Ecojustice or Anthropological Justice?
A Study of the New Heavens and the New Earth in Isaiah 65.17

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Introduction

This paper is concerned with one verse in Isaiah, Isa. 65.17,[1] which asserts that God will create new heavens and a new Earth.[2] At first sight this assertion brings into play two main principles which are involved in an ecojustice hermeneutic:

1. the principle of intrinsic worth, which is concerned with whether 'the universe, Earth and all its components have equal value'; if new heavens and a new Earth are necessary, then why is this so? Are the previous heavens and Earth flawed in some way or have they decayed to the point where they can no longer be sustained? Even if, as some scholars maintain, 'new' does not mean 'destruction' and 're-creation', but merely a 'renewal' of what had existed previously, it must be asked: Why is renewal necessary?
2. the principle of purpose, which states that 'the universe, Earth and all its components are part of a dynamic cosmic design within which each piece has a place in the overall goal of that design', must also be put to the test: Does the re-creation/renewal of heavens and Earth indicate that they were corresponding to their goal and purpose so little that they had to be realigned?

It is possible that a third principle comes into play in a minor way:

1. Isa. 66.22 also asserts that God will make new heavens and a new Earth, but this will be the subject of another paper.
2. In keeping with the focal point of the Earth Bible Project, 'Earth' is capitalized and treated as a proper name, except in direct quotations from the biblical text.

3. the principle of interconnectedness, which asserts that 'Earth is a community of interconnected living beings which are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival', must also be considered. People, animals, reptiles and botanical life are part of Earth,[3] so what happens to them? Are they re-created or renewed? Are they interconnected?

These principles will be borne in mind in my exegesis of Isa. 65.17 where God creates 'new heavens and a new earth'.

The history of the literary-critical analysis of Isaiah is complex and the views of individual scholars are frequently contradictory, both on Isaiah as a whole[4] and on Isaiah 65–66 in particular.[5] Isa. 65.17 has also been seen as a later addition to the text.[6] For these reasons a synchronic approach to the text will be pursued in the present paper. This does not mean that it will be totally uncritical, for as Williamson (1999: 177) so cogently remarked, 'To be postcritical implies that we have first been critical; in the scholarly world there is no short cut to modernity'. It is apparent that in the verse concerned and in those of its immediate context, allusions are made to preceding chapters in Isaiah itself. Such an idea is not new: Clements (1982: 117-24; 1985: 95-113) and Rendtorff (1984: 295-322), who claim a redactional unity for Isaiah, have both asserted that there are close links between the various parts of Isaiah, with Isaiah 40–55 being pivotal. Conrad (1991) treats Isaiah as a whole, recognizing repetition in the various parts of the book. As he points out, however, 'repetition is always repetition with a difference. Variation in the recurrence of repeated elements in the text suggests movement and progression' (1991: 30). Such movement has been seen by Williamson (1999: 177, 194) to yield information concerning the relative dates of the passages studied. The question of dating aside, the approach approximates to the way in which the ancient

3. Birds and fish have not been listed here as belonging to Earth as Gen. 1.20 specifies that birds are of the heavens and fish belong to the waters beneath Earth.
4. For details of the scholarship on the historical/literary unity or disunity of Isaiah cf. Driver 1888; Pfeiffer 1948; Eissfeldt 1966.
5. For a summary of scholarly criticism of Isaiah 65–66 cf. Gardner forthcoming, n. 2.
6. Isa. 65.17 is thought by Westermann (1969: 306) to have been a later addition to the text as the verses that follow it are deemed not to be cosmic in character. Isa. 65 has been seen by Tomasino (1993: 96) to disrupt the thought sequence of Isa. 64.12 and Isa. 66.1. He claims that Isa. 65 was inserted into the text, in conscious imitation of Isa. 66.22, after the rebuilding of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, with the purpose of shifting attention away from an anti-cultic theme apparent in the original text.

listener/reader would have understood Isa. 65.17.[7] Further, connections have been made by some scholars between Isaiah and other biblical works: Sommer's approach in his thematic analysis of Isaiah 40–66 (1996) showed the presence of themes and vocabulary from Jeremiah in greater quantity than those from Isaiah 1–39; Wells (1996: 140-55) shows links between Isaiah 56–66 and legal texts in P, implicitly positing that P or its forerunner was in existence at the time of the writing of these Isaianic chapters. As such, the creation story of Gen. 1–2.4a, or much of it, would also have been available to our writer—a story which tells of the original creation of the heavens and Earth—as would the tale of the destruction of Earth at the time of the Flood, stories to which Isaiah may well have been alluding with his mention of new heavens and new Earth; Sehmsdorf (1972: 526-27) and, to a lesser extent, Smith (1995: 143, 146) show that Deuteronomy is the background to a number of Isaianic verses. The book of Psalms has also been seen as an influence on Isaiah (cf. Willey 1997).

