“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well;”¹ The prophecies and writings of Isaiah, the son of Amoz are both poetic and profound. Isaiah was well educated, as illustrated in his mastery of the ancient Hebrew language. He wrote mostly in an elevated poetic language, although he also wrote some key passages in prose.

Most scholars believe that Isaiah’s ministry took place between 740 and 700 B.C. In sixty-six chapters Isaiah addresses major issues facing Israel, spanning hundreds of years. His writings span several empires as well as both Israel’s pre and post-exilic eras. A great many scholars argue that because of the content, structure and flow of his writings, the book of Isaiah has multiple authors. This theory of tripartite authorship suggests a division of the book into three segments known as “primo-Isaiah,” “deutero-Isaiah,” and “trito-Isaiah.” This disputed authorship of Isaiah is one of the most popular textual biblical issues. This essay will focus on writings favoring various arguments of authorship, with perspective from numerous scholars spanning the last 150 years.

One of the great foundational works regarding the book of Isaiah is The Book of Isaiah Translated and Explained,² written by Bernhard Duhm. This work is a literary leader on the book of Isaiah. Duhm composed it in 1892 and pioneered the theory of a tripartite division of authors for the book of Isaiah. This theory is now recognized almost universally in Old Testament commentary. Although this work has been cited countless times by those who adhere to the theory of multiple authorship, many have also been critical of some of Duhm's premises

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¹ Isa. 1:16-17.
² Bernhard Duhm, The Book of Isaiah Translated and Explained (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1892).
for this argument. Nonetheless, this work is a foundational monogram establishing the much debated topic of authorship.

Similar to Duhm’s commentary, Samuel Driver’s *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, is a leading interpretive work of Isaiah. Driver is a foundational author within the realm Hebrew and the Old Testament. All diligent students of this ancient religious text will at some point need to acquaint themselves with the works of S.R. Driver. In this renowned monograph, with its first edition written during the 19th century, Driver masterfully offers a descriptive and historical account of the literature of the Old Testament. Though uncomprensive (as it fills only one chapter of his book), his works on Isaiah provide a literary review of the book of Isaiah.

The author's extensive background as a scholar does contribute however to a strong sense of bias in his definitive declaration regarding the authorship of Isaiah chapters 40-66. In his book, Driver boldly claims the following:

Judged by the analogy of prophecy, this constitutes the strongest possible presumption that the author actually *lived* in the period which he thus describes, and is not merely (as has been supposed) Isaiah immersed in spirit in the future, and holding converse, as it were, with the generations yet unborn. Such an immersion in the future would be not only without parallel in the Old Testament, it would be contrary to the nature of prophecy. The prophet speaks always, in the first instance, to his own contemporaries: the message which he brings is intimately related with the circumstances of his time: his promises and predictions, however far they reach into the future, nevertheless rest upon the basis of the history of his own age, and correspond to the needs which are then felt.\(^4\)

His view of Isaiah as a prophet differs considerably from those held by many others. He contributes space in this chapter to peculiarities of diction and literary style peculiar to the period.

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4. Driver, *Literature of the Old Testament*, 237. This bold assumption contorts the very definition of prophecy. The rash claim that such a prophecy of future events is without parallel in Old Testament writings is void of accuracy at any rate. Numerous other prophets prophesied of future events, including (and of course not limited to): Ezekiel, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.
of the Babylonian exile. These, he uses as evidence with the apparent purpose of distinguishing the author of chapters 40-66 from the prophet Isaiah.

Another comparative work was written by Thomas K. Cheyne in 1895—only a couple of years after Duhm’s commentary. Cheyne’s book is titled *Introduction to the Book of Isaiah.* In this, Cheyne expounds on the views expressed by Driver. Cheyne expresses the value of his own work as a supplement to that of Driver, in these words:

It must however be confessed that Dr. Driver’s book, though conscientious and learned, and in its arrangement highly practical, gives an insufficient picture both of the methods and of the present state of the higher criticism, and therefore hardly forms the best starting point for advanced students. For them at any rate a more representative and clear-sighted guide is indispensable. This amounts to saying that in this as in other subjects the successful student needs more than one teacher.

