

THE UNITY OF ISAIAH

A CRITICAL RESPONSE TO DENNIS BRATCHER'S ARTICLE
THE UNITY AND AUTHORSHIP OF ISAIAH: A NEEDLESS BATTLE



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Jerry D. McDonald

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Abstract: Dennis Bratcher wrote an article “*The Unity and Authorship of Isaiah: A Needless Battle*” In this paper, we will quote from Bratcher's paper, then respond to it. Bratcher's words will be in light blue while this writer's words will be in black. Thus our purpose will be to show why it is important to show that there was only one writer of the book of Isaiah. As we will see Bratcher completely does away with divine revelation from God to man, in both the Old Testament as well as in the New.

INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

The unity of the book of Isaiah is paramount to the fulfillment of predictive prophecy, especially that concerning our Savior, Jesus Christ. There are so many prophecies concerning Christ that would fail without the unity of Isaiah that we would have no hope of eternal life. While this paper will, primarily, deal with Dennis Bratcher's article "*The Unity and Authorship of Isaiah: A Needless Battle*" there will be quotations from other articles as well. By the time we close this paper we will have shown that holding to the unity of Isaiah is not a needless battle, but is rather an essential one.

Before proceeding it is essential to define what is meant by "the unity of Isaiah." This term simply refers to the unity of the book of Isaiah, or the unity of the authorship of the book of Isaiah. Concerning this subject, Dayton Hartman wrote:

"No other book in the Canon of Scripture evokes more vivid imagery of the coming Messiah than that of Isaiah. It is the writings of this prophet, Isaiah son of Amoz, which so distinctly point to the coming King, Christ Jesus. As result, Christians hold this book as the crowning jewel of Old Testament Messianic prophecy. Its incredible prophetic accuracy has reinforced the faith of countless believers throughout history, all the while driving the critics mad. *Today Christians are faced with a challenge designed by textual critics to undermine the believer's confidence in the book of Isaiah. The charge is simply this: Isaiah was not entirely written by the historical Isaiah, but instead multiple authors spanning various periods of time. Does this charge have any validity? That is the very question we will examine*" (<http://jude3project.org/2007/03/14/the-unity-of-isaiah/>).

Hartman clearly points out that the charge is that Isaiah was not written entirely by the historical Isaiah, but by different authors spanning various time periods. Our job is to show that this charge is false. Bratcher holds to this view, and he criticizes those who hold to the single writer viewpoint. He says that the battle for only having one writer is needless. In other words, Bratcher is a compromiser, one who refuses to take one side or the other. To people who fall into this compartment Jesus said: "*And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning*

of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot” (Rev 3:14-15). He also said: “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Mat 12:30). One cannot compromise and still be with God.

(Mr. Bratcher has given me permission to use his article provided I reprint it in its entirety and context, and also put the copyright on it. So I am going to reprint the article, then in the discussion I will break it down and respond to it point by point).

The Unity and Authorship of Isaiah: A Needless Battle

Dennis Bratcher

The Battle

The unity and authorship of the Book of Isaiah has been a touchy subject for many Christians for much of the 20th century. This particular issue has drawn a disproportionate amount of discussion and has usually generated more heat than light. For many, it has become a shibboleth of orthodoxy with the position taken on the issue separating those who believe the Bible from those who don't.

There are various reasons why some have chosen the authorship and unity of the book of Isaiah as a battleground, but a single issue invariably and quickly comes to the forefront: the issue of predictive prophecy. In varying degrees of intensity and from various angles of concern, defenders of the unity and single authorship of Isaiah contend that to concede the book was formed over a period of time would eliminate the amazingly accurate predictive element of prophecy in the book. There is sometimes even the claim made that people who suggest anything differently are really trying to promote an agenda that denies belief in prophecy or the trustworthiness of Scripture. Or, to argue the other way, they contend that if Isaiah of Jerusalem wrote the entire book, it could only have been God's direct revelation to him of the things that he predicts, which provides proof of the supernatural origin of Scripture, as well as proof that the future can be absolutely predicted hundreds of years in advance.

For example, from this perspective Isaiah names the Persian ruler Cyrus who would overthrow Babylon 100 years before there was even a Babylonian empire and 200 years before Cyrus would be even be born (Isa 44:28, 45:1). This, they believe, is physical proof of the absolutely miraculous nature of Scripture. This is often expanded to include claims of total inerrancy and historical infallibility of the biblical texts. Allowing parts of the book of Isaiah to date after the time of Isaiah of Jerusalem (740-701 BC)

would put all of this at risk (see [Prophets Date Chart](#)).

In other words, the arguments against any suggestion of more than one author or time frame are not usually based on evidence from the book itself. Rather, assumptions about the nature of Scripture and prophecy, certain theories of inspiration, and certain beliefs about how God works in human history provide the conclusion that this must be a single work by Isaiah of Jerusalem. Any evidence is read within that already decided conclusion based on considerations outside the text itself.

As a result, many traditional arguments have held for a **historical** unity for the entire book. That is, all of Isaiah was written by the prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem in the eighth century BC (740-700). As noted, this has usually been promoted as the only way to understand the book, not from analysis of book itself but from certain views of scripture and prophecy. As noted, in modern times, especially since the rise of analytical biblical study in the latter nineteenth century, this has often become a defensive position, an apologetic for predictive prophecy.

Such a historical unity for the book fits well with world views constructed from a Platonic/idealistic perspective. This perspective is primarily concerned with ultimate reality and focuses on the total control God exerts on everything that happens in the world, a feature of most theological systems that hold to some form of predeterminism. It also fits well with certain views of prophecy that see its only function as predicting the future, especially as that prediction leads to Christ. For many this is a primary agenda in arguing for the predictive element as fundamental in prophecy. Actually, however, this is as much a misunderstanding of the New Testament as it is of the Old Testament, but that is another topic.

From such a perspective, the "prediction" of the coming of Cyrus in Isaiah 44-45 became the crux of the issue. Either a person believed that this was accurately predicted by Isaiah of Jerusalem 200 years before it happened or one didn't believe any of the Bible. However, this is really arguing an idea of what the Bible ought to be rather than looking at the text on its own terms. Unfortunately, this is still preached from some pulpits, even though it simply is not true. Many people hold the Bible in high regard as the authoritative word of God and cherish it as the basic source for the faith and practice of the church, and yet do not believe that these chapters were written by Isaiah of Jerusalem in 700 BC.

It is true that some scholars used the new insights into the origin of the book of Isaiah that emerged in the first part of the 20th century to discount any revelatory actions of God in history. But they had no more basis to take such a position than did those who argued that God himself wrote the book. That was simply an example of the newly developing methods of biblical investigation being used badly. However, some tried to counter such views by rejecting not only the erroneous conclusions, but also the methods of biblical study being used. As a result, often the argument was too strong in the other direction, which resulted for many in a wholesale rejection of the insights into the composition of the biblical books, and Isaiah in particular, that would prove so valuable for others in understanding the dynamic of the biblical message.

Assumptions that Support the Battle

First, let's consider some of the assumptions often made in discussing this topic. The problem with many of these assumptions is that they either come from our modern world view and frame of reference without considering how the ancient world might be different, or they work from certain pre-determined beliefs about the nature of Scripture that only allow one way of seeing the text.

1) It is often assumed that the title for the book intends to communicate who wrote the entire book. However, **the traditional title of a biblical book says nothing about authorship of the book.** Just because the book carries the title "Isaiah" does not imply anything one way or the other about who wrote the entire book. For example, the book of Jonah is not a book written *by* Jonah, but *about* him. Similarly, Job, Esther, Ruth, and probably Malachi are likewise not titles of authorship but of content. So, it requires an assumption to conclude that because the 66 chapters of this book fall under the title *Isaiah* this requires that Isaiah be the author of all of them. And it might be important to recall that biblical book titles are not part of the biblical text itself, but are only traditional titles. Many of the Old Testament books have different titles in Hebrew than they do in English, which are based on titles in Greek and Latin translations.

2) Many assume that single books under a single title are the work of a single person. Yet, **there are clear examples in Scripture where book titles were applied to collections of material by various authors.** For example, the book of Jeremiah contains narrative sections describing from a third person perspective actions that Jeremiah took (ch. 37-44). There are references within the book to Jeremiah's scribe, Baruch, writing for Jeremiah (36:4-8). So, it seems logical to conclude that these sections were written by Baruch and included with the Jeremiah material without creating a separate book of Baruch (although there is an apocryphal book titled *Baruch*, which contains edited sections of the book of Daniel, it almost certainly was not written by Baruch). Likewise, the book of Amos contains third person narratives about Amos in addition to the collections of the sermons that Amos himself proclaimed (7:10-17).

In a different kind of example, there are several instances where sections of material in one book, Isaiah in particular, are duplicated word for word in another book. For example, Isaiah 36-39 is largely duplicated in 2 Kings 18:13-20:19. Also, Isaiah 2:2-4 is repeated in Micah 4:1-3. This suggests that the biblical text is not nearly so concerned with authorship as we are, and that biblical books can be composite from various time periods from various authors without specifically stating that they are so.

3) The assumption is often made that the concept of "authorship" is a universal idea that applies to any culture in any time period of human history. But **our modern, Western concept of "authorship" is alien to the ancient Eastern world.** In our world of copyrights and the legal ownership of ideas, we simply assume that this is also how the ancient world conceptualized intellectual property. In fact, the whole concept of ideas being property that can be owned or sold is a totally foreign concept to the ancient, Eastern mind (as well as some modern cultures; see [Community and Testimony: Cultural Influence in Biblical Studies](#)). Our assumptions reflect the highly individualized nature of our culture, forgetting that the ancient Near East was far more

tribal or communal in its thinking. Ideas were shared within the community and even passed on from one generation to the next as part of the community. This allowed people to teach or write in another's name, carrying on the tradition of a master through pupils or disciples who would not only preserve the original teachings but add to them as heir of the tradition.

There is evidence within the book of Isaiah that Isaiah of Jerusalem had around him a group of disciples, and that he specifically entrusted them with preserving and transmitting his message (8:16, "Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples," cf. 30:8). Again, it requires both modern assumptions about authorship, as well as ignoring the culture of the ancient world, to conclude that these disciples did nothing but preserve word for word what Isaiah said without allowing the message to be dynamic within their community or applying that message to later events. We know that even in the classic Greek period, students of the Greek philosophers wrote and spoke in the names of their masters, speaking to a new generation and a new time what the master would have spoken had he still been alive (this may also be the case with Paul and the Pastoral Epistles). Again, this suggests that it may be a lack of understanding of the ancient world and our assumptions at work that allows us to even make authorship an issue.

4) Some assume that New Testament references to Isaiah speaking or writing certain passages that are quoted in the New Testament are proof that the prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem was the author of all of that material. Yet, **New Testament references to Isaiah refer to the book as part of the tradition of sacred writings by traditional titles and do not intend to present arguments about authorship.** There are several dimensions of this aspect. First, as just noted, the idea that the biblical community was as concerned as we are about who wrote what material is an assumption from our modern ways of thinking. To project our concern about authorship into NT references to OT material is simply to force the Bible to address issues that it does not address.

Second, because of these different perspectives, the NT community may not have known any more about the precise author of individual material in the OT than we do. To assume that the biblical writers knew who wrote the material almost always invokes a certain theory of inspiration in which God simply reveals to them such information. While that may be adequate for some, it obviously goes far beyond the evidence we have in the text itself, and again uses theological ideas as the basis for deciding biblical issues.

Third, there are several instances where the NT writers seem not to have remembered where certain passages were located, or remembered them incorrectly. For example, Mark 1:2 introduces the OT quotation by "as it is written in the prophet Isaiah," but begins by quoting a passage from Malachi. Another example is Matthew 27:9 where the reference is given as Jeremiah, but the passage is actually taken from Zechariah. It is also interesting that there are manuscript variations that give the reference as Isaiah, and some that make the correction to Zechariah (see [Sacred Words or Words about the Sacred?](#)).

All this says that even the references to the locations of OT references are not always

precise in the NT. That in itself is no problem, since the focus is on the message being communicated rather than precision of citation. That is, unless one is trying to maintain certain views about the nature of Scripture, such as totally inerrancy; then it presents a problem (see [The Modern Inerrancy Debate](#)). If the location of the texts are not precise, it is only certain assumptions at work that allows the NT references to the OT to be adequate for determining authorship of the OT texts.

5) A few assume that references to Isaiah throughout Scripture provide proof that he was the author of the material that bears his name. **Nowhere in Scripture is there any claim that Isaiah of Jerusalem is the author of the entire book of Isaiah.** There is no question that the prophet Isaiah is the focal point of the traditions that carry his name. But again, it is simply certain assumptions at work that allow us to conclude that he is the single and only person responsible for the entire book.

A Different Perspective

I would suggest that there **is** unity and coherence in the book of Isaiah, but that unity is **not a historical unity** that comes from being written at a single point in history by a single person. The unity of Isaiah **is a theological unity** rather than a historical one. The unity is the witness of the Faith community to God in the midst of changing historical circumstances. The community was struggling to come to grips with historical events in relation to what they understood about God and his actions in the world. Theologically, the witness of the book of Isaiah is consistent and unrelenting. Central themes can be traced throughout the book even though the historical circumstances have changed. In places, different themes take center stage or the emphasis is different: judgment in the first section of Isaiah, creation theology and grace in the second section, and faithful response to God in the third section. But there is an overall cohesion in the message of the book.

