

The Troubles of Templeless Judah

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Introduction

THE EXILIC PERIOD

The sixth century BCE represents a decisive period in ancient Israel as it is within these 100 years that interpreters isolate a watershed in the history, literature, and theology of the Old Testament. The turning point coincides with a period of time between 587¹ and 539 BCE known as the exilic age. For Judah, disaster, defeat, destruction, and disruption define the beginning of this period. Indeed, the assimilation of Judah into the Neo-Babylonian empire had severe repercussions for all spheres of Judahite existence including political, religious, and social. A decline begun already through a previous invasion in 597 climaxed in 587 when Neo-Babylonian forces captured and humiliated the king, burned Jerusalem, the seat of his power, to the ground, dismantled and desecrated the temple, and deported members of the royal family, priests, and other elites to Babylon. Every facet of what had been the kingdom of Judah lay in disarray and a state of collapse. With the demolition of the city of Jerusalem and its temple, the Neo-Babylonians struck a blow at the heart of Judah by shattering the tenets of its faith. Zion theology, the predominant ideology of the pre-exilic Jerusalem temple cult which

¹ There continues to be some dispute over the date of the second attack of Nebuchadnezzar on Jerusalem. A preference for 587 stems from general agreement with the results of a thorough study of this issue provided by J. Hughes, *Secrets of the Times: Myth and History in Biblical Chronology* (JSOTSup, 66; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 159–82, 229–32. Recent discussions include, G. Galil, 'The Babylonian Calendar and the Chronology of the Last Kings of Judah', *Bib* 72 (1991), 367–78; O. Edwards, 'The Year of Jerusalem's Destruction', *ZAW* 104 (1992), 101–6; G. Galil, *The Chronology of the Last Kings of Israel and Judah* (SHANE, 9; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 108–26.

rested on the dual foundation of the inviolability of the city and the eternal covenant with David, was called forcibly into question. In spite of so great a crisis, sometime after the subjugation of Babylon by the Persian ruler Cyrus, the descendants of exiled Jerusalemites and Judahites returned to Judah and rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem. In the interim, the situation for the communities in Judah, Egypt, and Babylon remains obscure. Nevertheless, this time period is taken to be a significant epoch during which great thinkers and theologians grappled with reformulating the concepts of Yahwistic community, faith, and politics.²

The importance ascribed to this period cannot be overestimated. The downfall of the kingdom of Judah set about a series of events which, in the estimation of the Hebrew Bible and biblical scholars, resulted in the greatest watershed in the history of ancient Israel, that is, a rift of such magnitude that it provides a turning point in every facet of the pre-exilic state including the political, religious, and social organization of the state of Judah. On the political front never again would Judah be ruled by a Davidic king and never again would Judah be a state independent of foreign control (except for a brief period under the Maccabees). After the return from exile, the leadership of Judah, or Yehud as it was to be called, fell to the priesthood and to those repatriated through the policies of the Persians. On the religious front the temple cult after the exilic age looked very different in terms of leadership, operation, and regulation. Before the fall of Jerusalem, religion in Judah can be characterized as Yahwistic. Although a variety of forms of the worship of Yahweh existed, the form beginning to dominate was monotheistic, aniconic, and oriented on one central sanctuary.³ From the middle of

² Historical surveys of this time period can be found in two main types of literature, historical and theological. Recent historical works include, B. Oded, 'Judah and the Exile', in J. H. Hayes and J. M. Miller (eds.), *Israelite and Judaean History* (OTL; London: SCM Press, repr. 1990), 469–80; T. C. Mitchell, 'The Babylonian Exile and the Restoration of the Jews in Palestine (586–c.500 B.C.)', in J. Boardman *et al.* (eds.), *The Cambridge Ancient History*, III/2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edn. 1991), 410–40; H. M. Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah during the 'Exilic' Period* (SO, 28; Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1996).

³ O. Keel and C. Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter, und Gottessymbole: Neue Erkenntnisse zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels aufgrund bislang unerschlossener*

the fourth century BCE onwards, a different form of religion emerged as Judaism. Traditionally, the exile is understood to be the decisive break between the two.⁴ Moreover, it was a germinating period during which many posit great movements in the conceptual understanding of Israel's deity. For instance, located here are the first formulations of exclusive monotheism, the rise in individual responsibility, and the growth in the application of the concept of universal sovereignty, and the availability of the worship of Yahweh to foreigners. Moreover the community was maintained through the influence and authority of the elders who filled a necessary social vacuum. The importance ascribed to the events of 587 can be seen especially in the number of books which examine the exilic age from the perspective of 'biblical theology'.⁵ Indeed, the exile is considered the defining period during which religious practice and theological interpretation were reassessed and reformulated.⁶

ikonographischer Quellen (QD, 134; Freiburg: Herder, 1992); ET *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in ancient Israel* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1998); D. V. Edelman (ed.), *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms* (Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, 13; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1995).

⁴ J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1878, 6th edn. 1927). On Wellhausen's contribution to the study of the Old Testament, see various articles in *Semeia* 25 (1983) and J. Barton, 'Wellhausen's Prolegomena to the History of Israel: Influence and Effects', in D. L. Smith-Christopher (ed.), *Text and Experience: Toward a Cultural Exegesis of the Bible* (BS, 35; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 316–29.

⁵ e.g. E. Janssen, *Juda in der Exilszeit: Ein Beitrag zur Entstehung des Judentums* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956); P. R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century BC* (London: SCM Press, repr. 1994); R. W. Klein, *Israel in Exile: A Theological Interpretation* (Philadelphia, Pa.: Fortress Press, 1979; repr. Mifflintown, Pa.: Sigler Press, 2000); J. D. Newsome, *By the Waters of Babylon: An Introduction to the History and Theology of Exile* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979); R. Albertz, *Die Exilszeit* (BE, 7; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2002), ET *Israel in Exile: The History and Literature of the Sixth Century B.C.E.* (Studies in Biblical Literature; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 2003).

