THE ANTI-ASSYRIAN CHARACTER OF THE ORACLE
IN IS. IX 1-6

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One of the most stimulating contributions so far of Professor Erling HAMMERSHAIMB in the study of the Prophets is his interpretation of the Immanuel sign in Is. vii 1). This article d’hommage is inspired by HAMMERSHAIMB’s linear interpretation of the three messianic oracles in Is. vii, ix and xi. According to that interpretation, all three oracles are founded in Isaiah’s conviction that the political future of Judah is indissolubly bound to the dynasty of David in its primal sense, i.e., as connected with the legitimate right of rulership over the ancient kingdom of David. Is. ix 1-6 and xi 1-9 are therefore, according to HAMMERSHAIMB, not only authentic, but even forceful expressions of the basic assurance made in Is. vii. The formulation of the oracles in Is. ix and xi, is linked, following HAMMERSHAIMB, with the changed situation which arose with Ahaz’ political alliance with Assyria 2).

The purpose of this article is to affirm the correctness of HAMMERSHAIMB’s understanding regarding Is. ix 1-6. The interpretation of this messianic oracle follows mainly three lines: One can illuminate the motif-complex by Egyptian material, or by Accadian material, or finally, one can apply the internal O.T. material and sometimes this is done in an highly original way. At present the first approach is most customary. Typical for this is WILDBERGER’s interpretation of the oracle in the light of the Egyptian influence which is assumed to have shaped the form of royal ideology in Jerusalem: consequently the supposed five throne-names in the oracle and their divine


2) HAMMERSHAIMB, art. cit., 22 ff.

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character 1). The weakness of this theory lies in the undeniable fact that the number of names in ix 5 is four. Supplying a fifth name from the following is non-acceptable from several points of view, and furthermore is a solution contrived from the parallel material (see below). In addition the titelage in the Egyptian royal protocol is an expression for such genuinely Egyptian thinking concerning Pharaoh's incarnation and sovereignty that it is difficult to regard the use of this material as justified. In the main, Egyptian influence is an exaggerated factor in current interpretation of the monarchy in Israel. This is seen by comparing with the so-called vassal-treaty-texts, and not least of all, by internal interpretation 2).

SCHUNCK tries, through a special balance, to connect to the Judges tradition in his treatment of the names in Is. ix 1-6 3). His line of thought is still linked to the Egyptian material, but the two first consonants inspire him to supplement a Judge name 흥. In this way SCHUNCK's suggestion leads over to that interpretation alternative which regards ix 1-6 from an internal O.T. viewpoint. The correctness in principle of this approach ought to be easily apparent. It is plausible the prophet was consciously considering the Gideon tradition in one or another form, as HARRELSON has recently noted 4). The expression "The Day of Midian" in Is. ix 3 and the motifs Yahwâh 'immër-ka (Judg. vi 12, 16, cf Immanuel), kol-nîfš̂̄'ôtâw (vi 13, cf pâlă yô'tî), gibbôr hâhâyîl (vi 12, cf 'el gibbôr) and Yahwâh šâlôm (vi 24, šâr šâlôm) point in this direction. A wider context of a more pregnant royal ideological character is indeed more illuminating, as VISCHER's contribution shows 5).

This line of tradition provide the key to an understanding of Is. ix

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2) See R. DE VAUX, "The King of Israel, Vassal of Yahweh" in The Bible and the Ancient Near East (1972), 152 ff., P. J. CALDERONE, Dynastic Oracle and suzerainty treaty. 2 Samuel 7,8-16 (1966), and the correction of the supposed influence upon 1 Kings iii from the Egyptian "Königsmorelle" by M. WEINFELD, Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School (1972), 250 ff.

3) K.-D. SCHUNCK, "Der fünfte Thronname des Messias (Jes. ix 5-6)")", V/2 23 (1973), 108-110.
