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**'A TALE OF TWO CITIES' - NATIONALISM IN  
ZION AND BABYLON**

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**INTRODUCTION**

There are many forms of nationalism. Johannes Degenaar lists eight varieties of nationalism including constitutional, revolutionary, pan- and racial nationalism in a paper on 'Philosophical Roots of Nationalism'.<sup>1</sup> 'Nationalism' thus defies a fixed definition, as does 'nation' or 'race', and takes on colour from its historical and cultural setting. 'Nationalism' is an ideology, that is a set of ideas used to express a nation's aspirations by an influential group within it. It may draw on feelings of ancestry, kinship, shared history, language, homeland, and sense of destiny. An ideology does not have to be logically consistent or factually true to function. It may be based on myth in both senses of the word.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, an ideology is not necessarily a form of 'false consciousness', and I shall attempt to use the words 'ideology' and 'nationalism' as neutrally as possible in the rest of this paper.

'Nationalism' consciously attempts to transcend tribalism. It is not the ideology of separate clans, tribes, villages or cities as such, but an ideology which attempts to unify these elements in a greater whole, the nation-state. In our times, physical objects such as flags, coins, and the central political buildings carry the symbolic message of nationalism, as do rituals such as singing the national anthem, parades carrying the flag, or ceremonies at the opening of government buildings.

The capital city therefore plays a special role in the rituals of nationalism ancient and modern, normally being the

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<sup>1</sup> Theo Sundemeier (ed.), *Church and Nationalism in South Africa* (Johannesburg, Raven Press 1975) 11-39.

<sup>2</sup> See L. Thomson, *The Political Mythology of Apartheid* (Yale, 1985) for a study of the development of a contemporary political ideology which interpreted historical events using ideas about race, nation and destiny inspired by forms of German and Dutch Calvinism.

place where the ruler is invested and acclaimed. Because territory is so important to nationalism, and a nation has to define itself in distinction from other nations and territories, the occupation or aggressive encirclement of a nation-state by others may result in an upsurge of nationalism as a drive for liberation and self-determination gathers momentum. Yet nationalism may move from the defensive to the expansionist as regards territory, and we shall look at both of these phases of nationalism. I shall argue that nationalism is not a modern political phenomenon only, but that, observing due academic caution, we may allow this concept to play a role in the hermeneutical task of relating the ancient context to modern ones.

There is a further item to note at the outset, namely, that we simply do not have access to expressions of Israel's nationalism emanating from official court documents such as dedicatory inscriptions commemorating building activities and military victories, the Israelite equivalents of the Moabite stone. Neither the ideology of king Zedekiah, nor the oracles of prophets like Hananiah are preserved in original sources, but the strong possibility is that canonical prophets were engaging the nationalism from such sources as much as the nationalism from outside Israel.

## I NEO-BABYLONIAN NATIONALISM.

### A. Nabopolassar and the Re-building of Babylon and Empire.

A newly published barrel cylinder of Nabopolassar provides an opportune focus for investigating Babylonian nationalism. Iraqi scholars discovered it deposited with a Nabonidus cylinder in a mud-brick box near the Ishtar gate.<sup>3</sup> This deposit by the first and last kings of the Neo-Babylonian empire proclaims their pious nationalism to gods and successors from their capital city. In form and historical content the new cylinder adds nothing special to the Neo-Babylonian cylinders edited by Langdon eighty years ago, but the proportion of ideological content, especially on Babylon the capital, is impressive. The cylinder commemorates work on the Imgur-Enlil wall, and is therefore disposed to an ideological

<sup>3</sup> See F. N. H. Al-Rawi, *Iraq* 47 (1985) 1-9.

proclamation about the capital city.

To debate which ideological sphere is the equivalent of the sun in the solar system, would probably produce as many responses for Babylonian religious ideology as it has for the Old Testament theology debate. In the Nabopolassar cylinder, king and capital both capture notable quantities of ideological matter. We shall focus on the ideology of the capital city, with the justification that this indeed is the weighting given by the king himself by recognizing that the city was primeval, whereas he was 'the son of a nobody' to start with. The most pertinent ideological lines read as follows:

A Babylon 2, Column 2:8-26.

8. *Imgur-Enlil* ('Enlil-showed-favour') the mighty wall of Babylon 9. pre-eminent boundary post, splendid since ancient times, 10. firmly-founded boundary which endures eternally, 11. elevated nest which comes level with the heavens, 12. strong shield closing the mouth of the enemy land, 13. the very wide courtyard of the *Igigi*, 14. the broad precinct of the *Anunnaki*, 15. stairway to the heavens, staircase to the underworld, 16. station-place of *Lugal-girra* and *Meslamta-ea*, 17. open-air shrine of *Ishtar* the great queen, 18. javelin range of warrior *Dagan*, 19. military camp of heroic *Ninurta*, 20. charter house of *Anu* and *Enlil*, 21. site of the ingenious designs of *Ea* lord of *Eridu*, 22. ground, the preserve of the great gods, 23. of the *Igigi* and *Anunnaki*, 24. its foundations they laid with joyful hearts, 25. skilfully they carried it out according to plan, they raised its elevations 26. with the progression of time, it had weakened and collapsed.<sup>4</sup>

From the inscription as a whole, we wish to examine four ideological points which contribute to Babylonian nationalism: (i) the idea that Babylon was built by the gods in primeval times; (ii) the affirmation that it is a cosmic centre; (iii) the sense of continued destiny involved in the re-building programme; and (iv) the idea of the capital as the bulwark of a liberated homeland.

(i) Babylon, the god-built.

The first point to make is that Nabopolassar's ideology has roots in a foundation myth. The motif of the god building the

<sup>4</sup> 8. *Imgur-Enlil dūru rabā ša Bābilim* 9. *pulukku rēsta ša ištu sātīm sūpū* 10. *kisurrā šuršudu ša labār dūr umē* 11. *qinna zaqru ša šitnunu šamāmī* 12. *tukšu dannu ēdil pī māṭ aṣṣābī* 13. *tarbāšu šumduḷu ša Igigī* 14. *kisallu palkā ša Anunnakī* 15. *mēlit šamāmī simmilat ganzir* 16. *nanzāz Lugal-girra u Meslamta-ea* 17. *ibrat ša Ištar šarrat rabitīm* 18. *maškan tilpānu ša Dagan qurādu* 19. *tarbāš karāšu ša qurradu Ninurta* 20. *bīt kidinni ša Anum u Enlil* 21. *ašar ušurāti naklāti ša Ea bēl Eridu* 22. *qaqqar niširtim ša ilāni rabūti* 23. *ša Igigī u Anunnakī* 24. *ina nūg libbišunu ukinnū temensu* 25. *nakliš uštašbu ullū rēšisu* 26. *ina labār umē inīs iqūpma*

city did duty at Mari and Nippur as well. Yahdun-Lim, in vaunting his mediterranean march, claimed that nothing matched it 'from ancient times when the god built the city of Mari'.<sup>5</sup> Those praying to the queen of heaven at Nippur affirmed that it had been entrusted to her by its founder Enlil, the executive head of the Sumerian pantheon: 'the city Nippur . . . Enlil built it for his own dwelling-place'.<sup>6</sup>

But the motif is best known in its Babylonian versions, where Marduk builds Babylon as his capital in primeval times in conjunction with the defeat of Tiamat, the ordering of the cosmos, and the creation of Man. A bilingual text copied at Sippar in Neo-Babylonian times starts the world with water; after this, cult-centres were built:

Babylon was built, Esagila completed.  
The gods, the Anunnaki, one and all he created.  
'Holy City' they solemnly called it,  
(this) residence, their hearts' delight<sup>7</sup>

It is in *Enuma elish* that we have the fullest literary expression of the motif. Conventionally this text is known as 'the Babylonian creation myth', but this does not really do justice to its theme and purpose, and one must agree with Saggs when he says, 'To read the total work without preconceptions surely leaves the impression that the central theme was not creation (either cosmic or human) but assertion and justification of the supremacy of Marduk and of his city Babylon . . . *Enuma elish* was a conscious creation for a religio-political end.'<sup>8</sup> The myth commemorates building activities. In Tablet 5, Babylon is built as a royal capital for Marduk and a conference centre for the divine assembly. In Tablet 6, Marduk's personal shrine, Esagila, is constructed by the grateful gods. Thus the

<sup>5</sup> *ša ištu ūm šat ālam Mari ilum ibnū* Col 1:34f., *Syria* 32 (1955) 13; ANET 556.

<sup>6</sup> (*ālu Nippur...tphušma Enlil ramānuš ašāba* col. 4:3f., W. G. Lambert, 'The Hymn to the Queen of Nippur, in G. van Driel (ed.), *Zikir Sumim* (Leiden, Brill 1982) 200.

<sup>7</sup> *Bābilu epuš Esagila šuklul*

*ilāni Anunnaki mithāriš epuš*

*ālu ellum šubat šub libbišunu šriš imbū*

(CT, 36 lines 14-16). See L. W. King, *The Seven Tablets of Creation 1*, (London, 1902); A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* (Phoenix edition; Chicago, Univ. Chicago Press 1963) 62: CAD N.1,32. Here Marduk creates the Anunnaki gods, whereas in *Enuma elish* he simply assigns them places, and they are referred to in the stock phrase 'the gods, his fathers'; see 6:39f., 71.

<sup>8</sup> H. W. F. Saggs, *The Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel* (Athlone Press, 1978) 58f.

charter for Babylonian supremacy is supported by two complementary episodes of primeval building by the gods.

Initially it is the city itself which enshrines Marduk's kingship:

Tablet 5:119-30.

119. Above the Apsu, the blue-stone residence 120. Opposite to Esharra, which I myself built for you, 121. Below the skies whose floor I have hardened, 122. I shall build a house to be my luxurious residence! 123. I shall found my cult-centre there, 124. I will lay my cella, I will establish my kingship. 125. When you go up from the Apsu for the assembly, 126. There will be your overnight resting-place before your assembly. 127. When you come down from the heavens for the assembly, 128. There will be your overnight resting-place before your assembly, 129. I shall call its name Babylon, 'homes of the great gods'; 130. I shall build it with the craftsmanship [of the mas]ters!<sup>9</sup>

The gods are enthusiastic about their new quarters in Babylon, and respond:

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 137. Bābili ša tazkura šumu du(mqi) | 'Babylon, whose site you decreed for propitious renown, |
| 138. aš(ruššu šubta)ni idi dārišam  | Founded as our dwelling forever.'                       |
|                                     | (5: 137f.)  |

They propose - as an act of gratitude to Marduk for inventing Man to relieve their labours, and for Marduk's hospitality in his city - to build him a personal shrine in Babylon:

55. When Marduk heard this, 56. His countenance glowed exceedingly like day: 57. 'Build Babylon, whose construction you have desired; 58. Shape its brickwork, name it "The Sanctuary".' 59. The Anunnaki wielded the hoe. 60. For one whole year they moulded bricks for it. 61. When the second year arrived, 62. They raised the elevations of Esagila as counterpart to the apsu. 63. They built the ziqqurat as the upper apsu. 64. Its shrine they established as a residence for Marduk, Enlil, and Ēa. 71. He seated the gods, his fathers, at his banquet. 72. This is Babylon, the site of your residence! 73. Sing joyfully in its precincts, fete yourselves with its celebrations. (6:55-64, 71-3)<sup>10</sup>

In the Nabopolassar cylinder, the Igigi and Anunnaki appear in two roles - as builders of Babylon (2:23-5), and as its residents (2:13-14). These are exactly the roles they play in the foundation myth *Enuma elish*. In addition, Nabopolassar is quite consciously re-enacting the building work of these gods, because he describes himself as the one:

6. who skilfully restores the original base of ancient days, 7. who grasps the

<sup>9</sup>Line 129 reads: *lubbima šum(šu Bābilū) bīti ilāni rabūti*.