⁶ D. W. Thomas, 'The Sixth Century B.C.: A Creative Epoch in the History of Israel', *JSS* 6 (1961), 33–46; W. Brueggemann, 'A Shattered Transcendence? Exile and Restoration', in S. Kraftchick and B. Ollenburger (eds.), *Biblical Theology: Problems and Prospects* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 169–82, repr. in *idem*, *Old Testament Theology: Essays on Structure, Theme, and Text* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1992), 183–203; B. Becking, 'Continuity and Discontinuity after the Exile: Some Introductory Remarks', in B. Becking and M. C. A. Korpel (eds.), *The Crisis of Israelite Religion: Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times* (OTS, 42; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 1–8.

Although the significance of this period is beyond dispute, the designation commonly used for it raises issues of its own. In the case of terminology, in both a descriptive and a conceptual sense, 'exile' or 'exilic' is a misnomer. The period can only be spoken of as 'exilic' when the perspective is taken from that of a community which experienced a forced existence outside the land of Judah.⁷ Furthermore, it is not entirely appropriate to use the singular in conjunction with the disaster in the sixth century BCE because the Babylonians deported people in three separate instances in 598, 587, and 582. Moreover, 'exile' does not adequately represent the fact that some people chose to flee from Judah. After 587 a group reportedly settled in the neighbouring nation-states of Ammon, Moab, and Edom (Jer. 40: 11) and, following the assassination of Gedaliah, another group fled to Egypt with Jeremiah in tow (Jer. 41). In their case the identification of the period would be labelled more suitably the 'expatriate' or the 'refugee' period. Ascertaining a term inclusive of the various populations that continued to identify themselves with the worship of Yahweh and with the land following the events which led to the collapse of Judah as an independent state remains troublesome. An additional problematic point stems from the fact that from its inception Jewish history can be viewed as a series of exiles and restorations and that the situation of the exile *par excellence* never actually ceased to exist.⁸ A series of deportations occurred in conjunction with the collapse of the northern kingdom in the eighth century BCE. In spite of this, the period has never been referred to as 'the exile'. From textual evidence it is clear that communities in Egypt and Babylon continued to flourish well into the Hellenistic period and beyond.⁹ Nevertheless, the traditional and generally accepted

⁷ P. R. Davies, 'Exile? What Exile? Whose Exile?', in Grabbe, *Leading Captivity Captive*, 128–38.

⁸ M. A. Knibb, 'The Exile in the Literature of the Intertestamental Period', *HeyJ* 17 (1976), 253–72; R. Carroll, 'Israel, History of (Post-monarchic period)', *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, iii (New York and London: Doubleday, 1992), 567–76. In the modern period the Zionist movement continues to refer to Jews displaced from Israel as 'in exile'. An introduction to this discussion with a view to the use of exile in the Old Testament, apocryphal books, and in Jewish tradition can be found in J. M. Scott (ed.), *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions* (JSJSup, 56; Leiden: Brill, 1997).

⁹ On the question of when the exile is better understood as the Diaspora, see R. J. Coggins, 'The Origins of the Jewish Diaspora', in R. E. Clements (ed.), *The World*

terminology for the period of time between the destruction of the temple in 587 and the rise of Cyrus in 539 is the 'exile'. A perspective from that of the land, those people who remained behind following the series of deportations, demands a rethinking of our terminology for this period as does the growing unease in some circles over the terms 'exile' and 'return'.¹⁰ A term more in keeping with the focal point of this thesis would be the Templeless period, understood to be the time sandwiched between the ruination of the sanctuary in Jerusalem in 587 (in other words, that crucial moment when communities whether in the land or in Diaspora had to reassess Yahwistic religion in the light of the loss of the central sanctuary whether through its desecration or by displacement) and 515, when temple construction was completed according to the biblical account.

The Templeless period—or that time during which worship at the central sanctuary in Jerusalem ceased or was altered to a significant degree and during which portions of the people of Judah had to grapple with religious existence without the traditional symbol of the temple—thus forms a significant era in which the entire social, political, and religious spheres of Judah were adapted and reformulated. The period of time between 587 and 515 forms the backdrop against which much of the interpretation and even the move towards the canonization of scripture took place. It represents a seminal period for discussion even among those scholars who choose to posit the locus of the production of the literature of the Hebrew Bible in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. Any understanding of this era, in fact, impacts several different discussions currently raging in Old Testament scholarship. What was the situation in the land? Where was the primary location in which reflection on theological concerns and observance of religious practices took place? Does the social situation in Judah in the early Persian period support the view

of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological, and Political Perspectives (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 163–81.

¹⁰ R. Carroll, 'Exile! What Exile? Deportation and the Discourses of Diaspora', in Grabbe, *Leading Captivity Captive*, 62–79, too, grapples with this terminology with more pessimistic results. Note his alternative understanding of the perspective of exile: 'from the position of modern readers of the Bible there can really only be a sense of exile as something propounded by a Jerusalem—or Palestinian—orientated point of view' (67). See also the notes on this by L. L. Grabbe, 'Reflections on the Discussion', in Grabbe, *Leading Captivity Captive*, 146–56.

that the events which took place at the beginning of the sixth century BCE created an insurmountable rupture between the communities who remained behind in Judah and those who were deported to Babylon? It is not the purpose of the present study to answer all of these questions; rather, it is to provide a basis for the resolution of some of these issues by contributing a much needed study of the situation in Judah with a concentration on what was happening in the land and what, if any, distinctive interpretation took place there.

