation and God's Nature and Character

The most immediate impact of Isaiah's creation thought pertains to the conceptualising of the nature and character of God. That this God is the creator leaves an indelible imprint on the thought complex of the book. Who this God is and what he is like is a principal concern and consequence of his creatorship.

God: The One and Only

In various ways, Isaiah attempts to convey the idea that God is incomparable and unique. There is no god that is formed before or that exists after him (43:10). No one can save apart from him (43:11; 47:13-15). He is the only one who can predict the

future (42:9; 43:9, 19; 46:10; 48:3, 5-7). God is the only one who can say, "I am God, and there is none like me" (46:9).¹ He is the One and Only God, who is inimitable, and who commands the forces of the universe.² His will is preeminent and his deeds are inscrutable. He is the supreme ruler and controller of all that exists. This incomparability of God exhibits itself in at least five different ways.

A Self-Predication of Uniqueness

Isaiah's most outstanding expression of God's incomparability is denoted by the phrase "none like me/him" and its counterparts. Isaiah asserts that it is God who must be feared and dreaded (8:13) and suggests that this is so because there is no one like him. The question is asked, "To whom will you liken God?" (40:18). God himself asks the question, "Who is like me?" (44:7) or "To whom will you liken me?" (40:25; 46:5). Over and over, particularly in chaps. 40-46, God predicates uniqueness upon himself through the insistent claim: "I am God and there is no other" (43:10; 44:6; 45:5-6, 14, 18, 21, 22; etc.). The divine self-predication "I am YHWH" dominates the book of Isaiah and it is expressed in at least six different ways: "I am" אני (47:8, 10), "I am God" אני אל (43:12; 45:22; 46:9), "I am your God" אני אלהיך (41:10), "I am YHWH" יהוה אני (41:4; 42:6, 8; 43:15; 45:3, 5, 6, 18; 49:23, 26; 60:16, 22), "I am YHWH your God" אני יהוה אלהיך (41:13; 43:3; 48:17; 51:15), "I am YHWH your God, the Holy One of Israel" אני יהוה קדוש ישראל (43:3) or "I am YHWH your Holy One" אני יהוה קדושכם (43:15).³ Despite their *Gattungen* and formal function, these different variations of the

¹Ronald Youngblood, *Themes from Isaiah* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1984), 131.

²Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 172.

³Fanwar, 63-64. M. L. Phillips furnishes the best discussion of the use of the formula in Isa 40-55. According to him, the formula is composed of a first-person

divine self-predication are used interchangeably.¹ So unequalled is God that, whatever he chooses to do (10:13), there is no one who can deter him from his purpose (43:13). The insistence of this self-predication is intensified by a fourfold question in 46:5: "To whom will you liken (דמה) me and make me equal (שיה) and compare (משל) me that we may be equal (דמה)?" This is accompanied by the ultimate self-predication, "I am God and there is no other; I am God and there is none like me" (46:9).

Arising from this self-predication is a question concerning explanation. Why is God so insistent on his own uniqueness? As a corollary to this, Why does Isaiah impute this claim upon God? The answer to these queries lies in Isaiah's creation thought. When God asks "To whom will you compare me?" (40:25) he immediately follows this with another question, "Lift up your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these?" (40:26). The creation rhetoric implied in the second question is quite clear. God is the One and Only because he is the creator. This connection is further intensified in two creation passages. After an extended treatment of God's historical creation in 43:1-7, based upon the term יצר,² God's incomparability is stressed in 43:10 by the statement that no other deity is "formed" (יצר) before or after him. This

pronoun with a proper noun or another pronoun. It has six variations and most likely had cultic uses ("Divine Self-Predication in Deutero-Isaiah," *Biblical Research* 16 [1971]: 32-51). He also explained that elsewhere in the OT the formula has two components: covenant renewal (cf. Gen 15:1-21; the Decalogue; Exod 6:2-8) and covenant complaint (cf. Deut 32; Pss 50 & 81; Jer 14:17-22; 1 Kgs 18:35) (ibid., 33, 42). The variations of the formula are also discussed by Walther Zimmerli, *I Am Yahweh*, ed. Walter Brueggemann, trans. Douglass W. Stott (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 17-19. A more complete description of the use of the formula elsewhere in the OT is furnished by Allis, 65-66. Significantly the formula is employed primarily in Isa 40-55. It does not appear in chaps. 1-39 and is used minimally in chaps. 56-66. The concentration of themes and ideas in chaps. 40-55 is evident from every angle.

¹Phillips, 32.

²See chapter 2.

connection between God's incomparability and his creatorship is especially highlighted in Isa 45. God's unique self-predication in vss. 5-6 is followed by a creation statement in vss. 7-8.¹ By the same token, a creation statement in vs. 18 climaxes with this self-predication.² "The end of vs. 18 comes back to the proclamation that God is the only God" as intimated by this divine self-predication.³ The weight of this evidence suggests that, for Isaiah, God is the One and Only because he is the creator. Conceiving God as creator places him above any other creature. God is the creator.

The Folly of Man

A necessary corollary of God's incomparability is the folly of man, and by extension, the folly of anything man makes, especially idols. A curse is pronounced upon man's so-called wisdom: "Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight" (5:21). Man's folly is the object of a divine threat of exposure: "I will tell of your righteousness and your doings but they will not help you" (57:12). Above all else, man's folly is most appropriately demonstrated by idolatry, that is by what he makes and yet elevates to deity status. In Isa 44:10-23 idolatry is presented as the reversal of creation itself. Persistently idols are portrayed as the "creation" of man and creation verbs are utilised to show this. The verbs *יצר*, *עשה*, and *פעל* are employed to speak of idols as man's creation (vss. 10, 12, 13, 17).

This is further emphasized in two ways. One is through the claim that all those

¹In both vss. 5 and 6 God says, "I am YHWH and there is no other." Vss. 7 and 8 speak about God forming light and creating darkness, making weal and creating woe, and the *heaven-earth* merismus is employed to heighten the creation language of the verses.

²The verse begins with "for thus says YHWH who created the heavens" and ends with "I am YHWH and there is no other."

³Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 172.

who make idols are nothing (44:9).¹ "The verse moves from the makers (9a) to the idols (9b) and so to the devotees who speak on the idols' behalf (9c, d). . . . The meaning here is that to fashion an idol proves that the maker has no sense of meaning and purpose in the world nor any chance of achieving it."² Two is the irony that idols are unable to help man even when called upon (57:13). When the time of judgement comes, their collection of idols will be exposed as helpless.³ "When Judah in her distress cries out, she will receive no help nor be saved by her collection of idols, the pantheon she has created."⁴ The reason that man and the work of his hands cannot be trusted as God can is that man himself is a created being with "breath in his nostrils" (2:22).⁵ Therefore, man's truest security is to rely upon his creator rather than on himself. As Isaiah put it: "On that day, men will regard their Maker and their eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel. They will not have any regard for the altars, the work of their hands, and they will not look on the things their fingers have made" (17:7-8).⁶

¹The first part of the verse reads: "all those who make idols are nothing." "Nothing" here is the Hebrew word תהו which is used in Gen 1 in reference to the nothingness of the earth before creation. In this verse it may be used to compare man's nothingness to the earth's nothingness before creation. At the very least, as suggested by Oswalt, the term תהו in this verse may connote "elemental chaos" as it does in 40:17, 23; 41:29; 44:9; 45:18, 19; 49:4; 59:4; and also perhaps 24:10; 29:21; 34:11 (*The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 176, n. 43). It appears that a creation underpinning is evident here.

²Motyer, 346.

³Ibid., 475.

⁴Ridderbos, 519. Whatever the people create cannot be relied upon for help. The only reliable help comes from the Creator himself.

⁵The "breath in his nostrils" stresses two things: (1) man's mortality, and (2) man's createdness. See the discussion on this text in chapter 2.

⁶The phrase "on that day" that introduces these verses points forward to the eventual eschatological lesson that God's people must learn. The phrase and its

In essence creation is the reversal of the nation's idolatry where the gods they create (44:10-23) are placed in stark contrast to the divine claim that YHWH is the creator (44:24-28). Whereas man may "form" (יצר) or "make" (עשה) his gods (44:10, 15), it is God who in reality "forms" man and "makes" the universe (44:24). Thus creation is the antithesis of and antidote to idolatry.

YHWH of Hosts

Another way that Isaiah stresses the incomparability of God is through the use of the special epithet YHWH of Hosts (יהוה צבאות).¹ The root צבא, "hosts," appears in Gen 2:1 in reference to the created order and provides a creational significance to the title YHWH of Hosts (see also Isa 6:3). "Hosts" also refers to the stars (Deut 4:19), the angels (Ps 148:2), and Israel or its army (Exod 12:41; Num 1:3; Josh 5:14, 15). The title further appears in the context of the sanctuary of Israel (see 1 Sam 1:3; 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2) and this God is addressed in prayer and worship (Isa 6:3; 37:16). The name could suggest a "host" of worshipers. Most importantly, YHWH of Hosts is the God of Israel (1 Sam 17:45; 2 Sam 7:26, 27).

In Isaiah, the title is used in conjunction with "Holy One of Israel" in such passages as 5:24; 6:3; 47:4; and so on. YHWH of Hosts appears very nearly as a

significance will be discussed more in-depth later in this chapter.

¹Manfred Görg has argued that the name יהוה צבאות is to be understood as being made up of God's name + an attributive surname rather than as a construct ("Sb'wt–ein Gottestitel," *Biblische Notizen* 30 [1985]: 15). He also proposed an Egyptian etymology for this epithet. He wondered whether the term *sb'wt* had Egyptian etymology and suggested that it is parallel to the Egyptian *db3.tj*, a divine epithet used as a surname for the gods of Egypt. He contended that *sb'wt* is the Hebrew equivalent to the Egyptian title *db3.tj* (16-17). These conclusions are not entirely convincing. The presence of similar divine epithets in the Egyptian and OT religions is not unexpected. This however does not mean that the OT borrows from the Egyptians.

militaristic (see Num 1:3) or royal (see Isa 6:3) title of God. Herbert Lockyer commented that this name represents God as "the Lord of powers—the all-possessing, all-controlling" one.¹ In Isaiah, this appellation is a reminder that God is the "One who unites in himself all the powers of heaven and earth."² Watts saw a definite historical connection to this name. He wrote: "The Lord of Hosts corresponds to God's sovereignty over history and all the forces that compete in that arena: over kings and nations, armies and empires, in governments and societies."³ He also stated:

One aspect of God's being relates to his being lord and master, sovereign over societies, over nations, and over history. The title "Lord of Hosts," that is, "Lord of Armies," expresses this. Isaiah uses the title throughout. Yahweh is master of Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem, of their peoples, and of their rulers. He establishes their leadership, determines their fate, prospers them with plenty, and judges them with deprivation.⁴

Isaiah's use of this title is highly significant. It is employed 61 times in Isaiah but mostly in chaps. 1-39.⁵ In this first half of Isaiah, the title is used in contexts of judgement against sin, and, in about half of these appearances (27 times), YHWH of

¹Herbert Lockyer, *All the Divine Names and Titles in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 44.

²Th. C. Vriezen, "Essentials of the Theology of Isaiah," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrison (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 132.

³John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah*, Word Biblical Themes (Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 31.

⁴*Ibid.*, 29. Of note is the fact that the name YHWH of Hosts is employed in Isa 6:3, a text echoed in Rev 4:8. However, in that text the Greek word παντοκρατωρ "Almighty" (of which the basic connotation is power) is used, suggesting that YHWH of Hosts can be interpreted as YHWH Almighty with an emphasis on divine power and incomparability.

⁵It is used 55 times in chaps. 1-39 and 6 times in 40-66. With the exception of 28:5 and 28:29 the name is used in chaps. 1-39 exclusively in contexts of judgement against sin (Fanwar, 150, n. 1).

Hosts is pictured as bringing retribution upon his people.¹ In the second half of the book, YHWH of Hosts is consistently portrayed as Israel's redeemer.² Whether in judgement or salvation, YHWH of Hosts is uniquely able.

Like God's unique self-predication, the appellation YHWH of Hosts, as an expression of God's incomparability, find its rationale in the creatorship of God. In Isa 6:3, YHWH of Hosts is ascribed with threefold holiness³ and his glory is described as filling the earth, a clear allusion to creation.⁴ The historical creation of Assyria is said to be the work of YHWH of Hosts (19:25). The creation of the universe, cosmological creation, is also the work of YHWH of Hosts (37:16). In Isa 54:5 Maker and YHWH of Hosts are parallel designations of God. The association of YHWH of Hosts with creation is best exemplified in 45:11-13, where the inclusio, "thus says YHWH . . ." (vs. 11) and ". . . says YHWH of Hosts" (vs. 13) envelopes several creation statements: God *made* the earth, he *created* mankind, he *stretched out* the heavens and made the starry hosts.⁵ The incomparability of YHWH of Hosts is due to his being the

¹Ibid. Examples of this: 1:9, 24; 2:12; 3:1; 5:7, 9, 16, 24; etc.

