

Excerpts from Chávez, “A Theological Introduction to the Christian Bible” citing Brooks Schramm’s *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*

Third Isaiah, with many references to syncretistic practices (child sacrifice, sorcery and necromancy, etc.), shows that even after the Babylonian Exile the religion of Israel was “in transition;” see BROOKS SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah. Reconstructing the Cultic History of the Restoration* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supp. Ser. 193; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 127. This is a remarkable book, which will be further referred to in these pages. According to Schramm, the struggle to establish the orthodox Yahwistic cult as the only legitimate one “only came to an end with the promulgation of the Pentateuch,” 157, that is, with Ezra, in the fifth century B.C.E. The official Yahwism of the Bible, for Schramm, 178-182, and a growing number of scholars, represents the triumph of what was before the Exile only one “branch” of the religion(s) of Israel, and a minority one at that. Only some reformer kings (like Hezekiah and Josiah) were able to impose this faith of the “Yahweh-only party” (as Morton Smith called it), and this for brief periods only. Jer 44, e.g., is directed at the pagan, syncretistic worship of the exiles in Egypt after 587.

As SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 75-78, points out, Third Isaiah has no notion of the restoration of the Davidic dynasty, which had been so important for the original Isaiah of Jerusalem in the eighth century. In Second Isaiah, the Davidic covenant is democratized and extended to all the people, Isa 55:3. This is one of the clearest marks to distinguish Isa 1-39 from Isa 40-66. The restoration of Judah takes place without a messiah: Yahweh will rule directly (cf. 1 Sam 8). Cf. the idea of God’s people being blessed in the seed of Abraham (= Christ, Gal 3:16, 29), by virtue of being *in Christ* (and Christ is seed of David, Rom 1:3, whose seed is blessed according to 2 Sam 7:12; Ps 89:5, 30, 37; cf. Acts 13:34).

See Schramm, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 169 (they are a “common group”), citing Blenkinsopp, “The ‘Servants of the Lord’ in Third Isaiah,” *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 7 (1983), 1-23. Blenkinsopp thinks there is “a definite connection between the [*h[redim]*] of Isa 66 and those of Ezra 9-10. . . . For Blenkinsopp, Third Isaiah and Ezra are moving in the direction of sectarianism;” see SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 113

According to SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 159, “The Chronicler emphasis the liturgical function of the Davidic monarchy at the expense of its political function;” “Third Isaiah has no need of a Davidide;” and in Ezek 40-48, “the king, or rather the [*nasi*] (‘prince’), is conceived as ruling over ‘a kingdom without politics;” citing his mentor, the Jewish scholar Jon Levenson, now at Harvard. These different views of the Davidic king or his “messianic” successor are important to keep in mind in the study of Jesus’ “messianic” ministry.

SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 80, states that “Wanke has argued that the matrix of virtually all post-exilic prophecy is located in the mental climate created by Second Isaiah’s proclamation that the time of judgment was at an end and the time of Israel’s salvation had arrived.” One could point also to Haggai’s insistence around 520 that the turn-around (the *peripeteia*, or sudden change in a Greek story) would be “in a little while,” Hag 2:6, 18. The unfulfillment of these prophecies led to the dejection which is manifest in Malachi about seventy years later, Mal 2:17.

This message of consolation of Second Isaiah is qualified by Third Isaiah, who must deal with the question of why the “New Exodus,” in the sense of eschatological, final salvation (or, as the Germans call it, the *Endtheophanie*), has not taken place: it is being prevented by the people’s sins. What distinguishes Second from Third Isaiah is that for the latter, a new kind of judgment must take place, one that will divide true Israel from the ones who are wicked and do not obey God; this new (or additional) judgment must precede the promised restoration; see SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 127, 139, 143. This is a “radical transformation,” as Israel is now defined not by birthright, but by proper adherence to Yahweh’s cult, 158; cf. John 1:11-13; Rom 9:6-8; Phil 3:3.

SCHRAMM, *The Opponents of Third Isaiah*, 119, says that “Isa. 56.1 expresses the conviction that ethical conduct is determined by eschatological expectation,” footnote omitted. Jesus’ prayer for the forgiveness of his executioners in Luke 23:34 is considered to be unique in the Bible (cf. Acts 7:60).