

in the Old Testament.' It could even be suggested that the overwhelming preference for the simple adjective rather than the adjectival noun arises from the impression caused by the threefold 'holy' of 6:3.

The ambience of the references to the Holy God covers the topics raised in the prophet's call. There are three notable statements of his transcendence in holiness (5:16; 40:25; 57:15) to which may be added the implied transcendence of the Holy One as Creator (41:20), Potter (45:9) and Maker (45:11; 54:5). The emphasis in the Book of the King (chapters 1-37) is on the rejection of the Holy One<sup>2</sup> and the judgment which follows (5:16, 24; 10:17; 30:12-14). However, as in chapter 6, stress is placed equally on the Holy One as the Saviour who invites his people back (30:15), whom the remnant trust (10:20) and acknowledge as holy (29:23) and in whose salvation they rejoice (12:6; 29:19). The Book of the Servant makes a prevailing link between holiness and redemption<sup>3</sup> and this is the topic of the two references in the Book of the Anointed Conqueror (60:9, 14). In continuance of this, the latter book carries a major stress on the holiness of the redeemed state (60:9, 14).

When we review these references we find that they do indeed reflect the holiness theology of chapter 6 and carry the same emphasis on the major truth that the Holy One is the Redeemer. The most impressive stress on the divine holiness comes, however, with the use of the title 'the Holy One of Israel', which occurs twenty-five times in Isaiah as compared with seven in the remainder of the Old Testament.<sup>4</sup> The distribution of the title throughout the three sections of the book is 12:11:2. Whether this title is an Isaianic coinage can neither be proved or disproved. Its absence from Micah, the contemporary of Isaiah of Jerusalem, suggests that it was in some way an Isaianic peculiar not for general currency. Its use throughout the Isaianic literature is a unifying factor requiring explanation. As a title it is full of majesty and mystery: the God who is transcendent in holiness has brought himself into close relationship with a specified people whereby they may claim that he is theirs and he that they are his. The whole Isaianic literature is an explication of this basic situation: the awesome threat which holiness constitutes to an unworthy, careless, rejecting and unresponsive people (chapters 1-37); the lengths to which the Holy One will go to deal with sin, reclaim the sinner and create a righteous people for himself (chapters 40-55); and the eternal state of holiness which he will prepare for them and wherein they will enjoy him for ever (chapters 56-66).

#### d. History and faith

Isaiah of Jerusalem ministered from the year King Uzziah died (740/39), through the reigns of Jotham (740/39-732/31), Ahaz (732/31-716/15) and Hezekiah (716/15-687/86).<sup>5</sup> The peace which in general prevailed throughout Uzziah's reign was politically occasioned by the dormant state of the Assyrian Empire. In 745, however, the energetic imperialist Tiglath-pileser III (744-727) acceded, and he was followed by three equally ambitious kings: Shalmaneser V

**'Thirty-four times out of a total of ninety, of which two are in Psalms. 'Adjectival noun' means, for example, the attribution of holiness by the use of the idiom 'God of holiness'. In general this is a stronger affirmation of the quality concerned than is achieved by the simple use of an adjective.**

<sup>1</sup>1:4; 5:24; 30:11; 31:1; 37:23.      <sup>3</sup>41:14; 43:3, 14; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7; 52:10; 54:5.

<sup>4</sup>2 Ki. 19:22; Pss. 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Je. 50:29; 51:5; Ezk. 39:7. See also Is. 29:23.

<sup>5</sup>2 Ki. 15:1-7, 32-38; 16:1-20; 18 - 20; 2 Ch. 26 - 32.

## INTRODUCTION

(726–722), Sargon II (721-705) and Sennacherib (704–681).<sup>1</sup> The westward pressure of Assyria first touched **Aram** and the northern kingdom of Israel/Ephraim, but it was soon clear that Judah would have to make up its mind wherein its security lay in a day of threat. It was onto this stage that Isaiah stepped to minister in two parallel crises, the first under Ahaz and the second under Hezekiah.

### *The crisis under Ahaz*

From the days of **Jotham** Judah had been under pressure from the north (2 Ki. 15:32, 37). It is evident that the Assyrian threat had driven **Aram** and Ephraim into each other's arms for collective security (Is. 17:3). It is not clear why they moved against Judah. Was Ahaz already moving towards the alliance with Assyria which he finally made and were they thus dealing with a potential danger in their own backyard? Or was Ahaz genuinely hesitant about joining in their defensive anti-Assyrian pact and they were exerting pressure so as to achieve a total 'West Palestinian Treaty Organization'? In any case, invasion brought success to them (2 Ch. 28:5–8) even though, for reasons not recorded, they failed to press their advantage to the point of taking Jerusalem (Is. 7:1). The invasion did, however, increase Judah's sense of isolation among the southern states, and when the second wave of attack was experienced Judah faced Edomite and Philistine incursion (2 Ch. 28:17–18; *N.B.* 'again') as well as the dreaded invasion from the north.

It is with this second invasion, designed by its architects to be decisive even to the point of terminating the dynasty of David, that Isaiah 7:2-9 is concerned. As the commentary explains, this element of dynastic threat was central to the situation as Isaiah sought to make Ahaz confront it. But in the face of invasion on three fronts, coupled with a deliberate threat to the royal house, it is no wonder that the current Davidic incumbent and his people panicked (Is. 7:2). However, the fact that at this juncture Ahaz should be found considering Jerusalem's water-supply shows that in political leadership he was determined not to be a loser. The fact also that Isaiah, facing a king looking after human means of security, should counsel quietness (7:4) and faith (7:9) exposes the decision the Davidic king had to make. Is the security of the Lord's people no different from that of nations to whom he has not revealed himself or claimed as his own? Is the Davidic king, sitting on the Lord's throne (1 Ki. 1:27), as dependent on water-supply, **defences**, arms and allies as other kings to whom no divine promises have been made and whose capital cities do not rest on a divinely placed rock foundation (28:16)?

In the event, Ahaz refused Isaiah's call to faith, choosing instead the pathway of worldly security. He made his submission to Assyria on condition that Assyria would in return deal with the northern threat (2 Ki. 16:5–9). His short-term solution was purchased at the expense of a long-term price, for in every real sense the house of David ended with Ahaz. The remaining kings in David's line inherited a puppet throne by courtesy, first of Assyria, then Babylon, until the royal line disappeared into the sands of the exile, never to reign in Zion again.