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF THE *GOLAH*

Research on this period has undergone a series of slight adjustments over the years. In one area in particular, that of the situation in the land after the assassination of Gedaliah, the consensus view has moved away from the concept of a completely depopulated Judah as reflected for the most part in nineteenth-century scholarship¹¹ to a slightly more generous twentieth-century perspective which acknowledges that the majority of the population remained in Judah, but, nevertheless, denies it much creative significance.¹² In the latter point of view, the generation of theological reformulation and writing attributable to this period took place among the exiles in Babylonia (the *Golah*). In distinction to their counterparts in the homeland, the *Golah* group is regarded as 'fruitful' either because they are thought to be the more socially adept community¹³ or because subsistence level conditions in Judah made intense reflection and interpretation unlikely.¹⁴ A representative opinion of the second of the two perspectives is that of

¹¹ A twentieth-century representative of this point of view is Y. Kaufman, *The Religion of Israel: From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), who follows the biblical representation of the empty land.

¹² A point similarly noted in T. Willi, *Juda-Jehud-Israel: Studien zum Selbstverständnis des Judentums in persischer Zeit* (FAT, 12; Tübingen: Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995), 22; Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land*, 13–23.

¹³ Thomas, 'The Sixth Century B.C.', 33, and Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 44. An idea traceable perhaps to Jeremiah's analogy of the good figs who were deported versus the bad figs who remained behind in the land (Jer. 24).

¹⁴ Oded, 'Judah and the Exile', 476–80; Mitchell, 'The Babylonian Exile', 415.

S. S. Weinberg in his very useful, but now dated, study of the archaeology of this period:

It is highly unlikely that a material culture of any degree of sophistication could have been maintained during these centuries in Jerusalem without leaving more substantial remains than have been found so far; we must think more in terms first of squatters and then of people able to maintain only a mere subsistence level.¹⁵

The view commonly held of a Judah crippled until Persian imperial rule is exacerbated to some extent by the biblical texts themselves. In the first place, as a survey of literature on this period shows, a great number of texts are thought to stem from the portion of the population taken to Babylonia. More importantly, an intentional ideological interpretation sought literarily to remove the Judahites who did not experience the judgement of exile from the scene through two distinct, but nevertheless related, manoeuvres. These two find expression in the belief that the judgement of Yahweh results in the sentence of complete destruction for the people who remained in the land after 587, along with the concept of the empty land. The aptly termed ‘myth of the empty land’ propounds the belief that the ‘day of Yahweh’ resulted in the cessation of life in Judah. The great prophets of the exile, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, for instance, insisted that Yahweh’s judgement for past and ongoing sin necessitated a complete break with the past. Their thought is undergirded with the idea that the population deported to Babylonia alone experienced Yahweh’s redeeming punishment. Thus, they alone inherit the promises of restoration and blessing. This concept, though never expressly stated in Deutero-Isaiah, nevertheless, appears to inform its theological perspective within which the renewal of Judah comes about solely with the returnees.

A related endeavour—succinctly termed ‘the myth of the empty land’ by interpreters—contributes to the impression that the Babylonian exiles maintained and sustained an ideology of judgement and punishment by literary strategies that portrayed a Judah emptied of its inhabitants.¹⁶ The land of Judah devoid of its population

¹⁵ S. S. Weinberg, ‘Post-Exilic Palestine: An Archaeological Report’, in *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1969–70), 81.

¹⁶ H. M. Barstad, ‘On the History and Archaeology of Judah During the Exilic Period’, *OLP* 19 (1988), 25–36; R. Carroll, ‘The Myth of the Empty Land’, in D. Jobling

culminated in the Chronicler's assertion, found also in Leviticus, that the land lay fallow for a sabbath rest of 70 years (2 Chr. 36: 20–1 and Lev. 26: 34–5).¹⁷ At least a century later, the effort to gloss over the community remaining in Templeless Judah found its staunchest defender in Ezra (and to a lesser extent Nehemiah) whose literature promoted the belief that the landed population were foreigners. Consequently, the repatriated Babylonian exiles became the only community to inherit legitimately the religion of pre-exilic Israel.¹⁸ Even without the later corruption of details to discredit sixth-century Judah, the biblical material contemporaneous with the events themselves gives the impression that only a very small and insignificant portion of the population remained in Judah. Prophetic announcement of irrevocable and comprehensive doom coupled with repeated biblical asides that 'Jerusalem' (2 Kgs. 24: 14), 'Judah' (2 Kgs. 25: 21; Jer. 52: 27), 'all the rest of the city and the deserters . . . all the rest of the population' (2 Kgs. 25: 11), and 'all the people, young and old set out and went to Egypt' (2 Kgs. 25: 26) contribute to the belief that following the decline of Judah begun already in 597, the population decreases to all but 'the poorest people of the land' who were left to be 'vine-dressers and tillers of the soil' (2 Kgs. 25: 12).

The likelihood of a land completely bereft of its inhabitants is not only improbable, but also not entirely consistent with the biblical portrait of this time. Embedded within the prophecies of Jeremiah several texts predict hope and blessing for the Judahite population remaining in the land.¹⁹ Twice in Jeremiah, the inhabitants in the

and T. Pippin (eds.), *Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts Semeia* 59 (1992), 79–93; Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land*, 13–23; R. Carroll, 'Clio and Canons: In Search of a Cultural Poetics of the Hebrew Bible', *BibInt* 5 (1997), 308–15; *idem*, 'Exile! What Exile?', 65–6; R. J. Coggins, 'The Exile: History and Ideology', *ExpT* 110 (1999), 389–93.

¹⁷ More on the ideology of the Chronicler in this respect can be found in Willi, *Juda-Jehud-Israel*, 21–4; S. Japhet, *The Ideology of the Book of Chronicles and its Place in Biblical Thought* (BEATAJ, 9; Frankfurt: Lang, 2nd rev. edn. 1997), 364–73, and *idem*, 'Exile and Restoration in the Book of Chronicles', in Becking and Korpel, *The Crisis of Israelite Religion*, 33–44; J. Blenkinsopp, 'The Bible, Archaeology and Politics; or The Empty Land', *JSOT* 27 (2002), 175–87.

