



REFORMATION  
COMMENTARY  
ON SCRIPTURE

OLD TESTAMENT  
X

ISAIAH 1–39

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# COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH

**OVERVIEW:** Reformation commentators often begin their commentaries, even those based on sermons, with introductory remarks about the nature of prophecy and the work of prophets. They address the different terms used to refer to prophets and prophecies. They explain how prophetic literature compares to other genres in Scripture. They articulate the differences between the prophecies found in the Old Testament and their fulfillments in the New Testament regarding Jesus, the apostles, and the church. Many of these interpreters addressed the historical context of Isaiah himself, in addition to the book's relevance for the New Testament and the church at their time. To many of them, Isaiah was the most important of the writing prophets—a perspective in continuity with medieval interpreters. Of course, the primary reason they esteemed Isaiah so much was the many passages that could be directly and indirectly connected to Jesus as the promised Messiah. The preliminary comments of these exegetes often included a description of how the book as a whole was organized as well.

## *Prolegomena: Introduction to Isaiah*

**TITLES FOR PROPHETS.** KONRAD PELLIKAN: Holy men of God who explained the divine mind that the Spirit breathed and inspired, or who otherwise considered the heavenly will, or who explored and observed the divine will, the Hebrew names *nābī'im* [prophets]. This was generally translated in Greek with the term *prophētēs* [prophets], which Latin speakers and other foreign peoples used. Moreover, that term in Greek specifically signifies one who declares and speaks

something from the divine mind before it happens. From these, along with the common and general use of the term, the view is accepted that prophets to this extent are prescient and are able to predict and announce things in future times. PREFACE TO ISAIAH IN COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE.<sup>1</sup>

**THE DEFINITION OF A PROPHET.** PHILIPP MELANCHTHON: Therefore the definition of prophet should be considered. A prophet is a person immediately called by God to teach the gospel and give divine testimonies that do not err to certain political bodies. Already at the beginning, you should consider this immense kindness so that you give thanks to God that so many times he renewed the light of doctrine. ARGUMENT OF ISAIAH.<sup>2</sup>

**THE PRINCIPAL MEANING OF PROPHET.** ZACHARIAS URSINUS: Generally and principally *prophet* signifies the person announcing to the people to whom he is sent whatever was revealed directly to him by God. This may be by dream or divine vision or inspiration or apparitions and conversations with God or angels. He reports this to the people in the name of God. Finally, it signifies having the gift of interpreting and using it in the present to properly apply those oracles of the prophets to the church. . . . The excellence and worth of the prophetic ministry is evident from this. The highest of kindness is communicated by God to humanity—especially the knowledge of God and the divine will. Eternal life depends on

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<sup>1</sup>Pellikan, *Commentaria Bibliorum*, 3:2r.

<sup>2</sup>MO 13:794.

such knowledge, as testified by Christ. . . . Further, since it is true that so many of the prophets came after Moses, it is also right to say that they are interpreting the law of Moses. For God arranged that those uttered words be unveiled here in order to confirm, urge, and declare the law handed down by Moses. Now we understand by the term *law*, the entire teaching of Moses in the manner of Scripture, which is the source and foundation of the prophets. PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>3</sup>

**TWO KINDS OF PROPHETS.** WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: The Hebrews call *nābī* what the Greeks call prophet and we call seer. These signify those who speak not from human understanding and will but by the Spirit of God. Moreover, there are two kinds of prophets. One kind is those who predict the future. So the Greeks call them prophets, from *prophēteuō*, that is, “to foretell.” And in this sense, we call them seers. The other kind is those who either instruct or warn about present things, comfort or rebuke sinners, or proclaim the mighty works of God. Most join these two kinds of prophesying together, as evident in the writings of the prophets. The apostle later speaks about this . . . where he says, “Follow the way of love, and desire spiritual things, but especially prophecy. For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people, but to God. For no one is able to hear when he speaks mysteries by the Spirit. The one who truly prophesies speaks to the people for their upbuilding, encouragement, and consolation.” So Paul, the interpreter of the divine will, also called one a prophet even when they did not predict the future. PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>4</sup>

**THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROPHETS, APOSTLES, AND TEACHERS.** ZACHARIAS URSINUS: Second, it is evident from what was said how much the authority of the prophets and apostles differs from the authority of other teachers

and ministers in the church. Prophets and apostles, since they have the divine testimonies that were directly taught by God and thus governed by the Holy Spirit, were teaching the church nothing in what they said or wrote except what the Spirit of God had dictated to them. Without exception and uncertainty, everything known that they passed down in the church must be heard. But other teachers with this office, however excellent, do not have these same gifts and testimonies as the prophets and apostles. They are those who should extend, explain, impress, and apply doctrine for the benefit of the church. They are able to err at any time, mixing some human opinion with heavenly truth or not rightly understanding and applying the words of Scripture. For that reason, it is not enough when they teach to know their own ideas, but in addition they must seek whether those ideas are true based on what is said by others. That is, if they agree with the foundation—the rule of the prophetic and apostolic Scripture—their teaching is accepted. But if their ideas disagree with them, they should be rejected. Isaiah teaches this distinction . . . : “To the law and testimony! If they did not speak according to this word, there is no light of dawn in them.” PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>5</sup>

**THE HUMILITY OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS.** MENNO SIMONS: Their looks and titles prove that they do not walk in humility of heart before the Lord. They suffer themselves to be greeted as lords and masters, despite the fact that it is forbidden by the mouth of the Lord. Say, kind reader, did you ever hear or read that the holy apostles and prophets were covetous of such high, vain titles as are the learned and the preachers of the world? It is true the term *rabbi* and *master* was applied to the ambitious scribes and Pharisees, but not to the apostles and prophets. For we do not read of Doctor Isaiah, or Master Ezekiel, and of Lords Paul and Peter. No, no! All these who have rightly taught the word of the Lord were in their

<sup>3</sup>Ursinus, *Iesaïam*, 2; citing 1 Cor 12; Jn 17.

<sup>4</sup>Musculus, *In Esaïam*, 2; citing 1 Cor 14:1-3.