This simply says that nothing is lost in understanding a theological unity in the book rather than a historical one, except perhaps certain views of prophecy and the nature of Scripture that do not even emerge from the biblical texts themselves. I would even contend that understanding the theological unity and dynamic of the book makes it far more relevant to the modern world, and for most people who live in it, than does seeing the book only as a prediction of the future that is now for us 2,000 years in the past. Rather than making Scripture more valuable, I fear that such a position is preaching to the choir, simply making people who believe the Bible feel good about what they already believe. For others, I fear it removes Scripture from the "real" world in which they live, and therefore removes much chance of its message impacting their lives at the point of their need.

Two Communities: The Evidence from the Book Itself

Perhaps it would be helpful to examine some of the evidence from within the book itself. I would contend that this is not a matter of faith but a matter of investigation. We may accept the Bible as authoritative Scripture for the church, and yet not make that

authority dependent on conjectures, one way or the other, about authorship of any particular book. The authority of the book is not in the historical details of authorship, but in the message about God that the book carries. That is why even though we may have divergent opinions about the issue based on the evidence, it is not a matter to argue in terms of belief or non-belief in the authority of Scripture. And it is certainly not a shibboleth of orthodoxy by which to judge another person's commitment to God.

If we try to lay aside these assumptions and look at the internal evidence of the book itself without trying to fit them into any rationalized scheme about the book, we may be able to highlight how the assumptions tend to ignore or rationalize evidence. And it may allow us to develop a more dynamic view of the book as Scripture within a living community of faith.

There are several lines of internal evidence that point to three distinct time periods for the book of Isaiah. It was fashionable in the first part of the 20th century to speak of three Isaiahs, usually labeled First, Second, and Third Isaiah for the three parts of the book. Today, there is less concern in labeling the parts of the book in terms of authorship, and a greater tendency to understand the book in terms of an ongoing dynamic prophetic tradition that can be identified in the three different time periods. In other words, the emphasis has shifted from trying to establish either a single or multiple authors, and moved more to placing the movement of the book within the flow of history as the community came to terms with events in relation to the Isaiah traditions entrusted to them. The power of the book is that it reflects a community of faith's struggle to be faithful amid the most tumultuous period of Old Testament History.

Isaiah of Jerusalem's prophetic ministry spanned roughly a 40 year period from around 740 BC to about 700 BC (See [Chart of Israelite Prophets](#)) in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. This would place him active during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, the period of Assyrian dominance. Assyria rose as a world power in 745 BC, invaded and destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 721 BC, subjugated the Southern Kingdom during the reign of Ahaz, and nearly destroyed it in 701 during the reign of Hezekiah. Isaiah's entire ministry focused on calling the people to repentance, especially the weak Jotham and the apostate Ahaz, trying to avert disaster at the hands of the Assyrians, and later encouraging Hezekiah in his attempts at reform and rebellion against Assyria. While the Assyrians ruled over Judah during much of this time, exacting heavy tribute from the people, they never managed to conquer the city of Jerusalem even though they nearly succeeded in 701. According to the biblical witness, God intervened and saved the city from the Assyrians (Isa 37:36-38, 2 Kings 19:35-37).

It is that historical light that some of the evidence within the book of Isaiah needs to be examined.

1) There are numerous references throughout the book to the Babylonians (or Chaldeans). Babylon would not emerge as a world power until 612 when they captured the Assyrian capital of Nineveh, and would not stand alone until 609 when they wiped out the remnants of the Assyrian army and defeated the Egyptian pharaoh who was trying to intervene. In the time of Isaiah of Jerusalem, the enemy was the Assyrians and the Babylonians were not even on the stage of history yet. This suggests that the

ongoing community of faith who valued Isaiah's message in the time of the Assyrians simply took that message and reapplied what he had to say in the context of their own current enemy, the Babylonians.

There are references to the Babylonians in the first part of Isaiah (1-40), largely in the typical oracles against foreign nations (chs 13, 14, 21) and in chapter 39, which serves as a transition between the two eras and parts of the book. Yet, the Assyrians do not appear again the book past the account of their failure to take Jerusalem in 701 (38:6), except for a single occurrence that is clearly a reference to a long past time (52:4). Beginning with chapter 40 the Babylonians, and their eventual downfall to the Persians are clearly the main topic (e.g., ch 44:28, 45:1, 47, 48:14-22, etc.).

This likewise suggests that Isaiah 1-39 generally dates to the Assyrian period between 740 and 600 BC, while chapter 40 following dates at least to the Babylonian era, sometime after 612. The earlier material was interspersed by the later community with references to their own enemies, the Babylonians, as a way to apply the earlier material theologically to their own historical circumstances. But the later material does not include references to the Assyrians since they were long gone, had been judged by God and history, and posed no concern to the later Israelites who were preoccupied with the Babylonians and Persians.

2) There are several references to the temple in Jerusalem being destroyed as if it were an event some time removed in the past (44:26-28, 52:8-9, possibly 51:3). This happened in 586 BC as the **Babylonians** captured and destroyed the temple along with Jerusalem itself. While some want to argue that this is simply predictive prophecy, that perspective again invokes certain assumptions that stand outside the biblical text itself. The most reasonable interpretation of those passages apart from that assumption is that they come from a time after the temple was destroyed. This is especially true of those passages that anticipate *rebuilding* the temple and the city (44:26).

3) Along the same line, there are numerous references to the devastation of the land and of people carried captive to **Babylon** (40:1-2, 42:22-24, 43:14, 48:20, 51:17, 52:1-2, etc.). These deportations happened in 598 and again in 586, and perhaps an earlier deportation in 605 when the Babylonians first entered the land and put Judah under Babylonian control. While there were deportations by the Assyrians as they annihilated the Northern Kingdom of Israel, there were no large scale deportations from the Southern Kingdom of Judah. All of the references to exile of Israelites in the second section of the book (and at least one in the first, 14:2) are in relation to Babylon (e.g., 49:24, 52:2, 61:1, etc.).

4) There are several general references to a new leader emerging in Mesopotamia (41:2-3, 25), and two specific references that name Cyrus the Persian as the instrument of Israel's deliverance from Babylon (44:28-45:3). Again, by using assumptions about the nature of prophecy and Scripture, many conclude that this is simply Isaiah of Jerusalem precisely predicting the future. However, apart from those assumptions, and in line with earlier material in the book of Isaiah, this appears to be a prophetic interpretation of the meaning of unfolding historical events in light of God's purposes at work in that history. *That is exactly how Isaiah of Jerusalem responded to the Assyrian crisis 100 years earlier.* In other words, it is more likely that a later

community using the Isaiah traditions interpreted the change of power in the East as God's work in the world to bring the exiles home. Cyrus the Persian came to power in 539 BC and issued the edict that allowed the Israelites to return home in 538. This would place the section of Isaiah following chapter 40 around 540-539.

5) Finally, there is clearly a radical shift in tone and theological outlook in the book at chapter 40. The first 39 chapters focus on the failure of the people to be faithful to God, the stubborn recalcitrance of their leaders, and the near total failure of the nation to live up to its calling as God's people. Even Hezekiah, who is portrayed as a righteous leader, fails in several ways, including bragging of his wealth, a move that the book of Isaiah attributes as a cause of the later Babylonian invasion.

However, beginning in chapter 40, as the first words of "Comfort, comfort" in the section indicate, the perspective is hope for the future and encouragement. There is a sense of a recent great catastrophe that has devastated the land and people, and yet the book holds out great hope for the future. It is clear that new winds are blowing that portend a change in fortune, brought by the grace of God. Again, many want this to be prediction of the future. But in the context of the book, the sense of the text is that these are currently unfolding events that draw forth profound joy and anticipation from a context of near despair. It is clear that the arrogance of the people in Isaiah's time would not even allow them to conceptualize a problem or foresee such a disaster, let alone get very excited about what lay on the other side. The nearly unbridled hope and expectation of chapter 40 ff. is simply not the message needed in 700 BC.

There are other bits of evidence, but this seems sufficient to establish that there are plausible reasons within the biblical material itself to see chapters 1-39 in the Assyrian era of the late 8th century BC, while the material beginning with chapter 40 is from a later period around the middle of the 6th century BC.

A Third Section of Isaiah and a Third Community

The evidence for a third time period for the book of Isaiah is not as direct and the demarcation between the second and third sections of the book are not as pronounced, but for many is just as convincing. This conclusion depends on several lines of evidence: 1) an analysis of the content and theological perspective of the latter part of the book (chs. 56-66) compared to what we know of unfolding history in the period following 540 BC; 2) the close connection with the theological perspective of other books from the same period (Malachi, Ezra, Nehemiah), and 3) literary features that mark a shift between chapter 55 and 56. Since a careful analysis of all these is beyond the scope of this article, the perspectives will only be summarized here.

1) As already mentioned, the pronounced shift between the first and second sections of the book is striking in terms of the tone and theological perspective of the two sections. The first section (1-39) is largely prophetic judgement speeches and calls to repentance, with the tone set by 1:10-20. The second section (40-55) is almost entirely promises of restoration and the eager anticipation of a new golden age brought by God's reestablishment of the people in the land, with the tone set by 40:1-11.

The third section, however, returns to a much darker and more pessimistic perspective that again points out the people's failure to respond adequately to God. There are again problems with idolatry (57:4-13), injustice (59:1-8), and superficial religion (58:13-14). Yet, the mood that is addressed by this section of the book is fairly obviously one of indifference and apathy in which the people believe that God will not or cannot act to improve their situation (*e.g.*, 56:9-12, 58, 59:9-11). This reveals that the primary problem is not really rampant and aggressive Ba'al worship even though it was still practiced, or injustice flowing from prosperity and self-confidence as had been the case earlier in the book. Here the problems in those areas arise because the people have concluded that it makes no difference what they do, because God does not see or care, that he will do nothing to intervene.

This fits very closely with what we know of the period following the actual return from exile (see [The Persian Period and Return from Exile](#), especially Persian Rule and Return From Exile). Even though the return began in 538, the prophet Haggai scolded the people 20 years later for not being concerned about rebuilding the temple or the city. Nearly 100 years later, Nehemiah, appointed governor of the area by the king of Persia, was still trying to get the city walls rebuilt (Neh 3-6). And Ezra about the same time was still trying to get the people to recover some sense of who they are as God's people (Neh 8).

History unfolded in quite a different way than the community of the middle section of Isaiah envisioned it. There was so much elation at the prospect of a return from exile and the restoration of the nation that the rhetoric sometimes became rather grandiose. There is no question that some of the pronouncements in that second section are highly metaphorical ways of making the theological point that God was at work in the rise of the Persian empire and the end of Babylon. Yet, many took the exaggerated language as a historical program of how the restoration would unfold. So when the grand visions did not unfold in history exactly the way the people thought they should, they became discouraged.

They had much to be discouraged about in that 100 years following the return. A quick survey of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah will reveal how difficult life was in Israel between 538 and 450. The people were barely surviving. Very few had actually returned from Babylon. Most had simply stayed there. Since most of them had been born there, for all practical purposes they were Babylonians. Life had been good in Babylon. They were not kept as slaves, but allowed to become part of Babylonian culture. As such, they had prospered.

Most of those who had returned were priests, probably not the best group to rebuild a totally devastated land, which likely explains why so little rebuilding was actually carried out for 100 years. And even when the temple was rebuilt under Zerubbabel and Ezra in 520, it was not the same beautiful temple that Solomon had built. They likely only restacked the stones from the destroyed walls of the old building. Ezra 3:12 tells us that some of those who were still alive who had seen and remembered Solomon's temple wept when they saw the foundations laid for the new building, apparently because they knew it would only be a crude imitation of that earlier temple.

The people had no protection, since the city walls had been leveled. They were

constantly at risk from marauding bandits and rival tribes (Ezra 4; cf. Neh 2:10). There was even opposition from the Israelites who had been allowed to remain in the land. Those who returned that were not priests wanted to reclaim ancestral lands that had been taken over by those who had remained. Yet they had been on that land for 70 years, and saw the claims as a threat to their own security. Since the olive trees had been cut and the vineyards destroyed, food was in short supply (it takes many years for an olive tree to produce fruit after it is planted).

So, many simply concluded that the promises were false and that God was not really much of a god after all. This allowed apathy, the idea that God is powerless and does not care what they do, to set in. There are even traces of a developing cynicism (cf. 56:12). It is this disillusionment and despair of things ever getting any better that is reflected in the third section of Isaiah.

2) Most of the perspectives above can be easily seen in Ezra and Nehemiah, as well as in the prophetic books of Haggai and Zechariah. But the most obvious parallel is found in the book of Malachi. The main thrust of this prophet's message is his challenge of the indifference and apathy of the people (3:14): "You have said, 'It is of no purpose to serve God. What do we profit by keeping his command or by going about as mourners before the Lord of hosts?'" This entire book is directed at the attitudes of people and priests alike who have concluded that God no longer cares for them ("How have you loved us?" 1:2). The book of Malachi, is usually dated between 500 and 450 BC, while Haggai and Zechariah are dated only slightly earlier, around 520-515 (see [Israelite Prophets Date Chart](#)). This is likewise about the time of the work of Ezra and Nehemiah and the events that the books that carry their names recount.

