

THE UNITY OF ISAIAH DEFENDED

INTRODUCTION

Because of the growth of deism (There is a God, but no Divine revelation of His will) in the late eighteenth century, men who were antisupernatural began to take exception against the large portions of Isaiah which exhibited a foreknowledge of future events. Robinson quoted A.B. Davidson as saying, "For nearly twenty-five centuries no one dreamt of doubting that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, was the author of every part of the book that goes under his name." ¹ That is no one did until the German deists came along.

The critical disintegration of the book began with Koppe in 1780 who first doubted the genuineness of chapter 50. Nine years later Doederlin suspected the whole of chapters 40-66. Eichhorn around 1800 denied Isaiah 23 as not genuine, and later along with Gesenius and Ewald denied chapters 24-27. Rosenmueller came along to refute chapters 34 and 35 and then in 1880 Franz Delitzsch yielded to modern pressure and interpreted chapters 40-66 as from the period at the close of Babylonian exile. ² The former are but a few of the German scholars who tore at the unity of Isaiah. Those who still maintain the unity point to

1. Robinson, George L., The Book of Isaiah, Revised Edition, Baker Book House, 1954, p. 59.

2. The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Volume III, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939. (Article by George L. Robinson.) p. 1504.

the unanimity of the "Christian" church on the matter until these few German scholars arose to question the authorship.

The spurious author of chapters 40-66 who was alleged to have lived in Babylon at the time of Cyrus became known as Deutero-Isaiah. A man named Bernard Dahm went on to a theory of three Isaiahs none of whom lived in Babylonia! He even saw insertions in these three Isaiahs from still later periods in Judah's history.³

Recent views on the subject have tended to lower the date of the "non-Isaiah" portions rather than multiply the number of Isaiahs. There are two groups of these critics, the moderates and radicals. Moderates deny some 44 chapters out of the 66 as belonging to Isaiah, or 800 of the 1292 verses are not genuine according to them. Radicals deny all but 262 verses to Isaiah, saying 1030 were written by someone else.⁴

The fundamental axiom of criticism is the dictum that a prophet always spoke out of a definite historical situation to the present needs of the people among whom he lived, and that a definite historical situation shall be pointed out for each prophecy.⁵ It is not possible, however, to always trace a mere bit of discourse to a definite historical situation apart from its context. Moreover prophets often spoke consciously not only to their own generations but to those to come. Isaiah in particular commanded, "Bind thou up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples" (Isa 8:16). That is, preserve my teachings for the future. Again in Isaiah 30:8 we read, "Now

3. Archer, Gleason L. Jr., A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, Moody Press, 1964. p. 331.

4. Tarrey, R.A., and Dixon, A.C., et.al.; The Fundamentals, A Testimony to the Truth, Baker Book House, Volume I, 1972, p. 245.

5. Robinson, George L., op. cit. p. 60.

go ... inscribe it in a book that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever..." And in Isaiah 42:23 we find, "Who is there among you that will give ear to this? That will hearken and hear for the time to come?" ⁶ (Emphasis mine-K.M.)

Other critics objected to a Jew speaking of converting the heathen, of picturing universal peace and universal judgment. Some thought Isaiah's eschatological writing in 24-27 as from a time later than Ezekiel. ⁷ But to the critic the biggest problem is Messianic prophecy. He would deny all since he does not believe in a God who would reveal himself. Some have tried to use II Chronicles 36:22,23 as external evidence that chapters 40-66 existed as a separate collection. But this evidence is valueless, speaking of Jeremiah not Isaiah.

To deny to the Isaiah of the eighth century all grace, all knowledge of salvation or judgment, every Messianic ideal, every rich note of promise and comfort, all sublime faith in the God of Zion; is unwarrantably to create a new Isaiah, a mere preacher and statesman and the exponent of a cold ethical religion. Three great differences are alleged to accomplish this: ⁸ (1) Differences in theme and subject matter. (2) Differences in language. (3) Differences in theological ideas. Number one theory is that divine revelation is impossible. Where this occurs in the narrative we have a later writer. Number two theory is that 1-39 uses one name for God, while 40-66 another. (But there are over 50 common sentences in both parts.) Number three theory is that God cannot be spoken of as good and wrathful by the same author.