<sup>5</sup>Ursinus, *Iesaïam*, 5-6; citing Is 8:20; 1 Cor 3.

time not honored with such high-sounding names. This I write that you may know that such ambitious, proud spirits can never rightly teach you the humble word of the cross. HEARING THE PREACHERS.<sup>6</sup>

**THE REASON FOR THE PROPHETS.** PHILIPP MELANCHTHON: The reasons why and how prophets were sent, from the time all the way back in the beginning of humankind, may be obtained from what God has disclosed and from the promise handed down soon after the fall of the first parents. For these certain and illustrious testimonies he disclosed to humanity are the highest kindnesses of God. They handed down the promise about the mediator, by whom and because of whom humanity would be restored to righteousness and eternal life. . . . And this is the particular reason why prophets are called and sent: so that the testimonies of divine disclosures would be revealed by men who excel, and the doctrine of God would be restored by them, and the promise of the mediator would be repeated and illustrated. Now, we may know what the particular duty of all the prophets is, all the way from Adam. It is for them to reveal the testimonies of divine disclosures so that the promise of the gospel be restored, all doctrine of God be purified, and the church be renewed. ARGUMENT OF ISAIAH.<sup>7</sup>

**TWO KINDS OF SCRIPTURE.** JOHANNES BRENZ: For there are two kinds of Scriptures on which the church of the Lord is founded. One is the prophetic writings, the other the apostolic writings. “You are fellow citizens,” Paul says about the saints, “and the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone.” Because these writings are confirmed by many great miracles, it is as if the Holy Spirit extends them to us from heaven. All the teaching for our true and perpetual salvation is included in them. And their authority is so great

that if an angel from heaven were to announce something else to us, it would be accursed and considered anathema. PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>8</sup>

**THE THREEFOLD DISTINCTION OF PROPHECY.** ULRICH ZWINGLI: And finally because a reminder is entirely necessary, the prophecies about Christ contained in this prophet are sometimes altered so that the genuine sense is entirely something other than what is contained in the commentaries on the Gospels. For prophecies have a threefold distinction. Some are pure prediction, such as, “Behold, the virgin will conceive,” and all of chapter 53. And some are sermons that the prophets spoke to the people during their time, and there is nothing else addressed again in the time of Christ. But some occurred both for their very own use and for another. For example, . . . “A voice cries, ‘In the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord.’” The prophet addresses these words to the people at his time so that they prepare everything for the Israelite people returning from the Babylonian captivity. This freeing of slaves, although less well-known than the liberation from Egypt, was a type of the whole world being liberated. So John the Baptist responds to the envoys of the Jews that he is the voice crying out, “Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness,” that is, he cries out that they must repent. For the Lord arrives in the same way Isaiah previously had when he warned about the coming of Cyrus the liberator. The words of Isaiah there are not properly prediction but a type, and similar to those which John was delivering. ANNOTATIONS ON ISAIAH.<sup>9</sup>

**TWOFOLD PROPHECY.** WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: Moreover, these utterances are twofold—namely, the prophetic and the evangelical. In the prophetic kind, the mysteries hidden from the ages were foreshadowed with promises and prophecies and were being announced in advance. I propose to

<sup>6</sup>Simons, *Complete Works*, 2:266\*.

<sup>7</sup>MO 13:793, 794.

<sup>8</sup>Brenz, *Esaias*, 1; citing Eph 2:19-20.

<sup>9</sup>ZSW 14:94; citing Is 7:14; 40:3.

group together all those oracles of God's promises that were divinely revealed to Adam and the other patriarchs. In the evangelical kind, the truth and fulfillment of these mysteries and prophecies about Christ are announced and made known to the whole world. The former are enigmatic and shadowy figures, enclosed with covers such that it makes sense that the ancients said the writing of prophets was closed. Their closure is opened in the New Testament Scriptures by the Gospel writers and the apostles, as the key ordained for this use. So Christ reveals the sense not only to the apostles and his disciples but to all the elect, all the way to the end of the world. For he is the end of prophecies, the specific scope to which the prophesying of the prophet looked ahead. This is why the knowledge of Christ is that light without which no one will usefully and understandably be able to dwell sufficiently in the prophetic Scriptures. PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>10</sup>

**PROPHETIC PREDICTION.** ZACHARIAS URSINUS: There are predictions of future things that cannot be foreknown and foretold with this specificity and certainty by anyone unless they are revealed by God. He has that in his power, and the events accurately and in every way correspond to the predictions. This evidence is argued at length. . . . Based on this, therefore, when these testimonies and even this kind of prophetic teaching itself is compared to other religions, it demonstrates that either this is true doctrine from God or it is nothing. PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>11</sup>

**THE FIRST AMONG THE PROPHETS.** JOHANNES BRENZ: And since after David, no prophet exists besides Isaiah who more seriously, more abundantly, more skillfully, and more clearly explains these things, we think Isaiah has first place among the interpreters of the heavenly and true doctrine of salvation. PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>12</sup>

**SIMPLICITY AND BREVITY.** ZACHARIAS URSINUS: It is my task to explain the prophet Isaiah to the young men. Isaiah is, so to speak, foremost among those known as the Latter Prophets. This is because he surpasses the rest in the richness of his teaching and in the clarity of his prophecies about Christ. But because the exegesis of the Old Testament is more difficult and this book of prophecy is quite long, I will try to remember both my inadequacy and my obligation. I will emphasize simplicity and brevity as an accommodation to the capacity of these young men. After all, I was called here to train these young men, not ones who stand in need of greater and more finished instruction. PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>13</sup>

**ISAIAH'S HEBREW NAME.** JOHANNES OECOLAMPADIUS: Quite a few words have been rendered into such a strange and different form that they are foreign and unrecognizable to the Jews themselves, even more so than to us. For if you say "Ezechia" to them, they do not know of whom you speak. But if you pronounce it "Hizkia" or "Jehizkia," you will make sense to them. This practice is of double use to us. We will make ourselves less ridiculous to Jewish scholars, and we will be able, when necessary, to confer with them more conveniently. Now, concerning Isaiah's own name, I know that among our own linguists there once were arguments, with some urging it be written "Isaia" so that its Hebrew origin would be clear, while others, trained in Greek, strongly asserted that it is more correctly written "Esaia." . . . To me it seems that it is most purely said, "Iesaia"—or "Iesaias," if one indeed prefers to inflect it in Latin or Greek. But it is still not displeasing to say "Hesaias" along with the Gospel writers. . . . Further, the very name "Ieschaia" is praiseworthy and of good omen, so to speak. For it has a meaning the same as "salvation of the Lord." For in Hebrew, *yeshu* means "salvation"; *yah* is "the Lord." So then, when the name is heard, you would expect great, pleasing, and saving things in his book, and you will not be disappointed if you persist. The

<sup>10</sup>Musculus, *In Esaïam*, 1.

<sup>11</sup>Ursinus, *Iesaïam*, 4, citing Is 41; 42; 43; 44; 45; 46; 48.

<sup>12</sup>Brenz, *Esaïas*, vi.v.