²For example, in 44:6, "YHWH of Hosts" stands parallel to "King of Israel" and "his Redeemer"; in 47:4 it parallels "Redeemer" and "Holy One of Israel"; and in 54:5 it parallels "your husband," "your Maker," "your Redeemer," "the Holy One of Israel," and "the God of the whole earth." Isa 54:5 is also the last time the name appears in Isaiah.

³The differences in MSS that read a threefold or a twofold ascription of holiness to God in 6:3 will be presented at greater length later in this chapter. Compare the threefold use of the verb ברא in 65:17-18.

⁴It seems more appropriate to translate the second half of 6:3 as "the fullness of the whole earth is his glory." The word "full" מלא here is masculine construct and the suggested reading is preferred (See Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 67-69). This reading heightens the creation overtone of the verse.

⁵Refer to the exegesis of Isa 45 in chapter 2.

creator.

God as King

God's uniqueness and incomparability is further underscored by descriptions of his kingship. God is the One and Only because he is King. The root מלך in both its verbal and nominal forms is utilised by Isaiah to refer to the kingship of God, and kingship is associated with different names of God. Isaiah speaks of God as king (or King of Israel) in 33:22 and 44:6, whereas the idea that God reigns is spelled out in 24:23 and 52:7. This kingship of God is also alluded to in 37:16 where he is described as being "enthroned above the cherubim"¹ and with his dominion extending over all the kingdoms of the earth. H. G. M. Williamson pointed out that the kingship theme of Isaiah operates somewhat differently in the various parts of the book. Chaps. 1-39 present a coherent hope for an ideal king to act as God's appointed agent over Israel/Judah. This underlying theme is maintained in chaps. 40-55 but is transferred to a new context of Israel among the nations. The theme is further developed in chaps. 56-66 where the context is no longer Israel or the nations but the congregation of individuals.² The theme does demonstrate that God "is fully in command as the sole uncontested divine sovereign."³

¹This idea of God's enthronement is also referred to elsewhere in the OT: 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chron 13:6; Pss 80:2 [E1]; 90:1.

²H. G. M. Williamson, *Variations on a Theme: King, Messiah and Servant in the Book of Isaiah* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1998), 204-206.

³J. Kenneth Kuntz, "The Form, Location, and Function of Rhetorical Questions in Deutero-Isaiah," in *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah*, ed. Craig C. Broyles and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 127. The author also maintained that Isa 40-55 employs rhetorical questions freely and that as early as Isa 40:12-31 the prophet sought to instil a sense of the creatorship, redeeming work, and kingship of God. This is crucial to an understanding of these chapters.

What uniquely qualifies God to be king, over Israel and the world, is the fact that he is the creator. Concerning Isa 40-55, Mettinger stated that "the divine designation 'King' plays an important part in these chapters: The God who has announced a new Exodus is described as 'the creator of Israel, your King' (Isa 43:15), and the heralds hasten to Zion with the good news of his accession: 'Your God is now King!' (Isa 52:7)."¹ The association of creation with God's kingship is present in 6:1-3 and 37:16 and is intensified in 43:15 where Yahweh, Holy One, Israel's Creator (participle of ברא), and King (מלך) are parallel designations of God. Ollenburger observed: "The order which God creates and defends as King can be considered cosmically, naturally, or politically."² Furthermore, "Isaiah's consideration is primarily political, focused on the order of the community gathered around Zion, and Zion as the central symbol of that order."³ While it may not be necessary to limit God's kingship to the political realm, it is equally clear that "it is the language of creation that is best suited to express the universality and irresistibility of God's dominion."⁴

Lord of History

A final piece of evidence that God is the One and Only is the assertion that he is Lord of history. Abraham J. Heschel has observed that to modern historians history

¹Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, "Fighting the Powers of Chaos and Hell—Towards the Biblical Portrait of God," *Studia Theologica* 39 (1985): 30.

²Ollenburger, 58.

³Ibid. Unfortunately, Ollenburger downplays the other dimensions of God's kingship and elevates the political dimension unnecessarily. It appears that the book of Isaiah is as concerned about the cosmic dimension of God's kingship as it is about the political. While God is King in Zion, he is also enthroned above the cherubim (see above).

⁴Ibid., 63.

is the understanding of man's experience of events rather than an understanding of the events themselves. The prophet however is concerned with "the human event as a divine experience." As a consequence, for us history is the record of human experience whereas for the prophet "it is a record of God's experience."¹ Therefore, history is the arena where God's will comes to expression.² When seen in this way, history "is not capricious" and "the whole course of history, from beginning to end, is set within the purpose of the eternal God, the Creator and Sovereign."³

Not only is this One and Only God unique and sovereign, he is also history's controller. First, he is Lord of history because of his unique ability to affect the course of individual nations. For instance, God chooses and uses Assyria (7:18-25) to accomplish his judgement work against Israel, and when this is done, he turns around and exacts judgement upon Assyria itself (10:5-19). Second, again and again God states that he has plans for certain nations—Assyria (14:24-27), Egypt (19:12), Tyre (23:8-9), and even Zion (37:26). Third, God also raises his servants to fulfil his purposes and do his will (for example, 41:2, 25).

God's supremacy over history transcends temporal considerations (46:9-10a), is immovable in purpose (46:10b-11), and effects judgement and salvation (46:12-13). God works within history to preserve and create in later historical acts.⁴ Through the

¹Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 172.

²*Ibid.*, 174.

³Bernhard W. Anderson, "Exodus Typology in Second Isaiah," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), 187.

⁴Uhl, 181.

events of history God "is forming, making or creating history."¹ The connection of creation and history inevitably leads to the future, in that every experience of the future is an experience of the creator.² God's sovereignty over history transcends time because the prophet claims that God's action is manifest in the present (41:1-5), was manifest in the past (41:8-13), and will be manifest in the future (41:14-15, 17-20).³

Such supremacy is viable only because God is the creator and as the creator he is able to direct the course of individual, national, and cosmic history (see 44:24-28; 45:7-18). God's historical activity stands in a universal horizon, creation, and his activity in creation and history in a certain way is seen as a unity.⁴ God's "lordship over creation includes his lordship over history."⁵ As Willmes-Osnabrück so appropriately observed: "The Creator proves himself as the Lord of history."⁶

This connection between creation and history raises the issue of redemption. History is not merely the arena of God's creative activity, more specifically it is the

¹Stuhlmüller, "The Theology of Creation," 435.

²Jeremias, 31-32.

³Eric Heaton made these observations in relationship to Isa 41:1-20. His comments are appropriate to Isaiah's view of God's lordship over history ("Isaiah 40-55," in *Prophets and Poets*, ed. Grace Emerson [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973], 56-57). Heaton also pointed out that Israel looked at public historical events rather than private mystical experience for evidence of God's presence. This accounts for the decided historical underpinning of the OT and of the book of Isaiah.

⁴Eberlein, 188.

⁵Hudson, 116. He went on to say that although "creation is used to justify God's work in history, it is the doctrine of creation which is the primary faith builder" (ibid., 101-102). While Hudson's comments were made in regard to Isa 40-66, they seem appropriate for the entire book also.

⁶Willmes-Osnabrück, 90.

theater of his salvific acts.¹ A few remarks seem in order here. Long noted: "Redemption was the end of which creation was the beginning, and the arena of human history was where Yahweh's creative and redemptive work was performed."² There is an inescapable link between God's creative activity and salvific work since both are revealed or perceived to happen within the framework of history.

Creation and history were united by the prophet to emphasize not only the creation of the cosmos but also the continuing work of creation in Yahweh's lordship of his people. . . . Thus, Yahweh's lordship in creation was the basis of his lordship over the present events.³

In essence, "God's extensive power in creation is a macrocosm of his work in history and of his work in the election and redemption of Israel. He creates it all."⁴

God's Awesome Deeds

In reflecting upon the incomparable nature and character of God, some observation must be made concerning his work. God's unique place in the universe, in history, and in relationship to his people is not merely a statement of his nature but also an assertion of his acts. As earlier observed, God acts in terms of judgement and salvation. "Yahweh was the God of Israel who had done wondrous things in making for himself a people."⁵ He acts on behalf of (see 2:2-5 or 4:2-6) and against his people (see 5:8-30).⁶ He acts through the nations of the world (see 45:1-3) but also

¹More will be said about this connection later in this chapter.

²Long, 44.

³Ibid., 33-34.

⁴Watts, *Isaiah*, 36.

⁵Long, 56.

⁶This twofold work of God is best encapsulated in Isa 6:1-13. There the prophet experiences the redemptive act of the removal of his personal guilt by the

providentially (see 43:1-7). His acts are cosmic, historical, and eschatological.

Isaiah's unique contribution to this complexity of the acts of God is frequently expressed by the phrase the "work of his hands."¹ God's activity is also denoted by the varied uses of עשה. However, Isaiah's consummate conception of God's work is encapsulated in his creation thought. God is the creator of the universe (see Isa 45), the shaper of history (see 43:1-7), and the maker of new realities (see 65:17-25).² His acts are performed in the cosmological, historical, and eschatological dimensions. As such, God's deeds are as awesome as he is incomparable. God is the One and Only not only because of who he is but also because of what he does, that is, he creates.

Creation and God's Salvific Work

Of all thematic relationships in Isaiah, none is debated as much as the connection between creation thought and salvation theology. Following the lead of von Rad, other scholars have maintained that creation thought in Isaiah is largely subordinate to salvation theology.³ Typical of this view is Norman Young's assessment of the Genesis creation account. He argued that Israel's faith declaration began with Abraham and the patriarchs, that is, the creation of the people. This was later projected back to the very beginning. God was first affirmed as the creator and redeemer of Israel

work of the seraph (vss. 6-7). He is also given a preview of the eventual judgement that God intends to exact against his people (vss. 9-13). This pattern of redemption and judgement is particularly significant in the first segment of Isaiah (chaps. 1-35). See chapter 1 for further discussion.

¹Refer to the discussion in chapter 1.

²Refer to the discussion in chapter 2.

³Refer to Review of Literature.

and then as the creator of all that is.¹ According to this view, the chronology of OT belief "was from God the creator of Israel to God the creator of heaven and earth."² For many, creation thought in the OT, like its ANE counterpart, had a soteriological character from the start.³ Creation faith, as such, has no independent standing and serves an ancillary function to redemption faith.

As opposed to this view is the argument that creation is a significant doctrine in its own right, that it is the controlling background of OT thought, or that it is an independent tradition which stands on par with other doctrines in Isaiah.⁴ Schmid, on the basis of comparison with the general world view of the ANE, strenuously argued that creation always stood first and that history is the implementation of creation.⁵ He asserted that, from the outset, Israel understood her particular experiences of history and of God in the horizon of creation faith⁶ and that "views of creation provide the

¹Norman Young, *Creator, Creation and Faith* (London: Collins, 1976), 27. The author also provided a helpful review of the various views on creation (13-23). We cannot help but wonder whether this view of creation implies that creation did not happen at all. If creation is no more than an affirmation of faith, then its historicity is easily questioned. Following this line of thought can lead to a radically different interpretation of Genesis itself. To doubt the historicity of creation is to place doubt on the rest of the history of the book. Then perhaps Genesis is not an account of historical events as the book portrays but rather, as has been suggested, a political propaganda of sorts (see Gary A. Rendsburg, "Reading David in Genesis," *Bible Review* 17 [2001]:20-33, 46).

²Ibid., 40.

³Angerstorfer, 130.

⁴See the Review for a detailed discussion of these various views.

⁵Schmid, "Creation, Righteousness, and Salvation," 103-108. The significance of creation to the ANE world view is illustrated in both the Enuma Elish and the Atrahasis Epic (see *Myths from Mesopotamia*, trans. Stephanie Dalley [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], 1-37, 228-277).

⁶Ibid., 111.

framework within which assertions about history are made."¹ Doukhan is even more emphatic when he stated:

It is not the Redemption idea which generated the creation idea. It is rather because creation was assumed as a real historical event that the theology of Redemption could refer to it as it dealt with the actual event of salvation, and ultimately as it pointed to the eschatological salvation.²

Others have sought to moderate between these opposing views. Brooks, for instance, maintained that the close proximity with which Isaiah "presents creation and redemption indicates clearly the importance he grants both doctrines."³ Likewise, Westermann conceded that at least for Isa 40-55 the "prophet binds firmly together Creation and redemption."⁴ He also said that this allocation of Israel's creator and redeemer is frequent in these chapters. "Israel's redeemer is the God of majesty who created the world and directs the entire course of its history."⁵ Therefore, God's creative and redemptive works are very closely connected.⁶ The complexity of this debate has also been fuelled by differences of opinion with regard to authorship.⁷ The interest here

¹Ibid., 108.

²Doukhan, 228-230. Refer also to his extended discussion of the issue in which he concluded that redemption depends on creation (228-233). Doukhan also draws attention to the impact that Marcion's approach, which opposed redemption to creation, has had on subsequent studies on the subject (ibid., 228, n. 2).

³Brooks, 82.

⁴Westermann, *Creation*, 122.

⁵Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 25.

⁶Ibid. Westermann also pointed out that this connection must not be taken as meaning that the two ideas merge. Instead the prophet uses this polarity to remind his hearers that God's saving action is an island within the mighty universe of God's work as creator.