Cheyne's monograph holds true to the principle thoughts established by Driver. Ultimately, Cheyne executes the processes begun by those who preceded him. In juxtaposition to these major works on Isaiah is Charles C. Torrey's *The Second Isaiah*.

Torrey’s 1928 landmark monograph is majestically written showing great reverence for both Isaiah and his inspired writings. This book is indispensable to any astute pupil of Isaian text. Torrey's approach is one of both logic and faith. In it, Torrey considers the works of many including both Driver and Cheyne, and makes his own critical analysis of the origin of Isaiah’s book. Rebutting claims of a compound authorship Torrey declares,

Making due allowance for changes in subject-matter, I venture to assert that in no case will the signs of unity of authorship be more plainly marked, or more evenly distributed, than is the case when 'deutero-Isaiah' and 'trito-Isaiah' are compared. The two sections are pieces out of the very same homogeneous block. Taking into account the difference in

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subject-matter, there is no kind or degree of literary resemblance closer than what we have here.\(^8\)

Torrey critically analyzes and vehemently opposes the theories of his peers. His conclusion?

The necessity of making the division into 'Deutero-Isaiah' (chapters 40-55) and 'Trito-Isaiah' (56-66), with all that it involves, would of itself be a sufficiently great misfortune. That it is not possible to take this step without going still farther, the recent history of exegesis has clearly shown. The subsequent dissection of 'III Isaiah' is a certainty, while that of the curtailed 'II Isaiah' is not likely to be long delayed. We have here a good example of that which has happened not a few times, in the history of literary criticism, where scholars have felt obliged to pare down a writing to make it fit a mistaken theory. The paring process, begun with a penknife, is continued with a hatchet, until the book has been chopped into hopeless chunks.\(^9\)

One year after Torrey’s work was published, it received a generous endorsement in an article in *The Journal of Religion* written by William Creighton Graham. Graham’s article, titled “The Second Rescue of Second Isaiah”\(^10\) addresses the approach taken by Torrey in *The Second Isaiah*. Although he is quick to acknowledge his highly unfavorable disposition to the thesis of Torrey’s work, Creighton endorses the man in these words: "[Torrey] has written another work of real significance, a work which…will be influential for years to come in stimulating research, and in molding, in important respects, the methods and conclusions of those who engage in it. Higher tribute than this paid to any author would savor of adulation."\(^11\) "Whoever spends hours upon hours of careful study upon it will rise up and call its author blessed."\(^12\)


\(^12\). Graham, “Second Rescue,” 84.
In a more modern work, Jewish philosopher and biblical professor at Hebrew University, Yehezkel Kaufmann, wrote *The Babylonian Captivity and Deutero-Isaiah*.¹³ Kaufmann's is a thorough attempt to set up the historical background of sixth-century Babylon, the setting in which he believes the latter chapters of the book of Isaiah were written. Kaufmann's monotonous focus on the diaspora (dispersion of the Jews beyond the borders of Israel) is a striking disclosure of his bias when presenting the provenance of chapters 40-66 of Isaiah. His entire work is based on the premise that these chapters must have been written by someone other than the son of Amoz. This assumption is clear in his observation that "scripture gives no explicit biographical information concerning the author of the prophecies contained in chapters 40-66 of the book of Isaiah--not even his name nor where nor when he lived."¹⁴

Comparable to Kaufmann is Hans M. Barstad who wrote *The Babylonian Captivity of the Book of Isaiah*.¹⁵ In this work Barstad, an expert on the writings of Isaiah, does not argue for or against the idea of a "second Isaiah," rather he presents research which sheds light on the possible reasons why so many scholars for over a century have attributed the writing of Isaiah chapters 40-55 to a Babylonian setting. Barstad rejects this idea, nevertheless he displays extensive research in the area of exilic Babylonian history. Barstad stems the root of the claims back to Duhm, none of whose assumptions can be said to be very impressive, "having the

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Barstad cites much of the history from Kaufmann's works.