¹⁸ P. R. Davies, *In Search of 'ancient Israel'* (JSOTSup, 148; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2nd edn. 1995); L. L. Grabbe, 'Israel's Historical Reality after the Exile', in Becking and Korpel, *The Crisis of Israelite Religion*, 22.

¹⁹ Noted already by Janssen, *Juda in der Exilszeit*, 47; J. Bright, *Jeremiah* (AB, 21; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2nd edn. 1965), LIII–LIV; Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*,

homeland are called שְׂאֵר 'ת' 'the remnant', in Jeremiah 40: 11 and 42: 15. The term is later co-opted for the exiles, as in Jeremiah 23: 3 and Micah 2: 12, when it becomes associated with the theologically loaded concept of a righteous remnant.²⁰ During Gedaliah's short period as governor, Jeremiah describes the first harvest in terms that connote divine blessing: 'and they gathered wine and summer fruits in great abundance' (Jer. 40: 12). This brief glimpse of a Judahite community returning to normal activities, even blessed by the deity for their trouble, is further expanded by several hopeful prophetic oracles made to them. In a careful study of points of tension within the book of Jeremiah, Seitz finds prophecies of a more positive nature directed to the community in Judah.²¹ In one instance, Ishmael and his fellow conspirators approach the prophet for an indication of what to do after their assassination of Gedaliah. Jeremiah prophesies with words echoing what he had said to the exiles previously in Jeremiah 29: 5: 'If you will only remain in this land, then I will build you up and not pull you down; I will plant you, and not pluck you up; for I am sorry for the disaster that I have brought upon you' (Jer. 42: 10–12). The prophetic oracle insists that a future is made available to those who will remain in the land and submit to Babylonian rule. The promises of blessing are overshadowed by an intentional process of refraction and reinterpretation by the community exiled to Babylon, the 'Golah redactors' of Seitz.²² Although never positive about the population in Judah, Ezekiel is at least aware of them. In two places, he criticizes an attitude prevalent there in which the people perceive themselves as the righteous remnant to whom possession of the land was bequeathed (Ezek. 11: 17; 33: 24).²³

56–8, and *idem*, 'Historians and Prophets,' *SEA* 33 (1968), 18–54, 52 n. 44, but developed more fully in C. R. Seitz, 'The Crisis of Interpretation over the Meaning and Purpose of the Exile,' *VT* 35 (1985), 78–97, and *idem*, *Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah* (BZAW, 176; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989), 274–9.

²⁰ Janssen, *Juda in der Exilszeit*, 40.

²¹ Seitz, 'Crisis of Interpretation' and *Theology in Conflict*.

²² Seitz, 'Crisis of Interpretation', and *idem*, *Theology in Conflict*. Cf. E. W. Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles: A Study in the Prose Tradition in the Book of Jeremiah* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970); K. F. Pohlmann, *Studien zum Jeremiabuch: Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach die Entstehung des Jeremiabuches* (FRLANT, 118; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978).

²³ W. Brownlee, 'The Aftermath of the Fall of Judah According to Ezekiel,' *JBL* 89 (1970), 393–404; S. Japhet, 'People and Land in the Restoration Period', in G. Strecker

Silence on the situation in Judah after the assassination of Gedaliah in the literature of the *Golah* need not equate to inactivity. Indeed, in all likelihood, it indicates self-interest and even censure.

Even whilst reading against the biblical rhetoric, it is still possible to maintain three reasons to place the locus for creative literary activity following the disaster of 587 with the Babylonian exiles rather than with those who remained behind in the land. The majority of scholars attribute significant portions of the Old Testament such as Isaiah 40–55, Ezekiel, the final form of Jeremiah, the Priestly work, and the Deuteronomistic History to the *Golah*. In addition, the promulgation of the theological concepts of individual responsibility and universalism, along with the increased significance ascribed to purity and holiness, can be attributed to the *Golah*. Finally, the exiled leaders appear to be the ones who upon return to Judah after the advent of Persian rule steer the province of Yehud along the course of its political and religious future.

IMPORTANT WORKS ON THE SITUATION IN 'EXILIC' JUDAH

Reacting against the concentration on Babylon as the provenance for the continuation of the traditions of pre-exilic Israel that dominated the scholarship of his time, C. C. Torrey asserted with ever-increasing conviction that the exile and return was a myth created by a segment of the population to provide ideological backing for its political and religious reformation.²⁴ Although the level of Torrey's scepticism has not been matched regarding the deportation of a number of people

(ed.), *Das Land Israel in biblischer Zeit: Jerusalem Symposium 1981* (GTA, 25; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 106–8.

²⁴ C. C. Torrey, *The Composition and Historical Value of Ezra–Nehemiah* (BZAW, 2; Giessen: J. Ricker, 1896), 53–4, 62–5; *idem*, *Ezra Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1910), 285–9; *idem*, *Pseudo-Ezekiel and the Original Prophecy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 31–3; *idem*, *The Chronicler's History of Israel: Chronicles–Ezra–Nehemia Restored to its Original Form* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, repr. 1973), pp. xxvii–xxviii.

from Judah in the sixth century except perhaps by Carroll,²⁵ his instinct that the majority of the population remained in Judah and contributed to the theological interpretation of the Old Testament has found confirmation in several important works which, too, have sought to redress the balance by focusing on the contribution of the Judahite population to the literature of the Old Testament. Although never producing a monograph on the exile, the contribution of Noth to the question of the provenance of the theological literature of this period should be acknowledged. In his *History of Israel* he concluded: '[the Judahites] continued to be the centre of Israelite life and history. For them the events of 587 B.C. did not in any way signify the end. The links with Israel's past were preserved here, just as was the worship in the holy place in Jerusalem'²⁶ and again: 'Palestine was and remained the central arena of Israel's history, and the descendants of the old tribes who remained in the land, with the holy place of Jerusalem, constituted not only numerically the great mass but also the real nucleus of Israel.'²⁷ The real contribution to this argument came about through Noth's work on the Deuteronomistic History²⁸ In his view, the great work which encompassed Joshua to 2 Kings introduced by a form of Deuteronomy was written in its entirety from source documents during the exile by an historian in Judah. Noth provides two main arguments in favour of locating the creation of the Deuteronomistic History in Judah rather than among the Babylonian exiles: (1) the sources for the construction of the history included local traditions centred around Bethel and Mizpah which

²⁵ Carroll, 'The Myth of the Empty Land'; *idem.*, 'Clio and Canons'; *idem.*, 'Exile! What Exile?'. Also of note in this regard is Davies, *In Search*, 41–4, 57–9, 75–93. See C. E. Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study* (JSOTSup, 294; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 309–16, for a balanced critique of this perspective.