Isa. 65.17 reads: 'For behold I am creating new heavens and a new earth and the former ones will not be remembered or come into mind'.

The commentators are divided as to what is implied by the notion of newness. The two views are as follows:

1. The old heavens and old Earth are to be physically destroyed and new ones created in their place. Skinner (cf. Kissane 1943: 311) for example, followed this view. It has also been adopted by Whybray (1975: 275-76), who thinks that Isa. 65.17 was added at a later time to the non-cosmic vision of Isa. 65.18-25 by someone who was inspired by Isa. 51.6, where the cosmic order is transitory. Biddle (1996: 139) appears to endorse the view that the heavens and Earth will be replaced.
2. The old heavens and old Earth are to be renewed in a metaphorical or figurative sense. Westermann (1969: 408) explicitly rejects the first view, saying that it belongs to apocalyptic literature. Instead the created order 'is to be miraculously renewed'. Kissane (1943: 311) is more specific, seeing 'the restoration of Sion' as 'a new world order in which piety and justice will prevail'. Watts (1987: 353) also takes the new heavens as indicative of a new world order and, like Kissane, links it to the events of history: 'the Persian Empire has Yahweh's salvation and Israel is called to be a worshipping and pilgrim people with Jerusalem as its focus' (1987: 354).

7. Cf. Carr 1996: 193-97 for an excellent summary of the differences between the ancient and modern reader of texts.

Recreation or renewal? We could go even further: recreation or renewal of the heavens and Earth, or recreation/renewal of Zion and God's community? Or both? In order to determine the answer to these questions, Isa. 65.17 will first be looked at in its context[8] and then an enquiry will be made into the vocabulary used in the text and what connections the verse makes with previous Isaianic passages in terms of both theme and vocabulary.

Isa. 65.17 appears after a contrast on the one hand between those 'who did not seek me' (Isa. 65.1), 'who walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts' (Isa. 65.2) and appear to be worshipping deities other than YHWH (Isa. 65.3-7, 11) and, on the other hand, his 'servants' (Isa. 65.9, 13), who are identified as 'a seed out of Jacob, an inheritor out of Judah...my chosen ones' (Isa. 65.9). The latter will inherit God's mountains and dwell there (Isa. 65.9). In Isa. 65.13-15, which Smith (1995: 143) thinks is strongly influenced by Deut. 28.27-48, appear a series of contrasts addressed to God's servants about the future for the two groups: the servants will eat, the others will not; the servants will drink, the others will not; the servants will rejoice, the others will be ashamed; God's servants 'will sing for joy of heart' but the others 'will howl for breaking of spirit'; God 'will call his servants by another name' but the others will leave their name for an oath. Further, God will kill them. Isa. 65.16 is an enigmatic verse; it will be amplified later. After the creation of the new heavens and Earth in Isa. 65.17, a number of assertions about future bliss are made, many of which contrast with previous conditions or fulfil promises God had made.

1. God will be creating (*bore'*) Jerusalem a rejoicing (*gilah*) and her people a joy (*masos*) (Isa. 65.18). God says: 'I will rejoice (*galti*) in Jerusalem and joy (*sosti*) in her people and the sound of weeping (*beki*) and the sound of crying (*ze'aqah*) will be heard in her no more' (Isa. 65.19). 'Weeping' (*beki*) and 'crying' (*ze'aqah*) appear elsewhere in Isaiah in the context of destruction.[9] Against this background, the implication of the present

8. Westermann (1969: 441) thinks that Isa. 65.16b-25 links with Isa. 60–62 and that it has been moved from directly following these chapters. A number of scholars follow his view in part or in whole (cf. Smith 1995: 144 n. 56). Smith (1995: 142-52) posits that, although there are some thematic similarities between the two blocks of material, Isa. 65.16b-25 shows linguistic links with biblical material other than Third Isaiah and was written independently of it.

9. The Hebrew word *beki* is used of Moab weeping in Isa. 15.2, 3, 5; 16.9; of

passage is that God is creating a Jerusalem that will never again be destroyed. Instead it is to be a 'rejoicing' (*gilah*).[10] The only other occurrence of *gilah* is in Isa. 35.2 where the wilderness will blossom and rejoice when God's people are on their way to Zion, thus linking with Isa. 65.18-19.