⁷As demonstrated in the Review, two basic views emerge: (1) most works on Isaiah's creation thought focus almost exclusively on chaps. 40-55; and (2) most of these works accept the priority of salvation theology over creation thought. Since Isa

is to consider the data from the book itself and observe the relationship that salvation and creation have, insofar as this tells something about God.

In considering the various Isaianic passages that address creation thought and salvation theology, two patterns emerge. First, historical events are coupled with creation references. The Exodus is coupled with creation statements in 4:2-6; 43:1-3; 44:24 and 51:13, 15. The gathering from the Exile is coupled with a creation reference in 43:5-7. A historical figure, Cyrus, is mentioned in an important creation text, 45:12-13. Such coupling of creation thought and salvation history implies that creation is perceived as a historical event in the same way that the Exodus and Cyrus are historical. Isaiah assumes the historicity of creation. Second, several passages link creation with salvation and place creation before salvation. Isa 4:2-6 commences with creation allusions and then proceeds to allusions of the Exodus.¹ The same pattern is also observed in other creation passages such as 40:21-31; 42:5-7; 51:16b and 57:15-19. The most significant example of this pattern is provided by Isa. 45:18-25, Isaiah's most important creation text.² In this text, an extended pronouncement of God's creatorship (vss. 18-19) is followed by an equally extended statement of redemption (vss. 20-25). The creator God is the one who saves. Not only does Isaiah assume creation as a historical event, he also assumes that creation has historical priority over

40-55 is most frequently viewed as belonging to a separate author belonging to the exilic period, the prevailing view is that this author's focus is the forthcoming salvation of the exiles. The prophet allegedly uses creation thought to validate this salvation focus.

¹Refer to the exegesis in chapter 2.

²Refer to the exegesis in chapter 2.

redemption and history.¹

It could be argued that the passages examined here merely reflect a literary priority rather than a historical one. However, to say this is also to say that the coupling of historical events with creation references is similarly a literary development. It seems more likely that Isaiah assumes both the historicity and historical priority of creation. The book deals with history in three ways: (1) By making explicit references to certain dates (for example, 6:1; 36:1); (2) by referring to known historical events (such as the Exodus); and (3) by making reference to historical persons (such as Ahaz and Cyrus). The pairing of creation language with one or more of the above-mentioned historical uses (for example, 4:2-5; 44-24-28; etc.) suggests that Isaiah views creation as a historical event. Of special significance is the flow of Isa 44:24-45:25, where statements of primordial creation often precede statements about history (for example, 44:24-28 and 45:18-25). This appears to be far more than literary coincidence or structuring. This is further accentuated in the subsequent discussion.

Isaiah's Salvation Language

Isaiah's salvation theology is very much encapsulated in his use of language. When speaking about salvation, Isaiah employs two particular Hebrew terms: יָשַׁע and גָּאָל ("save" and "redeem").² Both terms are used in the verbal and substantive forms. God is referred to as the one who saves/redeems or as the Saviour/Redeemer. While the terms are distributed differently throughout Isaiah, they are concentrated in chaps.

¹It is noteworthy that a similar movement from creation to deliverance is exhibited in the Atrahasis Epic and in Gen 1-9.

²As used here, the two words will be translated as "save/Saviour" and "redeem/Redeemer" respectively.

40-55, as is Isaiah's creation language.¹ The first term occurs throughout the book whereas the second term occurs only from chap. 40 onwards. Each word has to be appraised individually.

The term **ישוע** occurs about 26 times in Isaiah and the majority of these occurrences are verbal.² Whenever the substantive is used, God is referred to as the saviour and this epithet is often placed alongside other names of God. For instance, in 43:3 "Saviour" is used alongside "YHWH your God" and "Holy One of Israel;" in 45:15 "Saviour" appears with "God of Israel;" and in 60:16 "Saviour" is used together with "Redeemer" and "Mighty One of Jacob." Not only is God saviour in a generic way, he is especially Israel's Saviour. God says "I am your Saviour" (43:3; 49:26) and the people acknowledge that God is their Saviour (45:15). Time and time again, Isaiah reminds the readers that it is God who saves or will save (33:22; 35:4; 37:20; 45:20; 49:25; 63:1; etc.).

The term **קָנָה** is used about 23 times in Isaiah, and with one exception, only from chap. 40 onwards.³ The verb "signifies the redeeming, or the liberating by a payment, of a relative imprisoned by debt, and was originally a technical term of family

¹One of the fundamental arguments employed in viewing Isa 40-55 as belonging to another author is this particular connection of creation and salvation language. This link also partially accounts for the fact that most works on Isaiah's creation theme concentrate on these chapters.

²The verbal uses are: 29:9; 33:22; 35:4; 37:20, 35; 38:20; 43:12; 45:17, 20, 22; 46:7; 47:13, 15; 49:25; 51:1; 63:1, 9; and 64:4. The word is used in the nominal form in 19:20; 43:3, 11; 45:15, 21; 49:26; 60:16; and 63:8.

³**קָנָה** appears in the first half of Isaiah only in 35:9 in the Qal passive participle. The other uses of the verb are 41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:5, 8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16 (all in the nominal/participial form); 62:12 and 63:4 (in the passive participle); and 43:1; 44:22, 23; 48:20; 52:3, 9; 63:9 (all in the verbal form).

law."¹ According to Stuhlmüller, "the principal types of redemption, designated by *g'l*, each reflects a peculiarly Israelite nuance."² This included the redemption of slaves, of property, from harm inflicted by murder, and for a husband who dies without male heir.³ The term portrays God as the one who redeems (43:1; 44:22; 48:20; 63:9; etc.) and he is often referred to as the "Redeemer" (41:14; 54:5; 60:16; etc.).⁴ Unlike *עֲשֵׂה*, the term is used mostly in the substantive form. In its verbal form in Isaiah, *לָאָה* always takes God as the subject,⁵ while in its substantive form it most often stands in conjunction with the divine tetragrammaton (for example, Isa 41:14; 43:14; 48:17; and 54:8).

¹Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 116.

²Stuhlmüller, *Creative Redemption*, 101.

³Ibid. The last type of redemption is best captured in the story of Ruth (see Book of Ruth).

⁴The word *לָאָה* frequently appears in the participle (that is, "Redeemer"). Stuhlmüller noted that when used in Isa 40-55 the participle *gō'el* appears in introductory formulas of poems/strophes (as in 41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 48:17; 49:7), in concluding formulas (as in 47:4; 49:26; 54:5, 8), with other epithets, by heading the list (as in 41:14; 43:14; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7), alone (as in 44:24; 54:8), and after *kōh 'āmar yhw̄h* (as in 43:14; 44:24; 48:17; 49:7) (*Creative Redemption*, 106). Stuhlmüller saw in this stylistic use of the participle in Isa 40-55 an indication of "the prophet's intention to use this word to dominate other ideas in his poems, like that of creation, and thereby to present 'creation' as a nuance or effect of *g'l*" (ibid.). This conclusion is unfortunate because it renders the creation thought of Isa 40-55 as totally subordinate to salvation theology. The positioning of the creation and salvation verbs in the various pericopes of Isaiah could be seen as being purely stylistic, as Stuhlmüller himself has recognised, without necessitating any conclusion about dominance or subordination. It could also be argued that the juxtaposition of creation and salvation verbs indicates an unbreakable interdependence of the two themes and that to see one theme dominating the other amounts to no more than a subjective conclusion. If anything, it seems more appropriate to see creation thought as the ground for salvation rather than the other way around.

⁵See Isa 43:1; 44:22, 23; 48:20; 52:3, 9; and 63:9. It should be noted that the verbal form is not the preferred use in Isaiah.

The distribution of the two terms is quite instructive: (1) ישע is used throughout the book, but it occurs mostly as a verb in chaps. 1-39; it is constructed as hendiadys with גאל in chaps. 40-55;¹ and it is used in chaps. 56-66; (2) גאל is used once in chaps. 1-39; it is constructed as hendiadys with ישע in chaps. 40-55; and it is used in chaps. 56-66; and (3) both terms reach a climactic relationship with the chiasmic statement of 63:9–". . . the angel of his presence 'saved' them (הושיעם) [a] in his love (באהבתו) [b] and in his pity (ובחמלתו) [b'] he 'redeemed' them (הוא גאלם) [a'] . . ." In a manner similar to Isaiah's use of creation language, salvation thought makes its appearance in chaps. 1-35, achieves a crescendo in chaps. 40-55, and reaches a climax in chaps. 56-66.

In several instances, this salvation concept is placed alongside Isaiah's creation thought where Creator parallels Saviour/Redeemer (43:3, 14-15; 44:24; etc.). The God who creates and the God who saves are one and the same God. To subordinate one act of God to the other perhaps misses the point of Isaiah, that it is the creator who saves. God's activity is conceived as being both creative and salvific. This can be looked at in another way, God's salvific work is creation, since creation functions also at the level of history, particularly salvation history.

Creation and Salvation History

If God's creative activity spills over into the realm of history, and if salvation history is a principal concern of the OT and Isaiah, then the relationship of creation to that salvation history is crucial, especially in light of the aforementioned debate. While applied to Isa 40-55, this comment by Anderson is very pertinent to the issue at hand.

¹For instance, Isa 49:26 reads ". . . I am YHWH, your Saviour and Redeemer" (Heb. מושיעך וגאלך could be translated as "your saving Redeemer/or your redeeming Saviour), the Mighty One of Jacob." The same construction also appears in Isa 60:16.

Never does the prophet think of Creation out of relation to history. . . . In some places he links creation and redemption so closely together that one is involved in the other. Yahweh's creative acts belong to the history of salvation. . . . His redemptive acts are acts of creation, and his creative acts are acts of history.¹

Oswalt offered an even more penetrating analysis concerning what he saw as the "audacity of Isaiah's argument" on this question.

If he is not the creator of the world, if he is not other than the world, then history is as much a puzzle to him as it is to the rest of the gods, and he cannot save anyone, just as the gods cannot. But if he is the creator, if he is transcendent, then he is not one of the gods, he is not part of the cosmos, and he can deliver his own from anything in the cosmos. . . . There is only one God, and only one savior, and he is the God of Israel.²

Isaiah attempts to capture this sense of salvation history in two different ways, via the Exodus-New Exodus Motif and specific Redeemer Images.

Exodus-New Exodus Motif

Isaiah's concept of salvation history follows a two-track presentation. On the one hand, Isaiah constantly alludes to or speaks of God's past salvific act, and on the other hand, he consistently looks forward to God's coming salvific acts. The historical dimension of salvation is portrayed by the Exodus,³ the OT's quintessence of deliverance, while the eschatological dimension of salvation is depicted as a 'new'

¹Anderson, "Exodus Typology in Second Isaiah," 184-185.

²Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 220-221.

³The Exodus is a stark reminder of the power and sovereignty of the creator. This is evidenced in his absolute control over nature through the plagues God sent on Egypt (Exod 7-11) which eventually led the Egyptian magicians to acknowledge a God higher than their own (Exod 8:19). The plagues, viewed as a direct affront on the Egyptian gods (even though the text does not say so), and the similarity of terms and language in the account with the creation pericope of Gen 1-2, suggest that the creator God was at work in the judgments of Egypt (See Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook of the Pentateuch* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982], 164-166). Further evidence of the creator at work in the Exodus account can be seen in God's total control over nature (as in opening the sea in Exod 13-14) and the extraordinary miracles he performed.

Exodus.

Anderson¹ highlights certain elements of the first Exodus that are then utilised by Isaiah to project towards the new salvation.² The linguistic and thematic echoes of the Exodus occur in Isaiah as the basis for the new Exodus.³ A few examples perhaps will suffice to establish this connection: (1) the deliverance of Israel by God's outstretched arms will be repeated in the new deliverance;⁴ (2) the divine glory seen by Israel will be observed by all flesh;⁵ (3) Israel's "rearguard" and "vanguard" will reappear;⁶ (4) the divine warrior who fought for Israel will once again fight to deliver his people;⁷ (5) the victory chant that accompanied the Exodus will also accompany the new one.⁸ Besides these, the new Exodus also shares elements drawn from Israel's wilderness sojourn. God prepares a way through the wilderness (Isa 40:3-5; 42:16), he promises to supply food and drink (Isa 41:17-20; 43:19-21), and to transform the wilderness (Isa 49:9-11; 55:13).⁹ "The new exodus" which is regarded as the

¹Anderson's "Exodus Typology in Second Isaiah" provides the main arguments on the use of the Exodus motif in Isa 40-55 and is the basis of this analysis of his views.

²Anderson referred to this as the eschatological message of Isa 40-55 (*ibid.*, 181).

³*Ibid.*, 181-184. Anderson gives the following as new Exodus passages: Isa 40:3-5; 41:17-20; 42:14-16; 43:1-3; 43:14-21; 48:20-21; 49:8-12; 51:9-10; 52:11-12; and 55:12-13.

⁴See Isa 40:10; 51:9; and 52:10.

⁵Compare Exod 16:7 and Isa 40:5.

⁶Compare Isa 52:12 with Exod 13:21-22 and 14:19-20.

⁷Compare Exod 15:3 and Isa 42:13.

⁸See Exod 15:21 and Isa 42:13.

⁹Anderson, "Exodus Typology in Second Isaiah," 183.