<sup>10</sup>Tablet 6: 57 and 72-73 read:

57. *epšama Bābilāni ša tēriša šiprišu* 72. *annam Bābili šubat narmēkun* 73. *nugā ašruššu jidūtašu tašbāma*

hoe of the Igigi, 8. who carries the work-basket of the Anunnaki, 9. who rebuilds Imgur-Enlil 10. for Marduk my lord.<sup>11</sup>

(ii) Babylon as Cosmic Centre.

The cylinder reproduces the mythology of *Enuma elish* as regards Babylon's spatial location in the universe too. It is sited between the heavens and the underworld: *mēlit šamāmī simmilat ganzir*, 'stairway to the heavens, staircase to the underworld' (2:15).<sup>12</sup> In the myth, the pinnacles of Marduk's temple are opposite Esharra. As Lambert understands it, this means that the top of Marduk's shrine Esagila is level with the lower heavens.<sup>13</sup> The cylinder describes Babylon, represented by its wall, as nestling in the heavens: *qinna zaqru ša šitnunu šāmāmi*, 'an elevated nest which comes level with the heavens' (2:11).

Its roots (the foundation platform), are as deep as the underworld, and Nabopolassar is sure that he has followed the original blueprint. He says: *ina irat kigalla išidšu lū ušaršid*, 'on the edge of the underworld I laid down its foundation' (2:39-40).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> 6. *muštesbi kigallu rešti ša dūr umē* 7. *šābit allu ša Igigi* 8. *zābil tupšikku ša Anunnaki* 9. *ēpiš Imgur-Enlil* 10. *ana Marduk belija*

In the lines quoted from *Enuma elish* Tablets 5 and 6, the term Anunnaki is doing collective duty for the two categories, Anunnaki and Igigi, and does not refer to underworld deities only. It is clear from the parallel lines of Tablet 5:85f. that both groups are involved, and closely associated:

*(pa)hūrma Igigi kalīšunu uškinnuš*  
*Anunnaki mala bašū anaššiqū šepēšu*

Assembled, the Igigi collectively paid homage,  
 The Anunnaki as a whole kissed his feet.

Both groups comprise the tally of 600 gods whom Marduk divides equally between heaven and underworld, 6:39-44. Like *Enuma elish*, the Nabopolassar cylinder text singles out leading deities by name from this wider pantheon; for example, Nergal and associated underworld deities Lugal-girra and Meslamtaea on the one hand, and Anu the sky god on the other.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Rawi (*Iraq* 47, 7) draws attention to the fact that this cylinder uses phrases not previously attested in the Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions, a fact which underlines the text's ideological richness. See his comments on *mēlit šamāmī*, *simmilat ganzir*, *maškan tilpānu*, *tarbaš karāšu* and his apposite references to the Nergal and Ereshkigal myth.

<sup>13</sup> See W. G. Lambert, 'The Cosmology of Sumer and Babylon' in C. Blacker (ed.), *Ancient Cosmologies* (London, George Allen & Unwin 1975) 56f.

<sup>14</sup> See Al-Rawi, *Iraq* 47, 7 n.38, and CAD K, 348f. for discussion of the connotations of *kigallu*, and references to Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions, which also carry this spatial mythology.

## (iii) Babylon's Perpetual Destiny.

Of a piece with these claims that Babylon is god-built, and at the mid-point of the cosmos, is the sense of time explicit in the inscription. There is a sense of continuity from primeval foundations to the remote future. This counteracts and completely overcomes the socio-political break at the end of the Assyrian empire and the founding of a new dynasty with Nabopolassar. Thus Babylon and its wall are described as a steadfast, physically fixed point, a *pulukku* and *kisurrû*, words for 'boundary post, boundary' which in themselves suggest the legal inviolability that boundary markers have in Near Eastern culture, at least in theory. The adjectives *rēštu*, 'original, primary', and *šuršudu*, 'firmly founded', used with these nouns are further amplified by phrases carrying the time perspective: *ša ištu šâtim*, 'which is from ancient times', and *ša labār dūr ūmē*, 'which has grown old for eternal days'.

These parallel lines (2:9-10) cohere with the other occurrences of the root *labāru*, 'to endure, grow old', in the cylinder. The long-term future perspective is conveyed by various phrases meaning 'for ever', *ana dūr ūmē*, *ana dārati*, *ana ūmē dārûtu* (3:21, 28, 35). The commemorative royal image and inscription were, like royal renown, intended to last eternally. One must assume that the crumbling mud-brick of Imgur-Enlil, frequently in need of repair, and not infrequently torn down by attackers, did not deter adherence to this ideology of eternal foundations. Perhaps the recovery of previous foundation deposits, often noted by Neo-Babylonian kings, reinforced their sense of Babylon as an eternal city. Consistent with this, and symbolic in itself was the use of an archaizing cuneiform script, here in the Nabopolassar cylinder and elsewhere by other Neo-Babylonian kings.

Another factor contributing to the mythological sense of continuity was the pantheon of gods Babylon had come to house. In the Nabopolassar cylinder, which subscribes to the supremacy of Marduk, there is also an honouring of ancient Semitic and Sumerian deities such as Dagan, known from the third millennium Ebla texts, and Anu and Enlil, known from the earliest Sumerian period. The name of the wall of Babylon commemorated is a Sumerian name *Imgur-Enlil*, 'Enlil showed favour'. The trend of Neo-Babylonian religion was to see Marduk as exercising 'Enlil-ship', that is, executive authority

which incorporated the attributes or specialities of other deities.

(iv) Babylon bulwark of a liberated homeland.

Counter-balancing any impression of a cosmopolitan religious perspective are the hard political statements embedded in the cylinder text. They form the baseline of the argument for Babylonian nationalism because they demonstrate the concept of people and territory, consciously defined as a unit over against another similar unit, the Assyrians. In Nabopolassar's words:

The Assyrians who had, because of the wrath of the gods, dominated Babylonia and had driven the people of the land to despair with their onerous yoke: I, the humble and weak one who ever seeks after the lord of lords by the exalted power of Nabu and Marduk my lord from Babylonia, I cut off their foot and achieved the throwing off of their yoke. (1:28-2:5)<sup>15</sup>

This kind of liberation theology based in Babylonian nationalism is also found in Merodach-baladdan's cylinder in which he describes the Assyrians as the wicked enemy who had only dominated Babylonia until their appointed time ran out. Then he led the military liberation as Babylonia's chosen shepherd, ruling from Babylon.<sup>16</sup>

Nabopolassar works with the concept of a homeland and enemy lands. The wall of Babylon is the *tukšu dannu ʿdil pī māṭ ajjābi*, 'the strong shield shutting the mouth of the enemy's land' (2:12), another metaphor as graphic as the 'yoke' and 'foot' metaphors. In contrast to the enemy land beyond the

<sup>15</sup> *Aššurū ša ina zīrūt ilāni māṭ Akkadī ibēlūma ina nīrišu kabtim ušazziqū niši māti anāku enqu pišnuqu muste'u bēl bēlē ina emūqi gašratim ša Nabū u Marduk beleža utu māṭ Akkadī šepšunu aprusma nīršunu ušaddim* (A Babylon 2, 1:28-2:5)

The same information about the overthrow of Assyria is given in inscriptions 1, 3 and 4 of Nabopolassar previously published in S. Langdon, *Building Inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian Empire I* (Paris, 1905) 48ff. and the VAB edition *Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften* (Leipzig, 1912). No. 4, line 17 describes Assyrian imperialism more fully with the phrases: *Aššurū ša ultu umī rāqūti kullat nišim ibēlūma*, 'the Assyrians who from distant days had dominated all peoples.' In historical context *kullat nišim* probably denotes other nations such as those of Egypt, Palestine and Syria, rather than simply meaning all the people of Babylonia.

<sup>16</sup> *tapdi ummāni Šubarti rapšatim imḥašma ušabbir kakkešun kušdūtasunu iškun ina qaqqar Akkadī ušapriša kibsišun*, 'he achieved the decimation of the extensive Assyrian forces, shattered their weapons, accomplished their defeat, and banished their tread from the soil of Babylonia.' (ND.2090:17-18, *Iraq* 15, 123).

boundary is the native land where Nabopolassar rules by divine election: *ina māt abbanu iškunanni ana rešeti ana bēlūt māti u nišu ittabi nibīta*, 'in the land of my birth he appointed me to pre-eminence, to the overlordship of land and people he proclaimed my name' (A Babylon 2, 1:19-21).

In fact, *mātu*, 'land', and *nišu*, 'people', are used almost interchangeably in the Neo-Babylonian inscriptions which refer to Babylonia. Lest the point being made seem too banal, we should recall that the actual population of Babylonia was a very mixed one, and increasingly so as the Neo-Babylonian empire saw mass deportations and settlements, including that of the Judaeans, joining a resident population which in itself was a heterogeneous mixture of Arameans and Chaldean tribal groups, known to us for the trouble they caused the Assyrian administration.<sup>17</sup>

Thus the tribal groups in the time of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar, and Nabonidus were subsumed ideologically under the term 'the land' or 'the people of the land', and 'the land' was defined in relation to other lands beyond the homeland, many of which were eventually incorporated into the empire as the nationalism of homeland liberation quickly adapted towards an expansionist form of national ideology.

## B. The Founding Dynasty in Related Neo-Babylonian Texts.

Nabopolassar's national achievement features in other texts important for delineating Babylonian nationalism, and I want to refer briefly to the *Nabopolassar Chronicle* and *Epic* texts, the *Dynastic Prophecy* and the *Uruk Prophecy* texts.

We know Nabopolassar's accession date from the *Babylonian Chronicle* which records tersely: 'On the twenty-sixth day of the month Marchesvan Nabopolassar ascended the throne in Babylon' (*ina Bābili ina kussē ittašab*).<sup>18</sup> Scholars routinely refer to the historical reliability of the *Babylonian*

<sup>17</sup> See D. J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon* (The Schweich Lectures, 1983: OUP, 1985) 76ff. on the labour force and the 89 foreign settlements at Nippur.

<sup>18</sup> BM 25127, line 15. See A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Locust Valley N.Y., J. J. Augustin 1975) 88. A. R. Millard, 'Another Babylonian Chronicle Text', *Iraq* 26 (1964) 32 (and n. 103, citing Gadd's remarks [*Iraq* 15, 128]) in support, reminds us that: 'They are considered to be the most reliable records of the events they narrate, though an occasional *nationalistic* bias can be detected' (*italics mine*).

*Chronicle*. Here we see that its perspective is a city-centered national perspective, not only Babylonian, but of Babylonia where the coronation is held. As it happens, we also have an epic version of this event in which Marduk gives an enthronement oracle which emphasizes the role of the capital city:

5. Bel, in the assembly of the gods, [gave] the ruling-power to [Nabopolassar]  
6. The king, the reliable command [...] 7. 'With the standard I shall constantly  
conquer [your] enemies. 8. I shall place [your] throne in Babylon.' (BM 34793,  
lines 5-8)<sup>19</sup>

In discussing this occasion, Ben-Barak describes it as 'a gathering symbolising the political independence of Babylonia won by the Chaldean tribes . . . a time of national ardour'.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Grayson, who first published this text, pointed out that the group of texts he edited in *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts* 'probably all come from the city of Babylon' and reflect 'an atmosphere of regional pride possibly mixed with hatred towards foreign overlords'.<sup>21</sup> What Grayson and Ben-Barak are terming 'national ardour' and 'regional pride', can be regarded as Babylon-centred nationalism. The *Nabopolassar Epic* and the *Nabopolassar Chronicle* both give the city itself, and not simply the king, a central ideological role.