²⁶ M. Noth, *Geschichte Israels* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2nd edn. 1954), 264; ET *The History of Israel* (London: SCM Press, 2nd edn. 1983), 292; and *idem.*, 'Die Katastrophe von Jerusalem im Jahre 587 v. CHR. und ihre Bedeutung für Israel', in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1960), 346–71; ET 'The Jerusalem Catastrophe of 587 B.C. and its Significance for Israel', in *The Laws of the Pentateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 260–80.

²⁷ Noth, *Geschichte Israels*, 267 = *History of Israel*, 296.

²⁸ M. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (Halle: Königsberger, 1943); ET *The Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup, 15; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981).

would have been more readily available in Judah; and (2) it recounted history, in Noth's view, from a more pessimistic perspective which elicited no hope for a return from exile by those who remained in the land. Noth's bold assertion that there was writing on the scale of the Deuteronomistic History by those who remained behind in the land of Judah, although challenged by the dual redaction hypothesis of Cross,²⁹ provides the basis for a re-examination of the situation of the population left behind in the land and the possibility of a contribution from this people to the literary activity of this period.

Building on Noth's preference for sixth-century Judah as the locus of creative writing after 587, Janssen produced a monograph on the significant number and wide variety of works attributable to Templeless Judah by those who remained faithful to the old traditions. Janssen adds two additional arguments in support of Noth's reasons for the placement of the Deuteronomistic History and uses them in conjunction with the redaction of Jeremiah in Judah. First, he highlights the concern of both works with the law and the lure of idolatrous Canaanite practice as being particularly relevant to the situation in Judah. Secondly, he argues that Solomon's temple depicted as a place of prayer in 1 Kings 8 fits the situation of Judah well since following its desecration it could no longer be used legitimately for sacrifice.³⁰ Janssen ascribes literature to these people on the basis of references to historical details and a fit with the time period after the destruction of the temple, the dissolution of the state, and the abolition of the Davidic king. Among texts from a Judahite provenance, Janssen includes Lamentations (excluding ch. 5), Isaiah 21, Obadiah, and Psalms 44, 74, 79, 89, and 102. If Janssen is correct, there are good reasons for considering that among those who remained behind there was a prolific group of writers and more importantly, a zealous group of faithful worshippers of Yahweh.

²⁹ See e.g. F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 274–89; R. E. Friedman, *The Exile and Biblical Narrative: The Formation of the Deuteronomistic and Priestly Works* (HSM, 22; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981); R. D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOTSup, 18; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981); G. Knoppers, *Two Nations under God: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies*, 2 vols. (HSM, 52; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1993).

³⁰ Janssen, *Juda in der Exilszeit*, 26–31.

In recent times the situation of the people left behind in the land forms a natural enquiry in Willi's study which focuses more directly on the community in the Persian period.³¹ Addressing the issue stemming from the Chronicler, that of the land of Judah as a *tabula rasa*, Willi highlights three sources that contradict this picture: (1) Old Testament literature like that of Haggai, Zechariah (1–8), parts of the books of Jeremiah (chs. 37–44; 52), Ezekiel, Lamentations, Deutero-Isaiah, and the Deuteronomistic History; (2) the archaeological and historical details; and (3) a re-examination of 2 Chronicles 36: 20–1. In his examination, he follows in the main the lines drawn already by Noth and Janssen, but his observation that the literature of the early Second Temple period, namely, the prophetic books of Haggai and Zechariah (1–8) along with archaeological finds, reveals continuity with the pre-exilic period is new. The overlap between the late monarchical period and the early Persian period suggests the existence of a viable community continuing its traditions in the land of Judah after the destruction of the temple.³²

Though Noth and Janssen were perhaps over-zealous with their positioning of significant creative activity within Judah,³³ their studies highlight a type of argument that has not been followed for the most part in recent times with regard to Judah. Both were concerned with determining a distinctive Judahite perspective on the disaster of 587 relevant for the population that remained in the land. The shift in research over the last several decades to the Babylonian population and its setting has overshadowed the equally important issue of what and how the circumstances of the land inform its literary reflection and interpretation.

One of the most important works on the contribution of the Judahite population to the theology of the Old Testament remains that of Ackroyd, who endeavours to associate the historical situation with the theological. Ackroyd published his *Exile and Restoration* in

³¹ Willi, *Juda-Jehud-Israel*, 21–6.

³² R. Bedford, *Temple Restoration in Early Achaemenid Judah* (JSJSup, 65; Leiden: Brill, 2001). In his concern to ascertain the reliability of views that the early post-exilic period was a time of societal tension centred on the control of and access to the Jerusalem temple, Bedford, too, finds much in common between the ideological concerns of the late monarchical period and the early Persian period.

³³ See the criticisms made by Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 65–8 and Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles*, 117–18.