"counterpart of the old exodus, is portrayed in the mythopoeic colors of creation."¹

Stuhlmüller devoted one chapter in his book *Creative Redemption* for exploring this use of the Exodus motif in Isa 40-55. His primary interest is the concept of new Exodus. He argued that these chapters of Isaiah combine the Exodus motif with explicit or implicit references to "(re)-creation" utilising creation vocabulary, suggesting that at least two poems summarised their account of the new Exodus with creation vocabulary.² According to Stuhlmüller, what Isa 40-55 says "about the *wondrous* aspects of the new exodus contributes to our knowledge of what he means by 'creation': a redemptive act of God, greater than Moses' act, providing full security and transformation, and attracting mankind's admiration."³

An examination of the Exodus motif in the whole book of Isaiah is provided by Hill. While admitting that Exodus typology is particularly abundant in Isa 40-66, Hill concluded that the presence of Exodus imagery cuts across the traditionally defined borders of the Isaiah corpus and is encountered constantly throughout the book.⁴ Moreover, the Exodus motif in Isaiah develops from a "historical reference to a full-blown eschatological model."⁵ The Exodus motif can be seen in such varied references as the cloud and fire (4:2-6), the second exodus (11:11-16), the garden from the desert

¹Ibid., 185.

²Stuhlmüller, *Creative Redemption*, 94. He also saw the parallel between these passages with either the *akīu* ceremony of Babylon or the Ugaritic *Chaoskampf*.

³Ibid.

⁴Hill, 185, 172.

⁵Ibid., 185. Hill thought that this development of the Exodus motif in Isaiah is a unifying factor in the book. However, he seems unprepared to concede a unity of authorship.

(35:1-10), the way for the Lord (40:3-5), the warrior and shepherd (40:9-11), water in the desert (41:17-20), and a new entry into the promised land (49:8-12).

The most recent study of the OT use of the Exodus motif was provided by Friedbert Ninow.¹ He isolated the following as the most significant Isaianic passages dealing with the Exodus motif: 11:10-16; 35; 40:3-5; 41:17-20; 43:1-3, 16-21; 49:8-12; 51:1-52:15. Ninow suggested that whenever "the prophet builds on the Exodus the historicity of the event is assumed."² However, Isaiah proceeds further and it is the prophet "who explicitly takes the historic event and fueled with it the eschatological hope."³ This future deliverance or new Exodus is "phrased and formed in terms of the historical Exodus."⁴ In Isaiah, the Exodus motif undergoes a process in which the historical Exodus-event intensifies towards a New Exodus, an eschatological fulfilment.⁵ This is a message that was proclaimed by Isaiah and all the prophets.

Isaiah frequently appeals to God's creative activity to support faith in his power to redeem his people and accomplish his purpose (4:2-6; 44:24-28; 45:12-13; etc.). This link between creation and salvation is so strong that Isaiah sees God's creative acts as belonging to the history of salvation. God creates, he creates in history, and he creates in history yet to happen. This creative God saves and his salvation is historical and

¹Friedbert Ninow, "Indicators of Typology Within the Old Testament: The Exodus Motif" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1999).

²Ibid., 233. Ninow's assertion indirectly impacts the understanding of the historicity of creation as well (see above).

³Ibid., 232.

⁴Ibid., 189.

⁵Ibid., 294.

eschatological. Thus salvation history is really a reflection of the work of creator God.

Redeemer Images

Isaiah's salvation discourse is not limited to the Exodus-New Exodus motif, which is largely confined to chaps. 40-55 (see above). There are at least two other redeemer images that form a significant part of Isaiah's salvation discourse.

The first Redeemer image that occurs in Isaiah is that of the Branch.¹ In 4:2-6, this Branch of the Lord is depicted as carrying out two principal tasks, the salvation of Israel (vs. 4) and creation (vs. 5), both of which carry eschatological overtones. The new work of God embodied by the Branch is both salvific and creative and it is performed eschatologically. The passage draws together these various elements of Isaiah's thought into a unified picture of God's work.

The second principal redeemer image in Isaiah is that of the Servant. This image is the subject of four specific poems also known as the Servant Songs: 42:1-9; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; and 52:13-53:12.² The last two songs describe the Servant's soliloquy and vicarious atoning work, respectively,³ and they contain no creation statements. The first two songs, however, do have creation statements. The first song describes at length the salvific work of the Servant, and how he will usher in a new era for sinful humanity. Of significance are the statements that the Servant is chosen by God (42:1, 6) and that this God is none other than the creator himself (42:5). In fact, the declaration of God's creatorship is embedded at the very heart of the song. Through his Servant, the creator is effecting his redemptive work. Likewise, the second song also places at the centre of the

¹Refer to chapter 2 and the exegesis of Isa 4:2-6.

²Cf. Lindsey.

³See MacRae, 118f. and 129f.

song a statement that the God who chose his Servant is the creator (49:5). Whereas the first song identifies God as the cosmological creator, the second song points to his historical creation.¹ Thus both songs complement each other and illustrate the fact that God's creative work exists on different dimensions and that it is the creator who saves. Salvation history is truly the outworking of God's creative energy, it is creation.

Universal Concerns and Mission

When speaking of salvation and salvation history, a further issue needs to be examined: salvation as a universal experience of all mankind. So much of the OT and of Isaiah seems geared to the big question of the redemption of God's people, that is, of Israel. One wonders whether there is even any room for the rest of mankind in God's salvific purposes. Is salvation the redemption *of* Israel or redemption *for* the world, or both? Scholars are by no means in agreement on the issue. In relationship to Isaiah, three principal options emerge: (1) Isaiah envisages salvation of both Israel and the rest of humanity, with Israel and the nations being co-equal; (2) Isaiah envisages the redemption of Israel alone, with the nations' abject submission to her; and (3) Isaiah envisages the nations' salvation but also their subjection to Israel.² Roman Halas assumed a more decided stand and pointed out that "Isaias teaches a doctrine of

¹Isa 42:5 speaks of God as the creator (participle of ברא) of the heaven and the earth, while Isa 49:5 refers to God as the one who formed (participle of יצר) the servant. The former is a reference to cosmological creation and the latter to historical creation. Since the Servant effects eschatological salvation, God's creative ability in all three dimensions is implied in these Servant Songs.

²D. W. Van Winkle, "The Relationship of the Nations to Yahweh and to Israel in Isaiah XL-LV," *Vetus Testamentum* 35 (1985): 446-447. A review of these basic views is also supplied by A. Gelston, "Universalism in Second Isaiah," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 43 (1992): 379ff.

universal salvation" and that this is a principal theme in the book.¹ A survey of certain Isaianic passages does clarify the point.

While salvation is most frequently associated with God's purposes for Israel (see above), Isaiah subtly weaves in the salvation for mankind throughout the book. The first intimation of the universal scope of salvation occurs in 2:2-5, where Isaiah speaks of the streaming "of all the nations" (נהרו כל-הגוים) and the coming of "many peoples" (הלכו עמים רבים) to the mountain of the Lord, to Zion and Jerusalem, to seek 'salvation'. The thought achieves a sustained discussion in chaps. 40-55. In the first Servant Song (42:1-9) God tells his Servant that he is made a "covenant to the people, a light to the nations" (לברית עם לאור גוים).² "Light" often serves as a figure for salvation, especially in Isa 40-55 (see 42:6, 16; 45:7; 49:6; 51:4; 58:8; see also 9:1). The parallel thought, עם ברית, refers most often to people in general (see Isa 13:4; 25:3; 42:5, 6; 45:7; Ps 18:44; etc.). Since עם most likely refers to mankind, the Servant addressed here is to become an agent of salvation for all mankind.³

This universal work of the Servant is augmented in the second Servant Song (49:1-6). Motyer drew attention to the twofold task of the Servant as structurally presented by the Song. In vss. 1-3 the Song speaks of a worldwide audience, with the Servant named "Israel," while in vss. 4-6 it speaks of the Servant who is commissioned

¹Roman Halas, "The Universalism of Isaias," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 12 (1950): 162.

²Walter C. Kaiser suggested that this language in vs. 6 is a replication of the promise made through Abraham in Gen 12:3 that "in you shall all families be blessed" (*Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000], 58).

³Van Winkle, 454-456; Cf. Walter Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 60-62.

to Israel and of worldwide salvation.¹ Vs. 5 clearly states that the Servant is "formed" (Heb. יצַר) for the salvation of Israel, while vs. 6 follows with an equally emphatic statement that this Servant is for the salvation of the nations. Creation and mission come together in one sentence. The Servant is created for mission, the salvation of the world.

The most significant discussion of universal concerns occurs in Isa 45:14-25. Motyer asserted that this passage presents a world plan,² while Halas thought that vss. 22-24 comprise the most universal passage in the book³ (this is also the most important creation passage in Isaiah). Vs. 14 presents the procession of the nations as people come to acknowledge YHWH.⁴ In vss. 20-21 the idol-gods of the nations are contrasted with YHWH precisely because they, unlike YHWH, are incapable of saving.⁵ The inclusive language of Isaiah is further demonstrated in vss. 22-23 via the expressions "all the ends of the earth" (כל-אפסי-ארץ) and "every knee (כל-ברך) . . . every tongue (כל-לשון)."⁶ In summarising this passage, Van Winkle observed:

The prophet envisages the salvation of the nations. The nations will confess that only Yahweh is God and that their own gods are non-existent (xlv 14). They will turn from their idols to worship the living God (xlv 14, 23). Yahweh himself invites all nations to turn to him and

¹Motyer, 384. See also Halas, 167.

²Motyer, 363. He pointed to an inclusio by contrast between vss. 14 (the world turning to Israel) and 21-25 (the world turning to YHWH), a pattern also exhibited in Ps 47.

³Halas, 166. McKenzie concurred with this assessment (lxv).

⁴Cf. 49:22-23; 60:9, 11; 66:3-16.

⁵Gelston, 390.

⁶For other OT uses of "all the ends of the earth," see Prov 30:4 where the phrase has a cosmological sense, Jer 16:19; Mic 5:3 and Ps 72:8 where it has a geographical sense, and Pss 2:8; 22:28 & 98:3 where it parallels nations (ibid., 388). See also Isa 51:4-6; 55; and 56:1-8.

be saved (xlv 22).¹

Significantly, this passage contains the most important creation statement in vss. 18-19 and the most universal salvation statement in vss. 22-24. It is evident that mankind and Israel receive salvation for the purpose of paying homage to the creator. It is the God who created all things who also redeems everyone.

The universal concerns of Isaiah reach a climax in the finale segment of the book (56-66) with the grand exaltation of Israel in chaps. 60-62.² In these chapters, Jerusalem is represented as encircled with bright light while the nations languish in darkness (60:1-3). The peoples of the world are drawn to this light (62:1-2). They bring their tribute (60:5, 7, 11, 16) and supply the labor for the rebuilding of the temple (60:10, 12-14; 61:5-6; etc.). Kings are led to Jerusalem (60:11) and Israel's supremacy is universally acknowledged. The salvific exaltation of Israel is accompanied by benefits for the peoples of the world. The salvation which the creator is accomplishing is salvation *of* Israel but also redemption *for* the nations. The book concludes with another passage, 66:18-21, where the central message "is that there is to be a mission to the

¹Van Winkle, 457. This approach of Isaiah resonates with other passages in the OT, especially Jer. 10:1-16. This passage is a satire on idolatry (J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 323) with vss. 10-13 stressing the creative power of YHWH. Jer 10:1-16 is a hymn to YHWH that is addressed to the nations (Robert P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986], 254). As if to emphasise its universal tone, vs. 11 is entirely in Aramaic (cf. Dan 2-7 and Ezra 4:8-6:18, which also employ Aramaic to convey a universal message), the *lingua franca* of the civilised world from 700 to 200 B.C., and breaks up the Hebrew text of the hymn. Vs. 11 is a "denial of the cosmic creative powers of the Babylonian gods in favour of Yahweh" (ibid., 257), an approach similar to Isaiah's (cf. Isa 40:18-20; 41:7; 44:9-20; 46:5-7; see also the polemic against the gods of the nations in Pss 115:3-8; 135:13-18). The contrast between YHWH and the gods of the nations is quite deliberate: the *non-creating* gods of the nations (vs. 11) are contrasted with the *creator* God of Israel (vss. 12-13).

²See Blenkinsopp, 93.

gentiles as a necessary prelude to the parousia, the final manifestation of God in human history."¹

This raises a crucial point to consider when dealing with Isaiah's salvation theology: the role of Israel. On the one hand, it is apparent that Israel is the chief beneficiary of God's historical and eschatological acts (see 4:2-6; 43:1-7; and 45). It is also evident that Israel is very much advantaged by the new creation of God (65:17-25). It almost appears that Israel is the sole object of God's salvific acts. On the other hand, Israel's role in the salvation drama extends beyond that of recipient. Israel is also pictured as the conduit through which this creative salvific act of God will flow to others (see 2:1-5; 41:8-20; 44:1-5; 60:1-22).² Of utmost significance is the declaration that Israel is chosen to be God's servant (41:8) by the One who "made" and "formed" the nation (44:2), thus bringing Israel's own mission into a creational framework. Israel was created not just for salvation but also for mission.