2. There will be no more premature death (Isa. 65.20). This may hark back to Gen. 6.3 where God limited the life-span of humans because of sin. Death was linked in Isa. 51.6 with the old heavens and old Earth and their passing. Isa. 25.8 asserts that God has 'swallowed up death forever', but this goes beyond Isa. 65.20 and Isa. 65.22 where life, although it is long, is limited. The sinner is cursed (*yequllal*). This may be an allusion to Ps. 37.22 where it is said that the wicked are cursed (*mequllalaw*) by God.
3. Houses built will be inhabited by those who build them and vineyards will have their fruit eaten by those who plant them and not by another (Isa. 65.21). This provides a counterpart to Deut. 28.30 where those who do not listen to God's commandments would 'build, but not dwell therein, plant a vineyard and not use the fruits thereof'. Smith (1995: 146) also makes a link to Zeph. 1.13.
4. God's people will have lives as long as the life of a tree (Isa. 65.22). Unless the tree referred to is the tree of life (Gen. 2.9; 3.22, 24), and there is no indication that it is, trees still die. The tree imagery may link with Isa. 61.3 where God's new community is to be called 'Trees of Righteousness'. The simile of a righteous person as like a tree also appears in Ps. 1.3 and Jer. 17.8.

Judah in Isa. 22.4, 12, and in Isa. 38.3 of Hezekiah at the time of his apparently imminent death. *Za'ak* (crying) is used only of Moab (Isa. 15.5, 8).

10. The whole of Isa. 35 may well be important as a background to Isa. 65.18-25. Its context is God's saving of God's people (Isa. 35.4) who will be brought through a fertile land (previously a wilderness; Isa. 35.1, 6-7) where no lion or ravenous beast will be found (cf. Isa. 65.25). Indeed the ransomed of Yahweh will return and come with singing to Zion and everlasting joy will be upon their heads: they will obtain gladness and joy and sorrow and sighing will flee away (cf. Isa. 65.18, 19). Further, Isa. 35 evidences other linguistic links with Isa. 65.18-19: the verb *gil* (rejoice) appears in Isa. 35.1, 2 and the verb *sus* in Isa. 35.1. The noun *sason*, which derives from the latter verb and is similar in meaning to *masos*, refers in Isa. 35.10 to the joy that awaits God's ransomed returnees. There may also be an allusion in Isa. 65.18-19 to Isa. 62.5 where God rejoices over the restored Jerusalem. Both Isa. 35 and 62 are in the context of the restored community in Jerusalem, as is Isa. 65.18-19.

5. In Isa. 65.22 God's chosen people will enjoy the work of their hands. This is in keeping with Deut. 16.15; 24.19; 25.12; 28.12; these texts announce blessings on the work of the hands of those who keep God's commandments.[11] It should be noted that the verb translated as 'enjoy' in most English versions actually means 'wear out' in Hebrew. The true implication of the verb is that the people will live long enough to be able to benefit from the work of their hands (cf. Whybray 1975: 278; Motyer 1993: 531). The stanza thus links with the previous one, paralleling life as long as a tree, and also links with the following stanza where labour will not be in vain.
6. The people will not labour 'in vain' (*leriq*) nor bring forth 'calamity' (*behalah*), with both words appearing in Lev. 26.16 (cf. Smith 1995: 151), in a passage concerned with what will happen if people do not obey the covenant. Lev. 26.16 appears in a similar context to Deut. 28.12. The notion of not labouring in vain is also likely to be a reversal of Isa. 49.4 where God's servant believed he had laboured in vain (*leriq*).
7. God will be attentive to them (Isa. 65.24). This verse contrasts God's immediate response to his servants with the lack of response God received from those people who had forsaken him (Isa. 65.12; cf. Smith 1995: 152). For previous appeals to people to be attentive to God compare, for example, Isa. 55.6; 56.1.
8. Wild beasts will be at peace with domesticated ones (Isa. 65.25). This is almost a repeat of Isa. 11.6-9. It is also what God intended for his original creation, but which did not eventuate.[12] It brings into play the principle of interconnectedness—at least as far as the behaviour of humans and the effect it has upon wild animals is concerned.