Two so-called prophecy texts originating in Babylonia deserve mention because they illustrate regional bias, but also stand in marked contrast to each other. The *Dynastic Prophecy* BM 40623, published by Grayson and discussed by Lambert, has been seen as a precursor to apocalyptic literature with its rise and fall of empires, its mixture of past and future events all cast as prediction, and its coded names including archaic gentilics.<sup>22</sup> It is certainly Babylon-centred, a point not

<sup>19</sup> 5. *Bel ina puḫur ilāni palū ana (...)* 6. *šarru pū kInu (...)* 7. *zaqiptu attanakšad aḫḫab(ka?)* 8. *ina Bābili kussā(ka?) anamdi(ma?)*. The text was originally published by A. K. Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts* (Toronto Semitic Texts and Studies 3: Toronto, 1975) 78ff. He links the king as avenger on the Assyrian (*AS-Sur* <sup>u</sup> 2:15, 16, 18) and avenger of Akkad (*gimil* <sup>ku</sup> 3:21) with a parallel statement about Marduk as avenger of the gods in *Anuma elish*. If the scribe intended this literary allusion, it is another example of ideology transferred from myth to politics.

<sup>20</sup> Z. Ben-Barak, 'The Coronation Ceremony in Ancient Mesopotamia', *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 11 (1980), 67.

<sup>21</sup> Grayson, *op.cit.*, 9.

made in discussions of parallels with Judaeen apocalyptic texts which are certainly Zion-centred. The name of Babylon escaped erosion to appear four times between 1:13-24 in a context which opposes Babylon to Assyria (1:10). Nabonidus must be the king whose era is described pejoratively in 2:11-16, recording his building activity in Babylon but characterizing his reign as a national set-back: *lemutti ana Akkadī ušammar*, 'he will evilly conspire against Babylonia'. Other kings either prevent Babylonia from being a peaceful abode (*ina palēšu Akkadī šubtum ni(ḥ)tum ul uššab*) 2:24) because they oppress the region (*šarru šu eli māti udannim(a)* 2:22), or they liberate the land militarily, bringing relief (*libbi māti (i)šāb(?)*) 3:22). The ideology of this text involves the categories Babylon and Babylonia, national territory and capital city, and little else in so far as the broken state of preservation allows an assured conclusion.

Lest this Babylon-centredness of royal inscriptions and other literary genres seem inevitable and trite, the *Uruk Prophecy Text*, Warka 22307/7, needs consideration. It certainly sets Babylonia as a national entity over against Assyria; for instance, rev. 8 says of an Assyrian imperialist 'he will take off the possessions of Babylonia to Assyria', *būšē māṭ Akkadē ana māṭ Šubarti ileqqe*. The text is therefore nationalistic, and concerned for justice and right decisions for Babylonia, and world dominance from this land. But it is definitely Uruk-centred, not Babylon-centred. The Neo-Babylonian kings, predicted with favour in rev. 11-19, arise in Uruk, do duty by Anu's cult-centre there, and will apparently enjoy world dominion as an Uruk-based dynasty:

16. After him, a king his son will arise in Uruk and dominate the four quarters (of the world). 17. Domination and sovereignty he will exercise from Uruk, and his dynasty will firmly endure in perpetuity. 18. [The kings] of Uruk will exercise an overlordship like that of the gods.<sup>23</sup>

This is as near as Mesopotamia comes to an eschatology - a city-based, enduring, dynastic, world empire. Its polytheism aside, as a kingdom theology of this-worldly character, it is not radically different in its form of expression from Jerusalem-

<sup>22</sup> Grayson, *BH-LT* 24ff: W. G. Lambert, *The Background of Jewish Apocalyptic* (Athlone Press, 1978) 12f.

<sup>23</sup>16. *arkīšu šarru māršu in qereb Uruk illamma kibrat erbetti ibēl* 17. *(bēl)tu u šarrūtu ina qereb Uruk ippuš adi ulla palūšu ikānu* 18. *(šarr)u ša Uruk kīma ili ippušu bēlūtu*

based, Davidic, dynastic messianism, including the emphasis on justice and right. But in its Babylonian context, the *Uruk Prophecy* parts company with all the Babylon-centredness which so thoroughly pervades the contemporary ideology. It may be assumed that the text originates from the partisan priestly circle of the Anu cult-centre in Uruk, though quite how it fits with the hard political facts of Nabopolassar's Babylonian coronation and Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian bias is unclear, assuming that at least one of these kings had already arisen when the 'prophecy' was composed.<sup>24</sup> At any rate, it survives as an example of Babylonian nationalism without Babylon.

### C. The Royal Records: Religious, Utopian and Economic Dimensions

If Nabopolassar's inscriptions delineate Babylonian nationalism in its phase of territorial liberation, then Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions document expansionist nationalism at its most successful. Finally, Nabonidus propounds his nationalism as Cyrus prepares to pose as the true national liberator who restores the honour of Marduk's cult-centre and rites after Nabonidus' alleged abuses.<sup>25</sup>

We can discern utopian, economic and religious dimensions to Babylonian nationalism, but it would be misleading on this basis to describe the royal records as *propaganda* in the sense of a cynical exercise in disinformation and population control.<sup>26</sup> The nationalistic prayers embedded in the

<sup>24</sup> See H. Hunger and S. A. Kaufman, 'A New Akkadian Prophecy Text', *JAOS* 95 (1975) 371-5. Lambert's hypothesis (*Background of Jewish Apocalyptic* 10ff.) that lines 11ff. refer to Nabopolassar and the beginning of the Neo-Babylonian empire, and lines 16ff. to Nebuchadnezzar as the future son seem more probable than the first editors' identifications. For Lambert, the text was composed with hopes pinned on Nebuchadnezzar some time after his accession in 605 BC. This still does not explain why the author thought the dynasty would move to Uruk from the capital Babylon, nor is Nabopolassar known to have originated from Uruk, nor does it explain why the text was preserved when the interpretation given to it by modern scholars was proved wrong by the political events themselves.

<sup>25</sup> 'He [i.e. Marduk] enabled him to enter Babylon his city (*ālu*) without battle and strife. Babylon he delivered from duress (*Bābili ʾtir ina šapšāqi*)... The people of Babylon one and all (*niše Bābili kalīšunu*), the whole of Babylonia (*naḫḫar Šumeri u Akkadī*), chief men and governors bowed down before him and kissed his feet' (BM 90920, lines 17, 18).

commemorative inscriptions are addressed to the gods, not to the Babylonian population or foreign vassals. The tone of the commemorative records may often sound boastful, but for all that the ideology of Marduk-city nationalism is rooted in religious conviction, and there is no reason to suppose that the kings ever disbelieved their national ideology.

Equally certainly, the ideology is a tool which manipulates the economies of Babylonia and subjugated countries. This economic interpretation of Babylon's imperialism is, of course, not a modern or Marxist interpretation of expansionist nationalism, but that of a contemporary, Habakkuk. Habakkuk explodes the utopianism of Babylonian kings who saw themselves as international benefactors, shining examples of shepherding, kings of justice:

Look among the nations and see . . . For lo, I am rousing the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth to seize habitations not their own. Dread and terrible are they, their justice and dignity proceed from themselves . . . They gather captives like sand . . . guilty men, whose own might is their god . . . for by them [the subjugated nations] he lives in luxury and his food is rich . . . His greed is as wide as Sheol; like death he never has enough. He gathers for himself all nations, and collects as his own all peoples.<sup>27</sup>

It is instructive to note that Habakkuk's analysis of Babylonian imperialism works with the category of 'nations', and that Babylonia is described by the gentilic 'Chaldeans'. The prophet is describing imperialism in nationalistic terminology.

We may now select a few passages which highlight the utopian, economic and religious dimensions of this mother-city nationalism. The king's boast recorded in Daniel 4:29 brings the city into the foreground of this ideological perspective:

walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon . . . the king said, 'Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my might power as a royal residence and

<sup>26</sup> For an analysis of Assyrian records interpreted in reductionist manner, see M. Liverani, 'The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire' and other contributions to M. T. Larsen (ed.), *Power and Propaganda* (Mesopotamia 7; Copenhagen, Akademisk Forlag 1979) 297-317. Compare the nuances of J. J. M. Roberts' statement, 'Solomon no doubt cultivated David's religious *propaganda* for his own purposes, but there is no compelling reason to make him the creator of these traditions', 'Zion in the Theology of the Davidic-Solomonic Empire' in T. Ishida (ed.), *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon and other essays*, 105 [italics mine]. One must ask in the end whether a text embodies a tradition, a religious belief, political propaganda, theology, or some combination of these.

<sup>27</sup> Hab. 1:5, 9, 11, 16 and 2:5.

for the glory of my majesty?'

The biblical words echo the Babylonian. Babylon-centredness characterizes statements of imperial ideology during the phase when Babylonian nationalism spelled world domination:

No city in the inhabited world have I made more illustrious than Babylon your city . . . From the kings of all quarters, from all mankind may I receive heavy tribute in Babylon.<sup>28</sup>

The widespread peoples whom Marduk my lord put into my power I made subservient to Babylon. The produce of the lands, the products of the mountains, the richness of the seas I gathered inside it. I gathered all peoples benevolently under its eternal protection.<sup>29</sup>

May I attain grey hairs in the midst of Babylon; may I enjoy posterity. Within Babylon may I receive the heavy tribute of the kings of the four quarters of the world. May my descendants for ever rule the black-headed people within it.<sup>30</sup>

By the mention of my weighty name may all of my enemies change, become weak, bow at my feet, bear my yoke for evermore and bring their laden tribute into my presence in the midst of my city Babylon. May my abode be established in Babylon and on its highways may I walk about and be content.<sup>31</sup>

Of particular interest is the inscription from which the first quotation is taken. *Nebuchadnezzar 15*, a lengthy 10 column document, focuses on building activities in the capital, including work on the wall Imgur-Enlil.<sup>32</sup> Like Nabopolassar's inscription, it documents not simply the work done but the potent ideology which motivates it. It is no surprise to find a cult-centre referred to as 'establishment of rejoicing and celebration of the Igigi and Anunnaki,' *šikin ḫidāti u rišāti ša Igigi u Anunnaki* (4:9-10), words reminiscent of the foundation myth. If Nabopolassar described Babylon as the preserve of

<sup>28</sup> *eli ālika Bābili ina kala dadmē ul ušāpa māḫāza . . . ša šarrāni kibrāti ša kala tenišeti bilassunu kabitti lumḫur qerbuššu* (Nbk 15, 9:54-6; 10:9-12; Langdon, 132, 140).

<sup>29</sup> *nišim rapšatim ša Marduk belija umallu qatūa ana Bābiliukanniš bilat matāti bišit šadim ḫišib tāmtim qerbašu amḫur ana šillišu dāri kullat nišim ṭabiš upaḫḫir* (Nbk 9, 3:18-24; Langdon, *Building Inscriptions* 88).