6. The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, op. cit. p. 1505.

7. Robinson, George L., op. cit. p. 61.

8. Archer, Gleason L. Jr., op. cit. pp 332f.

So much speculation and guesswork is seen in these critics' view of Isaiah that it requires more credulity to believe that he did not write chapters 40-66 than to believe he did. The problem is stated, we now purpose to set forth arguments for one Isaiah by one writer.

We propose to do this by listing those of well known men in the field of criticism and then going to the New Testament for final proof.

O.T. ALLIS' ARGUMENTS

Allis uses Isaiah 1:1 as his first argument. He shows that all of the former prophets have such a heading, several adding the name of the prophet's father as does Isaiah. All but three of these prophets indicate the time they prophesied. The book begins, "The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" If a distinct prophecy by an unknown prophet begins elsewhere in the book why is there no heading to indicate such?

There is no manuscript evidence for the 66 chapters being divided. Instead when the Dead Sea Scroll (Isaiah Scroll) was found it showed Isaiah 39:8 connected to Isaiah 40:1. This scroll dates to 200 B.C. and is an early witness to the unity.

Why would a great "unknown" prophet not be named or known is Allis' third argument. For 2500 years no one doubted Isaiah,

where did this unnamed writer come from? The Old Testament never mentions such a man.

Ecclesiasticus (180 B.C.) is quoted by Allis as saying that Isaiah wrote the entire book. This man quotes Isaiah 40:1; 61:2f in his writings presupposing then that the whole book is from Isaiah.

Allis further states, " It should be remembered then, that the basic question raised by the critics is not, how many Isaiahs there were, but whether there were more Isaiahs than one. The critics assume that the question has long been decided in their favor. But for Bible believers ... evidence is worthy of consideration... and should certainly not be ignored ..." ⁹

Allis further has some sound arguments concerning Cyrus which we include. Cyrus is prophesied in Isaiah 40-48. He is vividly described. Why, if he were already alive people would not need such a description? Josephus said Isaiah truly prophesied of him, and his testimony is valuable because it represents the historical concensus and repudiates the theory that a prophet is always a man of his own time. Allis uses the poem in Isaiah 44:24-28 to show Cyrus is still future. He says that the Hebrew construction must mean future and to use it otherwise is to abuse the text. ¹⁰

9. Allis, Oswald T., The Unity of Isaiah, A Study in Prophecy, The Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co. 1950.

10. Ibid. pp. 51-55.

ARCHER'S ARGUMENTS

Some critics say an historical figure is never mentioned by name such as Cyrus. Archer points to Josiah in I Kings 13:2 for evidence to refute this and also mentions Bethlehem Ephratah in Micah 5:2. Isaiah told Hezekiah (39:5-7) his treasures would be taken away to Babylon. How would Isaiah know that a subject province of the Assyrian empire at the time of his prediction would one day be so powerful? This shows the same accurate foreknowledge for the eighth-century prophet as appears in chapters 40-66.¹¹

Archer shows that chapters 40-66 show great familiarity to Palestinian geography, not Babylonian thus refuting those who would insist on those chapters being written at the close of Babylonian exile. The author of these chapters further speaks as if Judah were still standing, not fallen to Babylon. In Isaiah 40:9 we read, " Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God." Why speak out against false judges of the Jews in Isaiah 58:6 if they are no longer holding their own courts in their own land but are already in Babylonian exile?¹²

Isaiah further warns Judah against idolatry. (cf. 65:2-4; 66:17). Why? " It is agreed by scholars of every persuasion that the returning Jews who resettled Judah from 536 to 450 B.C. brought back no idol worship with them. The terrible ordeal of the Babylonian captivity had brought about a complete rejection of graven images on the part of the Jewish remnant.