To sum up what has been found in Isaiah 65 up to the present: Isaiah 65 is primarily concerned with changed conditions for humans depending upon which attitude to God they display; it pronounces reward in the form of physical benefits and spiritual peace upon God's servants and earthly punishment in the form of physical deprivation—as well as mental anguish and ultimately death—upon those who have not sought God. In such a world, there will be no aggression from wild beasts or snakes. It is humans to whom justice is being

11. Smith (1995: 151) highlights Deut. 28.12 as the background to the expression in Isa. 65.22, but the other Deuteronomic passages cited above are also valid.

12. For details cf. Gardner 2000: 121-26.

given[13] and righteous humans will enjoy the fruits of their labour, in contrast to those pictured in Deut. 28.30. Furthermore, in the future, Jerusalem will be spared devastation.

The only verse in Isaiah 65 which mentions Earth, apart from the one which forms the focus of this paper, is Isa. 65.16. It is worth looking at in some detail. It reads:

> he will call his servants by another name
> so that he who blesses himself by the earth
> blesses himself by the God of *'amen*
> and he who swears (*hannishba'*) by the earth
> swears (*yishshaba'*) by the God of *'āmēn*
> because the former troubles are forgotten
> and because they are hidden from my eyes.

The LXX substituted *'emet*, 'truth', for *'amen*. However, the *'amen* of the Masoretic Text is supported by the Dead Sea Scrolls and thus must be taken seriously.

The phrase 'God of *''amen'* does not appear elsewhere in the Bible. However, *'amen* does. It is a response to statements made—it signifies agreement, an affirmation of acceptance. The statements to which *'amen* is a response fall into two categories:

1. promise of obedience: curses are invoked upon those who perform specific acts which are contrary to God's laws (Deut. 27.15-16). Jer. 11.5 picks up on these curses (Jer. 11.4), asserting that if people obey God then they will possess a land flowing with milk and honey, to which the people respond with *'amen*;
2. affirmations of God's singular and everlasting nature; cf. Ps. 41.14(13) which is repeated in 1 Chron. 16.36; Ps. 72.9; Ps. 89.33(52); Ps. 106.48. As the message of all these passages is similar, I shall only give one of them in full here:

13. It has been suggested by a number of commentators that Isa. 65 is a response to the plea for justice made in Isa. 63.7–64.12 and this may well be so, but whereas the latter block of material is an appeal for all Israel, Isa. 65–66 is addressed to a divided community where only the righteous will be saved. See Steck 1987: 103-16; 1991: 217-28 cf. also Sweeney 1988: 91 and Carr 1996: 204-12.

> 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
> From everlasting to everlasting.'
> And all the people said *'amen* and praised the Lord (Ps. 41.14[13]).

With that little word *'amen*, then, Isaiah has alluded to the everlasting nature of God and the blessings upon those who live in accordance with divine will. As such its meaning is similar to 'truth' (*'emet*). *'amen* may have been used instead of *'emet* in order to allude to the passage in Deuteronomy that specifies rewards for those obedient to God. This links with the allusions to Deuteronomic passages that were found in Isa. 65.18-25. Although Isaiah nowhere else uses the noun *'amen*, he twice uses the verbal form associated with it. In Isa. 7.9, in a message to Ahaz he says: 'If you will not believe (*ta'aminu*), surely you will not be established'. Belief in God's word, then, is all-important, a statement which is borne out in the only other occurrence of the verb in Isa. 43.10, which reads:

> You are my witnesses, says Yahweh,
> my servants whom I have chosen
> that you may know and believe (*ta'aminu*)
> and understand that I am he.

To return to the exegesis of Isa. 65.16: it is the servants of God (Isa. 65.15) who bless themselves in the 'God of *'amen*', thus linking the text with Isa. 43.10.

The notion of swearing by Earth (Isa. 65.16) is not without its problems either. The phrase appears nowhere else in Isaiah; however, 'Earth/land' (*'erets*) and 'swear' (*sab'*) occur together frequently in Deuteronomy, with the following progression of thought being apparent:

1. the land was promised (sworn) to Abraham and his seed (Deut. 1.8; 6.10, 23; 7.13; 8.1; 10.11; 28.11; 30.20; 34.40);
2. only those who obey God will be allowed to enter/stay in the land (Deut. 1.35; 6.18, 23-24; 8.1; 30.20) which God promised (swore) to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob;
3. the land that God promised (swore) to the fathers will be fruitful (so will cattle and people) if God's judgments are kept (Deut. 7.13; 28.11).