<sup>30</sup> *ina Bābili ina qerbišu šibūtu lū ukšud lušba littūti ša šarrāni kibrātīm ša kala tenišetim bilassunu kabitti lumḫur qerebša lipūa ina qerbiša ana dārātīm salmat qaqqadim libeā* (Nbk 9, 3:48-59; Langdon, *Building Inscriptions* 88).

<sup>31</sup> *a na zikir šumija kabtu kullat nākiri littarri linušu liknišu ana šepēja ana ūmē šāti lišdudunūri bilassunu kabitti ana qereb ālija Bābili libilnū ana maḫrija ina qereb Bābili likun šubti ina sulešu atallaku lušbū* (Nbk 6, 2:44-7; Langdon, *Building Inscriptions* 260).

<sup>32</sup> Nbk 15; Langdon, *Building Inscriptions* 115-39.

the gods ('guarded ground of the great gods', *qaqqar niširtim ša ilāni rabūti* 2:22), this did not obviate physical defences, but motivated them: 'the defences I skilfully strengthened and established cult-centre Babylon as a bastion', *maššarti nakliš udanninma māḥāzā Bābili ana niširti aškun* 6:53-5.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Nebuchadnezzar understood himself as elected to this task: 'king of Babylon whom the great lord Marduk named for the prospering of his cult-centre Babylon', *šar Bābili ša Marduk bēlu rabū ana damqati māḥāzišu Bābili ibbušu* 7:1-4. Nebuchadnezzar states that he favoured no cities so much as Babylon and Borsippa, and goes on to eulogize the capital as his royal domain:

Indeed no cult-centre stood out beyond Babylon and Borsippa. In Babylon, the city of the lifting of my eyes, which I love, a palace, a building for people to admire, the bond of the land, holy cella, shrine of kingship, in the land of Babylon, in the midst of Babylon. . . that my royal residence should be in another cult-centre, my heart did not desire. Elsewhere in the whole world I did not build royal cella . . . Because reverence for Marduk my lord filled my heart, in Babylon his reserved cult-centre I did not change his street when I extended my royal quarters.<sup>34</sup>

Borsippa is sometimes listed with Nippur, Sippar and Babylon as a 'privileged city', *āl kidinni* under a form of royal charter which exempted citizens from certain taxes and corvée labour.<sup>35</sup> This freedom charter has second millenium roots, but by Nebuchadnezzar's time the extant texts such as *Nebuchadnezzar 15* above suggest that Babylon overshadows other traditional cult-centres, Borsippa included, in economic and religious importance.

In the quotation above, the ideological emphasis falls on the royal palace, yet despite this focus, the text clearly derives the ideology of the palace from the ideology of the

<sup>33</sup> The root *našaru*, 'to guard, keep', gives a noun *niširtu*, which can mean 'treasure, something concealed'. Nbk 15, 6:56 *ana niširti* suggests the nuance of 'keep, fortress, defended area'. The phrase *Bābili māḥāz niširtišu* 8:33f.) is translated by Langdon as 'his treasured city'. Marduk watches over Babylon as his personal property: 'Babylon the cult-centre of his guardianship'. Both nuances, the personal valued property and the guarding process, seem to be present.

<sup>34</sup> Nbk 15, 7:32ff.; 8:19ff.; Langdon, 134, 136. *Building Inscriptions*.

<sup>35</sup> See CAD K, 342ff. *kidinnu* for references, and the discussion by M. Weinfeld which attempts to compare the freedoms of *kidinnu*, *andurāru* and *šubarrū* with biblical concepts; also "Justice and Righteousness" in Ancient Israel against the background of "Social Reforms" in the Ancient Near East' in H.-J. Nissen (ed.), *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn*, Teil 2 (Berlin, Dietrich Reimer Verlag 1982) 491-519.

city, the palace renovations respect the divine ownership of the city. The street is Marduk's and Babylon is his special domain, *māḡāz niširti*. In these lines, it is Nebuchadnezzar's palace that is described as the 'bond, link, centre' of the land (*markasa māti* 7:37).<sup>36</sup> In another passage, it is *markas niši*, 'the bond of the people', and elsewhere the phrase is applied to Babylon, the city, as *markas kibrati*, 'the centre of the (four) world-regions', in turn similar to the phrase *Bābilu āl kiššuti*, 'Babylon, city of the totality', that is, world-capital.<sup>37</sup>

These verbal descriptions of Babylon as national capital in a global context are reflected graphically in the so-called *Mappa Mundi*, BM 92687, copied in Neo-Babylonian times and found in sixth century Sippar. Babylon is nearest to the compass hole at the centre, and commenting on this way of seeing the world, Lambert remarks: 'In a sense, then, the Babylonian cosmological ideas were a dead end. An overwhelming interest in *city theology* had deprived them of any desire to pursue cosmology in a scientific manner.'<sup>38</sup> We may agree, so far as a cosmology goes, that city-myth impeded development. However, it is evident that city-myth did not impede empire. On the contrary, it was the engine driving Babylonian nationalism outwards to the four quarters, to lay hands on raw materials and labour for the national capital.

#### D. Tintir = Babylon: an Ideological Source-book.

At this point we must briefly mention a second millenium source of sixth century Babylonian ideology - the five tablet *Tintir = Babylon* series. It was likely composed in the late second millenium reign of Nebuchadnezzar I. This predecessor to biblical Nebuchadnezzar traced his ancestry from pre-flood days via dynasties at Sippar and Nippur, using epithets such as 'king of justice, reliable shepherd, who keeps the land's foundations secure', *šar mešari re'ū kīnu mukīn išdi māti*.<sup>39</sup> It

<sup>36</sup> On *markasu*, 'mooring rope', used in metaphorical senses and in myth, see CAD M.1, 282ff. and the commentary of A. R. George on *Tintir = Babylon*, Tablet 1:35 'Babylon, the bond of heaven [and underworld]', *Babylonian Topographical Texts*, II (unpublished Ph.D. Univ. of Birmingham, 1985) 38ff.

<sup>37</sup> For references, see CAD K, 457ff. and 461. *kišatu* and *kišutu*.

<sup>38</sup> Lambert, *Ancient Cosmologies* 61.

<sup>39</sup> See W. G. Lambert's, 'Enmeduranki and Related Matters', *JCS* 21 (1967) 126-38 and 'The Seed of Kingship' in P. Garelli (ed.), *Le Palais et la Royauté*

seems that sixth century Nebuchadnezzar was heir not only to the name and epithets of his predecessor, but also to the ideology of Babylon encapsulated in the *Tintir* = *Babylon* composition, and the sense of national pride after political liberation which is a common factor to both eras.<sup>40</sup>

Babylon as cosmological centre, host to the gods, epitome of opulence, and seat of political stability and control is the theme of *Tintir*, which lists Babylon's shrines, streets gates, and walls. It satisfies the scribal passion for complete lists, and revels in the significance and theological resonance of names and epithets. It does for Babylon, the city, what Tablet 7 of *Enuma elish* does for Marduk with its recitation of his fifty names. In other words, it is scholastic theology, an erudite form of religious celebration.<sup>41</sup> Many of the physical items such as walls, streets, gates, and shrines which are listed by *Tintir* for ideological comment are mentioned by the Neo-Babylonian records of repair work. Work done on the wall Imgur-Enlil by Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar is a case in point. Tablet 1 of *Tintir* is devoted to the city Babylon as such, and runs to 51 lines, beginning with the archaic name *Tintir* and adding explicating Sumerian epithets. The tablet draws on the foundation myth. Thus Babylon is 'the city of the king of the gods' (*āi šar ilāni* line 12), 'the city named by Marduk', *āi nibīt Marduk*, line 13).<sup>42</sup>

(CRAI 19; Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner S.A., 1974) 424-40. The Akkadian quotations are from line 11 ('Seed of Kingship' 435) of the bilingual text which carries a royal ideology of Legitimacy by physical descent, alongside traces of the Sumerian idea of kingship legitimated by its lowering from heaven and location in a succession of cities, here Sippar and Nippur. The phrase *mukIn išid māti*, 'establishing' or 'making firm the foundation of the land', was used in turn by Merodach-baladdan 2 (BM 2090:13) and by Nebuchadnezzar 2 (Nbk 16, 1:4). It is one of those phrases embedded in royal ideology based on the concept of national territory: one land, one king.

<sup>40</sup> Compare Lambert's description of the period of Nebuchadnezzar 1 in terms of 'national pride': 'After several centuries of Cassite rule a restored native dynasty would be conscious of its legitimacy, and the military successes and cultural activities of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar 1 must have stirred national pride' ('Seed of Kingship').

<sup>41</sup> For discussion of the date, genre and purpose of composition of *Tintir* = *Babylon*, see A. R. George's dissertation *Babylonian Topographical Texts*, I (Univ. of Birmingham, 1985) 1-19. His competent edition and commentary supercedes older editions.

<sup>42</sup> George (*Topographical Texts*, I 69, 350, 356) translates 1:13 'the city called into being by Marduk', pointing out the association of 'naming' and 'calling into being' when the root *nabū* is used in *Enuma elish* 1:1, 'When the heavens above

Besides those lines drawing on myth and others focusing on rituals, festivals, and celebrations, there are the more political epithets akin to phrases used about the enemy and the land in the Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions; e.g.:

(Babylon, city). . . 24. which smites the offspring of the enemy 25. which destroys totally enemy and foe 43. which supports the life of the land 48. city of protection-privilege liberating the captive 51. which is the bond of the lands

24. *lāqit nipri ajjābi* 25. *auhalliq naph(ar) ajjābi u zāmān* 43. *mukin napišti māti* 48. *āi kidinni paṭiri kisi* 51. *riks māta*

These lines synchronize with statements about 'the enemy' in the building inscriptions, for instance that the Imgur-Enlil wall of Babylon is 'the strong shield which bars entry from the enemy land' (2:11 of the new Nabopolassar cylinder), and with the concluding prayers of the king of victory in battle over all enemies.<sup>43</sup> They also reveal the dualism of homeland and empire, 'the land' and 'the lands'. Those who belong to the homeland experience there liberation and protection (line 48).<sup>44</sup> Foreign lands are bound into a union with the national territory. The word *riksu*, 'bond', from the root *rakāsu*, 'to bind', develops from the physical act of tying up something with rope into a metaphor used for legally binding regulations such as those of laws and treaties. Babylon binds together the lands of the peoples under its rule.<sup>45</sup> The scribes responsible for draw-

were not yet *named*'. However in 5:129 of the myth, Marduk names Babylon in the sense of giving it the title 'houses of the great gods': *lubbima šum(šu Bābili) bitat ilāni rabūti*. For the use of *nabū* in the myth, see the references given in CAD N, 33ff.

<sup>43</sup> Compare Nbk 15, 8:42ff. and 9:440ff. on Imgur-Enlil's mountain-like fortifications against attack by enemies, and examples of royal prayers concluding the commemorative inscriptions: 'In truth you are my help and stay O Marduk! By your sure decree which does not alter let my weapons advance and be sharp. May they crush the weapons of the enemy!' (Nbk 4, 2:24-32). 'Whether in battle or conflict, you, O Marduk, are truly my deliverer and help! Let your dread weapons which are unrivalled go at my side for the destruction of my foes!' (Nbk 5, 2:23-9).