1968 on the basis of his Hulsean lectures on the period of the restoration.³⁴ The main purpose of the book is to examine the underlying belief that resulted from the events of the 'exilic' period and its significance for the thought of later periods of time, as in the early post-exilic period and beyond. In accumulating a variety of texts stemming from the sixth century, Ackroyd provides a crucial study of the thought of the 'exilic age', especially with regard to the types of theological manoeuvres required to assess the effects of the sweeping devastations that accompanied the advent of Neo-Babylonian rule. In general he lists four major reactions to the events of 587: (1) a return to older cults, (2) the acceptance of the religion of the conquerors, (3) the recognition of divine judgement, and (4) the day of Yahweh as equivalent to prophetic predictions of divine punishment for sin.³⁵

Ackroyd's stated aim is to associate the theological reactions with the events of 587. This he accomplishes through the inclusion of a separate section on the situations of the populations of this period in their disparate locations³⁶ and by introducing his discussion of the theological contribution of specific biblical texts with historical details. Throughout he seeks to associate the historical reality with the types of reflection taking place. In his view, then, 'The understanding of the development of thought cannot be undertaken without an appreciation of the situation in which it grew.'³⁷ Unfortunately, in his analysis he tends to avoid overtly associating ongoing societal change with reflection and adaptation. On the one hand, he speculates on literary production in the homeland: 'there must have been present a large proportion of those who were educated and used to positions of

³⁴ Other works by Ackroyd that disclose his thinking on this period include 'Historians and Prophets'; *idem*, *Israel under Babylon*, 1–34; *idem*, 'The Temple Vessels: A Continuity Theme', in *Studies in the Religion of ancient Israel* (SVT, 23; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 166–81, repr. in P. R. Ackroyd, *Studies in the Religious Tradition of the Old Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1987), 46–60; 'The History of Israel in the Exilic and Post-Exilic Periods', in G. W. Anderson (ed.), *Tradition and Interpretation: Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 320–50.

³⁵ Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 39–49. For a similar outline of responses to disaster of the sort that transpired in Jerusalem in 587 BCE, see Becking, 'Continuity and Discontinuity'.

³⁶ Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, 17–38.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

responsibility or the changed social conditions must have made it possible for the abilities of some of the less favoured groups to be revealed...Probably both of these happened'.³⁸ On the other hand, he attributes the adaptation of 'social conditions' with the historical events with which the exile is most often associated, such as, the fall of Jerusalem, the end of the state and the monarchy, the destruction of the temple, and the large-scale political changes which followed the rise to power of Cyrus and the fall of the Neo-Babylonian empire.³⁹ From one perspective it was the events of 587 that caused the need to reassess the inherited traditions of monarchical Judah. However, the significance of the day-to-day events for the construction of theological interpretation by the community in Judah remains obscure. A question-mark, therefore, exists over how the community in the land understood its relationship to its deity in the aftermath of those events in a possible period of reconstruction and renewal. New information about Templeless Judah has been brought forward in recent years that needs to be associated with the creation and generation of reflection in the homeland.

Interestingly a balance has been struck with regard to the association of the historical events of exile with their literature at least in terms of the community forcibly deported to Babylonia. Without going too far afield, it is helpful to mention two important contributions. The first represents a classic study of the Jeremianic prose narrative and sermons by Nicholson, who endeavours throughout to show that the material was developed within a circle of traditionists who refracted the prophecies of Jeremiah to address a particular historical context and religio-sociological situation.⁴⁰ It is his contention that the maintenance of the Jeremiah traditions served homiletic purposes by addressing concerns raised by the community in exile:

To put it another way, serious consideration must be given to the possibility that the book represents substantially the final literary expression and deposit of a tradition which grew and developed at the hands of a body of people who sought not only to transmit the prophet's sayings but to present an interpretation of his prophetic ministry and preaching on the basis of

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 13–14.

⁴⁰ Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles*.

theological concerns and interests which were of vital importance for them in the age in which they lived.⁴¹

In his view, the group to which the traditionists belong is that of the exiled community in Babylon. Nicholson adduces four arguments in support of the placement of the formulation of the Jeremianic tradition among the deportees: (1) the emphasis on the law and ritual practices such as sabbath observance and circumcision, (2) the foregrounding of the issue of false prophecy, (3) the exilic attitude dismissing the community which remained in Judah, and (4) the promises of a restored Israel and return to the land. In associating these four features particular to the community forcibly deported and resettled in a foreign environment, Nicholson shows how prophecy directed at one group is updated and reinterpreted to meet the circumstances of another.

The concerted effort by Smith-Christopher is likewise of note in this regard.⁴² Smith-Christopher, too, acknowledges the need to associate the development of theological concepts with the day-to-day experience of relocation. In an article on the topic he reveals:

It is the intention of this essay to argue . . . that the assessment of the impact of the Babylonian Exile must make far more use of non-biblical documents, archaeological reports, and imaginative use of biblical texts that report on the crisis and its aftermath in order to construct a more realistic picture of the trauma of the Babylonian Exile in both its 'human' (that is, psychological and physical) and theological impact on the Hebrew people of the sixth and fifth centuries BCE.⁴³

The impact of displacement in a foreign environment on social organization forms a major area of his research. Through it he reveals that the context of the *Golah* community, dissociated from its symbolic universe, resulted in situation-specific interpretative moves to cope with contemporary circumstances. Various experiences distinctive to the *Golah* group such as displacement, an exhausting

⁴¹ Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles*, 4 (see, in fact, all of chs. 1 and 4).

⁴² Smith, *The Religion of the Landless*; D. L. Smith-Christopher, 'Reassessing the Historical and Sociological Impact of the Babylonian Exile (597/587–539 BCE)', in Scott, *Exile*, 7–36, and to some extent in ch. 6 of *idem*, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (OBT; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2002), 137–62. Because D. L. Smith now publishes as Smith-Christopher, I refer to him as such.

⁴³ Smith-Christopher, 'Impact of the Babylonian Exile', 10.

journey, and resettlement in a foreign land in enclaves in the midst of foreigners, along with the loss of the religious and political symbols of the homeland, necessitated the implementation of strategies to maintain identity and ethnicity.⁴⁴ In his estimation, the social setting of exile led to two complementary shifts necessary for the community in exile: (1) the recognition of a strong social identity distinct from that of neighbouring peoples and (2) the creation of internal structures to maintain that identity.