The linking of swearing by earth (Isa. 65.16) with Deuteronomy is justified because the close association of the phrase with *'amen* in Isa. 65.16 also features prominently in Deuteronomy 27. Those then who 'swear by the earth' in Isa. 65.16, when interpreted through the references to Deuteronomy, are God's people who understand the

connection between possession of the land, along with its fertility, and keeping God's commandments. However, Isa. 65.16 goes beyond that: swearing by Earth is the same as swearing by God; blessing oneself by Earth is like blessing oneself by God. Blessing and cursing in the ancient world were seen as powerful creative forces capable of engendering life or curtailing it. That Earth has the same power as God is significant—a partnership is in view. In Isa. 65.16 Earth is not subdued as in Gen. 1.28 but is in co-operation with God, a co-operation that was evident on the third day of creation (see Habel 2000: 41-43), but denied on day six through fear of the power of Earth in its role as fertility goddess (Gardner 2000: 124). Now the intrinsic worth of Earth is recognized and its purpose is no longer suppressed; rather its original role is being restored.

Are there any prior intimations in Isaiah of the new status of Earth? In Isa. 45.8 righteousness is poured into Earth from above. Isa. 45.8 appears in a chapter which has a strong emphasis on God as the maker of all humankind (Isa. 45.12, 18) and so has a universal application. Isa. 45.8 itself is anticipating a new world order:

> Cause to drop down, you heavens, from above,
> And let the skies pour down righteousness;
> Let the earth open, that they may be fruitful in salvation,
> Let her cause righteousness to spring up together;
> I, Yahweh, have created it.

The passage contains some textual difficulties,[14] but as Motyer (1993: 360) says, the Masoretic Text can be retained if 'salvation and righteousness' are rendered as the subjects of the plural verb 'be fruitful'. Accordingly he translates,

> Let the earth open;
> Let salvation and righteousness[15] be fruitful;
> Let it [earth] make them grow together.

14. Qa and LXX have 'shout aloud' (*har'iyu*) instead of the MT *har'ipu*, possibly because they expected an object, and to make a parallel with the next line 'and let the skies pour down righteousness'. 'Shout aloud' would also be in keeping with the new heavens as witnesses to God's acts. However, as Motyer (1993: 359) points out, the verb *r'p* does appear without an object in Isa. 22.22 and 2 Kgs 15.16. 'Be fruitful' (*yipru*) is, as Whybray (1975: 106) says, 'unaccountably plural and *tatsmiach* 'cause to spring' (f.s.) has also caused problems'.

15. The two words translated as 'righteousness' in English are in fact different in Hebrew. The first is *tsedeq* and the second *tsedaqah* and scholars have seen different shades of meaning in them. Watts (1987: 157), in keeping with his tying of the Isaianic work to the events of history, links them closely with God working through Cyrus and translates *tsedeq* as 'right' and *tsedaqah* as 'legitimacy'. Motyer (1993: 360) thinks that the difference may amount to no more than a poetic variation, while Kissane (1943: 80) understands *ṣedeq* as an attribute of God (i.e. God's righteousness) and *tsedaqah* as virtually synonymous with 'salvation'. A perusal of the occurrences of both words in the Hebrew Bible suggests that there is little difference in meaning between the two and that Motyer's view should be upheld.

16. 'Truth' appears to be a wide-ranging concept which embraces 'loyalty to a deity' and right living in accordance with that loyalty; cf. the contrast implied between Isa. 59.14, 15, where there is transgression, and Isa. 38.3, where Hezekiah walked before God 'in truth and with a perfect heart and [did] what was right'.

Both Westermann (1969: 163) and Brueggemann (1998: 77) see the verse in terms of a new creation, with Brueggemann stating 'here the gift of creation causes the earth to prosper'. He does not specify in what way Earth prospers nor does he investigate whether physical Earth, as opposed to a community of people, is meant. Whybray (1975: 106) may well understand the background to the concepts involved when he draws attention to Ps. 85.10-14(85.9-13) and Ps. 72.1-7, although he does not elaborate greatly upon the connection between them and Isa. 45.8, except to say, rather imprecisely, that in those psalms, fertility and national order are linked to the king. Psalm 72 pictures the king responding to God's gifts of judgment and righteousness by displaying the same attributes to his people. (Interestingly, in Psalm 72, *tsedeq* and *tsedaqah*, which both featured in Isa. 45.8, alternate as in the latter text, although in opposite sequence.) The mountains and hills in turn are said to bring peace and righteousness. In Psalm 85, where there is a direct reference to a return from captivity (Ps. 85.2[1]), the people plead with God: 'Show us your mercy and grant us your salvation' (Ps. 85.8[7]). The verse is followed by the belief that

> Moreover his salvation is near to those who fear him,
> that glory may dwell in our land.
> Mercy and truth are met together;
> righteousness and peace have kissed each other;
> truth (*'emet*) springs out of the earth;
> and righteousness has looked down from heaven.
> Yes, the Lord will give that which is good
> and our land will yield her increase (Ps. 85.10-13[9-12]).