<sup>44</sup> See CAD K, 342ff. S.V. *kidinnu* for the references to the ancient privilege and protection charter for Babylonian citizens renewed by the late Assyrian kings Sargon and Esarhaddon.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *markasu* in the phrase *markas māti*. The ideological text BM. 45690 published as 'Nebuchadnezzar king of justice' (W. G. Lambert, *Iraq* 27 [1965] 1-11) credits Nebuchadnezzar 2 with making Babylonia a utopia of justice, peace, and plenty, including the issueing of beneficial regulations for the city ('he drew up beneficial regulations for the city', *riksatu āli ana damiqtu urakkis*

ing up the sixth century inscriptions commemorative of royal building projects probably sensed the ideological continuity from Nebuchadnezzar 1's era, and drew on *Tintir* = *Babylon*.

#### E. Neo-Babylonian Nationalism: summarizing observations.

Summing up the elements of national ideology in the texts encountered, we note the following:

a. The national ideology clusters around specific physical objects which are invested with symbolic qualities. These visible, physical objects are part of the mundane world of politics and the economy, and so the ideology interacts with the historical process.

b. Two important cluster-points for national ideology are the king and the capital city. Each has its complex set of associated symbolic objects: the king has his crown, sceptre, throne, seal, palace; the capital city has its walls, gates, streets, and shrines. These cultural items express national ideology by their outward symbolic decorations and through their functions in religious rituals and festivals. The national ideology is reinforced by events such as victory processions, ceremonial inauguration of building works, the new year festival, and coronations in Babylon the capital.

c. Babylon as the cult-centre of Marduk, the national god, takes over the role of earlier cult-centres such as that at Nippur.<sup>46</sup> The royal inscriptions and other current ideological texts draw on the foundation myth embodied in *Enuma elish*: Babylon is the cosmic centre.

d. Babylon is also a fortress. Its massive walls are there to block out the enemy. The enemy in this period is not another southern city, as in the Sumerian period, but in the first place the adjoining national territory of the Assyrians, whose

[Obv. 2:25f.], and the empire peoples ('judgements and decisions which were acceptable to the great lord Marduk and beneficial to the peoples as a whole and the native Babylonians', *dinū u purussā ša eli bēlli rabī Marduk tābi ana dumuq (k)isat niši u šušubū Akkadī* [Obv. 2:23ff]).

<sup>46</sup> A. R. George, *Topographical Texts*, I 16, says of the epithets applied to Babylon in *Tintir* Tablet 1, 'many of these Sumerian epithets are of the same kind as those attested for Nippur and other old Sumerian cities in Sumerian literary texts: some of them are borrowed verbatim.' Similarly, the Royal titles such as 'Shepherd' and 'King of Justice' and phrases which claim world-rule revive royal epithets known prior to Hammurabi and used in Sumerian Royal Hymns.

Babylonian administration was viewed as an oppressive occupation.

e. The king arises in the Babylonian homeland, and unites the people of the land under his just rule. The legitimacy of the new dynasty is based on election by the national god and enthronement in Babylon the capital. Marduk promises him military success. By divine intervention and battle, the homeland is liberated.

f. Palace, city and temples are aggrandized by imported raw materials resulting from foreign tribute and foreign labour, as expansionist nationalism gives political and economic credibility to the ideology.

g. The ideology propounds a national destiny of global rule from Babylon as a manifestation of the kingship of Marduk, who created the world, the capital city and man.

We may with justification speak of this Babylonian ideology as a 'nationalism' on the grounds that the texts themselves use concepts of nation-state such as 'land of birth', homeland versus foreign land, and people of Babylonia versus other peoples such as Assyrians. Politically, the nationalism of the period is readily distinguishable from the political situation of other periods such as the eras of warring Sumerian city-states, Assyrian administration, and Chaldean tribalized structure without unifying central administration. Equally clearly, and despite overlaps in the pantheons recognized, Babylonian nationalism differs from the ideology of state and gods propounded by Assyria and Persia before and after the Neo-Babylonian Empire. We are therefore dealing with Babylonian nationalism, inextricably linked with Babylon the capital city, and not with an amorphous Near Eastern common theology. Biblical material which is engaged with this Babylonian nationalism would therefore need to specify its target for polemic, and we might expect the city Babylon to feature prominently in such material.

## II BIBLICAL NATIONALISM - TWO SAMPLES.

When we turn from Babylonian documents to biblical ones, do we forsake nationalism along with the notable change of genre? Is there any merit in drawing comparisons between the two bodies of literature, or in seeing the biblical material as an engaged and contextualized theology worked out by a process of

polemic against deviant Israelite and Near Eastern alternatives?

We shall focus now on some biblical material which is targeted into roughly the same period as the Babylonian literature which has been reviewed, in other words the period of the Babylonian exile and its aftermath.<sup>47</sup> We shall exclude discussion of those 'oracles against foreign nations' which are addressed to Babylon, though they obviously constitute evidence for the engagement of the prophets with Babylonian imperialism, as does Psalm 137. Rather, we are going to focus on some of the eschatology concerned with Israel's future which also involves the nations.

There are three main hermeneutical approaches to this eschatology, the literalist, the reductionist and the contextualist. The literalist approach sees the ideology as revelation in the form of predictions which demand national fulfilment in the world of politics and economics.<sup>48</sup> The reductionist approach discounts divine inspiration and sees the futuristic sounding ideology as a projection and legitimation of contemporary social structures or values rather than revelation.<sup>49</sup> The contextualist approach tries to give weight to both the culture-bound and revelatory qualities of the

<sup>47</sup> Awareness of the Babylonian milieu is, of course, as old as the composition or editing of the Genesis material with a probable Babylonian background, such the Flood story, or the material which explicitly names Babylonia, such as Gn. 10:10 which refers to Babylon, Uruk and Agade 'in the land of Shinar'. See R. Zadok 'The Origin of the Name Shinar', *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 74 (1948) 240-4 arguing for an earliest use of *Sanjara* in the late second millennium Kassite period. Dn. 1:2 shows that 'Shinar' was a term used as late as the post-exilic period. Political relations in the 8th century between Hezekiah and Merodach-baladan 2 long pre-date the Exile itself.

<sup>48</sup> This is the chosen position of J. D. Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids, Dunham 1958), and is representative of much dispensationalist interpretation.

<sup>49</sup> N. K. Gottwald describes his approach to 'Israel's Religious Concepts as "Ideology"' as a descriptive method that 'has nothing to say about the truth or falsity of the religious ideas', *Tribes of Yahweh* 65f. His critics nevertheless evaluate his end position as reductionist. W. Brueggemann, not unfairly, describes the stance of Gottwald in the following terms: 'He sees the text not only as a result of societal conflict, but as a literary legitimation of a social movement. In his view, the canonical literature is primarily a settled ideology of a certain partisan experience of reality', 'A Shape for OT Theology 1: Structure Legitimation', 47 (1985) 30. See G. A. Herion 'The Impact of Modern and Social Science Assumptions on the Reconstruction of Israelite History', *JSOT* 34 (1986) 3-33 for discussion of positivism, reductionism, relativism and determinism, as well as an evaluation of Gottwald.

ideology, without deciding in advance whether the prophets understood their material as literal predictions of the political future, or the poetic and symbolic language of exhortation with the future contingent upon audience response, or an indeterminate mixture of both of these.

The approach adopted here is contextualist. The words 'nationalism' and 'ideology' in a contextualist approach are not intended to exclude inspiration and revelation, nor do they presuppose that there was a false consciousness or propagandist motivation involved. Rather, they simply signal a methodology that begins with description, moves on to comparison, and then evaluates Israel's ideology in relation to that of her contemporaries. 'Theology' refers to the component of the material that carries over with normative effect from the specific cultural and historical setting.

By using the term 'ideology' for the complex set of interwoven ideas encountered in the biblical material, a signal is given that the exegete belongs to a different historical and cultural group than the original Jewish audience, and therefore may not find that the theological essence of the message requires the taking over of its economic, political and territorial framework. A contextualist approach therefore requires close scrutiny of the historical and socio-political context into which the theology was first injected, and it assumes, perhaps optimistically, that this theology can be extracted and injected again into the exegete's own cultural and ideological context without devaluing the original message. Precedent for distinguishing the culture-bound aspect from the theologically normative would be found by analogy from the way the New Testament interprets such elements of Jewish culture as circumcision, dietary laws and Sabbath law.

#### A. The National Ideology of the book of Daniel.

We have already noted that the Babylonian texts known as the *Uruk Prophecy* and the *Dynastic Prophecy* have been compared form-critically with Daniel 11 with respect to the supposed mixture of past event and prediction, phraseology describing cryptically and anonymously the rise and fall of kings or kingdoms, and the use of archaic names of peoples.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> See J. G. Baldwin 'Some Literary Affinities of the Book of Daniel', *Tyn B*

Leaving these points aside, and assuming a redactional unity for the book which embraces both court stories and visions, a comment on contextualization and theme may be offered.

The theme of the book of Daniel is the kingdom of God, brought to sharp focus by chapter 7 in which the human-like figure receives the kingdom. The arrival of the kingdom of God has a dramatic setting against the background of the kings and kingdoms from Babylonian times onwards. But one cannot talk about the kingdom of God in Daniel without talking in ethnic and geo-political terms about the land and the temple. The book opens with a statement about Jerusalem and its temple vessels (1:1-2). It returns to this focal point of interest in Belshazzar's feast (5:2-3, 23). In between, Daniel and his companions retain their national identity over against the Chaldeans, the wise men of Babylon. In chapter 6, the kingdom of God's link with Zion is maintained by Daniel's orientation in prayer. He faces Jerusalem.

Many commentators identify the 'little horn' of both chapter 7 and 8 with Antiochus, and his attack on the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>51</sup> Certainly the 'glorious land' and 'the sanctuary' of chapter 8:9, 11, 14 is identified with the promised land and the Jerusalem temple, and many see 'the holy ones' and 'the people of the holy ones' who receive the kingdom in chapter 7 as Jewish, or more precisely a holy remnant, those like Jewish Daniel and companions. Chapter 9 is focused on Jerusalem (9:2) and replete with references to Jerusalem and its temple, 'the city Jerusalem, thy holy hill', 'the city which is called by thy name', 'thy city', 'the holy hill of my God', 'your people and your holy city', the word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem' and 'the city and the sanctuary'.<sup>52</sup>

Chapter 10 concerns the heavenly realities behind earthly politics, but a national ideology in which the Jews are under the aegis of Michael ('your prince' - 10:21) informs the visions whose information is summarized as 'what is to befall your people' (10:14), which amounts to a national perspective.

30 (1979) for assent to similarities in form and style combined with denial of dependence and genre identity. Compare G. F. Hasel, 'The Four World Empires of Daniel 2 against its Near Eastern Environment' *JSOT* 12 (1979) 17-30.

<sup>51</sup>J. G. Baldwin, *Daniel* (IVP, 1978) 162 follows E. J. Young in denying the equivalence of the 'little horn' in chs. 7 and 8, but maintaining its application to Antiochus in ch. 8.

<sup>52</sup>Ch. 9:2, 16, 18, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26.

In chapter 11, the categories of covenant, 'the wise' and Jewish apostasy explicitly modify an overall national perspective. At the same time as the chapter emphasizes this soteriological dualism, the references to Zion and the promised land recur, 'the glorious land' (11:41) and 'the glorious holy mountain' (11:45). In the final chapter, earthly and heavenly realms interact as Michael, described as 'the great prince who has charge of your people' (12:1), intervenes. The chronological marker at the end of the chapter leaves the Jerusalem temple in the foreground at the end of the book as it began the book. The apocalyptic of the book of Daniel cannot be divorced from the Zion tradition.