<sup>1</sup>See Erlandsson.

*The crisis under Hezekiah*

During Hezekiah's reign the whole of west Palestine came into uneasy subjection to Assyria. Damascus fell in 732 and **Samaria** in 722, and the two northern powers vanished as Isaiah had said they would (7:7–9). The southern states found themselves, on the one hand, gripped by Assyria and, on the other, pressed by Egypt to front a concerted rebellion. The death of Sargon II and the accession of Sennacherib (704) seemed to offer an opportunity for revolt. The ancient conglomerate empires were held together only by the personality and ability of the current ruler, and it was almost *de rigueur* for subject peoples to revolt when the hand that had gripped them was relaxed and before a new hand could renew their servitude. Furthermore, the remarkable Merodach-Baladan was once more ruling in Babylon, and even in Mesopotamia itself Assyria's continuance as the dominant power was by no means a certainty.<sup>1</sup> To the south, Egypt was vociferous in promising backing to a rebellion. What was Hezekiah to do? The independent sovereignty of the throne of David was a precious thing and an understandably enticing objective, but how to secure it? The alternatives were clear: Egypt was offering an alliance and Merodach-Baladan was sending ambassadors, presumably also offering an alliance but in any case suggesting that he and Hezekiah make common cause in opposition to Assyria (39:1–2). Against this, however, Isaiah, in the name of the Lord, was offering promises. During Hezekiah's illness the promise of recovery (38:5) was gratuitously amplified into a promise that the Lord would defend and deliver Hezekiah and his city from Assyria (38:6), and both promises received the double confirmation of the sign of the shadow and Hezekiah's return to the house of the Lord (38:7–8; 2 Ki. 20:5). Between the lines of Isaiah's recorded ministry we hear the reiteration of divine promises as the main thrust of his message (28:16; 30:15). Like his father before him, however, Hezekiah found the lure of politics and militarism too strong. His envoys signed the Egyptian alliance (28:14–15) and he raised the standard of rebellion. The inevitable followed. By 701 Sennacherib was secure enough to turn his attention to his western dominions and Hezekiah found that (in his own metaphor) he had conceived a baby he was not strong enough to bring to birth (37:3)!

The course of the Assyrian campaign is disputed and different interpretations of the biblical material are offered.<sup>2</sup> The view taken in the commentary is that, following the battle of Eltekeh, at which Egypt's single attempt to redeem its promises was quashed, Sennacherib turned on Judah. His ferocious assault on Judah's **defences** demonstrated the futility of further resistance, and Hezekiah asked for terms. The Assyrians imposed a fine which strained Hezekiah's treasury to the limit (2 Ki. 18:13–16). But, having accepted this tribute, the king of Assyria at once returned to the attack (2 Ki. 18:17) and earned for himself and his empire a deserved reputation for treachery (see on 21:2; 24:16; 33:1). It is at this point that Isaiah takes up the narrative (see on 36:1), and everything moves swiftly to its chilling conclusion (37:36–38). Belatedly taking up a position of faith, Hezekiah found the Lord to be as good as his word, and king and city were rescued. The period of

<sup>1</sup>See Erlandsson.

<sup>2</sup>J. Bright, *A History of Israel* (SCM, 1972); H. H. Rowley, 'Hezekiah's reform and rebellion', *Men of God* ed. H. H. Rowley (Nelson, 1963); L. L. Honor, *Sennacherib's Invasion of Palestine* (New York, 1926); B. S. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis* (SCM, 1967); R. E. Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem*, JSOTS, 13 (1980).

Assyrian invasions of Judah was over and the empire itself began its slow decline.

The history recorded in the Bible is history with a message, not because of a tendentious selection of available facts but because it isolates the grain which runs right along the wood. When, as in Isaiah's case, the grain is exposed it is stamped with the single word 'faith'. Putting the matter in a broad, scriptural perspective, 'justification by faith' is not a 'Sunday' truth bearing only on our relationship with God but also a 'Monday' truth for the conduct of life in all its challenges. This is what Ahaz refused to face and Hezekiah forgot. In each case the Lord offered promises backed by divine guarantees; in each case they chose the road of personal endeavour, a do-it-yourself salvation based on the worldly specifics of arms and alliances. With chapters 1-37 before us, Isaiah is a sort of Paul of the Old Testament, a prophet of faith and, in its truest sense, 'simple' reliance on what God has promised.

*Faith denied, hope affirmed*

By dividing the Isaianic literature at chapter 37 the commentary capitalizes on the observation often made that chapters 38 and 39 set the scene for the 'Babylonian' chapters which follow.<sup>1</sup> Indeed they do. Flying in the face of the confirmed promises he had received on his sick-bed (38:5-6), Hezekiah was swept off his feet by the visit of Merodach-Baladan's men. Although what he said to them is not recorded, he certainly did not send them away with the message that the Lord, and not force of arms, would restore his sovereign freedom. Rather, in actions speaking louder than words, he conformed, to their view that power must be met with power, arms with arms, and the Assyrians with an alliance they could not afford to ignore. As the discussion of chapter 39 in the commentary shows, Isaiah meets all the canons of the modern study of forth-telling and foretelling in his handling of this situation. The name 'Babylon' was handed to him and he replied with a forecast about Babylon, a forecast of the future with a cruel relevance to the present,<sup>2</sup> no matter how much the unimpressive Hezekiah might have tried to soften its impact. The 'Babylon' in which this prediction was fulfilled was not the contemporary kingdom of Merodach-Baladan<sup>3</sup> but the Babylonian Empire which took Nineveh in 612 and replaced Assyria as the dominant world power. The end of David's kingdom was as sudden as it was pathetic. Following the death of the

<sup>1</sup>This is usually assumed to be a 'bonus' arising from the editorial 'lifting' of these four historical chapters from 2 Kings into Isaiah. It may be, however, that chapters 36-37 and 38-39 were first given their unchronological order by the editor of Isaiah in order to provide, respectively, a rock of history under the promises of chapters 6-35 and an essential background to chapters 40-55 (see the additional note to chapter 37). For differing views see R. E. elements, 'The unity of the book of Isaiah', *Interpretation*, 36 (1982); J. I. Payne, 'The unity of Isaiah: Evidence from chapters 36-39', *JETS* (1963); J. H. Walton, 'New observations on the date of Isaiah', *JETS*, 28 (1987).

