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This is a translated version of Wildberger's second volume of the Isaiah commentary, which appeared in 1978 in the Biblischer Kommentar series. It follows a basic pattern, a brief bibliography followed by discussions of textual problems, form (Gattung), setting, commentary, and theological/ideological purpose and thrust. Literature updates are furnished through 1979 based on the third volume. Introduction to the entire commentary (chapters 1-39) appears in the third volume, Isaiah 28-39. The text is Wildberger's own translation and other biblical texts are either from the RSV (as in Volume 1) or from the NRSV (as in Volume 2).

Wildberger's commentary on Isaiah 1-39 is most extensive, comprising of over 1,600 pages in a condensed type. The second volume deals with the oracles against the nations (Isaiah 13-23) and the Isaiah Apocalypse (24-27).

Wildberger maintained that Chapters 13-27 of the book of Isaiah formed a distinct literary unit. Formally, this section begins with a characteristic heading, massaʿ, (13:1; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1, 11, 13; 22:1; 23:1). These are also united by the content in that oracles against the nations separate these chapters from the previous chapters 1-12 and from the following chapter 28. Chapters 13-23 display a number of literary growth, composed of small Isaianic oracles directed against foreign people and of a collection of the oracles against the nations from the exilic and postexilic era. The oracles against Babylon begin and form the heart of the present oracles against the nations. The beginning of Isa 13:1, דַּעַת בֶּבַל, is expanded by the additional words similar to 1:1 and 2:1: "which Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw." Wildberger contended that the mentioning of Babylon ruled out the authorship of Isaiah ben Amoz, and "[t]he author who composed
chap. 13 did not have in mind just Israel and its humiliation by Babylon, but wrote a view toward all the peoples of the world who had groaned under the troubles that this world power inflicted on them" (14). A likely setting for chapter 13 is in the exilic era, and particularly a time of Astyges, the last king of the Medes but before the appearance of the Persian king Cyrus. The downfall of Babylon typified "the downfall of all tyrannical conglomerates" (36) rather than a historical Assyria or Babylon (against Kissane and others). With the addition of 14:1-2, this oracle against Babylon becomes theologically relevant to Israel and even eschatological in view of the coming chapters 24-27.

In the Isaiah Apocalypse (chapters 24-27), Wildberger identified as many as four literary layers: "the so-called original level" (24:1-6 with additions vv. 7-13; 14-20 and 26:7-21), "the eschatological images" (24:21-23; 25:6-8, 9-10a with additions vv. 10b-12), "songs about the city" (25:1-5 and 26:1-6), and "the later additions" (27:1-13). This literary critical decision remains hypothetical, as the "songs about the city" are much older than the original body of material. Wildberger again calls forth a need to see chapters 24-27 as a single, unified literary composition. The characteristic superscription, masšā', is missing in chapters 24-27. No specific people are condemned here, and the temporal outlook displays rather "a universal, eschatological-apocalyptic turn of events" (446). These chapters are not attributable to Isaiah ben Amoz, but were appended to the already existing corpus of chapters 13-23 by the redactor in order to give a new interpretation for the post-exilic community concerning the breakdown of the world order presented in the oracles against the nations. In this way, the inclusion of chapters 24-27 affects the understanding of the oracles against the nations in chapters 13-23 and brings them into a future-oriented eschatological context. Wildberger dated the so-called Isaiah apocalypse sometime between 500-400 BCB, in the period of Nehemiah. In the present literary composition, Isaiah 24-27 within the book of Isaiah "depicts once again the thoughts describing the הַיכָּל הָעֵד (kingdom of YHWH) by expanding considerably on the ancient Israelite faith" (602).

Wildberger's methodology is essentially literary, form-critical, and redactional in some sense. An analysis of independent, short, self-contained units sets a stage for Wildberger's literary, form-critical investigation of the text. This may explain an absence or virtual lack of any discussion of the given text in relation to a larger literary structure and its surrounding rhetorical device, although he often expressed a need to consider the unity of a literary composition and thereby theological/ideological intention and thrust. This criticism becomes even more acute, when one considers the legitimacy of Wildberger's understanding concerning the primary division of the book of Isaiah at chapter 39. As the book of Isaiah comes down to us as a book with 66 chapters, one must address the placement and ideology of each individual unit within and in relation to the final form of the entire book of Isaiah.
Wildberger's commentary undoubtedly offers the most comprehensive introduction to the book of Isaiah. The literature cited here is rather extensive, and linguistic and form-critical analysis along with historical and theological discussion present a balanced scholarly view of modern Isaianic research in the previous decades. Wildberger's text-critical notes and his acquaintance with ANE literature make this masterful work even more valuable. The issue of unity of the book of Isaiah, which dominated most of 1980's and 90's after the appearance of Wildberger's commentary, also receives a due attention, as Wildberger asserts: "In the first place, one must deal with the question about the unity of these four chapters (447). This question, however, is not raised at the outset but as a sequel to textual development. Wildberger's exegetical process, his decision of literary development and form-critical conclusion, therefore, run from diachronic to synchronic, as most form- and redaction-critical studies maintained in the previous decades. Having said all of this twenty years after this commentary first appeared, this translated version of Wildberger's commentary is a welcome addition to Continental Commentary series, and no serious student and theological library can afford to ignore its presence.