11. Archer, Gleason L. Jr., op. cit. p. 335.

12. Ibid. pp. 338-339.

It is impossible then to conclude that ' Isaiah II ' was composed at any time after the exile." ¹³

Archer shows striking resemblances between chapters 1-39 and 40-66. Most distinctive, he claims, is the characteristic title of God which occurs frequently throughout Isaiah - "The Holy One of Israel." (Twelve times in 1-39 and fourteen times in 40-66). Critics have tried to say " Isaiah II" was dominated by " Isaiah I's" usage. But why is there such an almost complete lack of such a title in the writings of other known post-exilic authors? Critics try to make facts fit their theory instead of listening to the truth. ¹⁴

An invariable rule followed by the ancient Hebrews was that the name of the prophet was essential for the acceptance of any prophetic utterance. This is emphasized by the fact that even so brief a composition as the prophecy of Obadiah bore the name of the author. The Hebrews regarded the identity of the prophet as of utmost importance if his message were to be received as an authoritative declaration of a true spokesman of the Lord. Surely the name of the author of 40-66 has been preserved. It is Isaiah.

Some deny Isaiah 13 which prophesies of the ultimate downfall of Babylon as an insertion by a later writer. If this be true, why would a later writer or editor ever have thought that Isaiah would need to prophesy concerning Babylon? ¹⁵

13. Archer, Gleason L. Jr., op. cit. p. 342.

14. Ibid. p. 345.

15. Ibid. pp. 350-351.

ROBINSON'S ARGUMENTS

(I.S.B.E.)

Robinson begins his defense of the unity of Isaiah by showing the striking characteristic common to chapters 1-39 and 40-66 by referring to the title, "Holy One of Israel" used by Isaiah. He says, " The presence of this Divine title in all the different sections of the book is of more value in identifying Isaiah as the author of all these prophecies than though his name had been inserted at the beginning of every chapter, for the reason that his theology - his conception of God as the Holy One - is woven into the very fiber and texture of the whole book." ¹⁶

Other characteristics listed by Robinson include the idea of a highway (cf 11:16; 57:14); a remnant (cf 1:9; 65:8,9); Zion (cf 2:3, 62:1); "pangs of a woman in travail" (cf 13:8, 66:7).

He argues that the literary style of the whole book is widely different from every other Old Testament prophet, and is as far removed as possible from that of Ezekiel and the post-exilic prophets. ¹⁷

Robinson concludes his arguments with the following statement, "...why should men object to prediction on so large a scale (as in Isaiah)? Unless there is definiteness about any given prediction, and unless it transcends ordinary prognostication, there is no especial value in it. Should it be objected that so minute prophecy is abhorrent to reason. The answer is already at hand. It may be abhorrent to reason, but it is handmaid to faith." (Emphasis mine - K.M.)

16. The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, op. cit. p. 1505.

17. Ibid. p. 1506.

"...the one outstanding characteristic of Israel's religion is predictive prophecy. The Hebrews certainly predicted the coming of a Messiah. Indeed, the Hebrews were the only people of antiquity whose golden age lay in the future rather than the past." "...emasculate those portions of the book of Isaiah which unveil the future and the book is reduced to mere reporting of events and its religious value as Divine oracles is lost." ¹⁸

THE FUNDAMENTAL'S ARGUMENTS.

This book by Tarrey, Dixon and others uses much the same arguments as Robinson, but their statements concerning prophecy both fulfilled and future in Isaiah's time are valuable.

Before the Syro-Ephraimitic was (734 B.C.), Isaiah predicted that within sixty-five years Ephraim should be broken in pieces (I Sa. 7:8). She went into Assyrian captivity starting in 722 B.C. He also predicted the fall of Tyre (I Sa 23:15); the siege of Ashdod (711 B.C.) (Isa 16:4; 21:16); and in the siege of Jerusalem he prophesied of Sennacherib's defeat (Isa 29:5). ¹⁹

On and on one could go with this. If this eighth-century prophet could do this, he could write Isaiah 40-66.