<sup>13</sup>Ursinus, *Iesaïam*, 1.

name is most precious as well, and to be received with reverent eyes for another reason, for the sake of Christ our Lord. For just as the prophet in many respects was a type of him, so also he has been given an affinity in name, something that would appear more readily if you chose “Isaias” over “Esaias.” PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>14</sup>

**THE ROYAL ISAIAH.** JOHANNES BRENZ: Now it is agreeable at this time to select the prophet Isaiah from these writings. He is included among the greatest ecclesiastical heroes who were ever on this earth. He taught the word of the Lord nearly eighty, or as others think, one hundred years. Let us say a few things about him. We will first speak about his family and when he was born. Then we will show his authority. Afterward we will include some about his kind of teaching. Therefore we receive from what has been interpreted that Isaiah was born about eight hundred years before the birth of Christ our Savior, as is plainly testified by the rule of those kings at the times when Isaiah engaged in his prophetic office. Moreover, he was born from a family that was hardly obscure but most distinguished and royal. For his father was Amos—not the prophet who is included in the list of the Minor Prophets but the one whom the ancestors passed down as the brother of Amaziah, king of Judah. And since Christ descends from the line of Amaziah, who was the uncle of Isaiah, it follows that Isaiah calls Christ his relative. PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>15</sup>

**HOW TO READ THE BOOK.** JOHANNES OECOLAMPADIUS: Behold, Christ himself, in reading this book, not only commended it but also taught how it ought to be read, which is going to be demonstrated in this preface. . . . We read that Jesus came to Nazareth, where he was raised, entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day according to his custom, and arose to read. And the book of Isaiah was handed to him, which he unrolled to find the

passage in Scripture, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me, he has sent me to preach good news. . . .” Then he rolled up the book to return to the servant and said to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” And all the eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. . . . And if anyone reads it well, they will also learn from it that the glory of Christ is made known and we are admonished. And it is necessary to read the prophet carefully. Or do you think that it is without mysteries that Christ himself unrolls and rolls up the book? Do you think that he rises and reads rashly? Do you think that it is for no reason that he did this on the Sabbath? Therefore, let us learn what seems to us to be the reasons. Christ himself opens the book. For the sense of Scripture is opened to no one except those who seek Christ and to whom Christ reveals himself. For he himself holds the key of David. “He shuts and no one opens; he opens and no one shuts.” . . . And in fact, you could say that the Holy Spirit is the doorkeeper, who opens it to no one except those who enter by the gate, which is Christ. Therefore, they waste all their work in vain who seek in the prophets anything other than Christ and the Christian life. That is the way Christ opened and closed the book.

Learn now why he read it on the Sabbath day, for this also pertains to us. For he admonishes us to sanctify the Sabbath as worthy to God, abstaining from servile works, I say, from evil affections: greed, jealousy, empty fear, trifles, delights, and similar things—if indeed we hope to benefit from the reading. PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>16</sup>

**GRAMMAR AND HISTORY FIRST.** MARTIN LUTHER: Two things are necessary to explain the prophet. The first is a knowledge of grammar, and this may be regarded as having the greatest weight. The second is more necessary, namely, a knowledge of the historical background, not only as an

<sup>14</sup>Oecolampadius, *In Isaiam*, 2v-3r; Marlorat, *Esaias*, iii.

<sup>15</sup>Brenz, *Esaias*, i.

<sup>16</sup>Oecolampadius, *In Isaiam*, 2r-v; citing Lk 4:18, 21; Rev 3:7. <sup>1</sup>A longer portion is quoted in Marlorat, *Esaias*, i.r-ii.v.

understanding of the events themselves as they are expressed in letters and syllables, but at the same time embracing rhetoric and dialectic, so that the figures of speech and the circumstances may be carefully heeded. Therefore, having command of the grammar in the first place, you must quickly move on to the histories, namely, what those kings under whom Isaiah prophesied did; and these matters must be carefully examined and thoroughly studied. The chief and leading theme of all the prophets is their aim to keep people in eager anticipation of the coming Christ. LECTURES ON ISAIAH.<sup>17</sup>

**THE HEBREW LANGUAGE.** JOHANNES OECOLAMPADIUS: I am compelled to confess that the mind of the prophet cannot be discerned in many places from the Greek or the Latin. So unless one had the ability to read Hebrew and had consulted the commentaries of the Hebrews, then he certainly would not be prepared to attain it. . . . I gave a new translation, which was not lacking in the Hebrew truth, which in the Old Testament one most especially ought to consider and observe. But I did not, for that reason, disregard what was handed down from Jerome and the Septuagint. Yet since I was able to drink from the fount, why should I to stoop to the stream? And for this reason you will hear in several places what moved me, because I changed several things in my edition. May those who are untrained not entirely believe this was purposeless. PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>18</sup>

**THE APPROPRIATE USE OF THE HEBREW.** FRANCISCO FORERIUS: There are also some other places to be pointed out to the readers, and that especially I did not return to the Hebrew for any reason other than to confirm the old translator. For, as educated people have the habit of doing, he generally expressed not so much the words as the sense. And on this account, one is unfortunately

accustomed to hear from those who are too curious and not very learned, and perhaps frequently do not have a good mind. They are those who think they have sufficiently proved what they are saying when they employ the Jews as witnesses, who affirm that the Hebrew words are not often expressed in our old translation. For this reason, I did not judge it useless if rendering something word for word that I would, as far as possible, also show that the Vulgate translator had in countless passages expressed his thoughts very skillfully and well, and that those who accuse him in those same passages depart furthest from the truth. I always affixed myself to the Hebrew words themselves; except when the speech was so unusual that it could in no way be understood in Latin, I retained the Hebraism. I hardly ever changed the order of the words. I did not add any sayings other than, in some passages, a substantive word, as they call it, and relative words, which the Hebrews regularly leave out. I did this more freely for the reason that I wanted to show how much freedom other translators had claimed for themselves, or to say it more accurately, how much recklessness. For if anyone adds some saying in any part of speech, he will by no means interpret Scripture faithfully but will pervert it. Christian reader, you have my view: I want nothing else in my translation, you see, than religion and faith. . . . I have divided the verses almost everywhere with the Hebrews. In some passages, however, I have shown that the divisions or punctuation was done poorly by the Masoretes, or whoever they ultimately were. I often translated the sayings as if they were written with other vowel points than are now read in the Bibles. For the one who applied the points and the divisions performed the duty of an interpreter. Therefore, as he could sometimes be misled, so according to me and many other learned men, those hold no greater weight than the interpretations of the rabbis, especially when I see that among those rabbis themselves, they vary greatly in this matter, and not all in the same way, just like neither the ancient interpreters nor the Chaldean paraphrases

<sup>17</sup>LW 16:3 (WA 31.2:1).