All this says that the theological perspectives of the third section of Isaiah, and the concerns they address, are the same concerns faced by the community of returned exiles in the period from about 540-450 BC. These same perspectives appear in the prophetic writings from this period, and fit with what we know is going on historically from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. This simply suggests that this third section of Isaiah is far more likely to be contemporaneous with these prophets in this time period than with Isaiah of Jerusalem in 700 BC. This would place a time frame for this third section of the book somewhere between 515 and 500 BC.

3) While the literary features of the book cannot help us much with a precise time period, they can confirm that there is some type of shift in the book between chapters 55 and 56. We have already noted the clear transition between chapters 39 and 40. We might likewise expect some literary clue to divide these chapters if, indeed, they should be seen to address different periods of history.

The end of chapter 55 does, indeed, seem to provide just such a conclusion and transition. In fact, the last three chapters, 54-56, serve to bring this section to a climax in fairly typical prophetic fashion. Following the strongly future dimension of the servant passage in 52-53 (however one might interpret the servant), there follows immediately the Song of Assurance (54), picking up the familiar Old Testament image of the joy of a barren woman who is now promised children (54:1). This chapter is clearly a celebration of God's grace in the restoration from exile. The final chapter of this section is a call for the people to respond to that grace, a call to change and a new

future based on God's gracious act of restoration (55:6-7):

Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

The same feature of a climactic call to repentance can be seen in the conclusion to the book of Hosea (14). Verses 12-13 of chapter 55 are a hymnic conclusion to the chapter and to the second section of the book.

Verses 8-11 of chapter 55 tie the second section to this third section of the book in message and theme. The key idea is the validity and reliability of God's word. The idea of God speaking and the reliability of what God says is a key ingredient of the second section of Isaiah, especially chapter 40, particularly in verses 6-8. The issue in that second section of the book is the promise of God's new action in history that would effect the restoration of Israel back to its land. The *word* of Yahweh is sure, even if inscrutable. The images of rain and growing seed illustrate the wonder and mystery of God's ways. The *word* here is not just the content of what is said; it is the agency, the instrument through which something is effected, in this case God himself. The focus here is on Yahweh's faithfulness and mercy to restore his people, as well as his will to do so.

However, God's word is not automatic, it does not work on its own apart from God or disassociated from the people's response to it (55:6-9). God's promise may be accepted or rejected. Disobedience or failure to accept God's promise does not necessarily invalidate the promise. But the question is clearly left in the air by the call to respond in chapter 55 whether failure to respond faithfully to the promise might not somehow hinder or endanger the promises of that second section. This becomes the key connective to the third section of the book. As noted, the issue facing the community reflected in this third section is the disillusionment of the people with their historical circumstances. The lack of the glorious kingdom promised by earlier prophets precipitated a severe crisis of faith for this community. It is this crisis that this third section addresses as the book attempts to revalidate the promises and rebuild a hope for the future that has almost been lost.

Like the previous two sections, the theme of this entire third section of the book is introduced in 56:1: "Keep righteousness and do justice for soon my deliverance will come." This reveals that the problem is in the delay of the promises, corresponding closely to the NT problem: "where is the promise of His coming?" It also reveals that the problem involves a failure on the part of the community, just as in the corresponding prophecy of Malachi. Theologically, the call is for the people to be faithful to God and live as God's people in the world even when there is no direct evidence that God is there.

Summary

This evidence leads to two conclusions. **First**, it seems entirely likely from the book itself, that the Isaiah traditions stretch over a span of time from the era of Isaiah of

Jerusalem in the middle eighth century BC to the post exilic era in the early fifth century BC. The three sections of the book sort out into three distinct time periods within the life of the community during that period.

The first section, chapters 1-39, comes from the Assyrian period and is directly associated with the ministry of Isaiah of Jerusalem from 740 to 700 BC. That does not mean that all material within those chapters dates from that period, however, since there are clearly some later additions to this collection from the Babylonian era. But it does establish Isaiah of Jerusalem as the founder of the Isaiah traditions.

The second section of the book, 40-55, comes from the late exilic period as the empire of Babylon was coming to an end and the Persian empire was emerging as the new ruler of the Middle East. If we take the edict of Cyrus in 538 as a benchmark for this era, this section of the book dates to **about 540-539 BC.**

The third section of the book, 56-66, reflects the crisis of faith precipitated by unfulfilled or delayed prophecy, a situation that we know from Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi prevailed between 520 and 450 BC. If we use the time of Haggai around 520 as benchmark for this era, this third section of Isaiah probably comes **from the period 515-500,** with the possibility that it may extend as late as 450.

As suggested earlier, the unity of the book of Isaiah is not to be found on the level of history or authorship. Its unity lies on the level of its theological message about God and how the people responded, and should respond, to his work in the world.

Second, seen in this light, there is really nothing in the book itself that directly addresses the idea of predictive prophecy, either for or against. It is simply not what lies at the heart of the book. This means on the one hand, it is probably a mistake to use the book as any kind of proof text to support the authority of Scripture based on the correspondence of prediction with events that happened hundreds of years later. On the other hand, seeing the book as the unfolding witness to God's work in the world provides no direct proof that there is no predictive prophecy. In other words, the whole issue of predictive prophecy must be dealt with on other grounds than a study of the book of Isaiah. That issue is much more an problem that arises from certain theological assertions than it does from most biblical texts. There are other texts that address the issue more directly (see [Ezekiel and the Oracles Against Tyre](#)). But at least in the way that the Isaiah texts have been used, the unity and authorship of Isaiah are not very good weapons with which to fight that battle.

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<http://www.crivoice.org/isaiahunity.html>

DISCUSSION

As we begin to look at Mr. Bratcher's article we see that he begins with "The Battle," and so let us take up from that point:

The Battle

The unity and authorship of the Book of Isaiah has been a touchy subject for many Christians for much of the 20th century. This particular issue has drawn a disproportionate amount of discussion and has usually generated more heat than light. For many, it has become a shibboleth of orthodoxy with the position taken on the issue separating those who believe the Bible from those who don't.

Robin A. Brace wrote the following concerning this battle:

"The literary unity of Isaiah was not doubted until comparatively recent times. There is no evidence that the ancients who lived a few hundred years after Isaiah's time knew of any problems concerning Isaiah's writings. Even the translators of the Septuagint translation (approx. 200 BC) showed no indications of disbelieving that the 66 chapters of Isaiah are not Isaiah's work. Nor did the copyists of the text of Isaiah seem to know any other author except Isaiah the son of Amoz" (<http://www.ukapologetics.net/2criticalisaiah.html>).

The reason it has generated more heat than light is because liberal critics have come in, of late, and have tried to draw the faithful away with uncertain words; words that we just cannot follow. Brace also wrote: "Some atheistic German rationalist Bible critics have insisted on dividing the prophet into 2 or 3 persons. When carefully examined, their evidence is flimsy and their argument is now beginning to lose authority" (Ibid). It is not the believer's fault that there is so much heat concerning this because we hold to our faith. Jude wrote "*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*" (Jud 1:3). We are to earnestly contend for that which we know to be correct, and when false teachers bring in false doctrine, we are to rebuke them, mark them and avoid them (Tit. 2:15; Rom. 16:17).

There are various reasons why some have chosen the authorship and unity of the book of Isaiah as a battleground, but a single issue invariably and quickly comes to the forefront: the issue of predictive prophecy. In varying degrees of intensity and from various angles of concern, defenders of the unity and single authorship of Isaiah contend that to concede the book was formed over a period of time would eliminate the amazingly accurate predictive element of prophecy in the book. There is sometimes even the claim made that people who suggest anything differently are really trying to promote an agenda that denies belief in prophecy or the trustworthiness of Scripture. Or, to argue the other way, they contend that if Isaiah of Jerusalem wrote the entire book, it could only have been God's direct revelation to him of the things that he predicts, which provides proof of the supernatural origin of Scripture, as well as proof that the future can be absolutely predicted hundreds of years in advance.

This is not an agenda, and we have not chosen the authorship of Isaiah as a battleground. The liberal critics and the atheists have done that, and we are merely defending what is right and good. Predictive prophecy is a very relevant issue here. The scriptures being of supernatural origin is of relevant issue here. Paul wrote: "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*" (2Ti 3:16). Now that statement is either true, or it is false; you can't have it both ways. Stephen Barker wrote:

"A sentence that is a tautology is bound to be true in every possible situation. Thus, it is a kind of necessarily true sentence, whose necessary truth results from its truth functional form. One well-known type of tautology has the form 'pv-p.' This is sometimes called the 'law of excluded middle,' because it reflects the fact that any given sentence must be either true or false, there being no third alternative" (*Elements of Logic*, p. 91).

Along those same lines Thomas B. Warren wrote: "(2) *For Propositions*. The law of excluded middle for propositions is: every precisely stated proposition is either true or false (not true). This is the case because there is no middle ground between a proposition being true or false (not true)" (*Logic and the Bible* p. 21). We could go on, but the point is true. Either Isaiah wrote all of the book of Isaiah or he didn't. If he didn't then the New Testament is in error because so much of the New Testament quotes Isaiah as though it was one complete book

written by one complete writer. As a matter of fact, even as late as the date of John Gill's writings he had no indication that there was any argumentation over this issue for he surely would have mentioned such an issue in his introduction to his commentary to this wonderful book, but no such words were written:

“Isaiah - INTRODUCTION TO ISALAH

This book is called, in the New Testament, sometimes "the Book of the Words of the Prophet Esaias", [Luk 3:4](#) sometimes only the "Prophet Esaias", [Act 8:28](#) and sometimes, as here, the "Book of the Prophet Esaias", [Luk 4:17](#). In the Syriac version the title is, "the Prophecy of Isaiah the Son of Amos": and in the Arabic version, "the Beginning of the Prophecy of Isaiah the Prophet". It stands first of all the prophets; though the order of the prophets, according to the Jews (a), is, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the twelve. But it is here placed first, not because Isaiah prophesied before the other prophets; for Joel, Jonah, Hosea, and Amos, begun before him, namely, in or before the days of Jeroboam the Second; but because of the excellency of the matter contained in it. Isaiah is called by Ben Syra (b) the great prophet, and by Eusebius (c) the greatest of the prophets; and Jerom (d) says, he should rather be called an evangelist than a prophet, since he seems rather to write a history of things past, than to prophesy of things to come; yea, he styles him an apostle, as well as an evangelist (e): and certain it is that no one writes so fully and clearly of the person, offices, grace, and kingdom of Christ; of his incarnation and birth of a virgin; of his sufferings and death, and the glory that should follow, as he does. John, the forerunner of Christ, began his ministry with a passage out of him concerning himself, [Mat 3:3](#). Our Lord preached his first sermon at Nazareth out of this book, [Luk 4:17](#) and it was in this the eunuch was reading when Philip came up to him, who from the same Scripture preached to him Christ, [Act 8:28](#). And there are more citations in the New Testament made out of this prophecy than any other book, excepting the book of Psalms, as Musculus observes. To which may be added, as another reason, the elegance and sublimity of his style in which he exceeds the greatest of orators, Demosthenes among the Greeks, and Tully among the Romans; and this is observed both by Jews and Christians. Abarbinel (f) says, that the purity, and elegance of his diction is like that of kings and counsellors, who speak more purely and elegantly than other men: hence their Rabbins, he says, compare Isaiah to a citizen, and Ezekiel to a countryman. And Jerom (g) observes, that Isaiah is so eloquent and polite, that there is nothing of rusticity in his language; and that his style is so florid, that a translation cannot preserve it. Moreover, another reason of this book being placed first may be the bulk of it; it being larger, and containing more chapters, than any of the greater prophets, and almost as many as all the lesser prophets put together. That Isaiah was the writer of this book is not to be questioned; many of the prophecies in it are by name ascribed to him, [Mat 13:14](#) though some others might be the compilers of it, collect his prophecies, and digest them in order: so the Jews say (h), that Hezekiah and his company wrote Isaiah, &c. At what time, and in whose days he prophesied, may be learnt from [Isa 1:1](#) by which it appears that he prophesied long, and lived to a good old age. He began to prophesy about A. M. 3236, and about seven hundred and seventy years before Christ. Abulpharagius, an Arabic

writer, says (i), he lived an hundred and twenty years, eighty five of which he prophesied. It is a generally received tradition with the Jews, that he lived to the time of Manasseh, and that he was sawn asunder by him; and which has been embraced by the ancient Christian writers, and is thought to be referred to in [Heb 11:37](#). See Gill on [Heb 11:37](#). But Aben Ezra on [Isa 1:1](#) observes, that had he lived to the time of Manasseh, it would have been written, and is of opinion that he died in Hezekiah's time. According to the Cippi Hebraici (k), he was buried at Tekoah, over whose grave a beautiful monument was erected; though Epiphanius (l), or the author of the Lives of the Prophets that go by his name, says he was buried under the oak of Rogel, near the fountain of Siloam; and it is a tradition with the Syriac writers, that his body lay hid in the waters of Siloah; See Gill on [Joh 5:4](#) but these are things not to be depended on; and alike fabulous are all other writings ascribed to him, besides this prophecy; as what are called the ascension of Isaiah, the vision of Isaiah, and the conference of Isaiah. This book contains some things historical, but chiefly prophetic; of which some relate to the punishment of the Jews, and other nations; but for the most part are evangelical, and concern the kingdom and grace of Christ; of which some are delivered out more clearly and perspicuously, and others more obscurely, under the type of the deliverance of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity.