<sup>2</sup>Mauchline allows the possibility that the Babylonian prophecy in 39:1-8 is Isaianic, provided it can be shown that Merodach-Baladan's Babylon was a powerful enough contemporary force (as indeed Erlandsson has now demonstrated). On 13:1-23, however: he writes, 'passages which speak of Babylon must be attributed to the sixth century BC at the earliest'. This reflects a general ambivalence among commentators.

<sup>3</sup>See Erlandsson. Childs (*Introduction*) seems to misunderstand Erlandsson's purpose, which is not simply to discover the original historical setting of Is. 13 - 14 but to show the extent to which Babylon under Merodach-Baladan was a threat to Assyrian dominance. In this he has succeeded.

able Josiah in 609, Judah tumbled to its doom under two incompetent kings until the fatuous Zedekiah, still hopelessly rebelling, provoked Nebuchadnezzar's final assault. Deportations to Babylon in 597 and 586 left the city and kingdom depopulated and ruined and the monarchy a thing of the past.

The preface, then, to chapters 40-55 raises two interlocking questions: does banishment to Babylon mark the end of the history of the Lord's people, and if so, does this mean that they have been guilty of a sin beyond the power and readiness of the Lord to redeem? Or, to put both issues positively, is he Lord of history (whereby he can recover his people from the hand of the enemy) and God of salvation (whereby sin will not have the last word)? The 'feel' of chapters 40-55 is that of reading a book, a conscious literary production, and one designed to answer precisely these two questions. Whatever be the **prehistory** of the poems that make it up, it seems the product of the study rather than of the market-place. If its substance was ever preached, it has now become detached from the pulpit. Its units are crafted with supreme literary artistry and not a word is out of place. Theologically, its message is encapsulated in the telling juxtaposition of 'Nothing will be left, says the LORD' (39:6) and (lit.) 'Bring comfort to my people, your God keeps saying' (40:1). Whether this is the message of Isaiah himself probing forward into the future or, according to common theory, of an anonymous prophet in the thick of Babylonian life, the literature as we have inherited it calls for another exercise of faith in the face of life; not life as it rushes to meet us with all its threats and snares (as in chapters 1-37) but life as we have helped to shape it by our wrong choices, faithlessness and sin. The Lord is the God of Cyrus (44:24–48:22), ordering history in its magnitude as much as in its minutiae for the welfare of his people, and also the God of the Servant (49:1–55:13), providing for their iniquity, transgression and sin.

#### *The disciplines and tensions of waiting*

The evident link between chapters 40-55 and Babylon naturally suggests that there may be a parallel link between chapters 56-66 and the period after the exile. The section itself, however, lacks specific historical allusion. There is nothing parallel to the reference to Ahaz in 7:1 or the plain association with the period of the Egyptian alliance in chapters 30-31, or anything like the four references to Babylon in chapters 40-55 (43:14; 47:1; 48:14, 20). Nevertheless, the more firmly specialists have dated chapters 40-55 in the time of the exile the more confidently they have written scenarios of the post-exilic period to accommodate the evidence of chapters 56-66. It is possible that this is not the most fruitful approach to the section and that we should rather understand the absence of historical reference to imply that Isaiah is dealing with principles rather than with situations – as is the case in other passages where names, implied dates and specific events are not evident.\* For example, as Isaiah's vision takes him further and further from his immediate setting the names in chapters 13-20 become the cryptic allusions of chapters 21-23 and the **un**-anchored eschatological vision of chapters 24-27. Disservice is done to chapters 24-27 by endeavours to name 'the ruined city' (24:10) etc. (see the commentary on chapters 13-27). But whatever view is taken of chapters 56-66, whether they allude to the post-exilic period or are a visionary **outreach** to the eschaton, they take over after the Lord has rescued his people from Babylon through Cyrus

\*See the introductory comments to chapters 1-5; 21-27; 28-29; 40:1–43:13.

(chapters 40–48) and after he has redeemed them from sin through the Servant (chapters 49–55). To tie these chapters too restrictively to the post-exilic period is to lose touch with their link with the Servant, which is in fact stronger than their link with Cyrus and the return. Their theme is announced in 56:1. Historically, the people are back from Babylon (48:20–22); conceptually, they are the redeemed of the Lord, his servants, clothed with the righteousness of his Servant (53:11; 54:17). Under each heading they are still his waiting people, for what has already been done leaves some of their needs unsatisfied. Therefore, they are called to persevere in the disciplines of ‘judgment and righteousness’ – the life the Lord decides and approves – until his salvation comes and his righteousness receives full expression. The Lord’s true people find themselves subject to oppression and tension within a mixed community (56:6–57:21). Experience teaches them that they cannot live up to what the Lord requires (58:1–14) because of inadequacies within themselves (59:1–13). There is set before them, however, the expectation of an anointed one (59:14–63:6) whose work of salvation meets their needs, whose work of righteousness fulfils all that God requires, and whose work of vengeance deals with every opposing force. Hence they pray (63:7–64:12) and hold on to the promises (65:1–66:24), confidently expecting the eternal glory of the new creation. In a word, once more the Isaianic literature centralizes faith – the faith that persists, prays and waits in hope.

#### e. Literary and structural features

Difference in style has been one of the continually urged reasons for the need to distinguish chapters 40–55 from chapters 1–39 but careful appraisal of the literature shows that, one way or another, more must be said. It is true that there is a high, poetic style chiefly concentrated in chapters 40–55 and that this contrasts with the more workmanlike rhythmic prose or somewhat less artful poetry in which the remainder of the literature is expressed. It would be misleading simply to say that the one is the product of written poetic skill and the other the product of the preached message, for what we have throughout the prophets is not their verbatim messages as preached but a written distillation of their ministry. Anyone with any experience of preaching can see that this is so. There is not a single ‘message’ in all the prophets that could be preached simply by proclaiming it as it stands; it is too condensed, too closely argued and too brief for any congregation to take it in just like that.

Similarly, in the Isaianic literature both styles are literary products, but the fact remains that the one impresses as never having existed other than as a carefully crafted written exercise and the other as the preserved record of spoken ministry. These two styles, however, appear throughout the whole book. On the one hand, we may compare 4:2–6 and 35:1–10 with chapters 55 and 60 and, on the other hand, 1:10–15, 29–31 with 43:22–24 and 65:2–5, or chapters 28–32 with chapter 48 and 59:1–13. It is intolerably wooden and unimaginative to deny that one author could produce both these styles.<sup>2</sup> Many

<sup>1</sup>2:2–4; 4:2–6; 9:1–7; 8:23–9:6; 11:1–9; 12:1–6; 21:1–10; 25:1–10; 26:1–6; 33:17–24; 35:1–10; 40–55 (*passim*); 60:1–22; 61:1–3; 62:1–63:6.