In a 2006 dissertation, Matthijs de Jong makes note of recent changes in the scholarly approach to the authorship of the book of Isaiah. De Jong’s doctoral thesis is titled “Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets: a comparative study of the earliest stages of the Isaiah tradition and the Neo-Assyrian prophecies.” In the dissertation he acknowledges that the strictly tripartite division of the book has been challenged in recent years as mainly Anglo-American scholars have approached the ancient record as a compositional unity. De Jong’s research has a slightly different focus than many of the other works on the topic. As stated within the doctoral thesis, its purpose is "to present a comparative perspective on the Isaiah tradition in the Assyrian period and the prophetic material from Assyria which sheds light on three issues: the interrelation between prophecy and historical circumstances, the function of the prophets, and the literary development of prophecy.”

Supporting de Jong’s claim, is an article written by L. La Mar Adams which he titled “A Scientific Analysis of Isaiah Authorship.” Adams approaches the history of the Isaiah authorship problem from a scientific view. The article reports a scientific analysis of all claims made both for and against the claim of single authorship of the book of Isaiah. Adams gives an


18. de Jong “Isaiah,” 38.

overview of the various views of authorship relating to the book, followed by a brief history illustrating the development of these views, even dating back to A.D. 1100.

Various types of arguments are discussed, including historical, theological and literary. He discusses the reasoning of the divisionists for their widely held opinion of multiple authorship. He also cites divisionists' largest claim in the words of Norman Gottwald, a modern critic of the Hebrew Bible: "When [the prophetic writings are] studied in their context, apart from dogmatic preconviction, [it is clear that] no prophet leaped across the centuries and foresaw the specific person Jesus of Nazareth. It is a plain violation of historical context to think that they did so, and in practice those that interpret the prophets as predictors of Jesus obscure the setting in which the prophets functioned." 20

Adams determines that most scholars insist on multiple authorship for the book of Isaiah because they do not believe that a prophet can prophesy beyond his own time period. This manner of thought was condemned by Jesus Christ. The author concludes that results of his statistical analysis do not support the divisionists' claim that little evidence exists to support the unity of the book of Isaiah, but that his results strongly support a sole author.

The vast majority of published works on the book of Isaiah are in the form of commentary. Among these Joseph Blenkinsopp's, *Isaiah 1-39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary,* included in the Blue Anchor Bible series, is the first in a three-volume work which separates the book of Isaiah into three sections. This may appear that the commentary is written to reflect the theory of 'deutero-isaiah' and 'trito-isaiah', however Blenkinsopp presents

20. As cited in Adams, “Scientific Analysis,” 153. This statement demonstrates a strict scholarly view of the Isaian text, ignoring completely the very purpose for which Isaiah’s works were written. Gottwald, as so many others clearly misses the mark.

pieces of both arguments in his commentary. Blenkinsopp's work provides both a new
translation of the book of Isaiah, as well as a literary-historical commentary.

A popular commentary from a Latter-day Saint perspective is Understanding Isaiah\textsuperscript{22},
co-authored by Donald W. Parry, Jay A. Parry, and Tina M. Peterson. This team of authors
successfully accomplishes the goal many have desired to reach, as they modestly and profoundly
provide a set of tools to simplify the complexity of Isaiah's writings. The commentary uses The
Book of Mormon and the Joseph Smith Translation to create a "more correct, inspired" version
of the King James rendering of Isaiah.\textsuperscript{23} Written as a commentary, this work provides chapter
headings and helps the reader apply many of Isaiah's teachings to modern experiences and
circumstances. The authors take the approach that Isaiah wrote as much for us as he did for the
people of his own epoch.

Another author who has focused his work on Isaiah from a Latter-day Saint perspective is
Victor L. Ludlow. In Ludlow’s Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet,\textsuperscript{24} he provides influential
background information about Isaiah and his prophetic role. He also discusses Isaiah's writings
in terms of its literary style. This dimension enables the reader to make a personal analysis of
both the poetic and prophetic style of the Isaian text. As the author states, "At no other Old
Testament time period were as many prophetic works and significant writings recorded as during
the lifetime of Isaiah."\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{22} Donald W. Parry, Jay A. Parry, and Tina M. Peterson, Understanding Isaiah (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998).

