

Isaiah 40-66

With chapter 40 we enter a section of the book of Isaiah which is very different from all that has preceded. The difference is so great that it has led some to think that they were not written by Isaiah but by someone who lived a century or more after his time. From this developed the idea of "the two Isaiahs." However, there are very few today who believe in the theory of "two Isaiahs" as it was held a few decades ago. Most of those who now deny the unity of the book divide it up among many authors. Some of these writers are said to have written large sections and others only a few verses.

We do not have space here to discuss the arguments for and against a multiple authorship of the book. It must suffice us to point out that they fall under three heads. The first includes those from the differences in historical background. This is the most important of the arguments.

The second type of argument is said to be based upon comparison of style and phraseology. Arguments of this second type are extremely technical and usually fail to produce conclusive evidence. While certain differences of phraseology and expression are found in the second part of Isaiah, as over against the first, there are also many remarkable similarities of expression. In fact all parts of the book are so similar in general form of expression that it would be quite easy for one to recognize almost any part of the book as different from other books of the Old Testament.

The third type of argument is based upon the claim that there is a difference of theological viewpoint between the two portions of the book. This argument requires examination of many passages and rests to a large extent upon philosophical presuppositions. The most important of the three arguments for multiple authorship comes from the difference of historical background. We shall briefly glance at this argument.

A Different Historical Background

It is undeniable that Isaiah 40 to 52 has in general a very different historical background from that of the earlier portions of the book.