<sup>2</sup>J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* contains high poetry and varied prose styles. Cf. also John Milton’s ‘L’Allegro’ and ‘An Ode on the Morning of Christ’s Nativity’ with the majesty of ‘Paradise Lost’ and the rhythmic prose of ‘Areopagitica’, and Archbishop Cranmer’s Preface to the Book of Common Prayer (‘Concerning the Service of the Church’ and ‘Of Ceremonies’) and the Prayer of Humble Access or the Table of Kindred and Affinity!

a preacher has turned his hand also to hymnology, and with equal expertise in each realm. Style as such, therefore, does not settle questions of authorship, though undoubtedly the majority of specialists are drawn to a multi-author solution along the lines of that proposed by Clements. This is the view that 'at some stage' the messages of Isaiah of Jerusalem and 'Deutero-Isaiah' were brought together because chapters 40-55 were felt to be appropriate and even necessary to complement the message of chapters 1-35 and that material like chapter 35 was introduced into the earlier prophecies as part of the integrative process.' Our present purpose, however, is satisfied by noting that style is one of the features that binds the whole Isaianic literature together, no matter how diversities of style are accounted for.

The literature also evidences identities of structure throughout. The present commentary is based on concentrated 'structuralist' study. It is taken as axiomatic that in any part of the Bible sound exegesis is imperilled if errors are committed in discerning the structure of a book, passage or verse. On the other hand, properly noted structure provides a control, determining to a very large extent the ambience within which exegesis may move.<sup>2</sup> The Isaianic literature is notable for a structure which we may call the 'extended doublet'. This consists in covering the same area of truth in the same consecutive steps twice over. For example, the Judah-based and Israel-based parallels in 7:1–9:7.6 and 9:8.7–11:16 are viewed from two angles of perspective, and the elucidation of principles in the three sections of 28:1–29:24 is paralleled by the application of these principles in the three sections of 30:1–35:10. Other extended doublets are 42:18–43:21 with 43:22–44:23 and 51:1–8 with 51:17–52:12.<sup>3</sup> Chapters 13-27 develop this feature into a vast extended triplet, the ultimate panorama of the Davidic hope (see pp. 133f.). The extended doublet does not seem to be used in chapters 56-66 where, instead, a large-scale 'arch' or 'trajectory' pattern binds the eleven chapters into a coherent presentation (see p. 461).<sup>4</sup> Like the doublet, the arch/trajectory structure is used throughout the literature as the form of individual poems, very often undercutting allegations of intrusive material and adding literary dynamic to interpretation.

The arch/trajectory structure is by no means peculiar to Isaiah<sup>5</sup> though it does pervade the whole literature. Certainly more distinctive is the neat insertion of usual (a-b-a-b-c; e.g. 35:4) or unusual (4:2–6; 32:5–8; 44:24–28)<sup>6</sup> poetic formations and a use of rhyme unparalleled in subtlety and abundance

<sup>1</sup>Clements, 'The unity of the book of Isaiah'.

<sup>2</sup>See, e.g. pp. 522f. A proper exegesis of 65:1 must take into account its structured parallelism with 66:18–21.

<sup>3</sup>There is also the extended parallel between Cyrus and the Servant (see on 44:24).

<sup>4</sup>Watts finds 'a marked structural resemblance to the arch in architecture . with the block at the crown of the arch being called the keystone since it conveys balancing lateral pressures to the two sides.' (p. 15). This description matches what we find throughout the Isaianic literature: poems balanced around and held together by a central truth.

<sup>5</sup>See my forthcoming commentaries on Zephaniah and Haggai in Baker Book House's Minor Prophets series, ed. T. McComiskey; I. Baldwin, Zechariah (*Tyndale Old Testament Commentary*, IVP, 1972), pp. 85–86. On general questions of structure see D. Clines et al., *Art and Meaning*, JSOTS, 19 (1952); House, *Zephaniah and The Unity of the Twelve*; P. Cotterell and M. Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Analysis* (SPCK, 1989); T. Longman, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Apollos, 1987). For consistent application of 'structuralist' principles, see D. W. Gooding, *The Gospel of Luke* (IVP, 1989) and *True to Faith: A Fresh Approach to the Acts of the Apostles* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1990).

<sup>6</sup>E.g. 16:13; 21:1–2; 22:4; 30:25–26; 35:4; cf. 40:2; 40:20–30; 41:11–12; 47:11; 49:19; 60:19c–20; 63:9.

elsewhere in the Old Testament.' The Isaianic 'palindrome' was noted as long ago as Delitzsch. As he used the term it did not apply to the use of an **inclusio** delimiting a passage but to sentences structured so as to begin and end with the same word. To an extent beyond what Delitzsch recorded in his commentary, this palindromic feature too stamps its mark on the whole literature;\* as also does the telling use of assonance and alliteration<sup>3</sup> and a penchant for making lists of one sort or **another**.<sup>4</sup>

Doubtless there are other literary figures unifying the Isaianic literature, but even those noted have a bearing on the supposition that the literature could be the product of an Isaianic 'school' of writers/preachers/thinkers. Watts is more conservative than some in proposing a lower date of 435 for the completion of the book. But even this means that over a period of three hundred years there was a continuing group (of which there is no external evidence) so **self-conscious** in their unity that they maintained not only theological identity but also identity in presentational skills and in the minutiae of literary styles and figures. This would register for the Isaianic literature a claim to uniqueness beyond even what its inherent grandeur demands.

## 2. *Isaiah as author*

**O. T. Allis** is correct when he observes that the fragmentation of the Isaianic literature among multiple authors and along an extended time-line is historically the product of the nineteenth-century rationalism which refused to countenance predictive **prophecy**.<sup>5</sup> Sadly, in addition to this, the prevailing spirit of scholarship was disposed to fragmentation rather than to **holism**,<sup>6</sup> and in the case of Isaiah this meant that a literature bursting with internal evidence of its unity was rather made to burst into disparate pieces. The subsequent course of study has concentrated on the fragments until it is now widely assumed that the case for multiple authorship need no longer be argued but can be assumed. This is by no means so. The evidences of unity instanced above require explanation and **we** must now explore the simplest explanation – that the whole literature is the product of Isaiah of Jerusalem. This introduction can only deal with major points and principles; the possibility that the whole literature is pre-exilic and the product of one mind is tackled in detail, as appropriate, throughout the commentary.