According to McKenzie, the idea of mission "underlies most of the themes we identify as dominant in Second Isaiah."³ The nation of Israel is saved for mission, it is a

¹Ibid., 98.

²This picture of Israel as a conduit of divine salvation is reminiscent of Gen 12:1-3, where God promised that through Abraham he would bless all the nations. This promise is actualised through the creative power of God displayed in the birth of Isaac (Gen 18 & 21).

³McKenzie, lvii. His comments are also appropriate for the rest of the book of Isaiah. McKenzie attempts to resolve the debate concerning the relationship between creation thought and salvation theology by subsuming both under mission. In a von Rad-like manner he has simply replaced the primacy of salvation with that of mission and argues for the idea that creation and salvation arise from a theological reflection on mission. However, this does not resolve the issue, it merely deflects it. The reflection on universal concerns above indicates that the opposite is true: missiological reflections, like redemption considerations, are driven and informed by Isaiah's creation framework. The goal of mission (and even salvation) is to bring Israel and all mankind to the creator to pay him his due homage.

servant (41:8-9; 42:19; 44:1-2, 21) and a witness (43:10, 21; 44:8; 48:6, 20; 55:4) of YHWH¹ for the salvation of all mankind. Similarly, Walter Kaiser commented that the "prophet Isaiah surely called his nation to function as a missionary to the Gentiles and nations at large."² It was her duty, as a nation blessed with the oracles of God, to bring instruction to the nations.³ All the peoples and nations of the world are consolidated in the same covenant God made with Abraham or with Israel or in the New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34). Though the covenants were initially given to Israel, it was Israel's duty to share them with all the peoples of the world.⁴ This is what it meant that Israel, YHWH's servant, was to be a "light to the nations" (42:6).

Creation and Holiness, Judgement, and Eschatology

Having established that creation thought is a major thematic strand in Isaiah, and having explored the connection between creation thought and salvation theology, it is now imperative to consider the link between creation and other significant thematic strands in the book. This final segment of this study investigates the connection between Isaiah's creation thought and three other principal themes within the book, namely, holiness, judgement, and eschatology.

Holiness in Isaiah

The concept of holiness is a major theme in the book of Isaiah. Indicative of this fact are the presence of the *trishagion* (6:3) and a special epithet for God in the book: The Holy One of Israel (קדוש יִשְׂרָאֵל). Moreover, Isaiah also employs a holiness self-

¹Ibid.

²Walter Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament*, 62.

³Ibid., 63.

⁴Ibid.

predication along the lines of the book of Leviticus, which is even more interested in issues of holiness.¹ Isaiah's holiness concept revolves around three factors: the vision of 6:1-13, the use of a holiness self-predication, and the special divine name קדוש ישׁואל.

Isa 6:1-13

Central to Isaiah's understanding is 6:1-13 with the *trishagion* embedded in vs. 3. In this vision, also believed to be the call vision,² Isaiah sees the threefold holy God: "Holy, holy, holy is YHWH of Hosts."³ By definition, God is holy⁴ and holiness is the

¹See Fanwar, "God's Holiness in Leviticus and Isaiah: A Biblical Response to Hinduism."

²Willis, *Isaiah*, 138. This call narrative proposal is also accepted by Young, Oswalt, Watts, and others. However, others have suggested alternatives or variations of this position. Clements referred to chap. 6 as the prophet's memoirs (70-71). Hayes and Irvine rejected the call narrative hypothesis and instead maintained that chap. 6 marks a shift in Isaiah's ministry, it is not his inaugural call (108-109). That this call is not placed at the start of the book (as would be expected) finds precedence in Amos 7:14-15. Since Isa 1-5 encapsulate the major concerns of the book, these chapters serve as a fitting introduction to the book, hence their position prior to chap. 6 (see Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, 54, 175 and Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 1:231-233).

³Watts noted that the DSSI_{Isa} has קדוש only twice but suggested that the thrice-holy formula is consistent with liturgical usage as in Ps 99; Jer 7:4; 22:29; and Ezek 21:32 (*Isaiah 1-33*, 68-69, n. 3b). James Luther Mays also pointed out that Isa 6 parallels Ps 99 in this respect. In Ps 99, each of the three stanzas concludes with the refrain "Holy is he" (vss. 3, 5, 9) and Isa 6:3 echoes this psalm ("Isaiah's Royal Theology and the Messiah," in *Reading and Preaching the Book of Isaiah*, ed. Christopher R. Seitz [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988], 40). Norman Walker postulated that the DSS reading represents an approved reading, an accepted form. The presence of the Paseq after the first קדוש is an example of a conflated reading, "holy, exceedingly holy." He did acknowledge that the triple 'holy' is consistently employed in the LXX and in most NT MSS of Rev 4:8, the only other occurrence of the phrase in the Bible ("The Origin of the 'Thrice-Holy,'" *New Testament Studies* 5 [1959]: 132-133). Burton M. Leiser also drew attention to the twofold 'holy' of the First Isaiah Scroll and concluded that the copyist did not know the Hebrew language well. He argued that the use of the Paseq, which appears in the *trishagion*, lacks a system. It is sometimes used when a word is written twice in succession or when one word is immediately followed by another closely similar in form. Examples include, Gen 22:11; 39:10; 46:2; Exod 16:15; 34:16; Isa 25:7; 26:3; 57:19; Jer 4:19; 15:12; etc. He proposed that the Paseq in Isa 6:3 introduces a pause and a subsequent diminuendo in

essential quality of deity, that which sets him apart or "separates" him from all other forms of existence as intimated by the term קדוש. "As here used, *qadosh* signifies the entirety of the divine perfection which separates God from His creation. God is the Creator, who exists in absolute independence of the creature."¹ Holiness marks God as being different from humans² and points "to the essential difference between the Creator and his creatures."³ God "is the thrice holy, the holiest of all. He is *the* holy one."⁴ As Motyer put it, holiness is "the only quality in the whole Old Testament which has to be 'cubed' in order adequately to express its worth and magnitude."⁵ The *trishagion* of Isa 6:3 can be understood either as an expression of emphasis or as a superlative.⁶ The threefold repetition suggests that holiness is God's distinguishing characteristic and the

reading ("The Trisagion of Isaiah's Vision," *New Testament Studies* 6 [1959-1960]: 262-263). Oswalt suggested that the DSSIsa has only two 'holies' because it is a probable haplography (*The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, 181, n. 34).

⁴Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 74; Holladay, 30.

¹Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 1:242-243.

²Robert L. Cate, "We Need to Be Saved (Isaiah 1:1-2; 5:1-2; 6:1-13)," *Review and Expositor* 88 (1991): 146.

³Joseph Robinson, "Isaiah 1-39," in *Prophets and Poets*, ed. Grace Emmerson (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 35.

⁴Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, 181.

⁵Motyer, 17. He also pointed out that the adjective קדוש is used of God more frequently in Isaiah than in the rest of the OT, 33 times versus 26 times (*ibid.*, n. 5). He also noted that God's name is qualified by this adjective in the OT more often than by all other qualifiers put together (*ibid.*, 77, n. 1).

⁶Youngblood, *The Book of Isaiah*, 24; Whitehouse, *Isaiah 1-39*, 124; and Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 1:244, suggested that the *trishagion* is used primarily for emphasis. Oswalt said that it is the strongest form of the superlative in Hebrew (*The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, 181), while Motyer stated that it is a super-superlative (77). According to Motyer, Hebrew uses repetition to express superlatives as in Gen 14:10, 'pits, pits', and 2 Kgs. 25:15, 'gold, gold'. Isaiah invented a threefold repetition to express God's holiness (76, 77).

sum total of his attributes.¹

Placed alongside the *trishagion* of 6:3 is the statement about the "glory" כבוד of God. The second part of vs. 3 is best translated as "the fullness of the earth is his glory."² Following this reading, a distinct creation echo can be detected in this passage.³ Such a conclusion is further strengthened by the dual feature of this holiness of God as redemptive (vss. 5-7) and retributive (vss. 9-13), both of which are acts of the creator. The passage speaks of a God who is holy and who is holy by virtue of his creatorship, for that is what "separates" him or sets him apart. In Brooks's words, "But the key item to notice is that the prophet places holiness and creation side by side to show that a chief characteristic of the Creator is holiness, and conversely, that this absolutely Holy One is the Creator."⁴

Holiness Self-Predication

God's holiness is also intimated through a holiness self-predication formula⁵ which appears from chap. 40 onwards. A shortened form of the formula simply reads "I am God/YHWH" אל אני יהוה or אני יהוה אל (41:4; 43:12), while the long reading is "I am the

¹Motyer, 76.

²The word מלא here is masculine construct, hence the adopted reading (Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, 67, 69). Young proposed two possible readings of Isa 6:3b: (1) "his glory is the fullness of all the earth" if 'glory' is the subject and 'fullness' is the complement; or (2) "the fullness of the earth is his glory" with 'fullness' as the subject. He thought that the second reading is the natural order of the Hebrew words (*The Book of Isaiah*, 1:245).

³Refer to chapter 2, Isa 4:2-6.

⁴Brooks, 79.

⁵See Fanwar, 63-66.

Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel" **אני יהוה אלהיך קדוש ישראל** (43:3; 48:17).¹ The first concern of the formula is to address the divine nature, inasmuch as it is coupled with the name "Holy One of Israel" (see below). The formula declares the transcendence and incomparable greatness of God.² It means that YHWH alone is God³ and it is the ultimate statement that God makes about himself.⁴ Furthermore, the formula tells us that God is holy (40:25). Israel's God is the one who predicates holiness on himself and says: "I am YHWH, your Holy One" **אני יהוה קדושכם** (43:15). Significantly, in 43:1-7 the God who identifies himself as the creator of Israel (vss. 1, 7) also identifies himself as the "Holy One of Israel" (vs. 3). Later in the chapter, in vs. 15, God says of himself: "I am YHWH, your Holy One, Israel's Creator, your king" **אני יהוה קדושכם בורא ישראל מלככם**. In this verse the formula serves as a virtual appellative ascription to identify God, the Holy One who is the creator. These verses also demonstrate that while YHWH is holy, his holiness is conceived relationally, "I am *your* Holy One" (43:15, cf. 10:17).

"The Holy One of Israel"

One of the most distinctive features of the book of Isaiah is the application of the epithet: **אני יהוה קדוש ישראל**, the Holy One of Israel.⁵ This appears to be Isaiah's special appellation for God and is used 26 times in the book.⁶ "If there is any one concept

¹Refer to the earlier discussion on the divine self-predication in this chapter.

²Allis, 66.

³Ridderbos, 390, 409.

⁴Zimmerli, 122.

⁵Oswalt said that it can hardly be doubted that Isaiah's experience in chap. 6 accounts for this title in the book (*The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, 180).

⁶The name appears in Isa 1:4; 5:19, 24; 10:20; 12:6; 17:7; 29:19; 30:11, 12, 15; 31:1; 37:23; 41:14, 16, 20; 43:3, 14; 45:11; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 54:5; 55:5; 60:9,

central to the whole Book of Isaiah, it is the vision of Yahweh as the Holy One of Israel."¹ Not only is it Isaiah's favourite divine title, it also encapsulates Isaiah's holiness concept as a consequence of the encounter with the *trishagion*.²

While the title is used throughout Isaiah, its contexts do differ.³ In chaps. 1-39, the "Holy One of Israel" appears mostly in contexts of sin and judgement, especially against Israel. God presents himself as one who is against his people. For example, in Isa 5:24 God pronounces judgement upon the people because they have "despised the Holy One of Israel." Similarly, the people's rejection of the Holy One of Israel (30:11) brings his wrath upon them (30:12-14).⁴ In chaps. 40-66, "Holy One of Israel" is employed in contexts that deal mostly with salvation and the title is frequently found in combination with "Redeemer" and "Saviour."⁵ In the second half of the book of Isaiah, the phrase the "Holy One of Israel" is met in speeches that touch on and promise

14. Isa 29:23 reads "Holy One of Jacob." The distribution of the name is: 12 times in chaps. 1-35, once in chaps. 36-39, 11 times in chaps. 40-55, and twice in chaps. 56-66. A. van Selms provides the following distribution: 15 times in Proto-Isaiah, 15 times in Deutero-Isaiah, and twice in Trito-Isaiah. This count also took into account the shortened form of the name, "Holy One" ("The Expression 'The Holy One of Israel,'" in *Von Kanaan bis Kerala*, ed. W. C. Delsman and others [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982], 258). Elsewhere, the name appears in 2 Kgs 19:22; Pss 71:22; 78:41; 89:19; Jer 50:29; 51:5.

¹J. J. M. Roberts, "Isaiah and Old Testament Theology," *Interpretation* 36 (1982): 131.

²Van Selms, 259.

³Van Selms correctly noted that the name is not always linked to holiness contexts, as will be seen (*ibid.*, 260).

⁴In the first half of Isaiah, the name is also used in salvation contexts as in 12:6 and 29:19. See Fanwar, 68, for a full treatment of all the contexts in which the name is used.