We add here some statements occurring in Isaiah but nowhere else in the Old Testament. Which argues for one author.

1. The "Mighty One of Israel" - (Isa 1:24; 49:26; 60:16) This is found in both parts.
2. "Streams of water" - (Isa 30:25; 44:4)

18. Ibid. p. 1508.

19. Archer, Gleason L. Jr., op. cit. p. 253.

3. "for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it" - (Isa 1:20; 40:5; 58:14)
4. Isaiah also uses emphatic reduplication of statements to make a point. (cf. 2:7; 6:3; 8:9; 24:16; 40:1; 43:11; 48:15; 51:12; 57:19; 62:10) ²⁰

Is there anyone who can see such obvious unity and deny out of hand one author for the whole book? Only blind prejudice against revelation could lead one to say such. Isaiah himself saw such a person and wrote of him when he said, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20). Only by perverting the text does one arrive at anything save unity for this great book.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

We start this portion of our apology for the unity of Isaiah with a few remarks on our attitude toward the inspiration of Scriptures. The Word of God is the verbal, plenary, inerrant revelation of the will of Jehovah. We believe God gave the words to His writers to say exactly what He wanted said. We believe this verbal quality applies to all points of Scripture. We further mean by inerrant that as to scientific and historical facts the Bible is without error.

In II Samuel 23:3 David said, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me and his word was on my tongue." Here we see a direct

20. Tarrey, R.A., and Dixon, A.C., op. cit. p. 251.

statement of verbal inspiration. In Exodus 20:1 we read, "And God spake all these words...." which Moses wrote in the law. In Isaiah 2:1 is recorded, "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem." These are a few which show how the Old Testament was given and in II Peter 1:20,21 this is verified when the Apostle writes, "Knowing this first that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The New Testament makes similar statements. In Matthew 10:19, 20 we see how God gave the exact words to the Apostles in times of stress. And Paul writes in Galatians 1:11, 12 - "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Again in I Corinthians 2:12-13 Paul gives us the meaning of inspiration when he writes - "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (words A.S.V.). The Bible, the words of the Bible, the very words God wanted written were given by Him. Jesus affirmed this in Matthew 4:4 when He said, "...man shall not live by bread alone but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (A quotation, incidentally, from Deuteronomy 8:3.)

We have given this argument to say this. When the inspired writer of the New Testament, even Jesus himself in many cases, is saying that Isaiah wrote such and such we have direct affirmation from God himself that such is true. No stronger argument can exist

for the unity of Isaiah than those of the New Testament text. A denial of the unity of Isaiah results in slander of the Lord and His statements, and refusal to accept the entire New Testament as genuine. In other words, complete rejection of the Bible as the Word of God is necessary to refute the New Testament evidence. We offer the following verses to strengthen our argument, but because of our faith in God's Word, one would necessarily be sufficient.

In Matthew 3:3, "For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." Here is the inspired Matthew saying Isaiah wrote Isaiah 40:3, the second part of Deutero - Isaiah supposedly written by some unknown writer.

In Matthew 4:14-16 we read, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon and the land of Nephthalin by the way of the sea beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people that sat in darkness saw great light: and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." Verse 15 is taken from Isaiah 9:1,2 while verse 16 is from Isaiah 42:7. Here Matthew connects both "parts" of Isaiah as being written by one prophet - Esaias.

Matthew 8:17 reads, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken of Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sickness." Here Matthew says Isaiah wrote Isaiah 53:4, and applies Isaiah 53 to Christ. Did the eighth century prophet see this far? The inspired New Testament writer says yes.

