

The tension in these readings is between **truth** and politics. The strength and the grace sought are remaining **true** without the support of human **opinion**, human political support; to remain **true**, even when remaining **true** makes one feel powerless. Second-Isaiah felt powerless, when, out of God's goodness, **Cyrus** arose, as the messiah, politically correct, though not in terms of institutional religion, but in terms of God's own design. Accepting God's power takes faith.

## Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

Verse 1      Thus says the Lord to his **anointed**, **Cyrus**, whose right hand I grasp subduing nations before him, and making kings run in his service, opening doors before him, and leaving the gates unbarred:<sup>1</sup>

One scholar observes:

According to Dan 9:25, seven weeks of years would elapse between the time the word went forth to restore the city until the time of an "**anointed** one." The identity of that "**anointed** one" is also debated. Nominees include **Cyrus** (on the basis of **Isa 45:1**), Zerubbabel [sic] (on the basis of passages like Ezra 5:2; Hag 1:1; Zech 4:6-10), and Joshua the high priest (on the basis of passages like Zech 6:11-12). While **Cyrus** is certainly called God's "**anointed** one" in **Isa 45:1**, the more natural reading of Dan 9:25 is that the "**anointed** one" would flourish in Jerusalem. Scholars who understand the high priest Onias III as the second "**anointed** one" mentioned in Dan 9:26 often choose Joshua over Zerubbabel [sic] because similar statements are made about the two. Scholars who see the time frame beginning in **458** or **445** interpret the **forty-nine years** as the time that generation took to rebuild Jerusalem and get its affairs in order again after the exile. In that case, of course, the identity of the first "**anointed** one" remains unknown.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, indented scripture references are from National Conference of Catholic Bishops, The Roman Missal Restored by Decree of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican and Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Lectionary for Mass: For Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America: Second Typical Edition: Volume I: Sundays, Solemnities, Feasts of the Lord and Saints (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998)

<sup>2</sup> Paul L. Redditt, "Daniel 9: Its Structure and Meaning," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2000) 238.

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Carroll Stuhlmüller, C.P., remarks,

Within Chaps. 41—48 ... the strongest statement about Yahweh, Creator of the universe, occur either in the solemn enthronement poem honoring **Cyrus** (44:24—45:7) or in the decisive confrontation between **Dt-Isa** and the people of Israel (45:9-13) or in the concluding summary, chap. 48. Therefore, they appear late in the first period of **Dt-Isa's** career.

We are assisted in our interpretation of 44:24 by recognizing the strong inclusion between 44:24 and 45:7. We find the repetition of the hymnic participle \*\*\* [\*\*\* stands for Hebrew ellipsis] and also the phrase:

44:24 \*\*\*  
45:7\*\*\*<sup>3</sup>

Verse 4      For the sake of Jacob, my servant, of Israel, my chosen one, I have called you by your name, giving you a title, though you knew me not.

Stuhlmüller continues,

This inclusion leads us to interpret \*\*\* or \*\*\* as referring to all those events within the poem. The poem begins with Jerusalem's destruction and leads to **Cyrus'** part in the reconstitution of Israel. Chaos and re-creation, precisely in that order, epitomize the international scene so far as Israel is involved. Yahweh's motive for acting is not to be found in his power to create but in his position as \*\*\* (44:24) who acts \*\*\* (45:4). Compassion and kinship prompted the Lord to re-create his chosen people Israel. Moreover, we note that the creative act is presented with participial forms, *i.e.*..., \*\*\*, so that even these divine acts consider God as creating *now*. The participles touch upon the memory of Israel's liturgical worship where redemptive acts were relived.

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<sup>3</sup> Even though Stuhlmüller presented this research as President of the Catholic Biblical Association, his name is misspelled, without the first "l," on the cover of the journal. The name is properly spelled on the inside. Carroll Stuhlmüller, C.P., "Deutero-Isaiah: Major Transitions in the Prophet's Theology and in Contemporary Scholarship," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January 1980) 13.

Participles, moreover, direct emphasis personally upon Yahweh as Creator and not upon creation, the thing done by Yahweh.