By using modern-day experiences of deportation and relocation to illuminate an experience in the ancient world, Smith-Christopher sheds more light on the social situation of exile and its effects on social identity. His consideration of the impact of a sociological situation on the creation and maintenance of community identity has been followed to a lesser degree by Berquist, who sought to understand the reconstitution of Yehud as a province impacted by the policies of the Persian empire.⁴⁵ The insights of both further contribute to McNutt's use of sociological data in her reconstruction of ancient Israel.⁴⁶ In spite of the fact that neither Berquist nor McNutt contributes in any significant way to an understanding of Templeless Judah, their insights in this regard are worthy of mention. Everyday life impacts theological understanding and reflection.

In recent years, three major studies provide models for approaching the situation of the exile and that in Judah, in particular. The work of three scholars, Carter, Albertz, and Barstad, is distinguished by the intention of each to bring evidence other than documentary and biblical to bear on the question of the situation of Templeless Judah. Although dealing primarily with the question of the size and population of the province of Yehud in the Persian period, Carter includes evidence from excavation sites and geographical surveys for

⁴⁴ The maintenance of a Judaeen persona is not unique to the exiles deported to Babylonia, as is shown by the extant letters of the Jewish military colony in Elephantine, modern-day Aswan. B. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine: The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); B. Porten, 'The Jews in Egypt', in W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein (eds.), *Cambridge History of Judaism*, i (hereafter *CHJ*, i), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 372–400; M. Smith, 'Jewish Religious Life in the Persian Period', in *CHJ*, i. 219–78.

⁴⁵ J. L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1995).

⁴⁶ McNutt, *Reconstructing the Society of Ancient Israel* (LAI; London: SPCK, 1999).

Neo-Babylonian Judah. A more detailed picture of Neo-Babylonian Judah establishes boundaries within which a reasonable assessment of the potential for social and literary activity can take place. From an alternative perspective, Albertz concentrates on religious issues whilst considering sociological and historical data in his study of the various communities of the exilic period and their literature.⁴⁷ In contrast, Barstad deals exclusively with Judah through concrete evidence including historical details, archaeological evidence, and the role of imperial governance as a means to re-examine the potential of sixth-century Judah as a locus for creative literary activity.⁴⁸ Though having different starting-points, the three succeed in establishing essential areas of enquiry for any future investigation and discussion of the potential of sixth-century Judah.

Conscientiously not resorting to the use of biblical material, Carter has undertaken the painstakingly tedious task of tackling various reports on the material culture of Neo-Babylonian and Persian Judah. For him archaeological excavation reports and general surveys provide the foundation on which to build a probable model for the population, sociology, and socio-economic status primarily of Yehud in the Persian period, but with some attention to Judah in the Templeless period.⁴⁹ Carter's study is an important contribution to the field in that it cautiously analyses information to construct a realistic portrait of the situation of Judah and Yehud. He shows, for example, that certain reconstructions, like that attempted by Weinberg, are unrealistic when considered in the light of the material evidence.⁵⁰ A better understanding of the make-up of the community curtails speculations that would simply not be feasible under the conditions of the province. Sociology, socio-economic data, and the impact of imperial rule, therefore, figure in the factors determining

⁴⁷ Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte Israels = A History of Israelite Religion* and *idem*, *Die Exilszeit = Israel in Exile*.

⁴⁸ Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land* and *idem*, 'After the "Myth of the Empty Land": Major Challenges in the Study of Neo-Babylonian Judah', in O. Lipschits and J. Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 3–20.

⁴⁹ Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud*, 31–74, 296; cf. J. Weinberg, *The Citizen-Temple Community* (JSOTSup, 151; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).

⁵⁰ Bedford, *Temple Restoration*, shows this from the perspective of the textual evidence.

social identity in the sixth century BCE and beyond. Information of a more material nature is imperative in any study of this period so that a proper understanding of the structures which impact the communities in Judah and Babylon can be adduced.

Through a rather different approach, Albertz produced an analysis of Israelite religion as a long-awaited follow-up to his study on family piety and state religion.⁵¹ In the two volumes of *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period*, he deliberately combines an interest in the change of religious belief and practice over time with developments drawn especially from the insights of sociological enquiry. Albertz belongs to a group of the relatively few who endeavour to differentiate the impact of situations on the different communities of the exilic period. At one point he comments: 'The Israel of the exilic period consisted of at least three major groups in separate territories which were exposed to different historical developments, had different interests, and in part came into conflict over them.'⁵² Three sociological situations and the developments that occurred as a result include that: (1) the loss of statehood led to the splintering of the groups of Judahites in their various territories, (2) the model of an older form of decentralized governance based on kinship lines came to fill the vacuum left by the loss of a central political authority, and (3) each group was impacted by close proximity to foreigners. In the case of Judah, the population was confronted by the encroachment of neighbouring peoples on territory once within its borders.⁵³ Notably, the ongoing nature of life in exilic Judah comes to the foreground in his discussion.

In *Die Exilszeit*, a new contribution to the study of the exilic period and its literature, Albertz provides a summary of the conclusions he reached in his earlier works. With reference to the situation in Judah, he includes specific details which impacted the community that remained behind in the land.⁵⁴ Beyond describing in greater detail the situation of Judah by using biblical literature outside the historiographical account, such as Jeremiah or Lamentations,

⁵¹ R. Albertz, *Persönliche Frömmigkeit und offizielle Religion: Religionsinterner Pluralismus in Israel und Babylon* (CTM, 9; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1978).

⁵² Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte Israels*, ii. 382 = *History of Israelite Religion*, ii. 374.

⁵³ Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte Israels*, ii. 382 = *History of Israelite Religion*, ii. 374–5.