Consequent on the separation of chapters 40-55 from chapters 1-39 and the allocation of the former to an anonymous prophet in a Babylonian milieu, it seemed reasonable to look further along the **time-line** for an origin for chapters 56-66, for, as Smart remarks, 'if the assumption that chapters 40-55 were

<sup>1</sup>E.g. 1:9cd, 13cd, 25: 5:14cd, 27cd; 6:11e; 10:6ab; 17:10 (chiastic rhyme); 33:22 (with cross-alliteration); 41:2ef, 17de; 46:11cd; 49:10cd, 19 (a-b-b-a); 53:6ab; 57:6ab; 66:1de.

<sup>2</sup>E.g. 1:7, 18; 7:23; 13:12 (rhyming); 14:25; 11:13 (chiastic); 35:5; 40:19; 42:13; 49:13; 54:13; 57:1, 20-21; 60:16; 66:2.

<sup>3</sup>E.g. 1:21; 5:7, 16, 30; 7:9; 8:12, 22; 14:23; 15:9; 24:1, 3-4, 6, 16, 23; 27:7; 35:9; 37:30; 40:31; 41:2; 50:4; 54:11; 58:12; 59:7, 11; 60:18 (chiastic).

<sup>4</sup>E.g. 1:17-18 (eight imperatives); 2:12-16 (ten exalted things); 3:2; 10:9 (six place-names); 10:28-32; 11:11; 15:1-9 (seventeen place-names); 21:15 (four 'from's); 24:2 (six comparisons); 24:7-12 (thirteen items of sorrow); 33:15-16 (six qualifications); 37:33 (four 'not's); 41:11-12 (four statements of overthrow); 44:24-28 (thirteen attributive clauses); 52:7 (four participles); 65:11, 13-16 (five contrasts).

<sup>5</sup>O. T. Allis, *The Unity of Isaiah* (Tyndale Press, 1951). See also the defence of unity in Oswald's introduction.

<sup>6</sup>See H. Harris, *The Tübingen School* (Apollos, 1990).



written in Babylon proves unfounded, the major ground for the separation of chapters 56-66 from chapters 40-55 is removed." Arguments in favour of a post-exilic Palestinian "Trito-Isaiah" were based on considerations of structure, style and background ideas. In contrast to the coherence of chapters 40-55, Gray, for example, could not find 'any single dominating purpose' in chapters 56-66. No commentator has been rude enough to style the chapters a 'rag-bag' but the anthological view has **prevailed**.<sup>3</sup> As the present commentary shows, this is not the only possible view of the third section of the Isaianic literature, and the contrast between coherence and non-coherence cannot now be alleged as sundering the two parts.

The question of style has been alluded to above. The continuation of the style of chapters 40-55 into chapters 56-66 has always been noted but a different style also has been observed and only the conviction that 40-55 are exilic and that, therefore, 56-66 must be post-exilic has prevented the acknowledgment that this second style is markedly pre-exilic. In fact these passages may be attributed to a post-exilic "Trito-Isaiah" only if on other grounds than style a pre-exilic date is impossible. This issue is explored in the commentary without finding any necessity to question the possibility of Isaianic authorship.

The Palestinian milieu of chapters 56-66 is plain. Since there is no reference to Cyrus or Babylon the assumption is made (on the basis of the assumed date of chapters 40-55) that both are things of the past. But both broadly and in **detail**<sup>4</sup> the facts in chapters 56-66 of people living in Palestine under native rulers match Isaiah's eighth-century bc date. Certainly the references to religious aberration (**57:3-9; 65:2-5**) belong directly to the pre-exilic period. They can only be made to refer to post-exilic Jerusalem by assuming first, that these practices still continued and secondly, that the people of the return would have been seduced into them, but the suppositions lack external validation. Much is made of the plainly divided state of society as suggested in chapters 56-57 and 65-66, and a busy scenario has been written about **post-exilic** cleavage between the pious and the ungodly. Again, this lacks external biblical evidence and is far from compelling. Such features were in evidence at every point in Israelite life and chapters 56-66 contain nothing that is not implicit in, for example, Isaiah **3:13-15; 5:12-16; 8:16; 28:7-8**; etc. and in the pre-exilic prophets in general.

Chapters 1-39 and **40-55** are thus the main battleground in the matter of Isaianic authorship. As the commentary shows in detail, if chapters 40-55 (though referring to the exile) are not to be dated during the exile there is no insuperable difficulty in allowing chapters 56-66 a pre-exilic, Isaianic origin. Everything depends on the dating of chapters 40-55, and we will consider this under the headings of literature, geography, history, prophecy and theology.

#### a. Literature

In addition to the question of styles considered above other features must be **considered**.<sup>5</sup> The rest of the prophetic books show that the literary convention

<sup>1</sup>Smart, p. 236. <sup>2</sup>R. S. Foster, *The Restoration of Israel* (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1970).

<sup>3</sup>Johnson, 'From chaos to restoration' shows that winds in Isaianic study are blowing in the right direction.

<sup>4</sup>The interpretation of 63:18 and 64:11-12 is considered in the commentary.

<sup>5</sup>See R. Margoliouth, *The Indivisible Isaiah* (New York, Yeshiva University, 1964). T. R. Birks, *Commentary on the Book of Isaiah* (MacMillan and Co., 1878), pp. 335-349 offers some telling comments on linguistic evidence.

under which the Old Testament was assembled was to preserve separate identity rather than to allow the work of one prophet to merge with that of another – even down to fragments like Obadiah.’ In the case of the pinnacle of Old Testament prophecy, however, we are invited to believe that this procedure was abandoned. It is easy to make up stories around the supposed anonymity of chapters 40-55 such as that since the prophet of the exile was forecasting the fall of Babylon he found it expedient to conceal his name. But even were this so (and it is a plain case of special pleading), it is one thing for identity to be concealed, another for a name to be lost and yet another for the work itself to be absorbed elsewhere. Clements’ view (see p. 26) that Isaiah of Jerusalem needed the ‘Isaiah’ of the exile to complete his message and for this reason the later prophet was added to the earlier is equally a case of writing stories to support theories. Besides which, as House’s ‘The unity of the twelve’ shows, there can be concern to develop the wholeness of the prophetic message without sacrificing the separate identity of books and the names of their authors. There is, however, no external, manuscriptal authority for the separate existence at any time of any of the three supposed divisions of Isaiah. In the case of the first Isaiah manuscript from the Dead Sea Scrolls (Q<sup>a</sup>), for example, 40:1 begins on the last line of the column which contains 38:9 – 39:8.