\textsuperscript{23} Donald W. Parry has also published an excellent primary source on Isaiah entitled Harmonizing Isaiah:
Combining Ancient Sources (2001), in which he blends the readings of other versions of Isaiah preserved in
the Masoretic Text, the Book of Mormon, and the Joseph Smith Translation.

\textsuperscript{24} Victor L. Ludlow, Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982).

\textsuperscript{25} Ludlow, Isaiah: Prophet Seer Poet, 40.
Ludlow also recognizes the relevancy of Isaiah's writings to the modern reader, and he deems the truths Isaiah taught ancient Israel still valuable today. Ludlow insists that Isaiah’s discourses on charity, morality, fasting, service, the Sabbath, and the true nature of worship still encourage people to live righteously. As did Understanding Isaiah, Ludlow offers doctrinal highlights of Isaiah's prophecies allowing readers to apply his teachings on a personal level.

The author identifies major themes addressed in Isaiah's writings, placing emphasis on the historical and doctrinal implications of the prophecies. Although a commentary, this book was written that it could be read from cover to cover, providing spectacular insight to the geography, and context of the 8th century B.C. As an appendix, the author briefly discusses the disputed authorship of the book of Isaiah. With the same certainty as his Latter-day Saint colleagues, Ludlow also refutes the idea of a division in the writing, and insists that Isaiah is the single author of all sixty-six chapters of the book.

Many of Isaiah’s writings were also quoted by Book of Mormon authors. A valuable resource for individuals who choose to study these quoted works of Isaiah will find Isaiah in the Book of Mormon of interest. Edited by Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch, this work is an exegetical work pointed to help students of the Book of Mormon in their quest to comprehend the meaning of Isaiah's writings. Included in this book is an essay by Jeffrey R. Holland entitled "More Fully Persuaded: Isaiah's Witness of Christ's Ministry." This essay draws attention to moments when Book of Mormon authors use the prophecies of Isaiah to describe the ministry of Jesus Christ. In another essay, Parry suggests personal keys for "unlocking" Isaiah. In an essay by Robert Cloward, entitled "Isaiah 29 and the Book of Mormon," Cloward effectively demonstrates the process by which one may "liken scripture to oneself":

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Isaiah foresaw both the fate and the future restoration of Jerusalem and her people. Nephi…likened Isaiah's words to his people in a new prophecy, showing how Nephite writings would advance the Lord's work in the latter days…. Then, the Savior and the resurrected Moroni taught the significance of Nephi's likening for this dispensation to the Prophet Joseph Smith. Joseph Smith, in turn, replaced Isaiah's words in his inspired translation of the Bible with his new understanding of how they had been likened to him and to the Lord's latter-day work.

In this process, Isaiah's sealed book was reinterpreted as Nephi's gold plates and as Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon. Isaiah's dust of death was reinterpreted as Nephi's source of renewed life and as Joseph Smith's Cumorah…. This is the process of likening. Prophets do it readily…. There is no impropriety in their giving old scripture new meaning for their lives.27

Other contributing authors of this work balance the historical and interpretive elements of the Book of Mormon Isaian text. Within the book, Ann N. Madsen approaches Isaiah's text as a restorationist, analyzing the words of the ancient prophet for latter-day prophecies. Madsen draws attention to the teachings of Joseph Smith and his use of Isaiah's teachings in bringing about the restoration of Christ's Church on the earth through the Book of Mormon.

This book also deals with the question of the unity of Isaiah, using as the greatest argument the validity of the Book of Mormon, and the fact that it quotes from chapters of Isaiah found in both "first" and "second" Isaiah. Using this fact, and the history of the Nephite people departing from Jerusalem around 600 B.C., Welch concludes that Isaiah is most probably written by one author.

An article in the Journal of Book of Mormon Studies also addresses Isaiah’s writings quoted in the Book of Mormon. Written by Sidney B. Sperry, “The ‘Isaiah Problem’ in the Book of Mormon”28 approaches the issue of multiple authorship of the book of Isaiah from the perspective of the Book of Mormon. He acknowledges the problem this causes as an


inconsistency between the two texts. Sperry works to give a reasonable answer to this 'Isaiah problem' to all readers whose conception of world-philosophy is "such that he can concede the possibility of 'the supernatural reality of prophecy' and acknowledge the possibility of the Book of Mormon being a true record translated by divine aid."\textsuperscript{29}

Sperry addresses the division theory held by most modern scholars, but also acknowledges that this idea has gained in popularity only in the last 150 years. He delves more deeply than Adams into the history of ‘deutero-’ and ‘trito-’ Isaiah, and also places emphasis on the quantity of the book of Isaiah supposedly attributed to writers other than the prophet whose name the book bears.