<sup>18</sup>Oecolampadius, *In Isaiam*, a.4v, 2v-3r; Marlorat, *Esaiæ*, ii.v-ii.r.



expressed things in the same voice. PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>19</sup>

#### ARTICLES OF FAITH IN ISAIAH. PHILIPP

MELANCHTHON: In the speeches of the prophets, the reasons are explained why the church was subjected to the cross, true and effective consolations are included, and promises are recited and illustrated about the mediator, the forgiveness of sins, the preservation of the church, the presence of God in the church, his hearing us and alleviating punishments in this life to serve the church, and the gift and glory of eternal life when all evil is destroyed entirely. Moreover, it is necessary for every member of the church of God to have a foundation, that is, all the articles of faith. The testimonies of the prophets ought to be sought for each article, and in the writings of Isaiah, the most abundant testimonies exist on all the particular articles. ARGUMENT OF ISAIAH.<sup>20</sup>

#### LEARNING HUMBLY FROM ISAIAH. JOHANNES

OECOLAMPADIUS: We read about how that ethnic and unlearned eunuch experienced the wonderful grace of God, since he was dwelling in this prophet so much with a righteous mind. For when he had come to worship in Jerusalem and was returning in his chariot, reading Isaiah, the Spirit said to Philip, “Approach that chariot and join it.” . . . Behold how happily the eunuch left, how much treasure reading Isaiah brought him, and ultimately how much joy he brought back to his house, even though at the beginning he was a rudimentary reader. He admitted his ignorance. But he changed from a rudimentary mind to a righteous one, and to a foreigner of arrogance who was not ashamed to learn, nor reluctant to comply. So more plentiful grace also followed. And we, too, will not go away without great fruit if we become eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven, renouncing the pleasures of this world, and if we worship the Lord in the heavenly Jerusalem, asking that his Spirit bring us

an apostle—that is, the teaching of the apostles—who, sitting in the chariot of our minds, also reveals hidden things to us that Isaiah preaches about Jesus as the Christ. We, too, would become more learned and happier from that. I think it is clear enough from those few examples how much authority Isaiah has and how it can be usefully read. PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>21</sup>

#### THE USE OF THE PROPHETS AFTER CHRIST.

WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: Moreover, it is not that we say, “Therefore after the light of the New Testament, there is no more use for the prophetic Scriptures.” There is a different use of them before and after the coming of Christ, because according to the difference of times it is beneficial in one way and another. But in no time should they be judged as useless. Before the coming of Christ, what was being commanded in the books and the future that is promised was given so that the faith of the saints would be directed toward what was promised. It was also so that they would depend on everything contained in these writings and not trust in their own merit of righteousness or external worship. Instead, they were to trust in what was being promised in the divine oracles, so that all the nations of the whole earth would be blessed in them. They were to do this even though they did not clearly understand those mysteries in the same way as we now understand them after his truth began to shine in the world. After the coming of Christ, the oracles of the prophets ought to be read and unrolled, not to impose on them the light of the New Testament Scriptures but to serve our faith by what is reported about Christ to us in the Gospels and the apostolic writings. These are confirmed when compared to the prophetic predictions so that we may understand from them that all the dispensation and doctrine of Christ the Savior was by no means humanly fabricated but divinely determined by God and predicted by the prophets and

<sup>19</sup>Forerius, *Iesaiæ*, b.ii.r-v.

<sup>20</sup>MO 13:795.

<sup>21</sup>Oecolampadius, *In Iesaiam*, 2v; citing Acts 8; quoted in Marlorat, *Iesaiæ*, ii.r.

fulfilled in Christ. This confirmation is of great use to our faith and an exceedingly great necessity. In this way, Christ himself is the goal, as the Gospel writers and the apostles cite the testimonies of the prophets throughout. They confirm that nothing of their own is conveyed, and nothing new and humanly invented proclaimed, but that the time for human salvation to be accomplished has arrived. These trustworthy oracles of the seers predicted those things accordingly much before their times. PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>22</sup>

**THE DEATH OF ISAIAH.** ZACHARIAS URSINUS: Reformed theologians get our knowledge of Isaiah's death from the rabbis. He was killed by Manasseh and cut in two by a saw. Nevertheless, this account survives in Epiphanius's book *On the Death of the Prophets*, as well as in Jerome's commentaries. And this is very much in keeping with Manasseh's wickedness and cruelty as described in the sacred history. I won't mention the other miracles that are told about him by the Jews and recounted in Epiphanius's book. We need only consider his martyrdom, since it confirms Isaiah's teaching more than other arguments, and we learn from his example. In return for his eighty years of labor, the endless slanders and insults he suffered from kings throughout that whole time, from wicked priests, from courtiers and the common people, in return for the prayers and plans he poured out on so many occasions for the salvation of his country, in return for the extraordinary brilliance of his heavenly teaching—and in this he surpassed all the prophets who preceded him—in return for the enormous benefits bestowed on the church in his own generation and indeed all generations until the end of the world, martyrdom is the reward he received from the world, actually from his own people, his close relations, and his own kin. PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>23</sup>

**THE LEGACY OF ISAIAH.** JOHANNES BRENZ: But although people were ungrateful toward Isaiah, God was nevertheless most gracious toward him, and compensated all his work and all his labor most abundantly. For not only did he preserve him in death and give him the inheritance of a heavenly kingdom, but he also dignified him with such honor many years after his death, such that an angel would announce his words to the virgin when Christ the Son of God was conceived, because the message was the most excellent of all by far and most welcome by all humankind. PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>24</sup>

**TWO PARTS OF THE BOOK.** VIKTORIN STRIGEL: There are two parts to the book of Isaiah. One is containing the historical in thirty-nine chapters; the other part is the prophetic. This distribution ought to be understood according to the rule, "the announcement is from the leader." For although in the earlier first part, promises about the Messiah and the calling of the Gentiles are woven in, yet Isaiah was a spectator and overseer of those particular matters, which are commemorated in that part. For he saw two sieges of the city of Jerusalem, one when Ahaz was reigning, the other when Hezekiah was reigning. He was also a spectator to the exile of the ten tribes, which happened in the sixth year of the reign of Hezekiah. For in the sixth year of Hezekiah, Samaria was captured and the ten tribes were carried away to Assyria. In the fourteenth year, Sennacherib attacked Jerusalem. ORATION ON THE PROPHET ISAIAH.<sup>25</sup>

**THREE PARTS TO THE BOOK.** MARTIN LUTHER: But although the larger part of the prophets spoke about the physical kingdom, yet they do (granted, with the most concise words) lead to Christ. Therefore, more ought to be considered in the designs and intentions of the prophets than their words. So, therefore Isaiah says many things about his people and the physical kingdom, in some

<sup>22</sup>Musculus, *In Esaiam*, 1-2.