There is a strong similarity in these verses with terms and concepts in Isaiah in general. In particular, 'salvation' and 'righteousness' appear here, the latter in association with the heavens as in Isa. 45.8, as does the notion of a force for right living[16] springing out of Earth. It is explicitly stated in Ps. 85.13 (12), but not in Psalm 72, that Earth would respond to the state of heavenly communion on Earth by yielding 'her

increase'. The links then between Psalm 85 and Isaiah are very important and would bear further investigation.

What is the meaning of Isa. 45.8 in terms of the present investigation of the new heavens and new Earth in Isaiah? The verse represents the notion of the heavens and Earth co-operating, with Earth as nurturer of righteousness and salvation. 'Earth opening' is a metaphor for the world below incorporating aspects of the divine which are actively poured into it from the heavenly sphere.[17] The partnership of God and Earth that comes to full flower in Isa. 65.16 is foreshadowed here.

To return to an exegesis of Isa. 65.16: 'the former troubles' which are 'forgotten' are likely to hark back to the time when those who were supposedly God's people refused to give loyalty and obedience. Some of their misdeeds are catalogued in Isaiah 65 itself (Isa. 65.2-7, 11-12), as is their punishment (Isa. 65.13-15). Isaiah 48 gives a clear delineation of the wrongful attitude of Jacob/Israel/those from Judah who 'swear by the name of the Lord and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth nor in righteousness' (Isa. 48.1). 'For they call themselves of the holy city' (Isa. 48.2). In Isa. 48.18 God laments:

> Oh that you had listened to my commandments!
> Then your peace would have been as a river
> And your righteousness as the waves of the sea;
> Your seed also would have been like the sand
> And the offspring of your bowels like its grains.
> His name would not be cut off or destroyed from before me.

Isa. 48.1, 18 can be seen to have many links with Isa. 65.15-16 in both theme and vocabulary: the contrast is sharply drawn in both texts between those who keep the commandments and their subsequent blessed state and those who do not and their consequent lack of peace and righteousness, lack of seed, lack of a name.[18]

'Former' (*rishonot*) recalls earlier Isaianic passages where it was announced that former things were passing and new things were about to begin (Isa. 42.9; 43.18). The notion of former troubles being hidden

17. However, Isa. 45.8 says nothing about any resulting effects, in terms of fertility for Earth, in the way that Psalm 85 does. Linked with Isa. 45.8 is Isa. 61.11. In the latter text, God's action in causing righteousness (*tsedaqah*) and praise to spring forth (*yatsmiach*) before all the nations is seen in terms of a simile with earth bringing forth her shoot, causing her seeds to spring forth.

18. In turn these two texts, Isa. 65.15-16 and Isa. 48.1, 18, shed light upon Isa. 66.22, the second of the two passages where besides 'new heavens and a new Earth', the seed and name of the new community are promised permanence.

from God's eyes suggests that a new era in the relationship of God and people is about to begin. In Isa. 65.17 God announces:

> For behold I am creating new heavens and a new earth
> and the former things will not be remembered or come into mind.

Again it is stated that former things (*rishonot*) will not be remembered (*tizzakarnah*). This may well hark back to Isa. 43.25 where God says to the exiles: 'I will not remember (*'ezkor*) your sins'. This is in the context of God doing a new thing (Isa. 43.19). In Isa. 65.17, God asserts, in parallel to not remembering the former things, that they will not 'come into mind' (*ta'alenah 'al leh*). Smith (1995: 150) points out that the latter expression is found four times in Jeremiah (Jer. 3.16; 7.31; 19.5; 32.35), three of which concern God not permitting syncretistic worship. There is a further reference in Jeremiah that Smith does not mention: this is Jer. 44.21, a passage that is most appropriate as a background to Isa. 65.17. It includes both 'remember' (*zakar*) and 'come into mind' (*'alah 'al leb*) and, as in Isa. 65.17, it is God who is the subject of the verbs. In an address to the exiles from Judah who were living in Egypt, Jeremiah says:

