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### **The Symphonic Structure**

WE HAVE ALREADY NOTICED a few examples of the great Variety of material contained in this section of Isaiah. At many points, particularly in chapters 40 to 48, there seems to be a radical change of subject from one verse to the next. It may almost appear that the prophet simply dropped one subject and turned to an entirely different one. Then, after a verse or two, he left that for a third subject, then perhaps came back to the first or the second, and so on. These frequent transitions, often very sudden, are a marked feature of this part of the book.

The clue to the understanding of this is found right at the beginning of this section. Isaiah 40:1-2a literally reads, "Comfort my people, comfort my people, says your God. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem." The entire section might be called "Isaiah's Book of Comfort." Though he states important truths and describes wonderful acts that God will do in the future, his purpose is not simply to provide information. It is also to give comfort - to speak to the heart.

The construction of this part of Isaiah is somewhat like a symphony. A theme is presented and briefly discussed. Then a second theme is introduced which, in turn, may lead into a third. Again there is a felt need for reiteration of the first theme, then perhaps of the third again, and then of the second. Thus certain basic ideas are presented, repeated, and stressed, not merely to state the ideas they contain, important as this is, but to make a profound effect upon the hearts and minds of people who are already in their imagination suffering the horrors of the Babylonian Exile, which Isaiah had predicted (in Isa 39:5-7) just before the beginning of this section of his book.