<sup>23</sup>Ursinus, *Iesaiam*, 9. <sup>24</sup>See also Melancthon in MO 13:797.

<sup>24</sup>Brenz, *Esaias*, 4.

<sup>25</sup>Strigel, *Oratio De Propheta Esaiam*, 39.

places he condemns sins, in other places he praises righteousness. And it is evident that nearly all the prophecies were directed to the people, but yet at the same time also, he prepares and lifts up the minds of the people to the future kingdom of Christ. . . . But this whole prophecy is best summarized in three parts, namely, the prediction of the future captivity in Babylon, then about the return from that, and third about Christ.

LECTURES ON ISAIAH.<sup>26</sup>

**THE DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK.** JOHANNES OECOLAMPADIUS:

Under Uzziah, he prophesied all the way to chapter 6.

Under Jotham, he saw the vision in chapter 6.

Under Ahaz, he preached what is from chapter 7 to the end of 14.

Under Hezekiah, from 15 up to chapter 40.

Yet it is uncertain whether the rest that follows he also preached under king Hezekiah or under Manasseh, his successor. Certainly from chapter 40 to 49, he prophesied the history of Cyrus and the liberation from the Babylonian captivity.

From chapter 49 all the way to the end of the book, he clearly and without types preaches about Christ and the church. PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>27</sup>

**THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE BOOK.** ZACHARIAS URSINUS: Some divide the book into six parts. While some of the earlier interpreters separate it according to the sequence of the kings under

whom Isaiah prophesied, two of the more recent interpreters treat it according to the subject matters.

First is from the beginning of the book all the way to the beginning of chapter 6, in which they think the oracles pronounced under Uzziah are contained.

The second is contained in chapter 6, in which the vision portrayed to the prophet under Jotham is described.

The third you have from the beginning of the seventh all the way to the end of the fourteenth chapter, encompassing the speeches under Ahaz.

The fourth, from the beginning of 15 to the end of chapter 39, is what was pronounced under Hezekiah.

The fifth is from the beginning of 40 all the way to the end of 48, which is the promise of liberation of the people from Babylon by Cyrus.

The sixth is from the beginning of 49 all the way to the end of the book, which is about the liberation by the Messiah, that is, about Christ and the church, or his reign.

Others add a division in two parts. The first is all the way to the beginning of chapter 40, containing a mix of threats, warnings, exhortations, and promises, which subdivide into four, as was already said before. And the second is from the beginning of chapter 40 to the end, containing promises and comforts, which also subdivide into the two parts previously identified. PREFACE TO COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup>LW 16:3-4, 5 (WA 31.2:2.1-7, 2.31-33).

<sup>27</sup>Oecolampadius, *In Iesaiam*, 5v.

<sup>28</sup>Ursinus, *Iesaiam*, 9.

## 1:1-9 A VISION REGARDING UNREPENTANCE

**1** *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.*

<sup>2</sup>*Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth;  
for the LORD has spoken:*

*“Children<sup>a</sup> have I reared and brought up,  
they have rebelled against me.*

*but <sup>3</sup>The ox knows its owner,  
and the donkey its master’s crib,*

*but Israel does not know,  
my people do not understand.”*

<sup>4</sup>*Ah, sinful nation,  
a people laden with iniquity,*

*offspring of evildoers,  
children who deal corruptly!*

*They have forsaken the LORD,  
they have despised the Holy One of Israel,  
they are utterly estranged.*

<sup>5</sup>*Why will you still be struck down?  
Why will you continue to rebel?*

*The whole head is sick,  
and the whole heart faint.*

<sup>6</sup>*From the sole of the foot even to the head,  
there is no soundness in it,*

*but bruises and sores  
and raw wounds;*

*they are not pressed out or bound up  
or softened with oil.*

<sup>7</sup>*Your country lies desolate;  
your cities are burned with fire;*

*in your very presence  
foreigners devour your land;  
it is desolate, as overthrown by foreigners.*

<sup>8</sup>*And the daughter of Zion is left  
like a booth in a vineyard,*

*like a lodge in a cucumber field,  
like a besieged city.*

<sup>9</sup>*If the LORD of hosts  
had not left us a few survivors,*

*we should have been like Sodom,  
and become like Gomorrah.*

<sup>a</sup> Or Sons; also verse 4

**OVERVIEW:** In the opening chapter, Reformation commentators address some of the same issues as they do in their prefaces. These include the history and background of Isaiah himself, especially the kings identified in the opening verse, and different kinds of prophecies. They introduce the major themes of the book, particularly noting the importance of listening to and obeying God’s word, understanding the figures and mysteries of prophecy,

and the need for repentance. From this opening chapter, many of these interpreters begin making the connections between the Old Testament people referred to in various ways and the New Testament church. This enables them repeatedly to make direct applications to the time of Jesus and their own times, with a particular emphasis on the smallness of the remnant that remains faithful.

## 1:1 *The Vision of Isaiah*

### THE MULTIPLE TIMES AND AUDIENCES OF THE PROPHET'S MINISTRY. KONRAD PELLIKAN:

This title is presented first, before all the sermons of Isaiah the prophet in which he faithfully explained the heavenly oracles, as commanded by God, to the kingdom of the tribes of Judah and the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem. Indeed, they were first directed to the times of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. All that Isaiah saw, he prophesied for those times. Second, Isaiah has the most distinguished order of the prophets. He distributed the order of his visions differently from the convention of those others. This is the most erudite and faithful book to be constructed, according to some, as Jerome testifies on this passage. Finally, it is useful to the church of the faithful dispersed throughout the whole earth, who also need exhortations, threats, and examples, just as the Jewish people who sinned by neglecting the Lord's word. So likewise when those in the church continue to sin, they are healed by the same remedies from the word of God. The result is that these sermons of Isaiah equally serve the church gathered from the nations now and always, as they previously did the Jews. COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 1:1.<sup>1</sup>

### NAMED AUTHORS. PHILIPP MELANCHTHON:

The title is the beginning because God does not want books to exist in the church without certain authors; therefore he calls prophets and apostles, and he adorns them with testimonies so that we may know from whom and by whom doctrines are received. Therefore it is necessary for the title to come first. Moreover, the introduction is powerfully great, "Hear, O heavens and earth," because God wants his voice to be heard by every kind of human, and he wants the church to be known in the world. ARGUMENT OF ISAIAH.<sup>2</sup>