> The incense you burned in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem,
> you and your fathers and the people of the land,
> did not Yahweh remember them (*zakar*)
> and did it not come into his mind (*ta'alenah 'al leh*)?
> so that Yahweh could not stand it, because of the evil of your works
> and because of the abominations you committed;
> therefore your land has become a desolation, an astonishment, a curse,
> without inhabitant, as it is this day (Jer. 44.21-22).[19]

God's memory of sins then brought about the devastation of the land. Applied to Isa. 65.17, this suggests that in the time of the new heavens and new Earth, God will not remember past sins and therefore new Earth will not be made desolate. The 'curse' (*'alah*) appears a number of times in Deuteronomy 29 where it is applied to those who break the Mosaic covenant. There the curse affects the land so that it becomes like Sodom and Gomorrah (Deut. 29.23). This will not happen in the time of the new heavens and new Earth for then *sinners themselves* would be cursed (Isa. 65.20), rather than *Earth* being the innocent victim of the curse. Instead, God's servants, who bless themselves by the God of *'amen*, bless themselves by Earth and those who swear by Earth, swear by the God of *'amen*, recalling the promises and

19. Sommer (1996) has also missed this allusion.

threats of Deuteronomy. A continuous process is in operation: those who believe in God and obey his commandments partake of the blessings of Earth, Earth that has been enriched by having righteousness and salvation poured into it (Isa. 45.8). This brings about harmony in all creation (cf. the principle of interconnectedness)—a harmony that was intended, but did not eventuate, in the first creation.

That a new creation, in some form, is heralded in Isa. 65.17 is certain: the verb 'create' (*bara'*)[20] and the adjective 'new' (*chadash*)[21] highlight this. The notion of land being cursed because of human disobedience to God is found, time after time, in allusions made by Isa. 65.16-25 to Deuteronomy and Jeremiah. New Earth, by contrast, will be a place where justice will prevail (cf. Isa. 42.3-4; 65.20-24), where there will be salvation for the righteous (Isa. 45.8; 61.11) who will congregate in Jerusalem (Isa. 62.7; Isa. 65.18-19).[22] Not as many references to the heavens are made in Isa. 65.16-25: Isa. 45.8 has the heavens dropping down and mingling with earth, producing salvation and righteousness together. It is possible that Isa. 34.4 should be seen as contributing to the picture of the new heavens. It reads:

> All the host of heaven will be dissolved
> and the heavens will be rolled together as a scroll;
> and all their host will fade away
> as the leaf fades from the vine
> and as a fading leaf from the fig tree.

This is to happen in the context of God's wrath against the nations and their host whom 'he has put under the ban and given over to slaughter' (Isa. 34.2). Isa. 34.3 details the death of the human wrongdoers whose blood will be so prolific that it will melt mountains. Isa. 34.4 describes the punishment of the host of heaven who must surely be seen in terms of the gods of the nations who have just been slain. The imagery suggests that the heavens are so compressed by being rolled up that their host are denied life-giving sustenance and thus die in the same way as leaves on a tree will wither and fall if their

20. It is tempting to see a link with the first version of the creation story in Gen. 1–2.4a where *bara'* is used. Whether such an allusion is present or not, the use of *bārā'* is attested elsewhere in Isaiah itself in relation to the original creation (Isa. 40.28; 42.5; 45.18).

21. 'New' (*chadash*) does not appear in Isaiah prior to Isa. 41.15 and it is noticeable with each of its occurrences, whether it refers to events (Isa. 41.15; 42.9; 43.19; 48.6), a song (Isa. 42.10), or a name (Isa. 62.2), that it appears in a context of hope, redemption and a putting away of the past with all its difficulties. Isa. 48.7 is very emphatic that new things that are created 'are created now, not from then'.

22. All passages cited here have been referred to already in the present paper.

capillaries are unable to suck moisture from the branch. It should be noted that the heavens themselves are not destroyed. They are rolled up as a scroll and so, like a scroll, they can be unrolled again. When they are, they will be without the heavenly bodies that had been falsely worshipped in the past. Such an interpretation fits well with Isa. 60.1-2, 19-20, where the only light is YHWH. Without it, darkness would cover Earth. Isa. 60.3 goes on to say that nations and kings will be attracted to the light. Isa. 60.19 specifies that the sun will no longer be the light by day or the moon by night. Instead God will be an 'everlasting light'.

