

PREFACE

I had the privilege of spending most of 2007 living with my brother msc in our Italian provincial house in Rome, ten minutes walk from the library of the Pontifical Biblical Institute. I thank the Australian Provincial Council for organising this time for me, my Italian brothers for their hospitality, and Father James Dugan SJ for so graciously allowing me such easy access to the library. On the academic side, I am especially grateful to Father Ulrich Berges MSC, professor of Old Testament studies at the University of Münster, who gave me invaluable assistance in working my way through the complexities of modern research into Isaiah, and who kindly read and commented on the Introduction to this commentary.

I have been lecturing on Isaiah for over thirty years. One fruit of my recent Roman research is this introductory commentary in which I hope to make available to the interested reader an accessible starting point for further investigation of this remarkable book. In the Introduction I explain why it is that I have moved away from speaking of an anonymous exilic prophet, generally referred to as ‘Deutero-Isaiah’, and also from postulating a ‘Trito-Isaiah’ in the post-exilic period. Recent scholarship points towards the existence, during and after the Babylonian Exile, of what we might term an ‘Isaian School’ (rather than individual prophets), who continued to rethink their history in the light of the inspired words of the great eighth century prophet, Isaiah.

The Book of Isaiah covers over three hundred years of Judah’s history, and reflects on the presence and action of YHWH in that history, including the years that led up to the Fall of Jerusalem, the traumatic years of exile in Babylon, and the difficult years after the exile, in which the School of Isaiah struggled for the soul of Judah.

I thank Father Warrick Tonkin for the time and care he put into reading the manuscript and granting it the ‘Nihil Obstat’, and Archbishop Mark Coleridge for permission to publish. My prayer is that this Introductory Commentary will enrich your appreciation of this ancient and inspiring book.

– Feast of the Sacred Heart 2008