**WHO IS ISAIAH?** MARTIN BORRHAUS: "Son of Amos." This indeed is not Amos the prophet, who is third among the twelve mentioned, who is not called 'āmôš but 'āmôs. Further, it is uncertain from which tribe and which house Isaiah was born. It is old kaballah of the Hebrews that Amoz and Amaziah, king of the Jews, were brothers. And if this is the case, then his royal family brought not a little splendor to Isaiah the prophet, and it would not be surprising that he was more free in his rebuking and more eloquent than others, with his style of speaking considered forceful, full, and impressive. But since this view on the lineage of Isaiah the seer is not proven from the sacred history (and it is not promoted at present), Isaiah was approved by the divine Spirit, not because of his earthly descent and origin but based on the divine oracles, which generate new and heavenly humans in the Messiah, and abolish the old ones. ORACLES IN ISAIAH ON 1:1.<sup>3</sup>

**VISION AS PROPHECY.** JOHN CALVIN: The Hebrew word *ḥazôn* [vision], though it is derived from *ḥazah*, "he saw," and literally is a vision, yet it commonly signifies a prophecy. For when the Scripture makes mention of special visions which were exhibited to the prophets in a symbolical manner, when it was the will of God that some extraordinary event should receive confirmation, in such cases the word *mareh*, "vision," is employed. . . . Thus the inscription of Isaiah recommends to us the teaching of this book, as containing no human reasonings but the oracles of God, in order to convince us that it contains nothing except what was revealed by the Spirit of God. COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 1:1.<sup>4</sup>

**HEAR THE SERMON.** JOHANNES BRENZ: In this speech, therefore, Isaiah exhorts the inhabitants of the kingdom of Judah and his listeners, the Jerusalemites, to repentance. From the beginning, he blames them for their sins, then he also blames

<sup>1</sup>Pellikan, *Commentaria Bibliorum* 3:A-1; partially quoted in Marlorat, *Esaiæ*, 1r.

<sup>2</sup>MO 13:801.

<sup>3</sup>Borrhaus, *In Iesaiæ Prophetæ Oracula*, 2r.

<sup>4</sup>CTS 13:35-36 (CO 36:27).

their hypocritical and superstitious righteousness. Third, he examines the true fruit of repentance and true good works that God ordered. Finally, when he sees that neither the leaders nor the subordinates were becoming better, either by the preaching of the word of God or by punishments, he promised the revealing of righteousness in the Messiah so that the faithful would indeed be saved while the wicked would perish perpetually. Therefore, let us hear the speech of Isaiah. This is the beginning of his speech where the prophet provokes attention. COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 1:1.<sup>5</sup>

**CARNAL AND SPIRITUAL JERUSALEM.** JOHANNES OECOLAMPADIUS: For these things have been written not only on account of the fleshly but also the spiritual Jerusalem. Isaiah did not write only for his own times but also for ours, which are called “the ends of the ages.” He did not write for one race of humanity but for all. This is in the same way that the apostles, when writing an epistle to one church, wanted it to benefit all ages and churches. Under these kings, the prophet was inspired by the Holy Spirit. The studious reader should keep in mind the histories that happened in the times of those kings. COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 1:1.<sup>6</sup>

**A CALL TO REPENTANCE LIKE JOHN THE BAPTIST.** ULRICH ZWINGLI: For the sense is: this is the speech that Isaiah had for Judah and Jerusalem, where he charged them with faithlessness and shatters their foreign hopes. Moreover, it should be noted that the Hebrews generally have the custom that when they make mention about the activity of someone, they address only the main and particular points that are said about the activity. This is like when the Evangelists wrote and proclaimed about the blessed Baptist, “Woe to you, you brood of vipers, who showed you the way to flee from the coming wrath?” They were content to mention this mark of prophetic harshness, with

the rest of the sharpness and firmness being readily apparent. Without a doubt, the blessed Baptist proclaimed many things to many people before so many people came running to him. But the earlier Evangelists reported only a few things in their accounts. Yet a little later, John delivered the entire sum of the Gospel to be handed down from his preaching. ANNOTATIONS ON ISAIAH 1:1.<sup>7</sup>

**HISTORY AS A FOUNDATION POINTING TO THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST.** JOHANNES OECOLAMPADIUS: Just as it is necessary for those who explain the prophets to have either a faithful interpretation or knowledge of the languages, so, as I said, it was also needed to properly remember the histories of the times in which the prophecies occurred. For unless those are rightly laid as a foundation, whatever is built on top will collapse, and to the extent that they have been handled rightly, the mysteries of allegories can also be happily gathered. Be careful not to despise them entirely, nor unreasonably advance them, for Scripture is unworthy of both. But in order that you may use these more skillfully, know that when the prophets foretold about future things this way, they did not neglect their own times meanwhile. . . . Likewise it often happens that, just as the histories are true in themselves, so also are the mysteries they foreshadow with a certain type—either about Christ or the antichrist. So let the diligent commentator ignore neither. But first let him weave together the history, then also uncover the wrappings of the mysteries, reported by the apostles. And let him show us what the Spirit wants us to either imitate or lift up, aided in doing this by careful comparison of Scriptures. For it cannot be denied that everything that was written “[was] written down for our instruction” . . . not only so we learn but also so that we may receive from it something beneficial; not merely for knowledge, which would be vanity, but also for life. . . . So also in our Isaiah, let us first hear what he said to his own times, and then let us look for

<sup>5</sup>Brenz, *Esaias*, 7.

<sup>6</sup>Oecolampadius, *In Isaiam*, 4r-5v; Marlorat, *Esaias*, 2.