(a) T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 14. 2. (b) Ecclesiasticus, ch. xlviii. ver. 22. (c) Demonstrat, Evangel. l. 5. c. 4. inscript. p. 225. (d) Adv. Ruffinum, fol. 76. D. tom. 2. ad Paulam & Eustechium, fol. 8. M. tom. 3. (e) Prooem. in Es. fol. 2. B. tom. 5. (f) Comment. in Proph. Poster. fol. 1. 2. (g) Ad Paulam, ut supra, (& Eustechium, fol. 8. M. tom. 3.) (h) T. Bab. Bava Bathra, fol. 15. 1. (i) Hist. Dynast. p. 43. (k) P. 11. Ed. Hottinger. (l) De Vitis Prophet. c. 7. & Isidor. Hispalens. de Vit. & Mort. Sanct. c. 37. (*Exposition on the Old Testament, Isaiah, e-Sword*).

Gill's commentaries were not the kind of commentaries that just ignored problems in the Bible. He dealt with difficult issues in every place where he found one, and had there been a problem during his day, and departed this life on October 14, 1771.

Keil & Delietzh wrote:

“We may safely enter upon our investigation with the preconceived opinion that the collection before us was edited by the prophet himself. For, with the exception of the book of Jonah, which belongs to the prophetic-historical writings rather than to the literature of prediction, or the prophetic writings in the ordinary acceptance of the term, all the canonical books of prophecy were written and arranged by the prophets whose names they bear. The most important to our purpose is the analogy of the larger books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. No one denies that Ezekiel prepared his work for publication exactly as it lies before us now; and Jeremiah informs us himself, that he collected and published his prophecies on two separate occasions. Both collections are arranged according to the two different points of view of the subject-matter and the order of time, which are interwoven the one with the other. And this is also the case with the collection of Isaiah's prophecies” (*Commentaries on the Old Testament, e-Sword*).

It does seem to me to be a problem when older men knew more about the Bible than modern scholars today. We are supposed to be the most educated people that has ever existed on earth, we have much better technology than they had but they knew much more about the Bible than we know today. Maybe all this new technology keeps us from getting down and studying for ourselves. It wouldn't hurt Bratcher to read Gill's introduction, especially the following:

“(e): and certain it is that no one writes so fully and clearly of the person, offices, grace, and kingdom of Christ; of his incarnation and birth of a virgin; of his sufferings and death, and the glory that should follow, as he does. John, the forerunner of Christ, began his ministry with a passage out of him concerning himself, [Mat 3:3](#). Our Lord preached his first sermon at Nazareth out of this book, [Luk 4:17](#) and it was in this the eunuch was reading when Philip came up to him, who from the same Scripture preached to him Christ, [Act 8:28](#). And there are more citations in the New Testament made out of this prophecy than any other book, excepting the book of Psalms, as Musculus observes. To which may be added, as another reason, the elegance and sublimity of his style in which he exceeds the greatest of orators, Demosthenes among the Greeks, and Tully among the Romans; and this is observed both by Jews and Christians. Abarbinel” (Ibid).

For if he would he would discover that the unity of the authorship of Isaiah has everything to do with predictive prophecy, and the supernatural origin of the scriptures.

Bratcher continues:

For example, from this perspective Isaiah names the Persian ruler Cyrus who would overthrow Babylon 100 years before there was even a Babylonian empire and 200 years before Cyrus would be even be born (Isa 44:28, 45:1). This, they believe, is physical proof of the absolutely miraculous nature of Scripture. This is often expanded to include claims of total inerrancy and historical infallibility of the biblical texts. Allowing parts of the book of Isaiah to date after the time of Isaiah of Jerusalem (740-701 BC) would put all of this at risk (see [Prophets Date Charts](#))

<http://www.crivoice.org/prophetschart.html>

This predictive prophecy is nothing compared to the prophecies concerning the Christ who would not come for several hundred years (Isa. 7:14; 9:6), or the coming of the church which would not come into existence for several hundred years (Isa. 2:2-4). What is so remarkable about a 200 year predictive prophecy? There isn't. The problem isn't the amount of time of

the prophecy; the problem is the idea of predictive prophecy in the first place. If predictive prophecy can be proven, then the Bible can be proven to be of supernatural origin, and that is something that people like Bratcher just can't live with. In other words to allow predictive prophecy in the book of Isaiah would put Bratcher's position of Bible errancy doctrine at risk.

In other words, the arguments against any suggestion of more than one author or time frame are not usually based on evidence from the book itself. Rather, assumptions about the nature of Scripture and prophecy, certain theories of inspiration, and certain beliefs about how God works in human history provide the conclusion that this must be a single work by Isaiah of Jerusalem. Any evidence is read within that already decided conclusion based on considerations outside the text itself.

Now notice what Bratcher says: “In other words, the arguments against any suggestion of more than one author or time frame are not usually based on evidence from the book itself.” Just taking the book itself one can come to no conclusion other than Isaiah wrote the entire book. Commentators and scholars up until the 20th century took the position that Isaiah wrote the book of Isaiah in its completeness, and their only evidence was the book itself. Bratcher's statement “Rather, assumptions about the nature of Scripture and prophecy, certain theories of inspiration, and certain beliefs about how God works in human history provide the conclusion that this must be a single work by Isaiah of Jerusalem” is patently false. First of all we make no assumption about the nature of Scripture and prophecy or inspiration. The Bible simply claims inspiration, and the evidence (both internal and external) prove that it is inspired. Predictive prophecy, especially from the book of Isaiah, is proof of Biblical inspiration. God works through his providential care in human history, and just simply reading the book of Isaiah will show anyone who wants to see it that it is the work of one writer. Then his statement: “ Any evidence is read within that already decided conclusion based on considerations outside the text itself” is also false. If his position about us not basing our decision on the text is in error, then his conclusion is also in error.

Major Premise: If Bratcher's argument that Bible believers holding to the book of

Isaiah being written only by Isaiah being based on considerations only outside the text is in error, then Bratcher's conclusion is in error.

Minor Premise: Bratcher's argument that Bible believers holding to the book of Isaiah being written only by Isaiah being based on considerations only outside the text is in error.

Conclusion: Therefore, Bratcher's conclusion is in error.

Now the major premise is axiomatic so what needs to be proven is the minor premise. If the minor premise is true, then we will have a sound argument because the argument is valid, being in correct form (if p then q, p, therefore q). It is a hypothetical syllogism in modus ponens form. In Aristolean logic the form is all that would be needed to make it valid, but according to modern logic there has to be a true relationship between the premise and the conclusion. So the major premise is axiomatic, that is it is automatically true. What we need to prove is the minor premise.

Last year this writer wrote a paper on the unity of Isaiah dealing with arguments on Larue's ideas about this issue. I wrote:

There are two types of evidences for determining the authenticity of any work; (A) internal evidences, and (B) external evidences. The internal evidences are those evidences that one looks at within the work itself to see if it can justifiably be considered an authentic work of a certain person. This is where Larue argues that Isaiah was not the single human author. His argument is that there was what he termed "proto-Isaiah" or first Isaiah because some of the first 39 chapters may have contained some of the quotations from the prophet himself, but it was not all written by the prophet. Then there was the "deutero-Isaiah" or second Isaiah which was the recorded words of a sixth century prophet in Babylonian exile, and then there was the "trio-Isaiah" or "third Isaiah" which is a continuation of the "deutero-Isaiah's" works by his disciples and some of his collective sayings.

What causes Larue (and others like him) to think that there is any division between chapters 39 and 40 at all?

"At that time Merodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered. And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not. Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from

whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon. Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them. Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. He said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days” (Isa 39:1-8).

The next chapter begins with a prophecy of Isaiah which deals with a messianic prophecy:

“Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young. Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved. Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain,

and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble. To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa 40:1-31)

John Gill wrote:

“INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH 40

This chapter treats of the comforts of God’s people; of the forerunner and coming of the Messiah; of his work, and the dignity of his person; of the folly of making idols, and of the groundless complaints of the church of God. The consolations of God’s people, by whom to be administered, and the matter, ground, and reason of them, (<234001>Isaiah 40:1,2). John the Baptist, the harbinger of Christ, is described by his work and office, and the effects of it; it issuing in the humiliation of some, and the exaltation of others, and in the revelation of the glory of Christ” (*Commentary on the Old Testament, Isaiah*, p. 600).

The first verse of chapter forty speaks of the prophecy of the pending doom of the Israelites to the Babylonian nation. However, Isaiah (as his style is) integrates one of the messianic promises into this. Verses two and following deal with the prophecy of John the Baptist coming to be the forerunner of Jesus Christ

“**Ver. 1.** *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.*] The Babylonish captivity being predicted in the preceding chapter, for the comfort of God’s people a deliverance is promised, expressed in such terms, as in the clearest and strongest manner to set forth the redemption and salvation by Jesus Christ, of which it was typical. Here begins the more evangelical and spiritual part of this prophecy, which reaches to and includes the whole Gospel dispensation, from the coming of John the Baptist to the second coming of Christ. It begins with comforts, and holds on and ends with them; which consolations, Kimchi observes, are what should be in the times of the Messiah; and the word “comfort” is repeated, he says, to confirm the thing” (Ibid, pp. 600, 601).

The argument that the style of deutero-Isaiah and proto-Isaiah are different is completely false. When one takes notice of this example where Isaiah is predicting the demise of the Israelite nation to the nation of Babylon and at the same time gives a messianic prophecy and then goes back to Isaiah 7:14 we see the same exact same thing being done there.

In the seventh chapter Isaiah was dealing with Ahaz who was preparing to go up

against Rezin, King of Syria. Verse three says “*Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shearjashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field.*” While discussing with Ahaz Isaiah told Ahaz to ask for a sign of his prophecy that his quest against Rezin would not be successful. Ahaz refused to ask for a sign:

“*Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel*” (Isa 7:10-14).

Right in the middle of dealing with a matter of Israel’s national momentary or near future national security, Isaiah integrates a messianic prophecy. This integration is what has caused so many to conclude that Isaiah 7:14 is not a messianic prophecy at all, but rather a prophecy that would shortly come to pass.

This purpose of this thesis is not to deal with the meaning of the prophecy found in Isaiah 7:14, though it is and always has been the firm belief of this author that it is straight line messianic prophecy. The purpose here is to show the similarities between Isaiah’s prophecy here and his prophecy in chapter 40:1ff. The evidence shows that both were written by the same man, not someone later on. It seems that those who work to find problems with God’s inspired word often trip themselves up on important matters like this; they just can’t help it. Error cannot be consistent! Both times, right in the middle of a nation’s national security issues Isaiah integrates a messianic promise. That is simply his way of doing things. This is something that cannot be denied.

Bible scholar and author Homer Hailey, in his commentary on the book of Isaiah wrote concerning chapter 40:2:

“*2. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem—Jerusalem stands for the surviving remnant, for at the time in view the physical city will lie in ruins and the people will be in captivity. The word of comfort is spoke ‘to the heart’ (margin), the center of the emotions which has long lain crushed under the consequence of sin and rebellion. It is now to be comforted by the God who has been spurned and rejected for empty vanities of wood and stone, the God who has sent faithless Judah into captivity for discipline*” (*A Commentary on Isaiah, With Emphasis on the Messianic Hope*, p. 331).

Hailey goes on to say that verses three through five deal with the messianic promise of John the Baptist coming as the forerunner of the Messiah, Jesus Christ or Jehovah:

“*3. In this verse the speaker is left unidentified. The prophet simply says, The voice of one that crieth, Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah. The message must receive the emphasis; the speaker is secondary. The voice is not that of Jehovah, for the way is to be made level for Him. Shortly before Jerusalem was destroyed Ezekiel saw a vision in which Jehovah withdrew a temple and city, removing toward the east (Ezek 11:23). And now through the trackless wilderness and desolate desert (cf. 21:1), He is returning to Jerusalem with His people after an absence of fifty years, the period of captivity (586-537 B.C.). The voice cries that the way for His return be prepared. Using the figure of preparation for the journey of a great king, the prophet says Make level in the desert a highway for our God*” (Ibid, p. 332).

The remnant that was promised to be saved is what Isaiah promises will be saved and that remnant is of Judah, not Israel. So why is it that Larue, and others like him come up with these arguments that Isaiah is not the only writer of the book? Simply because the book is literally filled with messianic prophecies. Homer Hailey's commentary is rightly named: "*With Emphasis on the Messianic Hope.*" If critics can cast doubt on the authorship (unity) of the book, then casting doubt on its content is a small matter. Thus the internal evidence for the book of Isaiah is extremely important and what we have examined (and we haven't even scratched the surface) leads to Isaiah as the only human author of the book; with God (the Holy Spirit) as the divine author.

This article can be found at <http://www.challenge2.org/unityofisaiah.pdf>

So how did we come to the conclusion that Larue was in error? By the internal evidence, the text itself. We don't need any external evidence to see that Isaiah had only one writer. Just reading the book itself shows that it had only one writer. However, there is external evidence that Isaiah was the sole writer of the book that bears his name.

Mr. Bratcher continues:

As a result, many traditional arguments have held for a **historical** unity for the entire book. That is, all of Isaiah was written by the prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem in the eighth century BC (740-700). As noted, this has usually been promoted as the only way to understand the book, not from analysis of book itself but from certain views of scripture and prophecy. As noted, in modern times, especially since the rise of analytical biblical study in the latter nineteenth century, this has often become a defensive position, an apologetic for predictive prophecy.

