

study of Genesis. Our thanks and congratulations are due the translator and the publishing house for bringing this notable work to the English-reading public.

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Wiklander, Bertil. *Prophecy as Literature: A Text-Linguistic and Rhetorical Approach to Isaiah 2-4*. Coniectanea Biblica, Old Testament Series, 22. Malmö, Sweden: Gleerup/Liber, 1984. xiii + 278 pp. Paperback, Swedish Crowns 150.00.

This book, a revision of Wiklander's 1983 Uppsala doctoral thesis, proposes "that Isaiah 2-4 is a structured and functional unit of discourse" (p. 248; cf. p. ix). Hereby, Wiklander distances himself from much recent scholarship which has generally found a collection of originally independent prophetic oracles in Isa 2-4.

To demonstrate this thesis, Wiklander undertakes a linguistic and rhetorical analysis, among whose characteristics the following receive special attention: reduction (looking at the text anew, without regard to previous interpretations); text-orientation (focusing upon the text from a variety of viewpoints); holistic approach (examining the parts of the text in light of the whole passage); synchronic analysis (viewing the text from a given point in time); and historical analysis (placing the text within a text-historical process of the literary work of Isaiah). By these approaches, he seeks to retrieve the "true" meaning of the text. "I shall try to grasp the *capacity of meaning* as it emerges in a distinct communicative setting. Thus, I shall proceed on the assumption—currently gaining ground in text linguistic research—that 'textual meaning' is a dynamic phenomenon and that 'texts' should be conceived as deriving their life from being integrated by the interpreter with dynamic socio-cultural and interactional processes" (p. 32).

How does such an analysis proceed, and what results does it yield when applied to Isa 2-4?

(1) Assuming this passage to be part of an anthology of Isaiah materials and to have made its first appearance in the period from 450-400 B.C., Wiklander examines its linguistic and rhetorical characteristics and looks for contemporary socio-cultural data from Israelite history having a bearing on the meaning of the text.

(2) Identifying certain "markers" (e.g., 2¹, 2⁵, 3^{1ff.}) in the text, recognized by both its author and its recipients, enables Wiklander to outline the larger sections in Isa 2-4. When viewed in the context of Isa 1-5, syntactic links between its various sections, either anaphoric (looking back

upon the preceding) or cataphoric (looking forward to what follows), set Isaiah 2-4 off from its larger context as possessing internal coherence. Finally, the text has syntactic characteristics identifying it as "audience-oriented," "argumentative-persuasive," and "oratorical."

(3) Turning to the semantic dimension of the text, Wiklander identifies the covenant, understood as a treaty between sovereign and vassal, as the dominant conceptual field. It gives coherence to the whole passage (Isa 2-4), and by virtue of the related field of lawsuit (*rib*), the passage again shows itself as "audience-oriented," and "argumentative-persuasive," and depends for its meaning upon the intended act of text reception.

(4) Reconstructing the argumentative situation (between author and receiver) by pointing to the political, national-ethnic, socio-economic, moral, religious-cultic aspects, Wiklander has identified the author's stance vis-à-vis his social support group (Jerusalem temple circles), its opposition (foreign advisers and local supporters), and the most likely historical setting for the text (Hezekiah's time). Finally, the text genre suitable to achieve the author's communication intentions is identified as written composition intended for oral performance, a "revelation text" in which the covenant lawsuit proceedings and the "prophetic vision report" are interfused (p. 215). This genre is entitled: "restoration of the covenant by means of prophetic revelation" (p. 219), and it is structured on the model of discourse designed to make the audience "think, feel, remember, believe, decide and do" (p. 227). By such a text production-reception, the audience is invited "to become the true and faithful vassal or covenant partner of Yahweh" (p. 228).

Reading prophecy as literature in this way enables the interpreter to ask new questions about the text and to carry away new, fresh answers. That would seem to be the chief contribution of the present work. However, not all questions about the book of Isaiah are answered equally well, so it seems; and some new ones arise. Thus, while some questions about the literary composition of Isaiah are addressed in a helpful way (e.g., the coherent unity of Isa 2-4), others are not (such as, the question of the composition of the whole book, its relationship to other prophetic books [e.g., Micah], and its place in Israel's history). Finally, from a theological perspective, some readers might wonder if the present sharp focus upon the literary characteristics of the passage will not raise the same theological questions, vis-à-vis inspiration, divine revelation and authority, that have been raised by other approaches to the prophets, such as form, tradition, and redaction analysis. But these cautions do not diminish the insights offered in this interesting study.