<sup>7</sup>ZSW 14:109; citing Mt 3:7.

what is implied for us through those things.  
COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 1:1.<sup>8</sup>

### 1:2-6 *Rebellion of the Sons*

**THE FATHER CALLS THEM SONS.** DIETRICH SCHNEPFF: For the first part of the antithesis, he indeed describes the kindness and mercy of the Lord toward his people with three terms. He does this so significantly that it could not be any briefer nor more brilliant. For since he does not call them his servants nor his people but sons, he shows that he is a father toward those who were moved in their soul. Moreover, as nothing is greater than paternal love, so the inclination of his will toward such people could not be expressed with a clearer term than *sons*. SCHOLIA ON ISAIAH 1:2.<sup>9</sup>

**AN ALLEGORY OF A FATHER RAISING CHILDREN.** MARTIN LUTHER: “They were adopted as children, and indeed they ought to be children, because I showed myself to them as a Father. I not only brought them up, protected them, and increased their number, but I also exalted them, glorified them, and made much of them. I made their name holy. I gave them kings and princes so that there was no other kingdom of this kind on earth.” God is good by nature, and he does not cast his kindness in the teeth of those who acknowledge that they have received this from God their Father. On the other hand, he berates the ungodly for their incalculable ingratitude. . . . “But they have rebelled against me.” That is, “they have deserted me; they have withdrawn from me; and though exalted by me, they have dropped their excrement into my hand.” The world treats us in the same way, no matter how much we have done for it. Whoever wishes to live in the world and desires to imitate God, his Father, should expect from the world the same treatment that God receives. LECTURES ON ISAIAH 1:2.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Oecolampadius, *In Isaiaam*, 5r-6v; citing 1 Cor 10:11; citing the bronze serpent from Num 21 as an example.

<sup>9</sup>Schneppf, *In Esaiæ*, 11.

<sup>10</sup>LW 16:7-8 (WA 31:24.8-25).

**A HEAP OF INIQUITIES.** WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: But the strength of this metaphor ought to be noted, for besides understanding that they were plunged into deep filth in their iniquity, at the same time he charges them, not for erring or for sinning in their thinking (as pliable people have the habit of doing) but rather for having a fixed intention of mind to maintain their stubbornness. It is as if he were saying they were bought by unrighteousness or sold to behave badly. The Jews were sinning and behaving unjustly, but without repentance. And so, also adding to their earlier disgraces, they were accumulating a most serious heap of iniquities on their heads. COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 1:4.<sup>11</sup>

**FOLLOWING HUMAN TRADITIONS.** JOHANNES OECOLAMPADIUS: Since we sin no less than them when we forsake the word of God and follow human traditions as they did, we who do this are easily convicted of being full of sin. Furthermore, in rebuking one wicked person, the Scripture blames all of them. For all wicked people belong to the one body of antichrist, just as all good persons are members of the body of Christ. And this is precisely why Scripture concludes that we are all under sin, the curse, and slavery, and condemns us as enemies of God and liable to eternal death. Therefore, what God was threatening through the mouth of the prophet to his contemporaries, that was threatened likewise to the later ages through Scripture. Indeed, that rebuke was also serving in the times when Christ was crucified by the Jews, with wickedness raging beyond measure. But it also serves our times, which are no less evil. The wicked in all ages will have their own Sennacheribs, and many are going to die before they migrate from here, just as the Jews were flogged. But generally all who do not return to the voice of God will have far more dreadful sufferings after this life—those that are infernal and eternal. COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 1:4.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Musculus, *In Esaiam*, 19, as quoted in Marlorat, *Esaiæ*, 4a.

<sup>12</sup>Oecolampadius, *In Isaiaam*, 6v-1.

**PIGS BATHING IN MUD.** MARTIN LUTHER: Our Holy One is Christ, who sanctifies us through the word of truth. Yet many attack this true and only sanctification with another sanctity that is counterfeit and false. A pig is led unwillingly to a bath because it thinks this is mud. On the other hand, it is willing to go into mud because it considers this a bath. Thus the wicked sectarians abhor the truth because they are delighted by lies. LECTURES ON ISAIAH 1:3-6.<sup>13</sup>

**UNDERSCORING ISRAEL'S OBSTINACY.** THOMAS COOPER: From the beginning of the fifth verse to the tenth, he greatly amplifies their wayward stubbornness, declaring that as they could not be won to repentance nor moved to turn to their gracious Lord by consideration of his exceedingly great benefits toward them, neither could they be reclaimed nor at all moved with grievous plagues and punishments. That was the only purpose (as a merciful father) for which he had brought these on them. Rather, by the same plagues, they increased in stubbornness and waxed every day worse than the other. Therefore he says, "To what end should I plague or scourge you with adversity any further seeing your obstinacy, as you will increase in wickedness and still heap sin upon sin and offense upon offense?" EXPOSITION OF OLD TESTAMENT CHAPTERS READ AT COMMON PRAYER.<sup>14</sup>

**INCURABLE UNREPENTANCE.** WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: Therefore it is evident that the prophet demonstrates with an irrefutable argument how incurable Israel's unrepentance is, based on what was happening among them in their present time. For they were behaving just like a wicked boy continuing his malice between beatings. So he shows with clear evidence that they could not be corrected by any blows. EXCERPT ON ISAIAH 1:6.<sup>15</sup>

**UNCHASTE CHASTITY.** KATHARINA SCHÜTZ ZELL: However, they do not punish and have never

punished the unchaste "chastity" of celibacy, the sin-flowing harlotry of Sodom and Noah's age; but instead they protect it. Indeed, temporal and spiritual authorities have made a covenant together about this to strive powerfully against God. Those who ought to be inclined to all integrity and to give it a helping hand must allow it to be said of them that one has five, six harlots, another seven women in childbed at the same time, and nevertheless a pretty prostitute at home, and many such like things. It is indeed as Isaiah says, "There is no health from the soles of their feet to the head." APOLOGIA FOR MASTER MATTHEW ZELL, HER HUSBAND.<sup>16</sup>

### 1:7-9 *The Devastation of the Land and a Remnant*

**FUTURE DESTRUCTION.** WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: So the Lord threatened his people repeatedly that he was going to bring enemies from far away to their land, namely, from Assyria and Babylon, whose language they could not understand. . . . This was to signify that he was going to bring on them enemies who were strangers to all sympathy, and who were all going to be involved in devastating and ruining everything to the point of destruction. So we read about the Assyrians that their heart was prone to not be chastised but was going to be crushed and destroyed, as later. EXCERPT ON ISAIAH 1:7.<sup>17</sup>

**HYPOCRITES AS TRAITORS.** HEINRICH BULLINGER: Then they provoked the Holy One of Israel himself to burning anger by their rebellion. For they contradicted the word of God, they blasphemed God, they persecuted the prophets, they retained idolatry and superstition, they imposed it on others by force—all things that provoke God. Finally, they "defected from the rear." This is why he especially treats them as hypocrites.

<sup>13</sup>LW 16:10 (WA 31.2:6.18-23).

<sup>14</sup>Cooper, *Brief Exposition*, 31\*.

<sup>15</sup>Musculus, *In Esaiam*, 22 as quoted in Marlorat, *Esaiæ*, 4r.

<sup>16</sup>Zell, *Katharina Schütz Zell, Church Mother*, 74-75.