Seeing that Isaiah as the sole author of the book which bears his name **is** the **only** proper way to understand the book. Not only is it an apologetic for predictive prophecy, but the analysis of the book itself shows that it had but one writer. [Y.T. Radday](#) argues that because he put certain words in a computer from different chapters of the book of Isaiah and it showed differences that it led to the conclusion that the book had more than one writer. I have had three written debates on the resurrection of Christ. Two of them were with the same man, Spencer Lo. In the first debate I used the traditional arguments and used normal type language, but in the second debate Mr. Lo wanted to discuss the theoretical aspects of what scientists from the future might find in the future. My proposition obligated me to show that

even in the future science would show that God raised Christ from the dead by supernatural power. Mr. Lo wanted to show that in the future scientists might possibly find that Jesus rose from the dead naturally. He tried to argue this in the first debate, but I continued with the traditional arguments. In the second debate I used completely different kinds of words; words with more syllables. If you were to feed words from both debates into a computer and ask it to check for differences, it would come to the conclusion that there were two different writers of the two articles, but I can assure that I wrote both sets of articles (<http://www.challenge2.org/coverres.pdf>; <http://www.challenge2.org/coverpage2.pdf>). If you read both debates you will certainly find different kind of words used by this writer and in a different style of writing. Why? Because the occasion called for it! The argument that Radday makes is irrelevant because there were many reasons that Isaiah would have had to have used longer words with more syllables and even inflective nouns. Neither Radday, Larue nor Bratcher has an argument that holds water when it is scrutinized. Bratcher continues:

Such a historical unity for the book fits well with world views constructed from a Platonic/idealistic perspective. This perspective is primarily concerned with ultimate reality and focuses on the total control God exerts on everything that happens in the world, a feature of most theological systems that hold to some form of predeterminism. It also fits well with certain views of prophecy that see its only function as predicting the future, especially as that prediction leads to Christ. For many this is a primary agenda in arguing for the predictive element as fundamental in prophecy. Actually, however, this is as much a misunderstanding of the New Testament as it is of the Old Testament, but that is another topic.

No it is not another topic, it is the topic. Bratcher wants to hit and miss on the real issue in his article and throw in just enough to make the reader think that he is dealing with the issue. Well, he's not dealing with anything. Predictive prophecy of the Old Testament, especially those concerning the Christ are essential to the Christian life. If Isaiah did not write the entire book of Isaiah, then (1) the New Testament is in error because many times the New Testament writers quoted the prophet Isaiah (Rom. 10:16), and if the New Testament is in error then (2)

we have no hope of eternal life because the New Testament are the words of the Spirit given to the writers and they are the words that came from Christ (Jn. 16:13). Also if Isaiah did not write the book, then this calls into question predictive prophecy and the deity of Jesus Christ (Isa. 7:14—Mt. 1:21-25).

From such a perspective, the "prediction" of the coming of Cyrus in Isaiah 44-45 became the crux of the issue. Either a person believed that this was accurately predicted by Isaiah of Jerusalem 200 years before it happened or one didn't believe any of the Bible. However, this is really arguing an idea of what the Bible ought to be rather than looking at the text on its own terms. Unfortunately, this is still preached from some pulpits, even though it simply is not true. Many people hold the Bible in high regard as the authoritative word of God and cherish it as the basic source for the faith and practice of the church, and yet do not believe that these chapters were written by Isaiah of Jerusalem in 700 BC.

What is so difficult to believe that Isaiah would prophecy something that would happen 200 years in the future? Is it really that difficult? Bratcher, and those like him don't want it because they would have to allow for the supernatural, and that is something they just won't do. Spencer Lo agreed that Jesus could have risen from the dead, but he argued that Jesus was an alien and the angels were aliens and that they raised Jesus naturally. It was easier for him to come up with some far-fetched dramatized sci-fi idea than it was to just admit that God supernaturally raised Jesus from the dead. I will agree to this: "Either a person believes that Isaiah predicted that Cyrus would come and overtake Jerusalem 200 years before it happened, or one can't trust any part of the Bible." It is either an all or none proposition. With Jesus you are either with him, or against him (Mt. 12:30). This idea of trying to be neutral and take the best of both worlds just won't work. People who do this don't belong in either world. He tells us that many hold the Bible in high regard and as their authority but do not believe chapters 44-45 were written by Isaiah the prophet. You want to explain how that is possible? If they can't accept the fact that Isaiah could have predicted the fall of Jerusalem 200 years before the fact, then they certainly cannot accept the fact that he could predict the

coming of the Messiah several hundred years before the fact. With that being the case they rip the authority of the New Testament right out from under themselves. So what do they hold up as authoritative? That makes no more sense than Ron Labbe, of Houston Texas, did back in the early 90's when he said that he was a Christian, but he didn't believe in the inspiration or inerrancy of the Bible. I wrote and asked him since he didn't believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of the only book that instructed him about Christ and how to become a Christian and live the Christian life, what made him think he was a Christian. I am still waiting for an answer. So inconsistent are these people, but inconsistency doesn't bother them because they just pretend that there is no inconsistency and go on to someone else and spout off the same old non-sense. Bratcher continues:

It is true that some scholars used the new insights into the origin of the book of Isaiah that emerged in the first part of the 20th century to discount any revelatory actions of God in history. But they had no more basis to take such a position than did those who argued that God himself wrote the book. That was simply an example of the newly developing methods of biblical investigation being used badly. However, some tried to counter such views by rejecting not only the erroneous conclusions, but also the methods of biblical study being used. As a result, often the argument was too strong in the other direction, which resulted for many in a wholesale rejection of the insights into the composition of the biblical books, and Isaiah in particular, that would prove so valuable for others in understanding the dynamic of the biblical message.

Now we see Bratcher wanting to sit in the middle when he says: “It is true that some scholars used the new insights into the origin of the book of Isaiah that emerged in the first part of the 20th century to discount any revelatory actions of God in history. But they had no more basis to take such a position than did those who argued that God himself wrote the book.” He just can't see that you have to choose one side or the other. You cannot stand in the middle in this war. The problem might be that he doesn't see that we are in a war in the first place. Maybe he thinks that everyone is at peace with each other; surely not! No, I think he understands that we are in the middle of a war, but he wants to compromise. He wants to sit in the camp of the liberal, the skeptic, the Bible critic, and the atheist, and sit in the camp of the Bible

believer at the same time. Well that just doesn't work. The apostle Paul wrote:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, (2Co 6:14-17).

In other words, you cannot sit in both camps! What communion does light have with darkness? What fellowship does righteousness have with unrighteousness? What agreement does Christ have with the prince of licentiousness and corruption? And what part does a believer have with an unbeliever? And finally, what agreement does the church have with the world. We as Christians cannot sit in both camps, we can only sit in Christ's camp. We must fight against the enemy.

He does not understand the implication of his doctrine because he fails to see why some have rejected the Bible completely having taken his view. In 1992 Roger Barron and I went up against Kenny Boles and D.D. Dunning at the Bland Christian Church on the subject of Instrumental Music for 3 nights. Boles' and Dunning's view was that if the Bible didn't specifically condemn it then it was all right to use it. I pointed out from one of their own preachers that since the Bible didn't specifically forbid steak and potatoes on the Lord's table that they could be used. Hal Hyranimus was the Christian Church preacher who made this argument. I used it several times the first two nights. The second night one Christian Church preacher stormed out of the building yelling "I have been a Christian Church preacher for 35 years, and I have never seen steak and potatoes used on the Lord's table." He didn't hang around long enough to hear my response, but my response was that it didn't make any difference if he had ever seen it or even heard of it. The fact is that his doctrine implied that it was all right and this was even recognized by one of their preachers.

Mr. Bratcher doesn't understand implication. The late Thomas Warren wrote concerning implication:

“To say that proposition X (statement) implies proposition Y is to say that it is impossible for proposition X to be true without proposition Y also being true. This means that proposition Y is a logical consequence of the proposition X—that it *follows* from proposition X. It says, in short, that proposition X functions as *evidence of* and that proposition Y functions as *conclusion*” (*Logic and the Bible*, p. 27).

In other words Mr. Bratcher's doctrine that Isaiah did not write the entire book has detrimental implications to both the book and the entire Bible. Now he may not see them, or want to see them, but they are there and those who do see them (on the liberal side) are taking advantage of them. Bratcher then continues:

Assumptions that Support the Battle

First, let's consider some of the assumptions often made in discussing this topic. The problem with many of these assumptions is that they either come from our modern world view and frame of reference without considering how the ancient world might be different, or they work from certain pre-determined beliefs about the nature of Scripture that only allow one way of seeing the text.

1) It is often assumed that the title for the book intends to communicate who wrote the entire book. However, **the traditional title of a biblical book says nothing about authorship of the book.** Just because the book carries the title "Isaiah" does not imply anything one way or the other about who wrote the entire book. For example, the book of Jonah is not a book written *by* Jonah, but *about* him. Similarly, Job, Esther, Ruth, and probably Malachi are likewise not titles of authorship but of content. So, it requires an assumption to conclude that because the 66 chapters of this book fall under the title *Isaiah* this requires that Isaiah be the author of all of them. And it might be important to recall that biblical book titles are not part of the biblical text itself, but are only traditional titles. Many of the Old Testament books have different titles in Hebrew than they do in English, which are based on titles in Greek and Latin translations.

I agree that the title of the Book does not mean that Isaiah is the author of the book, but we don't rely on just the title of the book. Notice what Gill says below:

“INTRODUCTION TO ISAIAH

This book is called, in the New Testament, sometimes “the Book of the Words of the Prophet Esaias”, (<420304>Luke 3:4) sometimes only the “Prophet Esaias”, (<440828>Acts

8:28,30) and sometimes, as here, the “Book of the Prophet Esaias”, (<420417>Luke 4:17). In the Syriac version the title is, “the Prophecy of Isaiah the Son of Amos”: and in the Arabic version, “the Beginning of the Prophecy of Isaiah the Prophet”. It stands first of all the prophets; though the order of the prophets, according to the Jews^{fi}, is, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the twelve. But it is here placed first, not because Isaiah prophesied before the other prophets” (*Exposition on the Entire Bible, Isaiah*, p. 2).

There is plenty of internal evidence that Isaiah wrote the book which bears his name. This argument is no better than the arguments used against Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. It is pretty much the same hashed up stuff dumped on a different book on the Bible. It wasn't valid on the Pentateuch and it isn't valid here.

2) Many assume that single books under a single title are the work of a single person. Yet, there are clear examples in Scripture where book titles were applied to collections of material by various authors. For example, the book of Jeremiah contains narrative sections describing from a third person perspective actions that Jeremiah took (ch. 37-44). There are references within the book to Jeremiah's scribe, Baruch, writing for Jeremiah (36:4-8). So, it seems logical to conclude that these sections were written by Baruch and included with the Jeremiah material without creating a separate book of Baruch (although there is an apocryphal book titled *Baruch*, which contains edited sections of the book of Daniel, it almost certainly was not written by Baruch). Likewise, the book of Amos contains third person narratives about Amos in addition to the collections of the sermons that Amos himself proclaimed (7:10-17).

The book of Jeremiah was written by Jeremiah, Baruch was the scribe that penned at least part of it. This does not mean that the book did not come from Jeremiah. Paul sometimes used people to write what he told them to write, but Paul was the one who was inspired: “The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand” (1Co 16:21). Baruch did not write anything that Jeremiah did not tell him to write “Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book” (Jer 36:4). It also seems, after reading three chapters of the book of Baruch in the Apocrypha, that this book is a book of pleadings to Israel to straighten up so she won't be destroyed. I find no place where Baruch claims that God has told him to write this such as we find in the book of Jeremiah. There were some prayers to God, on Israel's behalf, for mercy from God in that book as well. I don't see any difference in that book

than I would see in a series of articles that I or any other preacher would write to the church to tell it to get straightened up.

In a different kind of example, there are several instances where sections of material in one book, Isaiah in particular, are duplicated word for word in another book. For example, Isaiah 36-39 is largely duplicated in 2 Kings 18:13-20:19. Also, Isaiah 2:2-4 is repeated in Micah 4:1-3. This suggests that the biblical text is not nearly so concerned with authorship as we are, and that biblical books can be composite from various time periods from various authors without specifically stating that they are so.

Now let's look at the duplicated verses. I will not duplicate every verse because it would take up too much space so we will only go to the first verse in each book:

(Isa 36:1) Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them.

(2Ki 18:13) Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.

Gill wrote:

“Ver. 1. *Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, &c.*] The following piece of history is inserted from the books of Kings and Chronicles, as an illustration of some preceding prophecies, and as a confirmation of them; (SEE **<121813>2 Kings 18:13** <143201>2 Chronicles 32:1) *that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah*; who in the Apocrypha:

“And if the king Sennacherib had slain any, when he was come, and fled from Judea, I buried them privily; for in his wrath he killed many; but the bodies were not found, when they were sought for of the king.” (Tobit 1:18)

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is said to be the son of Shalmaneser, as he certainly was his successor, who in the sixth year of Hezekiah, eight years before this, took Samaria, and carried the ten tribes captive, (<121810>2 Kings 18:10,11) he is called Sennacherib by Herodotus^{f682}, who says he was king of the Arabians, and the Assyrians; who yet is blamed by Josephus^{f683}, for not calling him the king of the Assyrians only of the Arabians, whereas he styles him both; and the same Josephus observes, that Berosus, a Chaldean writer, makes mention of this Sennacherib as king of Assyria; the same came up in a military way against the fortified cities of Judah, which were the frontier towns, and barriers of their country: *and took them*; that is, some of them, not all of them; (see <233708>Isaiah 37:8), he thought indeed to have took them to himself, this was his intent, (<143201>2 Chronicles 32:1), but prevailed upon to desist, by a payment of three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold to him, by the king of Judah, (<121814>2 Kings 18:14-16)” (Ibid, pp. 546, 547).