⁵⁴ Albertz, *Die Exilszeit*, 81–5 = *Israel in Exile*, 90–6.

he helpfully addresses questions about population numbers and the impact of deportation on the situation in the homeland. Albertz's concern to link the ongoing events of the situation in the land with interpretation highlights the need for more consideration of the impact of social conditions on the development of religious thought.

Finally, the seminal contribution of Barstad in his *The Myth of the Empty Land* deserves mention here.⁵⁵ Seemingly as part of his wider desire to locate Deutero-Isaiah in Judah rather than Babylon, Barstad sought to redeem Judah from the wasteland to which it had been relegated by historians. In so doing, he provided an introduction to the evidence which ought to be used in conjunction with any discussion of this period. An historical reconstruction based on the biblical account supplemented with documentation from the ancient Near East, archaeological data, and the evidence of imperial administration indicate social conditions conducive for stable community life and the continuation of the normal activities of a state after the catastrophic events of 587. His study lays a firm foundation for a positive assessment of the population in Judah and its ability to participate in theological reflection.

One of the most helpful examples of the utilization of socio-historical factors as a means to illuminate the development of biblical conceptions is that of Seitz. His analysis of the continuation of the prophecies of Jeremiah provides a natural complement to the studies made by Carter, Albertz, and Barstad.⁵⁶ Importantly, Seitz attends to pre-exilic historiography in order to ascertain social factors that would continue after the fall of the nation and contribute to the development of the Jeremianic tradition. By so doing he draws attention to the differences between parts of the book of Jeremiah which exhibit a positive assessment on the homeland post-587 and those that do not. He carefully examines two recensions of the prophetic oracles, one which took place in Judah and the other in Babylon where they were redirected in line with the outlook of 2 Kings and Ezekiel. In addition to increased awareness of post-587 Judah, his study shows the correspondence between community and

⁵⁵ Barstad, 'On the History and Archaeology of Judah'; *idem*, *The Myth of the Empty Land*; *idem*, 'After the "Myth of the Empty Land" '.

⁵⁶ Seitz, 'Crisis of Interpretation' and *Theology in Conflict*.

literary development. It further highlights the need for more attention to Templeless Judah as a distinctive setting for literary development in its own right.

It is clear from recent studies that work on the Templeless period has to move in a new direction. A holistic picture made available through various types of evidence—imperial administration, archaeological, biblical, and sociological—must be used in conjunction in order to provide probable models. From the discussion of the concept of the ‘myth of the empty land’ it becomes clear that biblical evidence cannot be used alone; not only does the Bible provide disparate portraits, but some texts even attempt to discredit certain communities during this period. What is equally of concern is that a current study of Judah during this period is desperately needed to correlate new insights with theological interpretation. Such a study must incorporate current data from many fields in a reconstruction of Templeless Judah as a means of ascertaining whether or not it would have been a community in which serious theological reflection could and would have taken place. Once the former has been settled satisfactorily, it is also equally important to determine what type of thought might be pertinent to the community that remained in the land. Such would provide a bench-mark of sorts to assist in the assignment of additional pieces of biblical literature to Templeless Judah.

THE TASK AT HAND

From the above survey it is possible to note areas in which more thought needs to occur. In the first place, the still prevalent view that the only viable provenance for the production of significant Templeless literature is from the exiles in Babylonia must be reconsidered. The first chapter presents the biblical representation of history along with three portraits expanded on the basis of non-historiographical biblical material. The biblical representation of Templeless Judah is then laid alongside the evidence of archaeological endeavours and comparative imperial data in order to establish a more well-rounded framework with which to understand the nature

of continued existence in the land. In so doing, it highlights features that would make future stability likely. It was in this milieu that religion and religious conceptualizations continued in the land.

Subsequent chapters turn to the interesting possibility of the types of religious practices that continued among the populace. It is apparent from the vast amount of material on the Templeless period that a significant degree of consensus reigns regarding the likelihood of some type of worship taking place in Judah. The second chapter provides an introduction to the perspective outside the land which portrayed Judah as participating in what it considered to be idolatrous and foreign religious practices. Subsequently, the third chapter considers what some circles would regard as Yahwistic worship and some of the literature associated by interpreters with ongoing rituals.

It becomes especially apparent in the discussion of the religiosity of the land that in many respects its conceptualization arose from perspectives not of the community in Judah. It will be shown in the second chapter that *Golah* perceptions influence the association of aberrant religious observance with the homeland, and in the third chapter that biblical scholars haphazardly attribute laments from the Psalter and elsewhere in the OT to religious observances held at the temple site. Since each interpretation of the Judahite response to 587 stems from material not clearly attributable to Judah of the time, the fourth chapter focuses on the literature most widely regarded in tradition and scholarship to stem from Templeless Judah—the book of Lamentations. An analysis of Lamentations provides a means to access Judahite thought in order to ascertain themes and concepts pertinent to the situation in the land in the aftermath of the catastrophe of 587. It is hoped that the delineation of motifs distinctive to Templeless Judah will enable a measuring line of sorts with which to designate other literature from this setting in the future.

The purpose of this thesis is not to deal exclusively with the social setting of the population left behind in Judah, because this has been effectively provided in Janssen's *Juda in der Exilszeit*, Barstad's *Myth of the Empty Land*, Seitz's *Theology in Conflict*, and Albertz's *Die Exilszeit*. It is, rather, to focus on one aspect of the discussion which has elicited a great deal of interest in the literature of Judah of this period. The issue of cultic worship represents one area in which there is wide disagreement over the particulars, but general

agreement about its existence. Liturgy rather than history or prophecy provides an entry-point for the examination of the theological insights which stem from the community that remained behind in Judah. Since social conditions effect theological reflection, Judahite literature should differ from that relevant to the exiles in a Babylonian setting. Is there a distinctive contribution from the population in the land to the theology of the Old Testament? It is to this question we now turn.