⁵Such parallels can be seen in 41:14; 43:14; 48:17; etc.

salvation but never in disputations of judgement speeches.¹ The "judging 'holy one of Israel' of Isaiah 1-39 becomes a saving 'holy one of Israel' in 40-66."²

Expressing the holiness of God, the epithet "Holy One of Israel" stresses both the transcendence of God (he is the *Holy One*) and his special relationship with Israel (he is the Holy One *of Israel*). A holy God must also have a holy people or conversely, those who would be God's people must be holy as he is.³ While there is no equivalence to the Leviticus injunction "You must be holy" (Lev 19:2) in Isaiah, the book abounds with statements of God's relational holiness. God refers to his warriors as "my holy ones" (13:3). Israel is called "the people of your holiness" עַם-קִדְשְׁךָ (63:18) and "the people of the Holy One" עַם-הַקֹּדֶשׁ (62:12). The remnant of the Lord, those whom he redeems, receive a new name: "holy" (4:3; 6:13; 62:2, 12). It is God's purpose that his people should share his character⁴ and since YHWH is holy, the people who belong to him share his character and nature: they are holy.⁵

While the title does not appear in parallel with בְּרָא, it does appear in combination with the other two creation terms. In 17:7 it is used in parallel with עָשָׂה: "on that day, men will regard their *Maker* (participle of עָשָׂה) and their eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel." In 45:11 it is combined with יָצַר: "Thus says YHWH, the Holy One of Israel, and his *Former* (participle of יָצַר) . . ." The Holy One of Israel is none

¹Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, 161.

²Carr, "Reaching for Unity in Isaiah," 69.

³Cf. Lev 11:44-45; 19:2.

⁴Cf. 35:8; 48:2; 60:14; 62:12.

⁵For a more detailed discussion of this relational aspect of God's holiness see Fanwar, 81-87.

other than the creator God himself.

Judgement in Isaiah

As highlighted by Ridderbos, the book of Isaiah begins with a prophecy about the judgement of a sinful people in Isa 1:1-31.¹ The chapter goes on to describe a judgement that will be fearful.² A careful reading of Isaiah reveals that there exists an intimate relationship between judgement and salvation.³ According to Webb the book of Isaiah is divided into two halves representing different aspects of Isaiah's ministry. The first half of the book highlights Isaiah's ministry of judgement while the second half of the book underscores his ministry of comfort. "It is a book about demolition and reconstruction, judgment and salvation."⁴ It is rather evident from this that "Isaiah appears as prophet of both judgment and salvation."⁵

¹Ridderbos, 39.

²Ibid., 49.

³Here judgement is understood primarily in the negative sense of God exercising his punitive acts against his people and against the nations. As such it is understood as the polar opposite of salvation/redemption. Yet it is recognised that elsewhere in the OT, for example in Judges and the Psalms, often judgment *is* salvation. The book of Judges exhibits this pattern: the Israelites did evil in God's eyes, his anger burns against them and he permits Israel to become subject to foreign oppression, the people cry to God for deliverance, and he sends a judge to save them from their oppressors (e.g., Judg 3:7-11). A similar pattern is demonstrated by Ps 107 (which in turn serves as a microcosm of the Psalter itself): the people are in a state of need (perhaps caused by divine judgment), they call to God for deliverance, and he saves them (e.g., Ps 107: 4-9, 10-16, 17-22, and 23-32). Even in Isaiah, judgement at times is a precursor of salvation (see Isa. 6:11-13).

⁴Webb, 31. He also proposed that these two themes operate on three levels: (1) having to do with the discipline on Judah and Jerusalem; (2) having to do with the Holy One of Israel who is spurned with the focus on the vicarious suffering and exaltation of the Servant; and (3) having to do with the missionary movement of the book where judgement and salvation are absolutised as eternal life and eternal death (66:22-24) (ibid., 31-33).

⁵Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39*, 15.

A closer investigation however demonstrates that this relationship follows a certain pattern in the book. Throughout chaps. 1-39, Isaiah depicts an oscillation pattern between judgement and salvation passages. For instance, Isa 2:1-5 speaks about salvation, but is then followed by judgement passages (namely 2:6-4:1). These judgement passages are in turn followed by another salvation passage (4:2-6). Throughout this segment of the book, salvation oracles are interspersed with extended pronouncements of judgement. The pattern changes for chaps. 40-55. The heavy salvation emphasis of these chapters means that judgment assumes a minor role. These chapters, with their Servant Songs and salvation focus, are not as judgement oriented. An altogether different pattern emerges in chaps. 56-66 where judgement and salvation are sometimes juxtaposed as seen in 61:1-11 and 63:1-6. Isa 61:2 parallels "the year of YHWH's favor" שנת־רצון ליהוה with "day of vengeance of our God" ויום נקם לאלהינו. In 63:4 "day of vengeance" יום נקם parallels "year of my redemption" ושנת גאולי.¹

Judgement may be viewed as final (22:14; 25:10-12; 66:24) or simply as a vehicle for redemption (see 4:2-6). "Judgment takes many forms for Isaiah. It may come as natural disaster (24:4-5), military defeat (5:26-30), or disease (1:5-6), but all these are from the hand of God (43:27-28)."² God is truly judge (33:22) and for Isaiah, judgement is more than a harvest of natural outcomes. It "is also the outworking of the personal outrage of an offended deity."³

The connection with creation is demonstrated as follows: (1) the presence of a

¹The judgement passages of Isaiah often carry eschatological overtones. This connection is discussed in the final section of this chapter.

²Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39*, 40.

³Ibid.

remnant of God's people (see 4:2-6), over whom God creates a new existence, intimates some sort of pre-occurring judgement; (2) judgement is seen as a consequence of man not looking to the creator (22:11-12); (3) judgement is performed by, or is an act of, the creator (27:11-12; 43:14-15); and (4) judgement reverses creation.¹ In summary, all this evidence stresses that judgement, like salvation, is an act of the creator God.

Eschatology in Isaiah

Because of its complexity, the term eschatology requires some definition. In relationship to prophetic proclamation, J. Barton suggested two definition possibilities: (1) eschatology as the prophets' prediction of the future, a conviction of God inaugurating a new action in history, or (2) eschatology as a detailed, many-staged plan for history.² Widyapranawa said that the word 'eschatology' "does not limit God's activity to some period beyond the life of this world. God's re-creating presence is always in our midst."³ Von Rad maintained a similar position. He stated: "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

¹Cf. the flood narrative in Genesis as a reversal of the creation account according to the chiasmic reversal analysis of Kikawada and Quinn, 64-66 and 86ff. In Isaiah, it is God who measures out the water, marks off the heavens, and weighs the mountains and the hills (40:12); it is he who stretches out the heavens and creates all the starry hosts (40:22, 26); and it is he who, in judgement, will lay waste the mountains and the hills and dry up the land and the rivers (42:15). The God who judges undoes the works of his creative work.

²J. Barton, *Isaiah 1-39*, Old Testament Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 80-81. Barton thought that eschatology in the former sense is a distinct possibility in Isaiah while it would be anachronistic to speak of eschatology in the latter sense in Isaiah. Barton appears to have captured the basic essence of Isaiah's eschatology.

³Widyapranawa, 21.

'eschatological'.¹ He asserted that it is wrong to understand eschatology as a body of ideas and that God's actions within history cannot be distinguished from his actions at the end of history. Von Rad maintained that there is no need to confine the term 'eschatological' to the latter.² According to him, the prophets' message is eschatological "wherever it regards the old historical bases of salvation as null and void" in such a way that Israel is expelled "from the safety of the old saving actions" and the basis of salvation is suddenly shifted "to a future action of God."³ Along the same lines H. Leene submitted that eschatology is an expectation of the new. The new is a breach, but former and new are enclosed by continuity. The new does not belong to history but is very closely related to it.⁴ "Eschatology presumes that God has a goal for people and the world. Representations of that definitive future action of God that enables him to achieve this goal are eschatological."⁵ As opposed to all these is Muilenburg's view: "When we speak of eschatology, we refer to the imminence of a great divine event which is to mark the decisive end of the age."⁶

In a generic way, eschatology in Isaiah is imbued with the sense of the

¹Von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, 91.

²Ibid., 90, 91.

³Ibid., 93.

⁴H. Leene, "History and Eschatology in Deutero-Isaiah," in *Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Festschrift Willem A. M. Beuken*, ed. J. Van Ruitten and M. Vervenne (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 234-235.

⁵Ibid., 225-226.

⁶Muilenburg, 5:399. While Muilenburg's view may be the classic understanding of eschatology, it is also far more constricting. If his view of eschatology is applied, then Isaiah may not be a good source of eschatological thought (see below). In this study, the broader understanding of eschatology as espoused by von Rad and Leene is preferred.

"hereafter" as expressed by the phrase **ביום ההוא**, "in/on that day."¹ With the exception of Isa 52:6, the phrase is used exclusively in chaps. 1-35.² The absence of the phrase in chaps. 56-66, which contain the prophecies concerning the time of the end of the world (the classic understanding of eschatology) is significant though unexpected. Perhaps, the phrase becomes redundant by this point in the book with the end of one world and the emergence of a new one so sharply in focus. Nevertheless, the phrase appears to parallel other phrases that embody clear eschatological overtones: "in the last days" **באחרית הימים** (2:2), "the day of the Lord" **יום יהוה** (13:6, 9), "the Lord has . . . a day" (22:5; 34:8), "in days to come" **הבאים** (27:6), "day of salvation" **וביום ישועה** (49:8), and "day of vengeance" **יום נקם** (61:2; 63:4).

Throughout chaps. 1-35,³ these various eschatological statements alternate between contexts of judgement and salvation.⁴ In this segment of Isaiah, salvation

¹The phrase occurs in 2:11, 17, 20; 3:7, 18; 4:1, 2; 5:30; 7:18, 20, 21, 21; 10:20, 27; 11:10, 11; 12:1, 4; 14:3; 17:4, 7, 9; 19:16, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24; 20:6; 22:8, 12, 20, 25; 23:15; 24:21; 25:9; 26:1, 27; 27: 1, 2, 12, 13; 28:5; 29:18; 30:23; 31:7; and 52:6. As demonstrated in the Excursus, the phrase also serves as an introductory and/or closure formula in Isaiah.

²The most useful investigation of the eschatology, particularly its connection to messianic passages, of Isa 1-39 is provided by Wolfgang Werner, *Eschatologische Texte in Jesaja 1-39: Messias, Heiliger Rest, Völker* (Gesamtherstellung: Echter Verlag, 1982). Especially helpful is his discussion of such significant messianic passages as Isa 4:2-6; 9:1-6; and 11:1-9. In addition he has also identified Isa 2:2-4; 12:1-6; 14:24-27; 29:1-8; and 30:27-33 as principal eschatological texts in chaps. 1-39. In addressing the eschatology of these chapters, it should be recognised that chaps. 24-27 are frequently considered as being more appropriately apocalyptic (see William R. Millar, *Isaiah 24-27 and the Origin of Apocalyptic*, Harvard Semitic Monograph Series [Missoula: Scholars, 1976], 1-9).

³In applying the division of Isaiah that is proposed in this study, the phrase **ביום ההוא** occurs mostly in chaps. 1-35, once in chaps. 40-55, and does not occur in chapters 56-66.

⁴Compare with similar statements highlighted in the preceding discussion about judgement.

oracles (for example, 2:1-5; 4:2-6; 9:1-7; 10:20-11:16) are interspersed with extended pronouncements of judgement (for example, 2:6-4:1; 5:8-30; 9:8-10:4). Both judgement and salvation are imbued with eschatological overtones.

In chaps. 40-55 the phrase *ביום ההוא* appears only once, in 52:6, in a salvation context, as part of an extended prelude to the fourth Servant Song. Stuhlmüller pointed to what he termed the "absence of a developed eschatology" in these chapters.¹ By contrast, Uhl wrote that "the writer of Isaiah 40-55 does not stop with Yahweh's creation in the present; he relates it very poignantly to the future."² The future orientation of many of the prophecies of chaps. 40-55 embodies clear eschatological overtones despite the absence of explicit eschatological language. The focus of these chapters is primarily on salvation (see 49:8) and the new future that salvation, the work of the messiah, is expected to usher in.

Even though the phrase *ביום ההוא* does not occur in chaps. 56-66, one of its parallels, "day of vengeance" *יום נקם* (61:2 and 63:4) does.³ In both instances, "day of vengeance" is placed side by side with either "year of the Lord's favour" *שנת־רצון ליהוה* or "year of my redemption" *ושנת גאולי*. The new realities that eschatology addresses build on both judgement and salvation.

Each of the prophetic segments of Isaiah (that is, chaps. 1-35, 40-55, and 56-66)

¹Stuhlmüller, *Creative Redemption*, 168. He also opined that this alleged absence of eschatological thought in Isa 40-55 tends to restrict what these chapters say about first 'creation'. According to him, this lack of eschatology implies that references to 'first creation' in Isa 40-55 are not fully thought out (*ibid.*, 167-168).

²Uhl, 195. Leene more or less supported this same point but asserted that in Isa 40-55 history and eschatology do not merge (231).

³Compare this with Isa 34:8.

reaches a similar climax with a "hymn" celebrating new realities.¹ Isa 34:16-35:10 marks the end of the first section of Isaiah with an eschatological promise of new realities. Isa 55:1-13 closes the second segment with an eschatological invitation to experience these new realities.² The book then concludes with a final eschatological vision of the new realities themselves (65:17-66:24).