All of this happened in Isaiah's day, and he may well have been one of the contributing writers of the book of second Kings which would easily explain the duplication. Other commentators, such as Albert Barnes, suggests that the Bible student compare the 2 Kings 18:13 account with the Isaiah 39 account. Why? Because it was the same account. This was done during Isaiah's day. We do not know all of the writers of the Chronicles and Kings, and it may very well be possible that Isaiah was one of them. If he wasn't, it is no big problem because God inspired men to write both accounts and he had them say basically the same thing. One was not borrowed from the other. This is the same type of argument that has been used on the four accounts of the gospel, it failed then, and it fails now. It does not hold water. These arguments are made to get around supernatural revelation. Man wants to give a natural explanation to everything, and sometimes natural explanations just don't work.

In his book *Miracles That Never Were* Fred Aquistipace argued that when Moses turned the water into blood in Egypt, he went around the night before and put iron oxides in all the water pots which would turn the water red. Right! Moses was a chemist who knew how to do such things, and Moses spent all night slipping around the palace doing that. What about the Nile? Where did the red water from that come from? O, well there just happened to be a problem with the red clay in the water that day. Some coincidence huh! It is easier to just accept the supernatural than it is to sit around and try and come up with some far out unreasonable, excuse to get out of believing in God.

As far as Isaiah 2:2-4 and Micah 4:1-3 are concerned, I am sure that Mr. Bratcher will surely recognize that Isaiah was not the only prophet who would prophesy about the entrance of the church. Why wouldn't Micah prophecy about the church coming into its established state? Joel did in Joel 2:28-32! He didn't use the words that Micah and Isaiah used, but he

prophesied about the church coming. Is that a problem? No, not unless you have an agenda and you are looking for anything to prove your agenda, then anything becomes a problem. The late Dennis McKinsey once criticized me in his paper *Biblical Errancy* because I was trying to explain that Solomon's molton sea contained 2,000 baths, but another place said it held 3,000 baths. McKinsey got mad and made the statement that if I couldn't tell the difference between 2,000 bathtubs and 3,000 bathtubs I needed to quit. One of his own people had to criticize him and inform him that a bath was a Jewish measurement. In other words, the container contained 2,000, but it would hold 3,000 if needed. See how far fetched these people people go to get their positions?

3) The assumption is often made that the concept of "authorship" is a universal idea that applies to any culture in any time period of human history. But **our modern, Western concept of "authorship" is alien to the ancient Eastern world.** In our world of copyrights and the legal ownership of ideas, we simply assume that this is also how the ancient world conceptualized intellectual property. In fact, the whole concept of ideas being property that can be owned or sold is a totally foreign concept to the ancient, Eastern mind (as well as some modern cultures; see [Community and Testimony: Cultural Influence in Biblical Studies](#)). Our assumptions reflect the highly individualized nature of our culture, forgetting that the ancient Near East was far more tribal or communal in its thinking. Ideas were shared within the community and even passed on from one generation to the next as part of the community. This allowed people to teach or write in another's name, carrying on the tradition of a master through pupils or disciples who would not only preserve the original teachings but add to them as heir of the tradition.

Again, Mr. Bratcher argues from a naturalistic standpoint. His assumption is that the Bible is not of supernatural origin, but is of human origin. When one takes this position, there is nothing in the world that will change his mind. While I cannot open his link in the article within this article I was able to access it in the original article and it is nothing more than another article by none other than, you got it, "Dennis Bratcher." Here is the correct link:

<http://www.crivoice.org/community.html>. Now I haven't read the article, but since it was written by Bratcher, I feel safe in saying that it is going to be biased towards his position. He

has assumed that Isaiah is not inspired

There is evidence within the book of Isaiah that Isaiah of Jerusalem had around him a group of disciples, and that he specifically entrusted them with preserving and transmitting his message (8:16, "Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples," cf. 30:8). Again, it requires both modern assumptions about authorship, as well as ignoring the culture of the ancient world, to conclude that these disciples did nothing but preserve word for word what Isaiah said without allowing the message to be dynamic within their community or applying that message to later events. We know that even in the classic Greek period, students of the Greek philosophers wrote and spoke in the names of their masters, speaking to a new generation and a new time what the master would have spoken had he still been alive (this may also be the case with Paul and the Pastoral Epistles). Again, this suggests that it may be a lack of understanding of the ancient world and our assumptions at work that allows us to even make authorship an issue.

Way to go on taking Isaiah 8:16 out of it's context to make it teach anything you want it to teach. Sorry, but I just can't allow you to get away with that. Let's look at the context:

(Isa 8:1) Moreover the LORD said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Mahershalalhashbaz.

(Isa 8:2) And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah.

(Isa 8:3) And I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said the LORD to me, Call his name Mahershalalhashbaz.

(Isa 8:4) For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria.

(Isa 8:5) The LORD spake also unto me again, saying,

(Isa 8:6) Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son;

(Isa 8:7) Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks:

(Isa 8:8) And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.

(Isa 8:9) Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give

ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.

(Isa 8:10) Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us.

(Isa 8:11) For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying,

(Isa 8:12) Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.

(Isa 8:13) Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

(Isa 8:14) And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

(Isa 8:15) And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

(Isa 8:16) Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

(Isa 8:17) And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.

(Isa 8:18) Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

(Isa 8:19) And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?

(Isa 8:20) To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

(Isa 8:21) And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward.

(Isa 8:22) And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness.

When you begin reading this chapter you see that God has instructed Isaiah to write these things. Then in verse 11 through 16 we find the following:

(Isa 8:11) For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying,

(Isa 8:12) Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.

(Isa 8:13) Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

(Isa 8:14) And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

(Isa 8:15) And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.

(Isa 8:16) Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

In other words, God told Isaiah to bind up the testimony and seal the law among his (God's) disciples. Reader, this is what happens when a person assumes that the Bible is not inspired. He will look for anything at all to save his biting conscience. This verse certainly does not teach what Bratcher says it teaches. And as far as Isaiah 30:8 is concerned it clearly does not teach Bratcher's doctrine either: "(Isa 30:8) Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever." Bratcher's argumentation thus far has been shallow and weak, but let's continue on:

4) Some assume that New Testament references to Isaiah speaking or writing certain passages that are quoted in the New Testament are proof that the prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem was the author of all of that material. Yet, **New Testament references to Isaiah refer to the book as part of the tradition of sacred writings by traditional titles and do not intend to present arguments about authorship.** There are several dimensions of this aspect. First, as just noted, the idea that the biblical community was as concerned as we are about who wrote what material is an assumption from our modern ways of thinking. To project our concern about authorship into NT references to OT material is simply to force the Bible to address issues that it does not address.

The New Testament references to Isaiah do refer to Isaiah as the writer of the book. All we have to do is to read the passages that deal with these quotations:

(Mat 3:3) For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

(Mat 4:14) That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

(Mat 8:17) That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

(Mat 12:17) That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,

(Joh 12:38) That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

(Act 8:30) And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

(Act 8:31) And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

(Act 8:32) The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

(Act 8:33) In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

(Act 8:34) And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

(Act 8:35) Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

In each place, Isaiah was called the prophet, and in the case of the Eunuch, the Eunuch asked Philip if Isaiah the prophet was talking about himself or some other man. So I think we can dispense with Mr. Bratcher's idea that the New Testament references didn't refer to the prophet Isaiah.

Second, because of these different perspectives, the NT community may not have known any more about the precise author of individual material in the OT than we do. To assume that the biblical writers knew who wrote the material almost always invokes a certain theory of inspiration in which God simply reveals to them such information. While that may be adequate for some, it obviously goes far beyond the evidence we have in the text itself, and again uses theological ideas as the basis for deciding biblical issues.

Yes, to assume the New Testament writers knew who wrote the material always invokes the idea that God inspired the writers to write the Bible. This is what Bratcher wants to get away from. He does not want to grant Biblical inspiration because to do so destroys his whole position.

Third, there are several instances where the NT writers seem not to have remembered where certain passages were located, or remembered them incorrectly. For example, Mark 1:2 introduces the OT quotation by "as it is written in the prophet Isaiah," but begins by quoting a passage from Malachi. Another example is Matthew 27:9 where the reference is given as Jeremiah, but the passage is actually taken from Zechariah. It is also interesting that there are manuscript variations that give the reference as Isaiah, and some that make the correction to Zechariah (see [Sacred Words or Words about the Sacred?](#)).

Mr. Bratcher uses the ASV or something later, but the KJV reads: "As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee" (Mk. 1:2).

“Ver. 2. *As it is written in the prophets*, etc..] Malachi and Isaiah; for passages out of both follow; though the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Persic versions read, “as it is written in the prophet Isaias”; and so it is in some Greek copies: but the former seems to be the better reading, since two prophets are cited, and Isaiah is the last; to which agree the Arabic and Ethiopic versions, and the greater number of Greek copies. The following citations are made to show, that according to the writings of the Old Testament, John the Baptist was to be the harbinger of Christ, to come before him, and prepare his way; and also the propriety of the method the evangelist takes, in beginning his Gospel with the account of John's ministry and baptism: the first testimony stands in (<390301>Malachi 3:1), and the words are the words of the Father to the son, concerning John, pointing out his character and his work” (*Exposition on the Entire Bible, Mark*, p. 3).

[Jameson, Fausset, and Brown wrote the following on Mt. 27:9:](#)

“Mat 27:9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying — (Zec 11:12, Zec 11:13). Never was a complicated prophecy, otherwise hopelessly dark, more marvelously fulfilled. Various conjectures have been formed to account for Matthew's ascribing to Jeremiah a prophecy found in the book of Zechariah. But since with this book he was plainly familiar, having quoted one of its most remarkable prophecies of Christ but a few chapters before (Mat 21:4, Mat 21:5), the question is one more of critical interest than real importance. Perhaps the true explanation is the following, from Lightfoot:

“Jeremiah of old had the first place among the prophets, and hereby he comes to be mentioned above all the rest in Mat 16:14; because he stood first in the volume of the prophets (as he proves from the learned David Kimchi) therefore he is first named. When, therefore, Matthew produceth a text of Zechariah under the name of Jeremy, he only cites the words of the volume of the prophets under his name who stood first in the volume of the prophets. Of which sort is that also of our Savior (Luk 24:41), ‘All things must be fulfilled which are written of Me in the Law, and the Prophets, and the Psalms,’” (e-Sword).

All this says that even the references to the locations of OT references are not always precise in the NT. That in itself is no problem, since the focus is on the message being communicated rather than precision of citation. That is, unless one is trying to maintain certain views about the nature of Scripture, such as totally inerrancy; then it presents a problem (see The Modern Inerrancy Debate). If the location of the texts are not precise, it is only certain assumptions at work that allows the NT references to the OT to be adequate for determining authorship of the OT texts.

When you look at the explanations that are given you can see that Bratcher's assumptions don't hold up under scrutiny. Early Jewish scholars such as David Kimchi testify to the fact that the New Testament writers would often place the Old in three categories, and that the Hebrew Old Testament was different than ours in that the minor prophets were all grouped together, with Jeremiah being the first. This doesn't take away from total inerrancy, it just means that people have to study to understand what the scriptures are saying. No one ever said that Bible study was easy, but it is worth it.

5) A few assume that references to Isaiah throughout Scripture provide proof that he was the author of the material that bears his name. Nowhere in Scripture is there any claim that Isaiah of Jerusalem is the author of the entire book of Isaiah. There is no question that the prophet Isaiah is the focal point of the traditions that carry his name. But again, it is simply certain assumptions at work that allow us to conclude that he is the single and only person responsible for the entire book.

No where in Scripture is there any claim that John is the author of the entire book of Revelation. No where in scripture is there any claim that Matthew is the author of the book that bears his name. Where is the claim that Zechariah is the sole author of the book that bears his name? The continuity of the book, along with the rest of the evidence shows that book was written by Isaiah.

A Different Perspective

I would suggest that there **is** unity and coherence in the book of Isaiah, but that unity is **not a historical unity** that comes from being written at a single point in history by a single person. The unity of Isaiah **is a theological unity** rather than a historical one. The unity is the witness of the Faith community to God in the midst of changing historical circumstances. The community was struggling to come to grips with historical events in relation to what they understood about God and his actions in the world. Theologically, the witness of the book of Isaiah is consistent and unrelenting. Central themes can be traced throughout the book even though the historical circumstances have changed. In places, different themes take center stage or the emphasis is different: judgment in the first section of Isaiah, creation theology and grace in the second section, and faithful response to God in the third section. But there is an overall cohesion in the message of the book.