Even if the momentum of **Dt-Isa's** mind converges upon Israel's separation from the gentile nations, still the passages which sing hymnically of Yahweh as Creator of the cosmos contain hints and allusions that reach beyond Israel to the world. The fact that participial phrases like \*\*\* and \*\*\* became fixed formulas in postexilic liturgy shows the mighty potential of **Dt-Isa's** language.<sup>4</sup>

... d. Chaps. 41—48 stylistically is dominated by many exalted but scattered hymnic participles, by sustained trial speeches against the gods of the nations and crypto-Israelites, and by an increasing disputation against the \*\*\*. These chapters were composed before the fall of Babylon and represent a fully developed "theology." e. In chaps. 49-55 the style is more somber, often that of lament or a sober proclamation of salvation. The prophet is not disputing with Israelites but encouraging the remnant of his followers over the meager results of the new exodus. Zion, he insists, will have a glorious future. f. The Servant Songs begin with the strong chords of lament but end in a psalm of thanksgiving as the isolated and persecuted **Dt-Isa** finds peace and dignity in the Lord alone. g. Each of the two major sections were edited with a sense of chronological sequence: chaps. 41—48, from ebullient hopes in **Cyrus** to sarcastic opposition from his own people; chaps. 49-55 and the Servant Songs, from lamentation to new hopes.<sup>5</sup>

Verse 5     **I am the Lord and there is no other**, there is no God besides me.  
It is I who arm you, though you know me not,

In another place, Stuhlmüller writes,

Yet as the prophet of the Isaiah tradition declares, all remains in God's control:

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<sup>4</sup> Stuhlmüller, C.P., "Deutero-Isaiah: Major Transitions in the Prophet's Theology and in Contemporary Scholarship," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January 1980), 13-14.

<sup>5</sup> Stuhlmüller, C.P., "Deutero-Isaiah: Major Transitions in the Prophet's Theology and in Contemporary Scholarship," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January 1980) 28-29.

**I am the Lord, and there is no other....**

I form light and create darkness,  
I make weal and create woe;  
I the Lord do all these things (**Isa 45:5, 7**).

Second Isaiah summarizes, by the words “darkness” and “woe,” the destruction of the nation of Israel and the exile of its inhabitants under the fierce anger of the Babylonians, as declared earlier in Isa 44:24-28, a situation of \*\*\* about to be corrected.<sup>6</sup>

**Psalm 96:1, 3, 4-5, 7-8, 9-10**

Verses 7-9a Give to the Lord, you **families of nations**, give to the Lord glory and praise; give to the Lord the glory due his name! **Bring gifts, and enter his courts**. Worship the Lord, in holy attire.

StuhlmueLLer also writes about **Psalm 96**.

The fabric was Canaanite, as were some of the early designs which spoke of God as Creator. Yet the intuition of God as Savior and redeemer, dominant in the Torah (the five Books of Moses), not only persisted but emerged as a central concept. Marvelous moments, inspired by Israel’s **history**, began to control the psalms and there was even a subtle—or not so subtle—tendency to make theological corrections in earlier psalms. An example is a comparison between **Psalm 29** and **96**:

Psalm 29:1-2  
Ascribe to the  
Lord, O **heavenly  
beings**,

ascribe to the Lord  
glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord  
the glory of his  
name;

worship the Lord  
in holy splendor.

**Psalm 96:7-9a**

Ascribe to the Lord, O **families of  
the peoples**,

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<sup>6</sup> Carroll StuhlmueLLer, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 53.

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ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts.

Worship the Lord in holy splendor.

The much later **Psalm 96** not only adapts the lines to include actions within the sanctuary (“**bring an offering, and come into his courts**”), but unabashedly changes “sons of the gods” to read “**families of the peoples.**” The most serious question is not why later psalm writers dared to correct earlier, inspired text, but rather: Why did God tolerate these expressions of polytheism, small in number as they are? ...<sup>7</sup>

StuhlmueLLer continues, in another place,

Psalms most fully and formally proclaiming YHWH-King came late, like **Psalms 96-99** and 149. Most of these psalms are entitled “a new song,” possibly under the influence of Second Isaiah:

Sing to the Lord a new song,  
his praise from the end of the earth!  
Let the sea roar and all that fills it,  
the coastlands and their inhabitants.  
Let them give glory to the Lord,  
and declare his praise in the coastlands (Isa 42:10,  
12).

This hymn concludes a major section of the poetry of Second Isaiah (41:1-42:13). The longer poem begins by announcing **Cyrus** the Great as the champion and liberator of Israel (41:1-20). **Cyrus** is later to be acclaimed God’s “**anointed**,” or literally the Lord’s “**messiah**” (45:1). **Cyrus**’ conquest of the world provides a panoramic setting for Israel’s salvation and return from exile. This is the “new thing,” unheard of until now (41:21-29). Yet, mysteriously, God really achieves it through “my servant” Israel, silent and humble, the Lord’s instrument for justice (42:1-4). Israel

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<sup>7</sup> Carroll StuhlmueLLer, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 27.

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will become “a light for the nations” (42:9). The “new song” in 42:10-12 celebrates this wonder of Israel’s salvation that somehow becomes a light to the nations.<sup>8</sup>

...