These three section-closing "hymns" share two motifs that foster images of the newness of things to come: (1) a "rejoice" motif as expressed by the terms גיל, רנה, and שמח, whose existence is a consequence of new things and a new future (35:1-2; 55:12; 65:18 and 66:5, 10); and (2) an intimation of ecological changes, such as, the desert that bursts into life (35:1-2, 6-7), or the replacement of undesirable vegetation with desirable ones (55:13), or the perfect integration of life and the subsequent harmony of existence among God's creatures (65:20-25), caused by the new realities. Eschatological proclamation in Isaiah moves from a promise of new realities to an invitation to new realities to a vision of new realities and a new future. Each movement is punctuated by a "hymn" that propels Isaiah's eschatology from simply a view of the "hereafter" in chaps. 1-35 to a decidedly messianic one in chaps. 40-55 then on to a culminative tableau (56-66) of the "last days" that were first intimated in Isa 2:2.

The connection between Isaiah's creation thought and eschatological

¹This idea is derived from a proposal by Webb, 30. For a fuller treatment of this refer to the discussion on the structure of Isaiah in chapter 1. The structural parallel with creation is evident: 1-35 is introductory (creation) or promissory (eschatology); 40-55 is crescendo (creation) or invitation (eschatology); and 56-66 is finale (creation) or culminative (eschatology).

²Paul Hanson noted that Isa 55 brings the message of "Second" Isaiah to a fitting conclusion and through it "an unusual invitation is extended" (177). Similarly, Melugin saw in Isa 55:1-5 a promise to Israel, "a promise which employs the typical call of a merchant as a vehicle for inviting Israel to life" (26).

proclamation is twofold. First, there is a structural resemblance between the two concepts which engenders the perception that they are woven together into a tapestry. Like its creation counterpart, Isaiah's eschatology illustrates further the "symphonic structure" of the book.¹ In movement one, both judgement (27:11-12) and salvation (4:2-6), eschatologically speaking, are the products of God's creative activity. In movement two, it is the creator God who declares (42:5, 9; 48:6-7) and makes (43:14-19) new things to which the invitation of chap. 55 beckons. Isaiah's third movement brings God's creative and eschatological work to a fitting finale when he creates a new heaven and a new earth (65:17-19; 66:22). Thus the true fulfilment of the cry of יהוה ביום is made possible by the creator God.

Second, as observed earlier in this study, God's creation work exists on three dimensions—cosmological, historical, and eschatological. Both the first (4:2-6) and the last (65:17-25) major creation passages speak of God's creative activity in the eschatological sphere. The book as a whole reaches its structural and theological zenith with the making of new heaven-earth, the ultimate creation of God. Stuhlmüller expressed this best:

Eschatology becomes the completion, the fulfillment of the goal of creation! Eschatology is the final, everlasting *AMEN*, ratifying for all time the dependence of everything upon God. It is the eternal finale, the unending paean, proclaiming the reign of God over creation.²

Summary

This chapter has explored the creation theology of Isaiah. The relationship between creation and God's nature was explored. The creator God of Isaiah is the One

¹See the discussion in chapter 1. This "symphonic structure" can also be observed in relation to the other Isaianic themes covered in this study.

²Stuhlmüller, "The Theology of Creation in Second Isaias," 464.

and Only God. This uniqueness and incomparability of God is encapsulated in the divine self-predication which in turn is based on his creatorship. By contrast, man's folly in thinking that what he makes can be depended on is a counter factor to the supremacy of the creator. The divine epithet YHWH of Hosts further accentuates this supremacy of God. This expression of God's incomparability finds credence in the creatorship of God; YHWH of Hosts is the creator. God is also the divine cosmic monarch and the lord of history. His transcendence from his creation and his involvement with and sovereignty over his creation sets him apart as the One and Only God. Therefore, the works of God are truly awesome and this is so because he is the creator. Isaiah's consummate conception of God is encapsulated in his creation thought.

A particularly contentious aspect of Isaiah's theology is the relationship between creation thought and salvation theology (inclusive of the idea of salvation history). These two are arguably the most significant thematic strands in the book and both are crucial to an understanding of Isaiah's concept of God. However, to subordinate one to the other is to miss the point of Isaiah, that it is the creator who also saves. God's salvific work is expressed in the Exodus-New Exodus motif, the Branch imagery, and the image of the Servant. All three concepts depict the creator God as being involved with his creation for the purposes of salvation. They imply that it is the creator who effects the salvation of the people he had created. Furthermore, this salvation is not restricted to Israel, it is available to all of mankind. While redemption is *of* Israel, it is most certainly *for* all people. The creator who made mankind and Israel saves both.

This chapter also examined the relationship of Isaiah's creation thought to other important themes in the book. First, the connection between creation and holiness is considered. The book of Isaiah portrays God as the all-holy one. This is done via the

trishagion, the holiness self-predication, and Isaiah's unique name for God, the Holy One of Israel. God is holy, God is the creator, the creator is holy. God is holy because he is the creator, the one who stands above what he creates, the transcendent one. God's holiness is also relational and those who are his people participate in his holy character and nature.

Second, the link between judgement and holiness is explored. In Isaiah, judgement takes on various forms, and it may be viewed as final or simply as a vehicle for redemption. More importantly, judgement is often a consequence of man not paying heed to his creator. Therefore, judgement is an act of the creator.

Third, the relationship between eschatology and creation is investigated. For Isaiah, eschatology is primarily a view of the "hereafter." Isaiah's eschatological proclamation is carried out through the use of special phrases. Furthermore, Isaiah's eschatology pronounces a new reality, a new heaven and a new earth, with radical transformations as the ultimate goal. This new reality however is created by God. In a sense, eschatology is the ultimate creation statement. God the creator makes a better hereafter. This truth comes through a promise, an invitation, and a vision of a re-created world.

Throughout the chapter, the structural links between these other themes and creation thought are evident. Isaiah's "symphonic structure" is very much enhanced by the linkage between creation thought and other themes in the book. Some of the themes examined also follow the main movements of the book (that is, chaps. 1-35, 36-39, 40-55, and 56-66). Ideas are frequently introduced in Isa 1-35, attain a crescendo in 40-55, and reach a climax in 56-66. Chaps. 36-39 more often than not serve a bridging function between the introductory first movement and the other movements. The three-

dimensional work of the creator is also equally augmented by these other themes. The creator operates on the cosmological, the historical, and the eschatological dimensions. In essence, Isaiah's creation thought is not only the consummate conception of God in the book, it is also a foundational structural and theological premise.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of creation thought in the book of Isaiah in order to determine its relationship to Isaiah's concept of God as creator, especially as it pertains to his salvific work for and through Israel. The frequency of the three main creation verbs (עשה, יצר, and ברא) in the book demonstrates that Isaiah is a principal source of OT creation thought. These words along with other creation metaphors furnish the necessary data for a consideration of Isaiah's creation thought.

The study of creation thought in the OT has been greatly influenced by the suggestions of von Rad. According to him, the OT doctrine of creation is very much driven by soteriological considerations and dependent on them. All that creation thought does is serve an ancillary function. This is especially true of Isa 40-55 where a concentration of creation language is very much evident.¹ This link between creation thought and salvation/salvation history has become the prevailing view among scholars. Others who subscribe to this general view of von Rad are Reumann, McCarthy, Watson, and Anderson. Of these, the most influential (and most prolific) writer on OT creation thought is Anderson. His basic premise, like that of von Rad, was that redemption concerns are primary while creation thought is secondary. Anderson maintained this

¹For a survey of von Rad's views refer to the Review of Literature.

main view in all his works. For him, Isa 40-55 offers the most profound example of this historical or soteriological meaning of creation.

While the views espoused by von Rad and Anderson have become the main fare in scholastic research, they have not achieved complete consensus. There are scholars who have offered a dissenting voice to these conclusions. Schmid for instance proposed that all theology is basically creation theology and that the OT creation theme is a fundamental one. This view is the polar opposite to von Rad's but it has not been very popular.

Westermann attempted to offer a somewhat moderate view of OT creation thought. He sought to navigate between the opposing views of von Rad and Anderson, on the one hand, and Schmid, on the other hand. Westermann attempted to engage both sides of the debate by suggesting that Israel always encountered God as its Saviour but that this Saviour is also the creator. Moreover, talk of creation in the Bible as a whole has roots that reach far into the history of mankind. He hoped that these suggestions would not disengage talk of creation from reflection on redemption and that creation thought be accorded a significant role in OT theology.

In short, studies of the OT creation theme take on three forms:

5. There are those who stress the primacy of redemption/salvation history over creation thought.
6. There are those who emphasise the foundational nature of creation thought.
7. There are those who see these two themes as being inextricably linked.

A second major impact of von Rad, one that has had a profound influence on Isaianic studies, is the delimiting of Isaiah's creation thought to chaps. 40-55 of the book. The majority of the studies surveyed were driven as much by multiple authorship

theories as by the evident concentration of creation language in these chapters. Virtually without exception, studies of Isaiah's creation thought have focused almost exclusively on chaps. 40-55. Arguably the most significant research on the creation thought of these chapters was carried out by Stuhlmüller. He placed himself squarely in the majority view and held that the creation thought of Isa 40-55 is so soteriologically driven that it is tantamount to creation, hence his phraseology: creative redemption.

Some significant dissent was offered by some scholars, the most recent one being Hudson. He asserted that creation thought is not a sideline theme in Isa 40-55 but rather is foundational to the prophet's proclamation. He proposed that the creation thought of Isa 40-55 should be treated as an independent tradition. According to Hudson, any attempt to subordinate creation thought to any other concept downplays the role creation plays in the prophet's message.

Among commentators, the three options for understanding Isaiah's creation thought are well represented. However, most of the commentators who highlight creation thought in some way also tend to look only at chaps. 40-55. A meaningful treatment of the entire book of Isaiah presents a lacuna in current research which led to this present investigation.

Chapter 1 of this study explored the use of creation language in Isaiah. This was done from two perspectives. On the one hand, explicit creation vocabulary was investigated, while on the other hand, implicit creation metaphors were examined. The first part of the Chapter looked at the three main creation verbs, *עשה*, *יצר*, and *ברא*. These three verbs were selected because they are the same three verbs that appear in the Genesis creation account and because of their frequency in Isaiah.

The verb *ברא* is the technical creation term of the OT. When used in the Qal and

Niphal, the verb always has God as its subject. It is the pre-eminent description of the creator and the technical, theological word for creation. Objects of God's creation include the universe, mankind, and Israel. God also creates historical events and states/conditions of existence. **ברא** occurs 21 times in Isaiah, once in chaps. 1-35, 16 times in chaps. 40-55, and 4 times in chaps. 56-66. It is not employed in chaps. 36-39.

In Isaiah, the basic nuance of **ברא** is that of divine activity. Isaiah is very much interested in the new things, such as a new Jerusalem and a new heaven and new earth, that God creates. Isaiah is also interested in various dimensions of creation. The word is used to express creation that is primordial/cosmological or historical or eschatological. Cosmological creation addresses the creation of the universe and alludes to the Genesis creation account. Historical creation pertains to God's creative activity in the history and salvation of Israel. Eschatological creation refers to the new realities and paradigms that God promises to create.

The second main creation verb in the OT is **יצר**. The word refers to a special kind of creation, the forming of something in the same manner that a potter forms his vessels. In Isaiah, **יצר** is employed almost exclusively for the creation and election of Israel and like **ברא** it is concentrated in chaps. 40-55. While God forms other things, like light and the earth, the main thing he forms is a people, Israel. The historical dimension of God's creative activity is clearly underscored by this verb. This is not to say that **יצר** does not convey the ideas of primordial and eschatological creation. However, historical creation is the dominant idea expressed by the word.

The third main creation verb is **עשה**. While the word does not always connote creation, it does act as a counterpart of and is used interchangeably with **ברא** and **יצר**, and like those two its creation uses are also concentrated in Isa 40-55. Like **ברא**, the word is

utilised for all three dimensions of creation. What is special about its usage is the fact that it serves as a summary creation term in Isa 66 as it does in Gen 1:31.

The three creation verbs focus on God the creator, that is, they are more interested in the person rather than the work of God. They express a creation idea that is three dimensional: cosmological, historical, and eschatological. Their use is concentrated in chaps. 40-55. While creation references occur throughout the book, they do reach a peak in these chapters.

Isaiah's creation language is not limited to explicit vocabulary, it also includes indirect metaphor. The three metaphors examined in this study are: the "breath/spirit" metaphor, the "work of his/my/your hand" metaphor, and the "heaven-earth" merismus. The first metaphor is found in all the major sections of the book of Isaiah and its use resonates powerfully with the Genesis creation narrative. This metaphor clearly embodies the cosmological aspect of creation as portrayed in Isaiah.

The second creation metaphor appears with creation verbs when not referring to judgement and it is not used in Isa 40-55.¹ The phrase is used in connection with at least two of the three dimensions of creation, historical and eschatological, and evidences some continuity of creation thought in Isaiah.