#### b. Geography

The question of the topographical background of chapters 40-55 is important. Ellison remarks that ‘while the background of Palestine has grown faint, that of Babylonia has not become clear’.<sup>2</sup> The latter part of this assertion is true, the former is not. A. Lods found the geographical evidence so weighty that, pressed equally by his inability to accept predictive prophecy, he insisted that ‘Deutero-Isaiah’ was a resident of either Phoenicia or Palestine. He wrote:

When he wants to portray an idolater, he shows him taking his hatchet and going into the forest to fell a tree ... This would apparently rule out Egypt or Chaldea, for in neither ... are there trees fit for carving ... The oils to be had from the trees mentioned are those of W. Asia (41:19; 55:13). The landscapes or the climates of W. Asia provide him with most of his metaphors – mountain, forest, sea, snow, land made fertile by rain and not by the overflow of rivers or by irrigation, drought . frequent mention of Lebanon, the sea and the islands.<sup>3</sup>

The claim that on entering chapters 40-55 we pass into a Mesopotamian milieu is not borne out by the evidence. ‘Babylonia’ has certainly not ‘become clear’.

#### c. History

At 43:14 the prophet enters the realm of history and allusions made in principle in 40:1 – 43:13 are found to apply to the Babylonian captivity, the reasons for it,

**‘The supposition, often made, that ‘Malachi’ is a name invented to suit the book strengthens our awareness of the determination of the ancient archivists to conserve the individuality of prophetic texts.**

<sup>2</sup>H. L. Ellison, *Men Spoke from God* (Paternoster Press, 1958), p. 44

<sup>3</sup>A. Lods, *The Prophets of Israel* (Kegan Paul, 1937), p. 238.

its limited duration and forthcoming termination. G. E. Wright gave typically luminous expression to the principle on which modern study interprets this fact: 'A prophecy is earlier than what it predicts but contemporary with or later than what it presupposes.'<sup>1</sup> On this basis it has been concluded that the prophet responsible for chapters 40-55 must have been resident in Babylonia because he presupposed the captivity and from his setting within it looked forward to its conclusion. The matter cannot, however, be settled quite so quickly.

Chapters 40-55 reflect a Babylonian social and historical milieu as little as they do Babylon's geography. The chapters are not Babylonian in setting even though 43:14 – 48:22 is Babylonian in orientation. Babylon is mentioned four times – as the place of captivity (43:14), as a city doomed to fall (47:1), as a locus of divine punitive action (48:14) and as the point of departure of the returnees (48:20). Otherwise there is little that is exclusively or typically Babylonian about the chapters save that Cyrus is named as Babylon's conqueror (44:28; 45:1). It is particularly important to note that when the chapters speak about the circumstances of the exiles (e.g. 42:22; 51:14) they bear no relation to what we know of the actual experience of those who were transported to Babylon (cf. Je. 29; Ezk. *passim*). In this, as indeed in the 'description' of the fall of Babylon (46:1–2; 47:1–15), the prophet is not offering reportage but using conventional stereotypes. 'When we search for evidence of the prophet's residence in Babylon, we are surprised how hard it is to find any that is convincing.'<sup>2</sup> In fact, when we examine the details it would seem, in the terms Wright's dictum dictates, that 'Babylon' is predicted rather than presupposed, and is something foreseen in very broad terms at that. It is no more than the name of the captor. There is no evidence of eyewitness participation. The sort of detail by which an eyewitness would betray himself is simply not there – observations about the city, the way its life is ordered, the structures of its society, the feel and smell of the place. Nor, Whybray admits, do we find attention given to problems existing within what he calls 'the Jewish community'.<sup>3</sup> The mask definitely slips in 52:11 where the prophet adopts a position certainly not in Babylonia.

Wright's dictum is more attractive than useful, begging questions rather than providing direction. For what in fact constitutes a 'presupposition'? Suppose a prophet makes a prediction, which Wright's dictum allows him to do, does not that still future event immediately become one of the presuppositions on which he bases his continuing ministry? For now everything he says must be shaped by his knowledge of what is yet to happen. But this takes us into the next section of our enquiry.

#### d. Prophecy

When we discuss the bearing of predictive prophecy on the question of Isaianic authorship we must at once rule out considerations based on time factors. It is commonplace to ask if a prophet could or, more importantly, would predict an event a century and a half after his own time and then take his stand within that future event and look further forward still, another seventy years on!<sup>4</sup> Is it

<sup>1</sup>G. E. Wright, *The Book of Isaiah* (John Knox Press, 1964).   <sup>2</sup>Smart, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Whybray, p.196.

<sup>4</sup>The mere passage of time should not constitute a problem. Isaiah builds in time factors when it suits him (e.g. 16:1; 21:16) but generally the time of fulfilment is open. It was 130 years before 5:1–7 was fulfilled. The question of the prediction of the personal name of Cyrus is dealt with at 44:28.

possible to predict on that time-scale? Is it meaningful to do so – to say to one’s contemporaries, ‘Be comforted, in 200 years all will be well.’? It is important to remember, however, that the ‘200 years’ is our contribution to the discussion, not Isaiah’s. It comes by our hindsight, not his foresight. He says nothing of it and, for all we know, knew nothing of it.