In Isa. 65.16-25 there are many allusions to texts in Isaiah and elsewhere that promise punishment for those people who do not devote themselves to YHWH exclusively. Isa. 34.2 makes it clear that God's words there are addressed to the nations, whereas Isaiah 65 is addressed to two groups within Israel—the sinners and the righteous. The behaviour of the sinners, though, is like the behaviour of the nations for they, too, have been worshipping deities other than YHWH (Isa. 65.1-7). Further, the sinners in Isaiah 65 are killed (Isa. 65.15), as are those in Isa. 34.2-3. Removal of the host of heaven, as specified in Isa. 34.4, would go a long way, in the ancient world, to removing bodies that were worshipped in place of YHWH.[23]

Were the old heavens and old Earth destroyed or renewed in Isa. 65.17? They appear to have been renewed, with Earth becoming a partner with God as a source of blessing and a power to swear by. There are no allusions to passages which specify total destruction: devastation of land results from the curse which is part of God's punishment for disobedient people (cf. Deut. 29; Jer. 4.21-22), but devastation is not the equivalent of obliteration. In addition, Zion is to be renewed and is assured of perpetuity as its only inhabitants will be those loyal to God. As such, they will not bring the curses of Deuteronomy upon the land or themselves. Anyone who did sin in the new Zion would bear the curse in their own person (Isa. 65.20).

It is appropriate at this point to review the ecojustice principles that were seen to be involved in Isa. 65.17 and its context:

1. The principle of intrinsic worth: a renewal of both heavens and Earth was necessary because the heavens contained bodies that could be seen by sinners to rival God. Earth itself is

23. Isa. 51.6 has not been included as a passage lying behind Isa. 65.17 for it is thought to represent a later stage of thought: upon the destruction of heavens and Earth all who dwell therein will die (with the exception of 'his servants', according to Isa. 51.16).

transformed from being the innocent victim, devastated under a curse that had been placed upon a disobedient humanity, to being a partner with the heavens in ensuring that righteousness and justice/salvation are dispensed. Earth is a source of blessing, a power to swear by.

2. The principle of purpose: humankind's sinfulness was the cause of devastation. Further, the heavens needed to co-operate more with Earth and endow it with righteousness. Justice resulted in sinners being under the curse, not Earth. Earth would never again be a victim. It is noticeable that Earth, which co-operated in the task of creation on day three (Habel 2000: 41-43), but, by day six, was to be subdued by humans through fear of its power as a fertility goddess (Gardner 2000: 124),[24] is now a partner with the heavens (Isa. 45.8) or God (Isa. 65.16). Earth is eternal, a source of blessing (Isa. 65.16). Earth is not affected by human behaviour; rather, Earth is a source of strength for those humans who recognize its power. The original role and purpose of Earth, it seems, is being restored.
3. The principle of interconnectedness: righteousness among people will result in the fertility of Earth, which they can utilize (Isa. 65.21). Further, animals and reptiles will no longer cause terror to each other or to people (Isa. 65.25).

In conclusion, the context of Isa. 65.17 advocates both anthropological justice and ecojustice.

24. The precept of subduing Earth was withdrawn after the Flood (Gardner 2000: 128-29).

'The Wolf, the Lamb, and a Little Child': Transforming the Diverse Earth Community in Isaiah

John W. Olley

Introduction

The book of Isaiah starts with the naming of Isaiah and kings, and rulers and prophet continue to play important roles. Yet very soon animals are named: the ox and the donkey of Isa. 1.3. As the reader continues it becomes apparent that the book is richly 'animalled' (to coin a word avoiding the anthropocentric 'populated').[1] There is the idyllic picture of wild animals and children playing together (Isa. 11.6-9), with a similar picture near the end of the book (Isa. 65.35).

In descriptions of the present and visions of the future non-human members of the Earth community are clearly visible, but how are they involved? As decorations and symbols, or as participants; as appendages to human society and literary metaphors, or as beings with their own integrity? As references to animals in the book of Isaiah are explored most of the ecojustice principles adopted by the Earth Bible Project will be evident.

Diversity and Individuality

Reading through the book of Isaiah soon shows that there is detailed naming of a great variety of animals: wild animals—mole, ostrich, wild goat, hyena, jackal, lion (using four different words), leopard, wolf, bear, hedgehog; flying creatures—bat, bee, fly, eagle, owl, pelican, raven, buzzard, locust, crane, dove, swallow, moth; reptiles—adder, asp, viper, fiery serpent; and the miscellaneous caterpillars, grasshoppers, worms, mice and spiders! To this could be added domestic animals—and dogs.[2]

1. According to the categories of Katz ([ed.] 1992) there are at least 160 references to animals in Isaiah.

2. The list is a representative translation reflecting the variety in Hebrew, the English equivalent of some creatures being uncertain (Firmage 1992: 1109-67 lists