<sup>17</sup>Musculus, *In Esaiam*, 22 as quoted in Marlorat, *Esaiæ*, 5r; citing Deut 28; Is 49; 10:7.



For just as traitors in an army are civilians who join the ranks, but when there is about to be fighting they defect from the rear and betray the army, so hypocrites imitate piety, but when a crisis comes, they reveal that they are such that they betray ecclesiastical and political matters, defecting from the truth when they should have been especially steadfast. Let each one now likewise apply these things to the customs of his own church and accuse sins equally among the people and the leaders—and all to this end that sins be properly acknowledged, and each one seriously reflect on correction, so that we ourselves do not perish in the end but are saved in Jesus Christ our Lord. SERMONS ON ISAIAH 1:7-8.<sup>18</sup>

**SATANIC INGRATITUDE.** JOHANNES BRENZ: Ingratitude is entirely a satanic crime. For Satan in the beginning was created by God through his Son and adorned with the highest gifts above all the other angels, but immediately he was ungrateful to God his benefactor. He arrogantly wanted divine majesty for himself and Christ to be overthrown from his seat of majesty, which he is even still attempting and always will be attempting. Then Satan also inspired Adam with ungratefulness when he persuaded him that it was better to believe his word than that of God. And so Adam was ungrateful to God, because he thought God was deceitful and Satan was being truthful. From Adam is derived later ingratitude in all flesh. But those born again in Christ receive the Holy Spirit, in whom they purify the natural human ingratitude. This is why works must be given to us through Christ, so that we flee from ingratitude and not perish eternally together with Satan. COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 1:8.<sup>19</sup>

**A SMALL NUMBER OF CHOSEN.** JOHN CALVIN: The prophet here describes utter destruction; and yet, because God had to deal with his church and his beloved people, that judgment is mitigated by

special grace, so that out of the general ruin of the whole nation God rescues his people, whom he justly compares to a very small remnant. . . . This is the reason assigned by Paul, who is the best interpreter of this passage, when, by quoting it, he represses the haughtiness of the Jews, that they may not boast of the mere name, as if it had been enough that they were descended from the fathers; for he reminds them that God could act toward them as he had formerly done toward the fathers, but that through his tender mercies a remnant shall be saved. And why? That the church may not utterly perish; for it is through the favor that he bears toward it that the Lord . . . still reserves some small seed. This statement ought to yield us powerful consolation even in those heaviest calamities in which we are apt to think that it is all over with the church. . . . We also learn from it that we ought not to judge by the largeness of the number, unless we choose to prefer the chaff to the wheat, because the quantity is greater; but we ought to be satisfied with knowing that, though the number of the godly be small, still God acknowledges them as his chosen people. COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 1:9.<sup>20</sup>

**A FEW SAVED BY GOD'S MERCY.** JOHANNES BRENZ: "Unless the Lord," he says, "had left us a few survivors." The Lord saves a few certain ones by his mercy. He does not save them by their own righteousness or wisdom. "In the flood only eight were saved." What about them? Were they really not saved by their own righteousness and prudence? Not at all, but by the mercy of God. For God could also have destroyed them in the flood, if he had been inclined to exercise his severity rather than his compassion. In the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot was saved with his daughters. Yet they were saved by the mercy of God and not their own merits. In the Babylonian devastation of the city of Jerusalem, some of the Israelites escaped unharmed, but very few, and that by divine benevolence, not by their righteousness. So also in

<sup>18</sup>Bullinger, *Isaias*, 4r.

<sup>19</sup>Brenz, *Esaias*, 10.

<sup>20</sup>CTS 13:52-53 (CO 36:36-37); citing Rom 9:27-29.

the calling of the Gentiles to the knowledge of Christ, and the blinding and rejection of the Jews, some of the Jews were converted to Christ and were saved. Those, too, had merited rejection along with the rest, but God wanted to make a notable remnant among them for the riches of his glory, as Paul says, as vessels of mercy that he prepared in advance for glory. COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH 1:9.<sup>21</sup>

**A REMNANT BY ELECTION.** MARTIN BORRHAUS: God did not reject his people whom he foreknew. So, therefore at this time there was a remnant by the grace of election. When the apostle refers to the preservation of the remnant during Hezekiah's reign, he applies the passage to the remnant who were set free from the power of the spiritual Assyria, the antichrist, at the time the Messiah was presented to the world. The apostles disclosed that the antichrist had begun to construct the errors of his kingdom in their time. And with the veil withdrawn from the Israelites and mystical Jerusalem, we recognize saved remnants also of Gentiles in the church, described as offspring of Abraham's promise—a lost son in the beginning drawn to defection from the gospel at that time. Few, if you consider the entire world, are the survivors vindicated from his tyranny by the ministry of the gospel. ORACLES IN ISAIAH ON 1:9.<sup>22</sup>

**WARNED FROM OTHER CITIES.** WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: The prophet does not say the daughter of Zion is besieged or desolated, but the city is besieged or desolated, that is, it was

desolated and deserted in the same way as if it had been hostilely besieged. When the chief city is besieged, all the surrounding nearby regions, the district, and the remaining cities have already been conquered. . . . We see in this passage that the city previously most renowned is compared to a cottage in a vineyard with the remains after the harvest. Therefore, the great cities that are also in the nearby regions should also think about what could happen to them if they provoke the Lord by their shameful ways. EXCERPTS ON ISAIAH 1:9.<sup>23</sup>

**WHAT ABOUT THE COVENANT?** RUDOLF GWALTHER: But so that we may respond to the Jews, it should not be objected, "So God did not forget his covenant, did he?" And then, "He did not abandon his inheritance altogether, did he?" The prophet shows how indulgently they were treating the covenant at this point, even though they deserved to be utterly destroyed. For it says, "Unless the Lord of hosts had left a few survivors. . . ." With these words he totally wants to say this, "So indeed, we have suffered, and we see these heavier things remaining on us—whether the atrocities of our crimes or the power of all the enemies joined together rising up against us with immense cruelty. But it is the goodness of God here that wants a small surviving remnant among us to remain, from whom we are restored. . . ." Therefore, we ought not to lament the severity of God, but rather deplore our stubbornness, which to this point they could not correct with a penalty, nor soften by the leniency of God. SERMONS ON ISAIAH 1:9.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Brenz, *Esaias*, 13-14; citing 1 Pet 3:20; Rom 9.

<sup>22</sup>Borrrhaus, *In Isaiiae Prophetiae Oracula*, 8.

<sup>23</sup>Musculus, *In Esaiam*, 23 as quoted in Marlorat, *Esaiiae*, 6v.

<sup>24</sup>Gwalther, *Isaias*, 5r-v.

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