As the commentary insists, in **39:1–8** every condition laid down by modern understanding of the prophets and their work is met. Babylon is presented to Isaiah as a topic; he replies pointedly, addressing himself to the subject as given to him, and his message of coming Babylonian judgment (**39:5–7**) is as relevant to his contemporaries as is his prompt message of comfort (**40:1**). Wright’s dictum is intact – all the more so in that Babylon was a contemporary power of potentially world proportions. It is not for us to ask if Isaiah knew or did not know that the captor would or would not be Merodach-Baladan’s Babylon. Politically and militarily, it could have been. But once the word ‘Babylon’ is spoken we have a right to ask: Where then are the rest of Isaiah of Jerusalem’s predictions? For he cannot now stop. He has created a new presupposition which appears to nullify all that he had previously said by way of promise and hope, the whole vision of the King and his universal, **world-gathering** kingdom. If ‘Babylon’ is the last word, then there will be no King, no kingdom and no gathering of the nations into the Lord’s people. It is not, therefore, that Isaiah must transport himself a century and a half forward and then peer still further ahead into time. Rather, standing where he is, the prophet of Babylonian disaster dare not refuse to search out what will yet happen, for his own existing message is in jeopardy. We would be very unimaginative indeed if we failed to hear the disciples of **8:16** pressing him to seek further revelation – and to do so or to go down in history as a failed prophet. What is more natural than that he should do this? What is more unnatural than that he should not?

#### e. Theology

H. H. Rowley was a true prophet of the tradition of Isaiah studies in which he stood when he wrote regarding chapters 40–55 that ‘the whole tenor of the message and of the ideas that lie behind it and especially the thought of God and its corollaries are here different’ from what is found in chapters **1–39**.<sup>2</sup> But it simply is not so, either broadly or in detail. The broad theological identity of the Isaianic literature is secured by its almost exclusive claim to the title ‘the Holy One of Israel’ (see pp. 17f. above). When we consider that such a distinctive insistence on a particular, national God is not in the least suited to a prophecy with such a universalistic message as chapters 40–55 we have to ask, not why but, how a prophet other than Isaiah could have decided to use it.

Coming more to theological detail, chapters 1–39 assert six main principles: the LORD as Lord of history (e.g. **10:5–15**) and supreme over idols (e.g. **2:12–20**);

**‘Clements is correct in seeing that a true understanding of the prophetic message requires that the word of judgment should ‘modulate’ into the message of hope (and it is in this cause that he insists that chapters 1–35 ‘need’ chapters 40–55, with chapter 35 editorially built in to create the bridge). But within the Isaianic literature the alternatives are either that chapters 40–55 are the continuation of Isaiah’s own ministry (in which he answers the problems raised by his prediction of the Babylonian fiasco and its contradiction of his earlier message of royal hope) or that the words of another prophet have been used to replace those of Isaiah (either because they had got lost or because the anonymous prophet did a better job!). The grand unity of the Isaianic literature points to the former.**

<sup>2</sup>H. H. Rowley, *The Growth of the Old Testament* (Hutchinson, 1950), p. 95.

the promise of a remnant (e.g. 1:27;4:3;8:11–20;10:20); the reconciliation of God and sinner on the basis of atonement (6:6–7); the vision of the restored Zion (e.g. 1:26–27;2:2–4;4:2–6); and the Davidic Messiah (e.g. chapters 7–12). These six areas are also the theological substance of chapters 40–55. Chapters 40–48 read like a set of variations on the first three of the themes but do so, of course, in their own characteristic vocabulary and literary style, and it is important that we do not mistake change of presentation for change of thought. They do not have, for example, a ‘remnant’ vocabulary as such but they are concerned with implementing the ‘remnant’ concept in a doctrine of redemption.’ Again, the centre-piece of Isaiah’s inaugural vision is the truth of atonement by substitutionary sacrifice. In 6:1–8 this is related directly to the prophet’s personal needs but indirectly (verse 5) to the needs of the people. Apart from 52:13–53:12 this fundamental truth remains undeveloped in the Isaianic literature. But the predicted exile, brought about by the cardinal sin of abandoning the very doctrine of faith which was the core of his proclamation, must have challenged him deeply as to the wider validity of his own experience of God and motivated him to search out a full doctrine of atonement. The topic of the restoration of Jerusalem is obviously central to chapters 40–55 where (in chapters 49–54) Zion becomes explicitly the model of the redeemed, restored **people**.<sup>2</sup> And finally, the Davidic Messiah and the Servant are one (see the section on Messianic unity above and the commentary on 55:3–4).

### 3. *The book of Isaiah*

Whatever view is taken of the issue of the authorship of Isaiah it is essential to arrive finally at a coherent appreciation of how the literature came into its present shape. On the view that there were (say) three main authors spaced along an agreed time-line, it is in many ways simplicity itself to explain the resultant book – provided one is prepared to make at least two assumptions. First, there is the assumption (totally lacking external support but essential to the theory) of a continuing ‘school’ of Isaianic **disciples**,<sup>3</sup> concerned for the perpetuation of their master’s message and busily adapting it to their situations. Secondly, there is the assumption (which the very existence of the Old Testament as a whole validates) that within the old covenant church there were at work careful **achivists** and conservationists who gathered and finalized this growing material. Watts’ view of an editor and colleagues at work in 435 is similar: the ongoing company of disciple-preachers and the final unification of the growing corpus into a compendious twelve-act vision with a coherent view of God and history.

But how does the literature look if we seek to place the originating and organizing mind at the beginning rather than at the end – Isaiah himself in the eighth and early seventh century BC, rather than Watts’ anonymous editor in the late fifth?

The hesitancy of specialists and commentators to see the prophets as their own editors is very difficult to understand and, in the main, arises from

**‘Lordship over history** (40:21–25; 41:1–4, 25–27; 42:24–25; 44:24–45:7; 46:8–13; 47:1–25); **supremacy over idols** (40:18–20; 41:5–7, 21–24; 42:17; 44:9–20; 46:1–7).

<sup>2</sup>40:9; 41:27; 44:26–28; 46:13; 49:17–26; 51:11; 52:1–9; 54:1–3, 11–12. Cf. **the city as the centre of world-wide religion**, 40:5; 42:1–4, 6; 45:14, 22–29; 49:6–7; 51:5–6; 52:10.