The "heaven-earth" merismus is the most significant creation metaphor in Isaiah. This is a metaphor whose polar structure encapsulates the totality of creation and is the only metaphor that appears in all four segments of Isaiah. The metaphor is encountered in such formulas as the "spreading of the earth" and the "stretching out of the heavens."

¹As far as can be ascertained, this is the only piece of data from Isaiah's creation thought that does not revolve around chs. 40-55. The significance of this information is not entirely clear. Perhaps it suggests that some caution be taken in assuming, as so many do, that chs. 40-55 are the main source of Isaiah's creation discourse.

In Isa 1-35 the merismus occurs in judgement contexts and evokes the picture that judgement is the reversal of creation. In Isa 36-39 the merismus is utilised in one of the clearest creation statements in Isaiah (37:16). The "heaven-earth" merismus, like so much of Isaiah's creation language, is concentrated in chaps. 40-55. In these chapters the metaphor occurs in conjunction with several different creation verbs and the tenor of these usages is distinctly cosmological. In the final segment of Isaiah, chaps. 56-66, the merismus refers to the re-creation of heaven-earth and portrays creation in the eschatological sense.

The use of these metaphors complements the use of creation verbs in Isaiah.

Altogether, Isaiah's creation language displays the following pattern:

1. Isaiah's creation thought is three dimensional and creation is conceived as happening in the past (primordial), in the present (historical), and in the future (eschatological).
2. Isaiah's creation language demonstrates a conceptual unity that runs through the book.
3. Creation language, while concentrated in chaps. 40-55, pervades the entire book, but its use exhibits great flexibility in the different segments of Isaiah.

Chapter 1 also considered the impact that Isaiah's creation language has on the structure of the book. While recognising the many suggestions that have been made for the structure of the Isaiah, this study has proposed a "symphonic structure" to the book that is very much informed by the way Isaiah uses creation language. The book of Isaiah is made up of four movements: a first movement (1-35), a bridge (36-39), a crescendo (40-55), and a finale (56-66). The first movement introduces an idea which is then given a sustained treatment in the crescendo and which then achieves a climax in the finale.

Chaps. 36-39 provide a bridge in the presentation, anticipating the sustained push of the last two movements.¹

Chapter 2 furnished an exegetical treatment of four selected creation passages from Isaiah. These four passages were selected because they play a special role: They are representative of and crucial to Isaiah's creation discourse. Along with the use of creation language, these passages capture the full complexity of Isaiah's creation thought.

Isa 4:2-6 was chosen because it bears the first occurrence of ברא in the book. The passage is the second salvation passage in Isaiah and it is framed by judgement passages. It is introduced by the eschatologically rich phrase "in the day of the Lord" ביום ההוא. The text anticipates a new work of God, an eschatological redemption. This new eschatological and redemptive work of God is depicted as an act of the creator God, that is, an act of creation. While Isa 4:2-6 carries an undeniable soteriological character, yet it is creation that undergirds this salvation, and in a subtle way the passage embodies all three dimensions of creation.

Isa 43:1-7 was selected because it is one of only two passages in Isaiah where all three creation terms appear together. The entire pericope is framed by a creation inclusio (vss. 1 & 7) which envelops several statements about salvation, past and future (vss. 2-6). The passage harks back to the Exodus and points forward to the gathering from exile as evidence that God is still acting (creating). The passage integrates the ideas of God as creator and God as redeemer. God created Israel and promises a new

¹Isaiah's creation thought is not the only theme that operates this way. As demonstrated elsewhere in this study, other themes appear to function along similar lines. In conjunction with other thematic strands in the book, the "symphonic structure" of Isaiah is very much informed by its creation thought.

creation of the nation. This creator is also the saviour of the people. God works through time and his acts are both historical and proleptic. History provides the frame in which the creator performs his creative acts for salvation and re-creation. God created the world, formed Israel, and promises a new beginning. While the historical and eschatological dimensions of creation are the foci of Isa 43:1-7, the point made however is that it is the creator of the world who does these things.

Arguably the most significant creation passage in Isaiah is 44:24-45:25. The three creation verbs occur twice in this passage along with other creation terms. The "heaven-earth" merismus also appears twice in this passage. Such a concentration of creation language is unparalleled in the book. The passage clearly is focused on the primordial creation of God, which undergirds everything else he does historically or eschatologically. God's creatorship accentuates his sovereignty and bears with it the conviction that God is the one and only God because he is the creator. As the creator, he can and does command those he chooses to serve him. As the creator, his purposes are inviolable and man cannot question him. As the creator, he acts to sustain life and save man from predicaments. Creation is not only the consummate conception of God, it is also the basis of relational abstraction.

The final creation passage in this exegesis is Isa 65:17-25. Its selection was compelled by the threefold use of בָּרָא and the climactic vision of re-creation that the passage presents. More than any passage, Isa 65:17-25 stresses the concept of newness, a new creation. It looks forward to an eschatological work of God where new realities and paradigms become the norm. The text is squarely eschatological, and the creation it refers to entails a universal new beginning. This new creation however is analogous to the first creation of God. In this passage Isaiah's creation thought achieves a complete

cycle, from primordial to eschatological.

Besides exegeting the selected passages, chapter 2 also briefly explored the connections between Isaiah's creation thought and the Genesis creation narrative. In both, the three main creation terms are utilised. **בְּרָא** is the preferred term in Genesis and Isaiah for primordial creation, whereas **יָצַר** is preferred for the historical creation of man and Israel, respectively. Both books employ **עָשָׂה** as a synonym for the other two words and as a summary word for creation itself (see Gen 1:31 and Isa 66:1-2, 22). Both Genesis and Isaiah make use of the "breath/spirit" metaphor and the "heaven-earth" merismus. The use of the former in Isaiah resonates strongly with its use in Genesis, while the use of the latter in Genesis and Isaiah is complementary.¹ For both books, creation is seen as proceeding from the general to the specific. In Genesis, God creates the universe, then the earth, then man. A similar progression is observed in 65:17-25 with the re-creation of the cosmos and then of Jerusalem.² Furthermore, the two books share the same multi-dimensional view of creation. Where Isaiah differs from Genesis is in the introduction of an explicit eschatological dimension to the cosmological and historical that is common to both books. The connections between the Genesis creation story and Isaiah's creation thought exist along three levels: linguistic, structural, and conceptual.

Chapter 3 discussed Isaiah's creation theology insofar as this tells something about God and his works. The chapter also examined the connection between Isaiah's creation thought and other important themes in the book, namely holiness, judgement,

¹Genesis opens with the creation of "heaven-earth" and Isaiah climaxes with the re-creation of "heaven-earth."

²A similar, though not as clear cut, progression is also witnessed in Isa 45:12 & 18.

and eschatology.

The most immediate impact of Isaiah's creation thought pertains to the concept of God as portrayed by Isaiah. First, this creator God is conceived as the One and Only God. He is the incomparable God who is sovereign over all that he creates and surveys and whose will is unquestionable. He is the God who has no comparison or analogy by which he may be understood and therefore transcends his creation. His incomparability is depicted in five ways: (1) via a divine self-predication in which God stresses his sovereignty and incomparability; (2) through a comparison of the folly of created man; (3) in the special divine title, YHWH of hosts, which expresses God's complete command of his creation; (4) through the concept of the creator as the cosmic monarch, the divine sovereign; and (5) via the idea that God is also Lord of history and as such he transcends temporal consideration yet remains involved with his creation. Second, this creator God is perceived as one who is able to perform wondrous acts. God created the universe (Isa 45), he shapes history (Isa 43:1-7), and he makes new realities (Isa 65:17-25). His deeds are as incomparable as he is. Isaiah's creation thought is an expression of who God is and an assertion of what God does. God is the creator.

God however is not only the creator, he is also the saviour. The connection between these two aspects of the divine nature and character has proven to be the most vexing question in Isaianic studies. There is no doubt that a premier image of God in Isaiah is that of savior/redeemer. Frequently this saving God is presented as one and the same as the creating God. These two acts of God, creation and salvation, are inextricably linked together. To disengage them from each other or to subordinate one to the other commits an injustice against both. The point of Isaiah appears to be that God the creator also saves.

Since creation has a historical dimension and since salvation is performed within historical frameworks, the connection between creation thought and salvation history is a necessary corollary to the above. It seems most appropriate to consider God's historical creation as most closely tied to salvation history. Isaiah seeks to capture this relationship in two ways: via the Exodus-New Exodus motif and through the redeemer images of Branch and Servant. Isaiah appeals to God's creative activity to support faith in his power to redeem his people. Creator God saves his people from distress and he also saves them for mission. When God creates a people for himself (Exodus or New Exodus) he also creates conduits of his power and providence. Creation has a historical, eschatological, and missionary goal.

A significant concept in Isaiah is holiness. More importantly, it is God who is viewed as the Holy One. God is described as the thrice holy one (Isa 6:3). Isaiah uses a special epithet for God, the Holy One of Israel. God is holy because he is other than his creation. Holiness is an expression of the ultimate transcendence of God, and this transcendent God is none other than the creator himself.

This creator God is also judge of his people. When his people or the world live contrary to his will he judges them for their sins. Judgement is therefore a consequence of not looking to the creator (22:11-12) and it is the creator who pronounces judgement (27:11-12). The creator is the judge.

The creator is also the one who promises a better "hereafter," an eschatological new start. The structural correspondence to Isaiah's creation thought is evident here as well. The judgment and salvation so evident in Isa 1-35 are, eschatologically speaking, the products of God's creative activity. In chaps. 40-55 the creator declares and makes new things, while in chaps. 56-66 God's creative and eschatological work come to a

fitting finale. In a sense, eschatology is the ultimate creation statement in Isaiah.

In dealing with Isaiah's creation thought, three principal positions are encountered: (1) The primacy of salvation theology; (2) the foundational nature of creation thought; and (3) the interrelatedness of the two. This study has arrived at three main conclusions. First, Isaiah's creation thought is a foundational concept. Contrary to the prevailing idea that creation thought is subsidiary to salvation theology, this study finds that creation thought in Isaiah does much more than serve salvation theology. Creation thought undergirds and informs other themes, including Isaiah's salvation theology. It is the underpinning conceptual framework and has theological and structural ramifications. While this is not to overstate the primacy of creation thought, it is important to recognise that creation is basic to an understanding of other themes in the book. It helps to enlighten the reader as to the true essence of the nature and character of God and the extent of his activity. Rendtorff, who attempted to draw away from the dominant views of von Rad, said it best:

We can now put it differently: faith in God the Creator was perceived and experienced as the all-embracing framework, as the fundamental, all-underlying premise for any talk of God, the world, Israel, and the individual.¹

While this statement was not specifically applied to Isaiah, it is highly pertinent to Isaiah's creation thought and illustrates the point that creation thought engenders faith in the creator.

Second, throughout the study Isaiah's creation thought is seen as involving three different dimensions: cosmological, historical, and eschatological. God created the world, he acts in history (especially salvation history), and he promises new realities.

¹Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology*, 107-108. Rendtorff's conclusions are derived from his pursuit of the creation concept in Job and wisdom literature.

"Yahweh's activity knows no bounds. It extends itself to the past, the present, and the future."¹ God creates cosmologically, historically, and eschatologically. As Waltke put it:

As the Creator of the cosmos, He triumphed at the time of creation; as the Creator of history, He triumphs in the historic present; and as Creator of the new heavens and the new earth, He will triumph in the future.²

The following observation by Stek is especially applicable to Isaiah:

It must also be noted that whereas the Christian doctrine of creation has tended to focus almost exclusively on the *origin* of the creation *in the beginning*, that limitation does not apply to Old Testament creation language. In the speech of the Old Testament authors, whatever exists *now* and whatever *will come into existence* in the creaturely realm has been or will have been "created" by God. He is not only the Creator of the original state of affairs but also of all present and future realities.³

Third, the creation thought of Isaiah has important theological ramifications insofar as it tells us something about God. It speaks of a God who is incomparable and sovereign. It tells of a God who forms a people for himself and then acts to deliver and save his people from their predicaments. It speaks of a God who promises to create a better "hereafter," a new world for his people to live in. Creation thought tells of a God whose will is inscrutable and whose power is unlimited. It tells of a God who exercises his authority over time, matter, nations, and individuals. He is holy and transcendent; he controls history; he creates whatever he wills. In essence, God is first and foremost the *creator*. Therein lies any true understanding of his nature, character, and work. Andre Boulet summed up all this best when he said:

¹Eberlein, 82.

²Bruce K. Waltke, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-3, Part I: Introduction to Biblical Cosmogony," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 132 (1975a): 36.

³Stek, 211.

Every work says something to us of the artist who is the author. The final paintings of Van Gogh inform us of the agony of his heart and his obsessions. In the compositions of Mozart appears the coolness of a soul and the reserved melancholy of a great musician. The entire universe is the work of the sovereign artist. If we contemplate this divine work long and attentively, we can hear God speak to us . . . making known to us his infinite grandeur, his wisdom, his beauty, his goodness, . . . in a word, his glory and his mystery.¹

In short, creation thought is Isaiah's consummate conceptualisation of God.

¹Andre Boulet, *Création et rédemption* (Paris: CLD, 1995), 215.

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