While chapter 9 is the most explicitly Israel and Jerusalem centred with its combination of Exodus-Sinai and Jerusalem-temple motifs, the book as a whole builds on a national ideology, even if it modifies this by identifying with a sub-group within the nation, namely 'the wise'. No place is given to foreign nations in the covenant. At best foreign nations simply pass from the scene before the kingdom of God arrives.<sup>53</sup> If the book of Daniel represents a final development of Old Testament theology along covenant and kingdom lines, the nations appear to sink progressively lower with the succession of kingdoms and finally disappear from view leaving land, temple and Jewish remnant to fill the foreground.

If the ideology of the book of Daniel is a modified form of nationalism, it may be that the emphasis on the people, the land, the national capital Jerusalem and the national shrine, the Jerusalem temple, is not only traditional in the sense that it draws on land promises and Zion traditions, but also that this Daniel nationalism is a contextualized polemic. In other words, when the opening verses of Daniel speak of the Babylonian king, god, land and temple (1:2), it marks the theology of the book of Daniel as a counterpart ideology.<sup>54</sup> It

<sup>53</sup> The kings Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius are presented as individuals, but the stories could conceivably be taken as representative of the editor's view of the nations, in which case they appear to correspond to the positions adopted in eschatological prophecy: Nebuchadnezzar models pride, humiliation and forced submission to Yahweh; Belshazzar models annihilation, which is the same fate as that of the 'little horn'; Darius from a shaky start moves to full conviction and testimony. None of these named kings need be seen as a cipher for Antiochus Epiphanes.

works with the same ideological cluster points. Of course, a counterpart is not necessarily an exact equivalent - there is no transcendent apocalypticism in Babylonian literature recovered to date, and even if such material turns up, it would no doubt be polytheistic.

## B. The National Ideology of Isaiah 40-55.

If Daniel's stories and ideological heroes are given a Babylonian setting and counterpoised to its imperialism and astrology, this is equally true of the ideology Isaiah 40-55, perhaps more so. The ideology of Isaiah 40-55 can be studied in terms of its cultic-religious, economic, and utopian aspects as can the Babylonian material, and a number of specific motifs invite comparison such as that of foreign oppression, the role of Zion the temple-city, the role of foreign peoples as tribute-bearers, the role of Yahweh as national deity in terms of being a cosmic warrior, a creator-god, and having his shrine in the capital city, Jerusalem.

We shall view the material from four perspectives, beginning with the ideology of 'The National Deity as Creator', then moving on to consider 'Oppression and National Liberation', 'The Role of National Capital and Cult-centre', and finally 'The Role of Foreign Nations and the Economic Perspective'.

### (a) The National Deity as Creator.

The prominence of the creation motif in the argument of Isaiah 40-55 is well known.<sup>54</sup> The question of its correlation with Babylonian ideology may now be explored.

There are two perspectives on Marduk as creator. First, on the macro scale, he splits Tiamat after defeating her in combat, and puts the constituents of the universe into position. He instigates the creation of Man as well. Secondly, on the micro scale and in the present, Marduk creates the individual person. Nebuchadnezzar refers to his creation as part of his ideology of

<sup>54</sup> Note the contrast in 1:2 between *bet ha'elohim* and *bet 'elohayw* - 'the temple of God' and 'the temple of his god'. The book then tells the story of further sacrilege against 'the temple of God' until the assault of 11:45 against 'the glorious holy mountain', mount Zion.

<sup>55</sup> See C. Stuhlmueller, *Creative Redemption in Deutero-Isaiah* (Analecta Biblica 43, Rome, 1970).

## election of kingship:

After the Lord, my divine Begetter made me, Marduk had built my structure within my mother, when I was born, was created, I continually sought the guidance of the gods, the way of the gods I followed ever; as regards Marduk, the great Lord, the God my Maker, to his artistic work I continually paid attention.<sup>56</sup>

The language of formation within the womb embedded in election ideology occurs in two ways in Isaiah 40-55, first in connection with the individual Servant prophet, and secondly describing Servant Israel addressed as an individual:

Yahweh called me from the womb, from the body of my mother, he named my name.

And now Yahweh says, who formed me from the womb to be his servant . . .

But now thus says Yahweh, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. But now hear O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen! Thus says Yahweh who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you: Fear not, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen.

So far as we know, this creation language is not found applied to the Babylonian nation, but only to the king. This marks the ideology of Isaiah 40-55 as more 'democratic', but then these chapters are not a product of the court, as are Nebuchadnezzar's inscriptions.<sup>57</sup>

The 'skilfull work of Marduk' which Nebuchadnezzar refers to probably means the king's repair work done for Marduk on the city and its shrines, but it does recall that this skilfull work reduplicates primeval times when Marduk and the Igili did the original work on cosmos and city.<sup>58</sup> In the

<sup>56</sup> *ištu ibnanni bēlu ilu Irūa Marduk ibšimu nabrīti ina ummi enūma aldaku abbanu anaku ašrāti ili aštenel' alakti ili irteneddi ša Marduk bēlu rabū ilu bānija epšētušu naklāti eliš attanadu* (Nbk 15, 1:23-32 Langdon, *Building Inscriptions* 118.)

<sup>57</sup> The roots *br*, *ysr* and *šh* are used of Israel in 43:1 and 44:2. *ysr* is used in 49:5. But the point of comparison turns on the dynamic equivalence of the ideology - creation as election to office - more than on Semitic idiom such as 'naming the name' or verbal roots employing metaphorical language for embryonic development. Compare too the 6th century call of Jeremiah, where formation in the womb is part of the rationale for Yahweh's commission, Jer 1:5. We would regard the servant of ch.49 with his ministry to Israel and the servant figure of the other servant poems as being portrayed as an individual, a new Moses, covenant mediator, with a combination of prophetic and royal traits. We would also disagree with Eissfeldt's view that 55:3 'democratises' the dynastic hope.

<sup>58</sup> Note the work on Babylon done by the Igili and Anunnaki referred to on the newly published cylinder of Nabopolassar: *temenšu nakliš uštašbu* - 'skilfully

original creation work, Marduk is depicted as victor in combat and master of destinies. He shows his control by fixing the planets and constellations in position, thus fixing the calendar and cult festivals.

1. He fashioned the (heavenly) 'stand' for the great gods. 2. Stars, their (astral) counterparts, the 'images' he installed (thereon); 3. The year he defined, drew the borderline, 4. (For) each of the twelve months he set up three stars. 5. After he had drawn the demarcations for the year, 6. He fixed the stand of the Pole-star to define their bounds; 7. And that none (in their movement) should err or be remiss 8. He established with it (the Pole) the stations of Ea and Enlil.<sup>59</sup>

The biblical text is aware of Babylonian divination, and adopts an explicitly polemical stance against astrology (47:13). Moreover, it contrasts Yahweh as creator and inspirer of predictions with the Babylonian claims:

Thus says Yahweh your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: 'I am Yahweh who made all things, who stretched out the heavens alone, who spread out the earth - Who was with me? - who frustrates the omens of liars, who turns wise men back, and makes their knowledge foolish; who confirms the word of his servant, who performs the counsel of his messengers; (44:24-26)

Not only is Yahweh's control over destiny championed against counter-claims, but this is expressed in terms of his control over the stars, and the same close association is drawn between the visible stars in the sky, and the heavenly host regarded as heavenly beings, members of the Divine Assembly.

I am He, I am the first, and I am the last. My hand laid the foundation of the earth and my right hand spread out the heavens: when I call to them, they stand forth together. (45:12)

Rounding off discussion of the settings of the creation motif, we note that the kingship of Yahweh is expressed, as in

laid its foundation' (A Babylon 2, 2:24f.), and Marduk's skilful ordering of the cosmos in *Enuma elish* Tablet 6, which includes supplying Ea with the design for Man:

After Ea, the wise, had created mankind,  
Had imposed upon it the service of the gods -  
that work was beyond comprehension;  
As artfully planned by Marduk (*ina nklātu ša DN*),  
did Nudimmud create it- (6:35-8 ANET, 68)

<sup>59</sup> The translation and text is from B. Landsberger and J. V. Kinnier Wilson *JNES* 20 (1961) 156f., and their full discussion of the astrological terms and citation of parallel texts should be consulted.

*Enuma elish*, by the dual motifs of victory in combat and creation. Thus, 'the Creator of Israel, your King' (43:15) threatens Babylon with a defeat like the one over chariots and warriors (at the Exodus), exhibiting his control over the mighty waters of the sea (v.16). This victory in 'days of old' is recalled in the mythical language of combat with Rahab as 'dragon' (*tannīn*), 'sea' (*yām*) and 'great deep' (*mēy tēhōm rabbāh*), Isaiah 51:9ff. In the light of these contexts and comparisons, there is every reason to suppose that the ideology of Isaiah 40-55 is worked out as a counter to the ideology of Babylon.

(ii) Oppression and National Liberation.

The ideology of Isaiah 40-55 is polemical against Marduk, the divination experts, the city Babylon, and the Chaldeans - kings, princes and populace, all of whom are named explicitly by the text (e.g. in chapters 46-8). Military and political liberation is a powerful current running through the chapters, and involves, on the one hand, the destruction of Babylon and on the other, the New Exodus motif.<sup>60</sup> Like Nabopolassar, the text regards the experience of undergoing imperial domination as one arranged by the national deity himself, a divine judgement, but despite that, also culpably oppressive. The prophet repeatedly indicts the Judaeans in terms of their sin bringing on Babylonian domination, yet depicts the Babylonian imperialists as oppressive, using the same 'yoke' metaphor:

I was angry with my people, I profaned my heritage;  
I gave them into your hand, you showed them no mercy;  
On the aged you made your yoke exceedingly heavy.

The Assyrians, who by the hostility of the gods dominated  
Babylonia, and with their onerous yoke distressed the  
people of the land . . .<sup>61</sup>

<sup>60</sup> In a passage such as Is. 43:14-17, the Exodus liberation is recalled in militaristic images, whereas other passages emphasize the departure or desert journey. For an evaluation of the way this material has been used in the hermeneutic of Liberation theology, see J. Goldingay, 'The Man of War and the Suffering Servant - the OT and the theology of liberation', *TynB* 27 (1967) 79-113.

<sup>61</sup> Nabopolassar A Babylon 2, 1:28-31 and Is. 47:6, cf. *ina nīrišu kabtim ušazziqu niši māti* and *'al zāqēn hikbadt 'ullek me'ōd*. Similarly, 51:17-23 describes the invasion and captivity in terms both of Yahweh's personal wrath and of wrongful imperial oppression; cf. 54:7, 11. The S-theme of *nazāqu* meaning 'to vex, grieve, distress' in 1:31 describes the feelings of oppression of a subjugated

If both texts share a perspective on national liberation, they also agree that this is achieved by warfare on two planes: the action of the human field-commander in battle, and the direct divine intervention of the cosmic warrior god. In the Babylonian ideology, Marduk sends his warrior-deputy Nergal to assist Nabopolassar to destroy his Assyrian enemies. The biblical text recognises Yahweh as the chief cosmic warrior and Cyrus as his human field-commander.<sup>62</sup> In a passage such as Isaiah 49:25f., Yahweh speaks in the first person about his intervention which liberates the captives and decimates their captors with siege-famine and slaughter.<sup>63</sup>

### (iii) The Role of National Capital and Cult-centre.

Jerusalem is named in the opening words of our text (40:1, 9f.), and thereafter addressed frequently either in terms of its resident population or in terms of its cultic significance as site of Yahweh's Temple.<sup>64</sup> As the national capital, it is to be re-

population. Psalm 137 describes the psychological effects of being taunted, and the Babylonian tormenting of Is. 51:23 is probably psychological rather than physical abuse. Assyrian occupation and Judaeon exile thus produce similar feelings towards the oppressor however much he propounds a utopian view of his administration.