<sup>3</sup>W. J. Dumbrell (*The Faith Of Israel* [IVP, 1988], p. 99) **observes that the view that a continuing group of Isaiah’s disciples produced the Isaianic literature ‘is an interesting hypothesis but one that only “explains” one unknown by another’.** Cf. Clements, *NCB*, pp. 4–5.

overlooking a prophet's own presuppositions about himself and his work. Today many would find it impossible to think of the books of the prophets as verbally inspired by God, that is to say, that the chosen human agent not only received from God (by processes never disclosed) the essence and 'drift' of the message he was to convey but was also so wrought upon and superintended by God that the human words which expressed the message (words natural to that man at that time with that personality) were also the very words of God himself.' This is an astonishing claim and it is no wonder that specialists who came to the prophets amid nineteenth-century rationalism should simply dismiss it. Nor is it to be wondered at if right up to the present there remains widespread hesitation. Our duty, however, at this point is not to enquire whether Isaiah was right or wrong in thinking himself to be verbally inspired but to ask what a man who had this conviction would be likely to do with the resultant material. Would he leave it, partly written and mostly oral, to the changes and chances of history? Or would he be more likely – indeed certain – to 'bind' it up and 'seal' it among his disciples, leaving them 'this word' as 'law' and 'testimony' for their future instruction and guidance (8:16–20)? As the commentary shows, the significance of 8:9–22 is the self-conscious recognition of a people within the people, a church within the church, the believing remnant whose central principle is their attachment and obedience to the sealed, attested word of God they possess.

In such a circumstance (his conviction of verbal inspiration) and with such a mandate (to bind up and seal the testamentary teaching) what procedures might be adopted? We may assume that the command in 8:16 applied to the material of Isaiah's ministry to date. The quiet days after the great Sennacherib event, the Indian summer of Hezekiah's reign, or maybe the threat constituted by the advent of Manasseh (2 Ki. 21) to succeed his father would have given Isaiah opportunity (and in the case of Manasseh, motivation and urgency) to 'bind up' among his disciples the total output of the fifty years since 'the year that King Uzziah died'. Would he adopt a chronological approach, giving dates and times, ordering his messages in their written conciseness along the **time-**line of his days? Would he adopt a topical approach, grouping his messages under headings? Or would he search for a unifying principle and use all this God-given material to elucidate it?

The evidence of the Isaianic literature, as sketched in this introduction and detailed in the commentary, is that Isaiah adopted the last approach and, in fulfilling it, used his material with masterly freedom. In the commentary, his method is described as that of the 'mosaic' in which stones from differing points of origin and with individual prehistories are brought into a new integration so that it is now not the prehistory but the new design that is significant. The whole book is a huge mosaic in which totally pre-exilic material is made to serve pre-exilic, exilic, post-exilic and eschatological purposes. Within it, Isaiah is capable of taking original poems (the material in 5:22–30 and 9:8–10:4, for example) and using sections of them in new contexts. He rarely offers dates because it is not useful or important that we should know

**'The basic identification of the prophet's word with the Lord's words is seen in the movement from 'The words of Amos' (Am. 1:1) to 'This is what the LORD says' (Am. 1:3). The fundamental uniqueness of prophetic inspiration is stated in Je. 1:9, 'my words in your mouth, and the underlying miracle is illustrated in Ezk. 2:7–3:4 where we note how the passage is bracketed by the command to 'speak my words . speak my words' and the verbalized message is given in the written scroll. This is the conviction on which the prophets based their work.**

the original setting of his oracles but only that we should discover how their inherent meaning subserves the unity of his message. Our task is to take this mosaic-editing seriously,\* to shun the temptation to put pieces which have been editorially separated back together again and to sit before the text until its own perfection of ordering gradually comes to light.

The orientation from which Isaiah worked is stated in 8:16–17. He undertakes to provide his disciples with a sure word of God (a 'testimony' which God has attested, a 'law' which God has taught) for a period of waiting ('I will wait for the LORD') and expectancy ('I will put my trust in him'/'I will hope expectantly for him'). In the ultimate, expectation is **centred** on the eschaton, 'that day' when the true and divine Davidic King will reign and the divine Anointed Conqueror will have finally settled all outstanding issues. It is interesting to note that the Servant is not an eschatological figure in the same sense as the King and the Conqueror. There is no 'in that day' expectation about him, rather, when Isaiah wishes to relate the work of the Servant to the eschaton he reverts to the Davidic mode (55:3–4). The parallel with Cyrus (see p. 352) suggests a figure entering into the thick of history, and the call (following on the work of the Servant) to 'Maintain justice' in expectation of a 'salvation ... and righteousness' yet to be revealed (56:1) indicates that after the Servant the people of God resume the demanding tasks of waiting and obeying. In modern parlance, the Servant is a medium-term expectation, in contrast with the long-term expectation of King and Conqueror. But each Messianic figure is focused appropriately to the situations the prophet is addressing. In the pre-exilic days of the Davidic monarchy, he kept before his disciples the expectation of the perfect king (chapters 1–37). When circumstances made him a prophet of coming catastrophe (39:1–8; foreseen in 6:9–13; 7:10–25; etc.) and he had to face the possibility that in abandoning the way of faith grace had been sinned away, his vision was of the coming Saviour from sin, the Servant (chapters 38–55).<sup>2</sup> And finally, knowing as he did that the people would return from captivity morally and spiritually unchanged (48:1–22), the same mixture of believers and rebels (45%:13) as they always had been but now without a king, he encouraged his disciples in the face of circumstantial stress (57:1–21), personal failure (59:9–13) and a divided community (65:1–25) to look forward to the great Saviour and Avenger and the final work of settlement (63:1–6). Always his expectation is undated and

**'The 'fragmentarist' approach to the text evident from Duhm onwards is partly based on the assumption that the text is in extensive disorder. It is thought to be the result of many 'hands' (chiefly pretty unintelligent apparently) who added bits and pieces to the text/tradition they inherited. If the dislocation between what is original and what is insertional is as plain as commentators have seemed to find it, why ever was it added in the first place? Was the ancient world so full of unperceptive disciples and editors? If only Duhm had been blessed with the spirit of holism the last century would have been immensely the richer for it. Watts (vol. 1, p. xxiii) says even of the great Wilderberger that 'it was clear to him that what was finally paramount was the interpretation of the book as it now exists'. In spite, however, 'of the invaluable worth of his commentary in summarizing and evaluating all the results of historical-critical results to date, it does not succeed in presenting an understandable interpretation of the book. He has followed the method of historical exegesis, and his work presents the tremendous results of that method. But it does not make the book come alive for the reader or student.'**

<sup>2</sup>The movement from chapter 5 to chapter 6 and from chapter 39 to chapters 40–55 should be noted. Isaiah ends his Preface (chapters 1–5) with the implied question: Has even grace come to an end? (cf. 5:4). Immediately he moves to the experience and record of what grace can in fact do for one who is doomed by sin (6:1–8). In chapter 39 the cardinal sin of denial of faith is committed and at once the message moves into a redemptive mode climaxing in 52:13–53:12.