This simply says that nothing is lost in understanding a theological unity in the book rather than a historical one, except perhaps certain views of prophecy and the nature of Scripture that do not even emerge from the biblical texts themselves. I would even contend that understanding the theological unity and dynamic of the book makes it far more relevant to the modern world, and for most people who live in it, than does seeing the book only as a prediction of the future that is now for us 2,000 years in the past. Rather than making Scripture more valuable, I fear that such a position is preaching to the choir, simply making people who believe the Bible feel good about what they already believe. For others, I fear it removes Scripture from the "real" world in which they live, and therefore removes much chance of its message impacting their lives at the point of their need.

This **theological unity** that Mr. Bratcher brings up shows its true danger because it makes the Bible "far more relevant to the modern world, and for most people who live in it, than does seeing the book only as predicting of the future that is now for us 2,000 years in the past." When we go to attempting to making the Bible more relevant to us today than seeing it for what it was is why people like Hal Lindsay have come up with books like *The Late Great Planet Earth*. But there isn't any harm in such books is there? I don't know, you might ask Randy Wheeler. He and his wife Vicki were so sold on Lindsay's book that they moved up North and decided that the government was Zion and Vicki had a dream that the battle of Armageddon was at their front door. Sure enough, they pushed the government enough until they had a shoot out with the U.S. Marshal's service and the FBI. One U.S. Marshal lost his life, their son, lost his and Vicki lost her life. So what harm does it do to make the Bible more

relevant to modern man than to keep it in its historical context? Actually it does a lot of harm. There are a lot of commands in the New Testament that apply to us today and will continue to apply until Christ returns, as well as implicit statements, explicit statements and accounts of approved actions, and there are a lot of principles and lessons we can learn. But we must always be careful never to lift the Bible out of its historical context.

Two Communities: The Evidence from the Book Itself

Perhaps it would be helpful to examine some of the evidence from within the book itself. I would contend that this is not a matter of faith but a matter of investigation. We may accept the Bible as authoritative Scripture for the church, and yet not make that authority dependent on conjectures, one way or the other, about authorship of any particular book. The authority of the book is not in the historical details of authorship, but in the message about God that the book carries. That is why even though we may have divergent opinions about the issue based on the evidence, it is not a matter to argue in terms of belief or non-belief in the authority of Scripture. And it is certainly not a shibboleth of orthodoxy by which to judge another person's commitment to God.

If we try to lay aside these assumptions and look at the internal evidence of the book itself without trying to fit them into any rationalized scheme about the book, we may be able to highlight how the assumptions tend to ignore or rationalize evidence. And it may allow us to develop a more dynamic view of the book as Scripture within a living community of faith.

There are several lines of internal evidence that point to three distinct time periods for the book of Isaiah. It was fashionable in the first part of the 20th century to speak of three Isaiahs, usually labeled First, Second, and Third Isaiah for the three parts of the book. Today, there is less concern in labeling the parts of the book in terms of authorship, and a greater tendency to understand the book in terms of an ongoing dynamic prophetic tradition that can be identified in the three different time periods. In other words, the emphasis has shifted from trying to establish either a single or multiple authors, and moved more to placing the movement of the book within the flow of history as the community came to terms with events in relation to the Isaiah traditions entrusted to them. The power of the book is that it reflects a community of faith's struggle to be faithful amid the most tumultuous period of Old Testament History.

Isaiah of Jerusalem's prophetic ministry spanned roughly a 40 year period from around 740 BC to about 700 BC (See [Chart of Israelite Prophets](#)) in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. This would place him active during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, the period of Assyrian dominance. Assyria rose as a world power in 745 BC, invaded and destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 721 BC, subjugated the

Southern Kingdom during the reign of Ahaz, and nearly destroyed it in 701 during the reign of Hezekiah. Isaiah's entire ministry focused on calling the people to repentance, especially the weak Jotham and the apostate Ahaz, trying to avert disaster at the hands of the Assyrians, and later encouraging Hezekiah in his attempts at reform and rebellion against Assyria. While the Assyrians ruled over Judah during much of this time, exacting heavy tribute from the people, they never managed to conquer the city of Jerusalem even though they nearly succeeded in 701. According to the biblical witness, God intervened and saved the city from the Assyrians (Isa 37:36-38, 2 Kings 19:35-37).

It is that historical light that some of the evidence within the book of Isaiah needs to be examined.

1) There are numerous references throughout the book to the Babylonians (or Chaldeans). Babylon would not emerge as a world power until 612 when they captured the Assyrian capital of Nineveh, and would not stand alone until 609 when they wiped out the remnants of the Assyrian army and defeated the Egyptian pharaoh who was trying to intervene. In the time of Isaiah of Jerusalem, the enemy was the Assyrians and the Babylonians were not even on the stage of history yet. This suggests that the ongoing community of faith who valued Isaiah's message in the time of the Assyrians simply took that message and reapplied what he had to say in the context of their own current enemy, the Babylonians.

There are references to the Babylonians in the first part of Isaiah (1-40), largely in the typical oracles against foreign nations (chs 13, 14, 21) and in chapter 39, which serves as a transition between the two eras and parts of the book. Yet, the Assyrians do not appear again in the book past the account of their failure to take Jerusalem in 701 (38:6), except for a single occurrence that is clearly a reference to a long past time (52:4). Beginning with chapter 40 the Babylonians, and their eventual downfall to the Persians are clearly the main topic (e.g., ch 44:28, 45:1, 47, 48:14-22, etc.).

We have already gone over this and have shown that during Isaiah's years of prophecy Isaiah prophesied of things that would happen several hundred years in the future. This is nothing but a re-hashing of the things we have already covered in this paper.

This likewise suggests that Isaiah 1-39 generally dates to the Assyrian period between 740 and 600 BC, while chapter 40 following dates at least to the Babylonian era, sometime after 612. The earlier material was interspersed by the later community with references to their own enemies, the Babylonians, as a way to apply the earlier material theologically to their own historical circumstances. But the later material does not include references to the Assyrians since they were long gone, had been judged by God and history, and posed no concern to the later Israelites who were preoccupied with the Babylonians and Persians.

This is false. Chapter 39 ends with Isaiah prophesying to Hezekiah about what the Babylonians will eventually do to the Kingdom, but Hezekiah's reign will not be interrupted by

a foreign invasion. Then in chapter 40, in the midst of all of this he begins making a promise of John the Baptist who would be the forerunner of Christ.

2) There are several references to the temple in Jerusalem being destroyed as if it were an event some time removed in the past (44:26-28, 52:8-9, possibly 51:3). This happened in 586 BC as the **Babylonians** captured and destroyed the temple along with Jerusalem itself. While some want to argue that this is simply predictive prophecy, that perspective again invokes certain assumptions that stand outside the biblical text itself. The most reasonable interpretation of those passages apart from that assumption is that they come from a time after the temple was destroyed. This is especially true of those passages that anticipate *rebuilding* the temple and the city (44:26).

(Isa 44:26) That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof:

This passage simply shows that God will eventually bring them back to Jerusalem, this is one of the many prophecies concerning this.

3) Along the same line, there are numerous references to the devastation of the land and of people carried captive to **Babylon** (40:1-2, 42:22-24, 43:14, 48:20, 51:17, 52:1-2, etc.). These deportations happened in 598 and again in 586, and perhaps an earlier deportation in 605 when the Babylonians first entered the land and put Judah under Babylonian control. While there were deportations by the Assyrians as they annihilated the Northern Kingdom of Israel, there were no large scale deportations from the Southern Kingdom of Judah. All of the references to exile of Israelites in the second section of the book (and at least one in the first, 14:2) are in relation to Babylon (e.g., 49:24, 52:2, 61:1, etc.).

Again, this is predictive prophecy, as a matter of fact Isaiah 40:3 deals with the predictive prophecy of the coming of John the Baptist. Isaiah 42:22-24 deals with the impending judgment upon Jerusalem.

4) There are several general references to a new leader emerging in Mesopotamia (41:2-3, 25), and two specific references that name Cyrus the Persian as the instrument of Israel's deliverance from Babylon (44:28-45:3). Again, by using assumptions about the nature of prophecy and Scripture, many conclude that this is simply Isaiah of Jerusalem precisely predicting the future. However, apart from those assumptions, and in line with earlier material in the book of Isaiah, this appears to be a prophetic interpretation of the meaning of unfolding historical events in light of God's purposes at work in that history. *That is exactly how Isaiah of Jerusalem responded to the Assyrian crisis 100 years earlier.* In other words, it is more likely that a later

community using the Isaiah traditions interpreted the change of power in the East as God's work in the world to bring the exiles home. Cyrus the Persian came to power in 539 BC and issued the edict that allowed the Israelites to return home in 538. This would place the section of Isaiah following chapter 40 around 540-539.

In chapter 41:2-3, 25 is predictive prophecy of a king that God has chosen and will raise up to overthrow the Israelites. I fail to see why Bratcher has such a hard time in seeing this. There is only so much that one can say to all of this because all of these passages fall under the same category: predictive prophecy.

5) Finally, there is clearly a radical shift in tone and theological outlook in the book at chapter 40. The first 39 chapters focus on the failure of the people to be faithful to God, the stubborn recalcitrance of their leaders, and the near total failure of the nation to live up to its calling as God's people. Even Hezekiah, who is portrayed as a righteous leader, fails in several ways, including bragging of his wealth, a move that the book of Isaiah attributes as a cause of the later Babylonian invasion.

However, beginning in chapter 40, as the first words of "Comfort, comfort" in the section indicate, the perspective is hope for the future and encouragement. There is a sense of a recent great catastrophe that has devastated the land and people, and yet the book holds out great hope for the future. It is clear that new winds are blowing that portend a change in fortune, brought by the grace of God. Again, many want this to be prediction of the future. But in the context of the book, the sense of the text is that these are currently unfolding events that draw forth profound joy and anticipation from a context of near despair. It is clear that the arrogance of the people in Isaiah's time would not even allow them to conceptualize a problem or foresee such a disaster, let alone get very excited about what lay on the other side. The nearly unbridled hope and expectation of chapter 40 ff. is simply not the message needed in 700 BC.

There are other bits of evidence, but this seems sufficient to establish that there are plausible reasons within the biblical material itself to see chapters 1-39 in the Assyrian era of the late 8th century BC, while the material beginning with chapter 40 is from a later period around the middle of the 6th century BC.

As I have already explained, in chapter 39 Isaiah tells Hezekiah that his sons will fall to Babylon, but his reign, because he has repented, will not fall to an alien invasion. Then in the next chapter Isaiah begins to comfort the Israelites as well as Hezekiah by prophecying of the coming of the harbinger of the coming Messiah. The assumption that Isaiah did not write the entire book of Isaiah keeps Mr. Bratcher from seeing that all of this is predictive prophecy.

A Third Section of Isaiah and a Third Community

The evidence for a third time period for the book of Isaiah is not as direct and the demarcation between the second and third sections of the book are not as pronounced, but for many is just as convincing. This conclusion depends on several lines of evidence: 1) an analysis of the content and theological perspective of the latter part of the book (chs. 56-66) compared to what we know of unfolding history in the period following 540 BC; 2) the close connection with the theological perspective of other books from the same period (Malachi, Ezra, Nehemiah), and 3) literary features that mark a shift between chapter 55 and 56. Since a careful analysis of all these is beyond the scope of this article, the perspectives will only be summarized here.

I see nothing in chapters 56-66 to show a story of unfolding history in the period of 540 BC.

What I see is Isaiah's encouragement to God's people to be faithful and to continue the predictive prophecies concerning Christ. Gill wrote:

“Ver. 1. *Thus saith the Lord, keep ye judgment, and do justice, &c.*]Observe the word of the Lord, which comes from the God of judgment, is the best informer of the judgment, and the only rule of faith and practice; and which should be kept in the heart, mind, and memory, be held fast, and abode by; and so likewise all the ordinances of the Lord, which are his statutes and judgments; these should be all of them kept as they were delivered, in faith, from love, and with a view to the glory of God and Christ; all matters of judgment and justice between man and man, whether public or private, should be observed and done; all that you would have men to do to you, do to them; all works of righteousness required by the Lord, though not to be depended upon for justification in his sight, but regarded as fruits and evidences of faith and repentance; for works of righteousness cannot be done but by regenerated persons. The reasons enforcing a regard to these things follow: *for my salvation is near to come*; which are either the words of God the Father concerning Christ and his salvation, whom he appointed, called, and sent to effect it; who, when this prophecy was given out, was to come, and was to come as a Saviour, and was near at hand; and whose salvation, as to the efficacy of it, was come, all the Old Testament saints being saved by it; and, as to the impetration of it, was near at hand, he being ready to come, and in a short time, comparatively speaking, did come, and work out this salvation God had resolved upon, chosen his people to, and in which his glory was greatly concerned; and therefore calls it his own: or they are the words of Christ, who is the sole author of spiritual and eternal salvation, and in whom alone it is, and from him alone to be had; and which was near, being performed by himself, published in his Gospel, applied by his Spirit, and enjoyed by his people here and to all eternity: *and my righteousness to be revealed*; and which also are either the words of God the Father concerning his faithfulness in the performance of his promise of Christ, and good things by him; concerning his justice, which was glorified in the work of redemption by Christ; or concerning the righteousness of Christ, called his, because he sent him to bring it in, he approves of it, imputes it to his people, and justifies them by it; or they are the words of Christ concerning his own righteousness, which he has wrought out, and brought in, in the room and stead of his people, and for their sakes; and which is revealed, not by the light

of nature, nor by the law of Moses, but by the Gospel of Christ, and that from faith to faith, or only to believers. Now these being used as arguments to engage to the keeping and doing judgment and justice, show that the doctrines of salvation by Christ, and justification by his righteousness, are no licentious doctrines" (*Exposition on the Entire Bible, Isaiah*, pp886,887).