<sup>62</sup> *Nergal dandanni ilāni ušalik idāja inār ajjābija ušamqit gārīja*, 'he sent Nergal, strongest of the gods, to go at my side; he annihilated my enemies, felled my foes (1:24-7). Cf. Is. 42:13; 51:9 and 45:1, 13 and 48:14f. I have fully discussed the ideological framework of divine intervention in battle comparing the Assyrian and Babylonian material with biblical material in *Empire and the Gods: Mesopotamian Treaty Theology and the Sword in the First Millennium BC* (unpublished D.Litt. dissertation, Univ. of Stellenbosch, 1976).

<sup>63</sup> *mō.nayik*, 'your oppressors' (49:26). The root *ynh*, is used of the forbidden economic exploitation and harassment of aliens, widows and orphans in Covenant Law (e.g. Ex. 22:20), and is used aptly to convey the vulnerable position of deportees or a populace under foreign military occupation. The role of Yahweh here is as violent as Nergal's 'annihilation' and 'smiting' of his enemies in the Babylonian lines above, and parallel passages in the royal prayers concluding commemorative inscriptions. Commentators are divided over the connotation of the threshing-sledge metaphor of Is. 41:15f., and reluctant to allow a violent militaristic role to Israel. If a violent role for Israel is not supported by other passages in Is. 40-55, this militaristic role is indeed found elsewhere in biblical eschatology (e.g. Zc. 9:13) complementing Yahweh's role as divine warrior.

<sup>64</sup> 'Zion' and 'Jerusalem' cannot really be given separate connotations. The association of Zion and its Judaeon populace on the one hand, and Jerusalem and Yahweh's temple on the other is very close, and the city dramatically personifies the people. L. E. Wilshire's identification of the servant as the

built and re-populated. Other cities of Judah are mentioned as part of this programme, but only Jerusalem is named specifically:

who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited,'  
and of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built,  
and I will raise up their ruins

saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,'  
and of the Temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'

he shall build my city  
and set my exiles free

your walls are continually before me,  
your builders shall outstrip your destroyers,  
and those who laid you waste go forth from you.

Break forth into singing,  
your waste places of Jerusalem;  
for Yhwh has comforted his people  
he has redeemed Jerusalem.<sup>65</sup>

The re-building of Jerusalem is the counter-point to the destruction of Babylon. The doomed 'daughter of the Chaldeans' and 'daughter of Babylon' is contrasted with the delivered 'daughter of Zion'.<sup>66</sup> The exit from Babylon and Chaldea is balanced by the entry into Zion.<sup>67</sup> Both exit and entry, destruction and re-building are described in terms that appear to be intended in a physical sense, and have the opposing capitals as their referents. If the salvation starts in Babylonia, it culminates in Zion: 'I have put my salvation in Zion for Israel my glory', 'Yahweh will comfort Zion, he will comfort all her waste places', 'they see the return of Yahweh to Zion'.<sup>68</sup>

Jerusalem as a walled city is not described by a whole series of epithets, as Babylon is in Nabopolassar's inscription, but the one epithet that is used twice - 'the holy city' - is very significant in that it complements the important divine epithet 'the Holy One of Israel', and God's reference to Jerusalem as 'my

city is unconvincing, yet does highlight the prominence of Zion in these chapters: 'The Servant-City: a new interpretation of the "Servants of the Lord" in the Servant Songs of Deutero-Isaiah', *JBL* 94 (1975) 356-67.

<sup>65</sup> Is. 44:26, 28; 45:13; 49...16f.; 52:9.

<sup>66</sup> Is. 47:1, 5; 52:2.

<sup>67</sup> Is. 48:20; 51:11.

<sup>68</sup> Is. 46:13; 51:3; 52:8.

city'.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, the urbanized descendants of Jacob 'name themselves according to the holy city' (48:2), that is, they identify themselves with Jerusalem as part of their confession of Yahweh.<sup>70</sup>

The city sets a boundary: inside are the redeemed of Yahweh, outside are those outside the covenant, 'for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean' (52:1), which in context may well mean a group like the Babylonian invaders, since the unit is addressed to their bound captives. The walls of re-built Jerusalem function like Imgur-Enlil to keep out the wicked enemy.

It may be inquired whether there is any imagery used about building Jerusalem which is the dynamic equivalent of Marduk's building of Babylon in *Enuma elish* or the equivalent to statements that Babylon and its foundation walls are eternal. As regards the re-building, there is certainly a highly poetic statement from Yahweh that he will rebuild the city:

behold, I will set your stones in antimony  
and lay your foundations with sapphires.  
I will make your pinnacles of agate,  
your gates of carbuncles,  
and all your walls of precious stone.

Commentators such as Westermann and Whybray have suggested that these lines are written as a deliberate counterpoint to the luxurious building programmes of Nebuchadnezzar at Babylon, and that their imagery when compared with Ezekiel 28:13 suggests a background in myth.<sup>71</sup> What does seem clear is that the sense of continuity between primeval times and Nabopolassar, stated in his remarks about foundations and allusions to *Enuma elish*, has a dynamic equivalent in the comparison between a rebuilt Jerusalem and primeval Eden.

<sup>69</sup> In Is. 60:18, the walls and gates are given the symbolic names 'Salvation' and 'Praise'. 'The holy city' - Is. 48:2; 52:1; Yahweh as 'Holy One' - 41:16, 43:3, 14f., 45:11, 47:4, 48:17, 49:7, 55:5; 'my city' - 45:13. Cf. Ne. 11:1 where lots are cast for one in ten to live in 'Jerusalem the holy city'. This probably indicates a deliberate attempt to keep alive the prophetic eschatology of Zion; cf. D. J. A. Clines, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* (New Century Bible, 1984) 212.

<sup>70</sup> Is. 48:2 appears to indict hypocrisy, not the act of identification with Jerusalem as 'the holy city'.

<sup>71</sup> C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* (SCM, 1969) 278; R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66* (New Century Bible: Oliphants, 1975) 188. Since the poet draws on myth for his imagery elsewhere (51:9f.), this is not an improbable suggestion.

For Yahweh will comfort Zion;  
 he will comfort all her waste places,  
 and will make her wilderness like Eden,  
 her desert like the garden of Yahweh;  
 joy and gladness will be found in her,  
 thanksgiving and the voice of song. (51:3)<sup>72</sup>

If Yahweh had no primeval city, then its equivalent is his primeval garden, and the re-building programme and the re-population of the land is viewed in continuity with Yahweh's sharing of his presence and living space in primeval Eden.

Zion as a cult-centre is graphically brought to focus by the carrying of the temple vessels back from exile into the re-built shrine. The section naming Cyrus (Is. 44:24ff.) brings the previous oracles into sharp historical and political focus. In this unit, which contrasts Babylonian divination expertise with Judaeen prophecy, the re-founding of Jerusalem and its temple is announced. This re-founding is reaffirmed later in terms describing Babylon as the unclean latter-day Egypt from which the exiles depart under Yahweh's military protection (Is. 52:11f.). They carry the cult-vessels of the temple with them. This cult-vessel motif is common to Daniel and Isaiah 40-55.

#### (d) The Role of Foreign Nations and the Economic Perspective.

In the Neo-Babylonian material foreigners appear in fixed roles. The Assyrian oppressors are the target of military reprisal.<sup>73</sup> This is the role of Babylon in Isaiah 40-55 and the fourth kingdom in Daniel.<sup>74</sup> Then there are the two classes of

<sup>72</sup> The 'joy and gladness', 'thanksgiving and voice of song' is rather reminiscent of singing and celebrations in *Enuma elish* 6:72-7. Both are cultic festivities, singing the praises of the benefactor deity who has delivered the group from toil. The context also sets out an extended time span in its recollection of the ancestral pair, Abraham and Sarah, which compares with Babylonian ancestral claims back through Nebuchadnezzar 1 to a 'distant scion of kingship, seed preserved from before the Flood', *lipu rāqu ša šarrūti zēru našru ša lām abūbi*, W. G. Lambert, *JCS* (1967) 128, line 8. Election is the common factor motivating this assertion of kinship.

<sup>73</sup> *ina qibātim Nabū u Marduk naram šarrūtija u kakkē dannī ša Girra rašubbu muštabriqu zārja Šubarū anaru māsu utirru ana tilli u karmē*, 'at the behest of Nabu and Marduk, who love my kingship, and by the powerful weapons of Girra the terrible who blitzes my enemies, I annihilated the Assyrians and turned their land into a heap of ruins' (Npl 1, 1:23-31; Langdon, *Building Inscriptions* 48).

foreign nations, the tributaries who have submitted either spontaneously or under duress, and the unsubmissive who are conquered and plundered first.<sup>75</sup> Nebuchadnezzar gave practical recognition to his gods for his military success by devoting much of the produce and forced labour gained to cult-centres such as Etemenanki in Babylon. The following quotation highlights the combination of religious and economic factors with the utopian:

The widespread peoples whom Marduk entrusted to me, the hero Shamash appointed me as their shepherd, all lands, the entire inhabited world (*gimir kala dadmē*) from Upper to Lower Seas, distant lands (*mātāti rūgati*), widespread peoples of the world (*nišē dadmē rapšātim*), the kings of distant mountains and far-off regions which are bordered by Upper and Lower Seas, whom Marduk the Suzerain put into my control for drawing his yoke (*ana šadād sirūšu*) with their strength I assembled, and the work-force for Marduk and Shamash for building Etemenanki . . . Viceroy from Syria beyond the Euphrates in the West over whom I was sovereign by the decree of Marduk my lord, these brought mighty cedars from the Lebanon range to my cult-centre Babylon. The entire people of the widespread world (*naphar nišē dadmē rapšātim*) whom lord Marduk bestowed on me I pressed into service for building Etemenanki and laid corvee-work upon them.<sup>76</sup>

In like manner, an irresistible imperial expansion is promised the Judaeans: 'no weapon fashioned against you will prosper' (54:17), 'for you will spread abroad to the right and to the left and your descendants will possess the nations (*gōyīm yTyrāš*) (54:3). Nothing suggests this 'possession' will be an occupation without force. The basis of this is Yahweh's ultimatum to 'the ends of the earth' that 'every knee shall bow' and all swear allegiance (45:22ff.). Those formerly 'incensed against him' will be humiliated, and as a result Israel will be triumphant through Yahweh's help.<sup>77</sup> The

<sup>74</sup> Daniel 7:21f. 'this horn made war with the holy ones and prevailed over them until the Ancient of Days came (*ad diy 'atāh*), perhaps meaning 'came in battle, came to their defence' in a manner casting the Ancient of Days in the role of cosmic warrior, a role also attested for El, though less prominently than for Baal: see P. D. Miller, 'El the warrior', *HTR* 60 (1967) 411-31.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. 'Rival and rebel (*šāninu u mugallitu*) I annihilated, my enemies I destroyed. As for the rebels and the unsubmissive (*zāmānū lā māgiri*) - I subjugated the whole lot of them. I established justice in the land. My widespread peoples (*nišēja rapšātim*) I shepherded in continual peace' (Neriglissar 2, 1:36-2:3, VAR 4, 216).