In Matthew 12:17, beginning, several verses are quoted as being written by Isaiah, among them Isaiah 42:1; 52:13; 53:11; 11:2 61:1; 40:11. Here too is recorded the fact that Isaiah did prophecy

of a light to the heathen, that the eighth century prophet was guided to write such a prediction. Matthew 12:18b which is Isaiah 61:1 reads, "... and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles." The critic calls Matthew a liar who denies Isaiah's knowledge of revelation for the heathen.

In Matthew 13:14,15 is quoted the words of Isaiah 6:9. Christ himself quotes Isaiah as perceiving that the Jews would reject Him. More important, Jesus says without hesitation or criticism that Isaiah wrote such a statement. And also in Matthew 15:7 we read of the Lord referring to Isaiah as the author of the Old Testament book which bears his name. Jesus says, "ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you saying, This people honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." This is a direct reference to Isaiah 29:13.

Mark in chapter seven, verse six records the same statement as Matthew 15:7 and gives further credence to Isaiah's authorship.

Luke 3:4 records Isaiah 40:3 again as written by Isaiah, and in Luke 4:17 beginning a very interesting thing occurs. Jesus himself reads in the synagogue from Isaiah 42:1 and never hints one time that the eighth-century prophet never wrote such. Surely our Lord would have taken such an opportunity to refute a false author! The verses read, "And there was delivered unto him the book (Note-one book, K.M.) of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath annointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister and sat down... and he began

to say unto them this day is the scripture fulfilled in your ears." Not only did Jesus not refute Isaiah's authorship, He called these writings, in one book, scripture.

John records Isaiah 40:3 also in 1:23 as from Isaiah the eighth-century prophet. And perhaps the strongest argument in the entire New Testament for the unity of Isaiah is found in John 12:38-41. "That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled which he spake, Lord who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted and I should heal them. These things said Esaias when he saw his glory, and spake of him." Truly here is a definitive, absolute argument for one Isaiah. First John uses Isaiah 53:1 and Isaiah 6:9, says they were both written by him; and then says that this same Isaiah did indeed prophecy of the Christ. Should we believe the critic or John?

Luke records the Eunuch as reading Esaias the prophet (Acts 8:28). And in Acts 8:32 we see that he was reading Isaiah 53. Who wrote chapters 40-66 of Isaiah? Luke records only one prophet. In Acts 28:25,26 the prophet Isaiah is shown to have been definitely inspired by the Holy Ghost. How can one deny such plain scripture?

In Romans 9:27, Isaiah 10:22 is quoted. Isaiah 1:9 is said to be the writing of the prophet in Romans 9:29. Isaiah 53 and 65 are quoted in Romans 10:16,20 respectively, and in Romans 15:12 Paul quotes Isaiah 11:1,2 using the prophet's name as the author.

All of the Gospel writers, and the most prolific writer of them all, Paul, (whom we have already seen claimed verbal inspiration for himself - Gal 1:11,12; ICor. 2:12,13) refer to Isaiah as one book by one prophet. Who would argue against such conclusive, over whelming evidence? Perhaps a fool, or one who must deny plain facts to fit his theory as a "modern" Bible critic.

CONCLUSION

A statement is made in Revelation 22:18,19. "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." A Bible critic is definitely an "adder-to" and a "taker-away." He denies verbal inspiration and thus prophecy. He cannot by human reasoning understand a pre-vision of history.

The Bible, however, claims verbal inspiration as we have seen; and an omniscient God could certainly see a coming event and tell his writers to record it.

Critics say that prophecy is not real because it has no reference to the time of the one prophesying. But all of the prophets surround their prophesy with contemporary teaching.

Isaiah was accepted as a whole book for 2500 years. Christ, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Paul record only one author. Where is the one who would deny such? He is outside of the spirit and outside of life, for he denies the words of Jesus himself; and Jesus said of His words, "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing, the words I have spoken unto you they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). To deny the unity of Isaiah is to deny Christ which is anti-Christ.