1) As already mentioned, the pronounced shift between the first and second sections of the book is striking in terms of the tone and theological perspective of the two sections. The first section (1-39) is largely prophetic judgement speeches and calls to repentance, with the tone set by 1:10-20. The second section (40-55) is almost entirely promises of restoration and the eager anticipation of a new golden age brought by God's reestablishment of the people in the land, with the tone set by 40:1-11.

The third section, however, returns to a much darker and more pessimistic perspective that again points out the people's failure to respond adequately to God. There are again problems with idolatry (57:4-13), injustice (59:1-8), and superficial religion (58:13-14). Yet, the mood that is addressed by this section of the book is fairly obviously one of indifference and apathy in which the people believe that God will not or cannot act to improve their situation (*e.g.*, 56:9-12,58, 59:9-11). This reveals that the primary problem is not really rampant and aggressive Ba'al worship even though it was still practiced, or injustice flowing from prosperity and self-confidence as had been the case earlier in the book. Here the problems in those areas arise because the people have concluded that it makes no difference what they do, because God does not see or care, that he will do nothing to intervene.

This fits very closely with what we know of the period following the actual return from exile (see The Persian Period and Return from Exile, especially Persian Rule and Return From Exile). Even though the return began in 538, the prophet Haggai scolded the people 20 years later for not being concerned about rebuilding the temple or the city. Nearly 100 years later, Nehemiah, appointed governor of the area by the king of Persia, was still trying to get the city walls rebuilt (Neh 3-6). And Ezra about the same time was still trying to get the people to recover some sense of who they are as God's people (Neh 8).

History unfolded in quite a different way than the community of the middle section of Isaiah envisioned it. There was so much elation at the prospect of a return from exile and the restoration of the nation that the rhetoric sometimes became rather grandiose. There is no question that some of the pronouncements in that second section are highly metaphorical ways of making the theological point that God was at work in the rise of the Persian empire and the end of Babylon. Yet, many took the exaggerated language as a historical program of how the restoration would unfold. So when the grand visions did not unfold in history exactly the way the people thought they should, they became discouraged.

The Jews were often impatient people and they often wanted things their way right then.

They awaited a Messiah that would come and lead them out of Roman captivity, but Christ

had no intention of doing that at all. His mission was to bring them out of the captivity of sin, and when they found out that he was not there to do as they thought he was going to do they rejected him. Their impatience and return to idolatry, in chapters 56-66, did not mean that Isaiah did not write the entire book. They just became impatient. They wanted to everything to be done with right then. They knew that judgment was pending upon them and they wanted it to go away. When Isaiah started promising this Messiah and he did not come in a few years, they lost heart and went back into idolatry.

They had much to be discouraged about in that 100 years following the return. A quick survey of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah will reveal how difficult life was in Israel between 538 and 450. The people were barely surviving. Very few had actually returned from Babylon. Most had simply stayed there. Since most of them had been born there, for all practical purposes they were Babylonians. Life had been good in Babylon. They were not kept as slaves, but allowed to become part of Babylonian culture. As such, they had prospered.

Most of those who had returned were priests, probably not the best group to rebuild a totally devastated land, which likely explains why so little rebuilding was actually carried out for 100 years. And even when the temple was rebuilt under Zerubbabel and Ezra in 520, it was not the same beautiful temple that Solomon had built. They likely only restacked the stones from the destroyed walls of the old building. Ezra 3:12 tells us that some of those who were still alive who had seen and remembered Solomon's temple wept when they saw the foundations laid for the new building, apparently because they knew it would only be a crude imitation of that earlier temple.

The people had no protection, since the city walls had been leveled. They were constantly at risk from marauding bandits and rival tribes (Ezra 4; cf. Neh 2:10). There was even opposition from the Israelites who had been allowed to remain in the land. Those who returned that were not priests wanted to reclaim ancestral lands that had been taken over by those who had remained. Yet they had been on that land for 70 years, and saw the claims as a threat to their own security. Since the olive trees had been cut and the vineyards destroyed, food was in short supply (it takes many years for an olive tree to produce fruit after it is planted).

So, many simply concluded that the promises were false and that God was not really much of a god after all. This allowed apathy, the idea that God is powerless and does not care what they do, to set in. There are even traces of a developing cynicism (cf. 56:12). It is this disillusionment and despair of things ever getting any better that is reflected in the third section of Isaiah.

Again this was the weakness of the Jew, not the fault of Isaiah. If one will look back upon the

history of the Jewish people it can be seen that their history is full of instances where they lost faith in God because they thought that God was going to let them down, even before he had. This is no different. Isaiah promised a Messiah after prophesying their demise. They wanted the Messiah first so the demise would not happen, and when he did not come, they fell away. They didn't even realize what this Messiah was going to be saving them from. They were simple minded enough to think that he was going to save them from Babylonian Captivity.

2) Most of the perspectives above can be easily seen in Ezra and Nehemiah, as well as in the prophetic books of Haggai and Zechariah. But the most obvious parallel is found in the book of Malachi. The main thrust of this prophet's message is his challenge of the indifference and apathy of the people (3:14): "You have said, 'It is of no purpose to serve God. What do we profit by keeping his command or by going about as mourners before the Lord of hosts?'" This entire book is directed at the attitudes of people and priests alike who have concluded that God no longer cares for them ("How have you loved us?" 1:2). The book of Malachi, is usually dated between 500 and 450 BC, while Haggai and Zechariah are dated only slightly earlier, around 520-515 (see [Israelite Prophets Date Chart](#)). This is likewise about the time of the work of Ezra and Nehemiah and the events that the books that carry their names recount.

All this says that the theological perspectives of the third section of Isaiah, and the concerns they address, are the same concerns faced by the community of returned exiles in the period from about 540-450 BC. These same perspectives appear in the prophetic writings from this period, and fit with what we know is going on historically from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. This simply suggests that this third section of Isaiah is far more likely to be contemporaneous with these prophets in this time period than with Isaiah of Jerusalem in 700 BC. This would place a time frame for this third section of the book somewhere between 515 and 500 BC.

3) While the literary features of the book cannot help us much with a precise time period, they can confirm that there is some type of shift in the book between chapters 55 and 56. We have already noted the clear transition between chapters 39 and 40. We might likewise expect some literary clue to divide these chapters if, indeed, they should be seen to address different periods of history.

The end of chapter 55 does, indeed, seem to provide just such a conclusion and transition. In fact, the last three chapters, 54-56, serve to bring this section to a climax in fairly typical prophetic fashion. Following the strongly future dimension of the servant passage in 52-53 (however one might interpret the servant), there follows immediately the Song of Assurance (54), picking up the familiar Old Testament image of the joy of a barren woman who is now promised children (54:1). This chapter is clearly a celebration of God's grace in the restoration from exile. The final chapter of this section is a call for the people to respond to that grace, a call to change and a new future based on God's gracious act of restoration (55:6-7):

(Isa 55:13) Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

(Isa 56:1) Thus saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.

Now, I would like to know where this great shift is. In the last verse of chapter 55 he finishes a prophecy, and in the first verse of the next chapter he instructs the people to remain faithful to the Lord. So where is this great shift in thought?

Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

The same feature of a climactic call to repentance can be seen in the conclusion to the book of Hosea (14). Verses 12-13 of chapter 55 are a hymnic conclusion to the chapter and to the second section of the book.

Verses 8-11 of chapter 55 tie the second section to this third section of the book in message and theme. The key idea is the validity and reliability of God's word. The idea of God speaking and the reliability of what God says is a key ingredient of the second section of Isaiah, especially chapter 40, particularly in verses 6-8. The issue in that second section of the book is the promise of God's new action in history that would effect the restoration of Israel back to its land. The *word* of Yahweh is sure, even if inscrutable. The images of rain and growing seed illustrate the wonder and mystery of God's ways. The *word* here is not just the content of what is said; it is the agency, the instrument through which something is effected, in this case God himself. The focus here is on Yahweh's faithfulness and mercy to restore his people, as well as his will to do so.

I would like to know just how Mr. Bratcher can take the position that the 40th chapter is God's word when he does away with the inerrancy doctrine? It doesn't make sense to say that the Bible is God's word unless we say that it is totally inerrant, yet this doctrine is exactly what Mr. Bratcher is guilty of denying. Just how can he say that any part of the book of Isaiah is God's word unless all of it is, and if all of it is, then Isaiah wrote it all. It is a take it or leave it proposition. Mr. Bratcher wants to have his cake and eat it too and such isn't possible with God.

However, God's word is not automatic, it does not work on its own apart from God or

disassociated from the people's response to it (55:6-9). God's promise may be accepted or rejected. Disobedience or failure to accept God's promise does not necessarily invalidate the promise. But the question is clearly left in the air by the call to respond in chapter 55 whether failure to respond faithfully to the promise might not somehow hinder or endanger the promises of that second section. This becomes the key connective to the third section of the book. As noted, the issue facing the community reflected in this third section is the disillusionment of the people with their historical circumstances. The lack of the glorious kingdom promised by earlier prophets precipitated a severe crisis of faith for this community. It is this crisis that this third section addresses as the book attempts to revalidate the promises and rebuild a hope for the future that has almost been lost.

Like the previous two sections, the theme of this entire third section of the book is introduced in 56:1: "Keep righteousness and do justice for soon my deliverance will come." This reveals that the problem is in the delay of the promises, corresponding closely to the NT problem: "where is the promise of His coming?" It also reveals that the problem involves a failure on the part of the community, just as in the corresponding prophecy of Malachi. Theologically, the call is for the people to be faithful to God and live as God's people in the world even when there is no direct evidence that God is there.

I really don't see anything different in this third section other than Bratcher thinks that it goes back to a darker period. As I read it the last 10 chapters give more of the Messianic promises than any of the rest of the book. I feel that Mr. Bratcher needs to re-read the book without his bias of non-supernatural origin

Summary

This evidence leads to two conclusions. **First**, it seems entirely likely from the book itself, that the Isaiah traditions stretch over a span of time from the era of Isaiah of Jerusalem in the middle eighth century BC to the post exilic era in the early fifth century BC. The three sections of the book sort out into three distinct time periods within the life of the community during that period.

The first section, chapters 1-39, comes from the Assyrian period and is directly associated with the ministry of Isaiah of Jerusalem from 740 to 700 BC. That does not mean that all material within those chapters dates from that period, however, since there are clearly some later additions to this collection from the Babylonian era. But it does establish Isaiah of Jerusalem as the founder of the Isaiah traditions.

The second section of the book, 40-55, comes from the late exilic period as the empire of Babylon was coming to an end and the Persian empire was emerging as the new ruler of the Middle East. If we take the edict of Cyrus in 538 as a benchmark

for this era, this section of the book dates to **about 540-539 BC**.

The third section of the book, 56-66, reflects the crisis of faith precipitated by unfulfilled or delayed prophecy, a situation that we know from Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi prevailed between 520 and 450 BC. If we use the time of Haggai around 520 as benchmark for this era, this third section of Isaiah probably comes **from the period 515-500**, with the possibility that it may extend as late as 450.

As suggested earlier, the unity of the book of Isaiah is not to be found on the level of history or authorship. Its unity lies on the level of its theological message about God and how the people responded, and should respond, to his work in the world.

Second, seen in this light, there is really nothing in the book itself that directly addresses the idea of predictive prophecy, either for or against. It is simply not what lies at the heart of the book. This means on the one hand, it is probably a mistake to use the book as any kind of proof text to support the authority of Scripture based on the correspondence of prediction with events that happened hundreds of years later. On the other hand, seeing the book as the unfolding witness to God's work in the world provides no direct proof that there is no predictive prophecy. In other words, the whole issue of predictive prophecy must be dealt with on other grounds than a study of the book of Isaiah. That issue is much more an problem that arises from certain theological assertions than it does from most biblical texts. There are other texts that address the issue more directly (see [Ezekiel and the Oracles Against Tyre](#)). But at least in the way that the Isaiah texts have been used, the unity and authorship of Isaiah are not very good weapons with which to fight that battle.

CONCLUSION

In order to respond to every scripture Mr. Bratcher has brought up this paper would end up being over 100 pages in length. Many of them are repetitions and nearly all of his arguments were repetitious. He spent a lot of space repeating himself. His basic assumption is that the Bible is not of supernatural origin, that it is of human origin. When a person makes this his basic assumption then there isn't much you can do to change his mind. Paul said that "*all scripture is inspired of God*" (2 Tim. 3:16) and this would include the book of Isaiah. I trust the apostle Paul to be correct and will trust that the book of Isaiah was written by one man; Isaiah. Mr. Bratcher's article was entitled "A Needless Battle," but I believe that it is a very needed battle for it hits at the very heart of our Savior's deity. It hits at the very heart of

Biblical inspiration and inerrancy. If I can't trust the book of Isaiah to have been written by Isaiah, then what book can I trust? After being quoted from and referred to as the prophet Esaias in the New Testament, and even by our Lord, I am duty bound to trust it as having one writer. I am also duty bound to fight anyone on the spiritual battlefield who contends that it has more than just one. This isn't an issue of opinion, this is a matter of salvation; a matter of eternal life or eternal death: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1Ti 6:12).