This method of the Bible quoting the Bible, so familiar to contemporary readers, was new in biblical times. The first instance of quoting a biblical passage by name occurs when Mic 3:12 is cited by the elders of the land who defended the prophet Jeremiah against the death threats of the priests and temple prophets (Jer 26:18). Up until this time, inspired spokespersons were forming or, better, were creating the Bible new. Only close to the Exile and especially afterward did people begin to view Scripture as set and unchangeable and therefore as something to be quoted.

As was seen in Chapter 2 of this book [the chapter that I intend eventually to quote entirely, principle by principle], in quoting the Bible the people were not historical-critical scholars. They never felt obliged to abide exclusively by what the original author meant in his or her context. If individual verses were lifted out—and changed or corrected, as was seen when **Psalms 96:7-8** quotes Psalm 29:1-2—the later authors thought of themselves as members of a living tradition, able to adapt for the benefit of a later assembly of worshipers.

The community of believers are commissioned not only to be thoroughly Bible people but also to be a thoroughly vibrant, dynamic, and sensitive part of their respective churches as they struggle, preach, instruct, and pray within the contemporary world. Communities and churches today are not neatly confined as was ancient Israel, a country of some six thousand square miles, whose interaction with other nations was generally limited to the Near East. Today, believing communities form “world churches,” at home on all continents, where there are many living languages and distinctive cultures. If the YHWH-King psalms, depending upon the prophecy of Isaiah, stressed justice, the task is all the more pressing in today’s world where millions of people are

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<sup>8</sup> Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 65.

suffering severe forms of oppression. The task of adaptation—in quoting the Bible—is far more complex and demanding but equally as crucial as in Bible times, so that believers may repeat today:

Worship the Lord in holy splendor;  
tremble before him, all the earth.  
Say among the nations, “The Lord is king!  
The world is firmly established; it shall never be  
moved.  
He will judge the peoples with equity” (**Psalm 96:9-10**).<sup>9</sup>

For purposes of comparison, modern Israel is 8,020 square miles, Virginia 39,704.<sup>10</sup>

## 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b

Verse 5a and b For our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with much conviction.

## Philippians 2:15d, 16a

[no comment here]

## Matthew 22:15-21

Verse 16 spells out the conflict between truth and politics.

They sent their disciples to him, with the **Herodians**, saying, “Teacher, we know that you are a **truthful** man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the **truth**. And you are not concerned with **anyone’s opinion**, for you do not regard a **person’s status**. ...

Saint Jerome explains the **Herodians**.

Jerome: For Judea had lately become subject to the Romans, under Caesar Augustus, and when the census had been made of the whole (Roman) world, Judea had been made a tributary of Rome. And there

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<sup>9</sup> Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 70.

<sup>10</sup> n.a., The New Rand McNally College World Atlas (New York: Rand McNally & Company, 1983) 253 and 305.

was great division among the people; some saying they should pay the tribute, in return for the peace and security the Roman arms conferred on all; the Pharisees, on the contrary, who were full of their own righteousness, contended that the People of God, who were wont to pay tithes and also gave first fruits and other offerings contained in the Law, ought not to be subject to men's laws. Augustus however had made Herod, the son of Antipater, a foreigner and a proselyte, king of the Jews and entrusted to him the raising of the tribute, subject however to the dominium of Rome. So the Pharisees send [*sic*] their own followers with the **Herodians**, that is, Herod's soldiers; whom the Pharisees called **Herodians** in derision, because they paid tribute to the Romans, and did not give themselves to the worship of God.<sup>11</sup>

Verse 18 ... you hypocrites

The Greek does not seem quite as harsh, at least when the derivation of the word is explained. The Greek is υποκριτης. The grammarian explains, “(υποκρινομαι pretend, as a part) *actor*, hence *hypocrite*.”<sup>12</sup>

What strikes me personally is verse 22, the verse omitted,  
When they heard this they were amazed; they **left him alone**  
and went away.<sup>13</sup>

This sense of being correct in truth but politically incorrect and, therefore, **left alone** is a frustration to which I can relate.

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<sup>11</sup> Exposition from the Catena Aurea [i.e. writings gathered by Saint Thomas Aquinas] as found in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: A Manual of Preaching, Spiritual Reading and Meditation; Volume Four: From the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost to the Twenty-fourth and Last Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 293-294

<sup>12</sup> Max Zerwick, S.J., and Mary Grosvenor, A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5<sup>th</sup>, revised edition (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996) 72.

<sup>13</sup> Henry Wansbrough, General Editor, The New Jerusalem Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1985).