The author indicates why many scholars continue to hold the book as essentially Isaiah's. Among these, he addresses the Jewish and Christian churches, the Greek Church, the words of Christ and his apostles and other ancient record-keepers. Each of whose words and teachings all provide external evidence in favor of the unity of the book of Isaiah. Sperry also identifies numerous internal points of evidence supporting the unity of Isaiah, including the detachment of Isaiah's personality from his prophecies, the consistency of majestic imagery across every chapter, and his tendency to repetition and quote his own words. Another piece of evidence Sperry points out from within the text are the use of expressions almost exclusively peculiar to Isaiah, such as "the Holy One of Israel," "Lord of Hosts," "Mighty God of Jacob" or "set up an ensign." The writer also makes mention of the tendency to suddenly break into song, which is a common feature throughout the book, and quite peculiar to Isaiah. Regarding the theories of

\textsuperscript{29} Sperry, “Isaiah Problem,” 137-8.
multiple authorship, Sperry concludes, "the critics' arguments for the division of Isaiah are far from being compelling and conclusive. Lacking that, their case must be labeled 'not proved.'"\(^{30}\)

Sperry addresses the Isaiah text of the Nephite record contained in the Book of Mormon. He determines that "these verses, when studied in connection with ancient versions of Isaiah, give substantial evidence that the translator of the Book of Mormon had before him a version of Isaiah more ancient than any now in existence, and that he actually translated."\(^{31}\) Throughout Sperry's work, he provides textual references to both the book of Isaiah, and the Book of Mormon to illustrate both the similarities and variations between the texts.

A Latter-day Saint example of an exegetical study of Isaiah is Terry Ball’s article titled “Isaiah and the Great Arraignment.”\(^{32}\) Ball addresses Isaiah's unique characteristics as an educated man of significant social status in these words:

> When we think of an Old Testament prophet, we may picture a humble, simple man, one living in the wilderness and being fed by ravens like Elijah the Tishbite, or perhaps a gatherer of sycamore fruit and a herdsman like Amos. Isaiah, however, seems to have been a man of relatively high social station who could find audience with kings…. Moreover, the complexity and beauty of his writings, complete with all the poetic elements of metaphor, parallelism, and elevated language, reflect his station as a well-educated man.\(^{33}\)

In this article Ball addresses Isaiah's role as a "spiritual physician" to the people within the first five chapters of Isaiah's writings. He analyzes the way in which Isaiah addressed his people and approached them with an offering of healing. He outlines various maladies affecting ancient

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Israel while summing up each one in some detail and citing examples from the text. Ball also mentions the loving counsel of repentance given by Isaiah to a suffering house of Israel.

Ball determines Isaiah’s diagnosis of Israel as one of ignorance and apathy, greed and worldliness. He then expounds on four of the prognoses for those who reject the message of Isaiah, as well as some detail suggesting a prognosis for the righteous and repentant. Then urging all modern readers, specifically God's covenant people to avoid similar sicknesses, "particularly ignorance, apathy, rebellion, greed, worldliness, idolatry, and the failure to thrive," he importunes that all apply the same prescription offered by Isaiah, and that all look forward for the latter-day prophecies of Isaiah to be fulfilled.

There has been a great deal of dialogue regarding the writings of the prophet Isaiah. The Book of Mormon quotes Jesus Christ as saying “great are the words of Isaiah,” and that all things Isaiah prophesied would be fulfilled. With opposition finding its way to combat every planted seed of faith and truth, it is logical that learned men would both defend and battle against the words, prophecies, and concepts of a such a writer Isaiah. We are witnesses even today of the fulfilling of the words of this ancient prophet regarding the work of God. “I, the Lord, will hasten it in its time.”


35. 3 Nephi 23:1-3

36. Isa. 60:22