<sup>76</sup> Nbk 17, 2:12-36; 3...8-24; Langdon, *Building Inscriptions* 148, 150.

<sup>77</sup> *baYhwh yšdeqū weyithalelū kol-zerā Yisrā'el*. Commentators point out that the phrase 'survivors of the nations' (*peletēy haggōyīm* - v.20) involves military imagery, and so too does the triumph and celebration language of v.25. Yahweh is the warrior-king to whom all must submit.

surviving nations are cowed into submission, perhaps by the spectacle of judgement on Babylon as well as by the ultimatum. They arrive in chains carrying tribute to make their submission to Israel:

The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Ethiopia  
and the Sabeans, men of stature,  
shall come over to you and be yours,  
they shall follow you;  
they shall come over in chains and bow down to you.  
They will make supplication to you, saying:  
'God is with you only, and there is no other,  
no god besides him.' (45:14)<sup>78</sup>

Kings shall be your foster fathers,  
and their queens your nursing mothers.  
With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you,  
and lick the dust of your feet. (49:23)

#### SUMMARY: ISAIAH 40-55 AS NATIONAL IDEOLOGY

A number of studies of the ideology of Isaiah 40-55 have debated whether it should be described as 'universalism' or 'particularism', 'nationalism' or 'internationalism'. Their striking feature is that the Near Eastern cultural context is ignored, and the discussion is conducted without defining 'nationalism'. It is turned into an intra-canonical debate, playing off one biblical book against another, or else one prophet against another, or one unit of Isaiah 40-55 against another.<sup>79</sup> Fohrer, for example, speaks of 'questionable *nationalistic* and materialistic elements' which mark the beginning of a theological decline.<sup>80</sup> The basis of evaluation

<sup>78</sup> In Esarhaddon's *Gottesbrief* (ARAB 2, 231ff.), the desparate king of Shupria dresses up as a slave and appears on his city-wall in penitence, weeping, bowing, confessing his rebellion, pleading for clemency, and promising tribute, in this case to no avail since he had disregarded the Assyrian ultimatum, and provoked the military invasion. The submission in chains of Is. 45:14 may be intended to prevent military conquest.

<sup>79</sup> D. E. Hollenberg, 'Nationalism and "The Nations" in Isaiah 40-55', VT 19 (1969) 23-36, reviews the studies by Torrey, Davidson, Lindblom, Begrich, Gelston, Snaith, Orlinsky, Martin-Achard, de Bower and others relevant to this topic. W. Vogel's *God's Universal Covenant* (Ottawa, Univ. of Ottawa Press 1979) uses the categories 'Centripetal and Centrifugal Universalism' to discuss 'The New Universal Covenant' (chap. 4, 115ff.) in a theological evaluation wider than Isaiah 40-55 but interacting with the scholars just named. He omits all Ancient Near Eastern data.

<sup>80</sup> G. Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion* (ET; London, SPCK 1972) 327, italics mine.

adopted in such studies lies outside the culture, and appears to be that of Western internationalism. In which case, 'particularism' and 'nationalism' are pejorative terms.

On the other hand, M. Weinfeld's important study of numerous hymnic and eschatological passages under the title 'Zion and Jerusalem as Religious and Political Capital: ideology and utopia' tends to emphasize what he terms 'a particular spiritual dimension'. Pointing to passages in the prophets that speak of the nations abandoning idolatry and adopting belief in one God, he emphasizes that 'the king who sits enthroned in the royal city rules no longer by the might of his arm, but by the breath of his mouth'.<sup>81</sup> This seems to play down the elements of national ideology which speak of Yahweh as divine warrior, and of his violent enforcement of his kingship.<sup>82</sup> This is relevant to the nations' submission to Israel set out in Isaiah 40-55.

What we have in Isaiah 40-55 is a gamut of dynamic equivalents to statements in the Neo-Babylonian material on foreign nations: destruction for the oppressor nation; divine decree for national expansion; forced submission with tribute from remote regions; and a utopian perspective on empire, namely, that this is the extension of justice in the land to foreign nations. The perspective in both cases is global, which in practice means the known inhabited world, described in terms of its fringes - the mountains, oceans, coastlands and deserts.

Within this horizon, the socio-political category used is that of a nation, with suggestions that it is perceived as an ethnic group, tied to a territory, with a centralized power structure symbolized by the capital city.<sup>83</sup> Over against the

<sup>81</sup> M. Weinfeld's recent study of prophetic eschatology (in R. E. Friedman [ed.], *The Poet and the Historian* [Harvard Semitic Studies 26; Chico California, Scholars Press 1983] 75-115) is profusely documented with Ancient Near Eastern semantic and ideological parallels, but they are drawn mainly from Sumerian Royal Hymns and Assyrian Empire material, which are not the best comparative Near Eastern data available for the Babylonian and post-exilic periods.

<sup>82</sup> P. D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (Philadelphia, Fortress Press 1975) and other studies by him such as 'Jewish Apocalyptic against its Near Eastern Environment', *RB* 78 (1971) 31-58 and 'Zechariah 9 and the Recapitulation of an Ancient Ritual Pattern', *JBL* 92 (1973) 37-59 rightly emphasize the importance of Yahweh as Divine Warrior in biblical eschatology.

<sup>83</sup> The kingdom of Egypt, Cush and Sheba are named (43:3; 45:14) as national states of affluences. Cyrus and Babylonia represent other named national

foreign nations stands the nation Israel. Though there is awareness that Israel is composed of 'tribes' (49:6), the tribal structure is not important to Isaiah 40-55 since the tribes, including Levi, are never named, and the national unit with its land and capital city are central. Therefore we are dealing with a Zion-centred form of nationalism deliberately composed as a polemic against the competing Babylon-centred nationalism enveloping the Judaeans exiles.

At the end of the day, the good news of Isaiah 40-55 is good news for Israel proclaimed to Israel. The polemic slant to the biblical ideology of nationalism is intended to convince Israelites rather than convert Babylonians.<sup>84</sup> The lampooning of their idolatry, and the summons of their gods to trial are effective means of catching Judaeans' attention and supporting the positive affirmations of a return to the Judaeans cult-centre and its worship.

In the light of the above, we cannot agree with Odendaal's hermeneutical evaluation of Isaiah 40-66 when he says, 'The movement in the direction of Jerusalem/Israel has nothing to do with Jewish nationalism, but it is fully theocentric. The true God could be found at that address.'<sup>85</sup> We would not want to contest the theo-centric dimension of the biblical material by adopting a reductionist approach, but neither can we eliminate its culturally contextualized manner of expression. This does not mean that we are obliged to use 'nationalism' as a pejorative term, as Fohrer and others have done. The way is open to contrast the nationalism of the biblical text with Babylonian nationalism, the most obvious difference being the former's monotheism along with all its implications for creation and history.

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kingdoms, and the former conquers kings, rulers, and nations (41:2, 25; 45:1). Similarly kings and nations witness the actions of the Servant.

<sup>84</sup> This makes S. Paul's conclusion decidedly tendentious when he says that, 'Israel's mission is not one of *world conquest* as in the Mesopotamian inscriptions . . . but rather one of *world salvation*' - 'Deutero-Isaiah and Cuneiform Royal inscriptions', *JAOS* 88 (1968) 186. Israel benefits from world-subjugation whether Israel exercises the force to achieve it or, which is perhaps more likely, Yahweh does.

<sup>85</sup> D. H. Odendaal, *The Eschatological Expectation of Isaiah 40-66 with special reference to Israel and the Nations* (USA: Prebyterian and Reformed, 1970) 194 n.66.

## CONCLUSION

## Nationalism and a Contextualist Hermeneutic.

The contextualist approach cannot pretend to divest the exegete of his own cultural, historical and socio-political bias, not to mention his theological presuppositions. But it requires at least two agreements. One is that the influence of the interpreter's own ideology and theological presuppositions are declared, and secondly that Israel's eschatology is read in its wider Near Eastern context in a way that recognizes this influence upon Israel and within Israel. In other words, the first horizon is the original cultural and ideological context in this wider sense, however the interpreter wishes to relate this to his own ideological horizon. Thus the first horizon is defined by the semantics of the Babylonian terms *kippat mātāti*, *kiššatu*, *kibrat arba'i*, *kal dadmē*, *eršetu*, *tēnēštu* and *nišē*, 'the circumference of the lands', 'the totality', 'the four-quarters of the world', 'all inhabited zones', 'earth/underworld', 'mankind', 'peoples', and their Hebrew equivalents.

Comparisons between the Babylonian and the biblical material may be legitimately made; the more so if the biblical ideology is a counteractive ideology which aims to win Israelites away from the mind-set of Babylonian nationalism. Both Babylonian and biblical ideologies interpret the role of physical objects: territory, nation, central urban complex, religious buildings, armies, and so on. There is a utopian element in both sources since the ideology sets out an ideal such as a global, international empire, regulated by just laws. At the centre of this ideal political power structure is the homeland, the nation, and the capital city in which the god has his permanent residence. No enemy is successful against this capital city or its wider territory, and natural resources are channelled into it.

That Babylonian and biblical nationalisms are utopian is evident from the historical and political process which overtook each. Internal divisions, absorption of substantial elements of alternative ideologies, economic decline, territorial shrinkage, military subjugation, the razing of city-walls and temples all underline the difference between the physical referents and the ideology which clustered around them. The

ideology was never realized in its own utopian, geo-political terms. Neither Babylon nor Jerusalem lived up to their roles in the ideologies as centres of global empires. Not in the modern sense of 'the Earth', nor in the limited semantics of 'the earth', 'all inhabited zones' and 'the nations' of the then known world.

A reductionist approach would deny that there was any other plane of reality than the record of what happened to the physical objects. This would not be my theological perspective on either the Babylonian or the biblical ideologies. The literalist approach to the ideology of Isaiah 40-55 has to face the failure of the ideology to materialize in its day or since in its own *national* terms.<sup>86</sup>

The contextualist reader, being neither Judean, nor resident in Jerusalem, nor a worshipper in its cult-centre, identifies the nationalism of Isaiah 40-55 as the ideology of another's group, and acknowledges the culture-specificness of its theological expression. There is appreciation of the polemic thrust to this theology and the recognition that contextualisation demands culture-specificness, and that this is both the strength and hazard of contextualized theology. Culture-specificness implies a degree of culture-boundness.

An illustrative double analogy to Isaiah 40-55's contextualized theology is the culture-specificness of Jesus, and the development of Christology through polemic engagement with alternative messianic ideologies. The Nazareth Aramaic accent, seamless garment, sandals and beardedness, eating with fingers, and so on, are culture-specific elements of incarnation. The Christology which elaborates on the theological significance of Jesus's incarnation is polemically as well as pastorally motivated - for instance, the Christology of Hebrew or Colossians, which combat apostasies or heresies. Theology develops this way by engaging and utilising the terminology of opponents.

A contextualist study of Isaiah 40-55 will not stop with uncovering what I have described as its culture-specificness, but should also motivate the exegete to dynamically re-contextualize its theology by confronting the competing ideo-

<sup>86</sup> R. P. Carroll discusses the dissonance between the economic and political events of the history and the ideological perspective, but is yet another scholar to ignore the Babylonian material and the contextualization factor, 'Second Isaiah and the Failure of Prophecy', *Studia Theologica* 32 (1978) 119-31.

logies of his own culture, and identify the physical entities around which these ideologies cluster.

In short, the study of Babylonian and Old Testament nationalisms challenges scholars to study the ideologies of their own cultures, and in turn to address them in terms which communicate God's message today.