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The missionary spirit of the Old Testament

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# Outline

## A. Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Missions and the world situation</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) The Christian message</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) The Christian motive</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) The need for missions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## II Missionary Spirit of the Old Testament

| Relation to Christian missions   | 10   |
| b) Israel, God's chosen for this purpose | 10   |

## III Significance of this paper

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growth of the Missionary Spirit in the Old Testament</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preprophetic period</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) First mention of a world mission</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Moses--Yahweh sole God of Israel</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Its significance</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Elijah--Yahweh a unique divinity</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Implication of a world religion</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B. Period of Eighth Century prophets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amos--Yahweh a just God</th>
<th>25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. God's care universal</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Religion identified with the moral law</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Hosea--Yahweh a God of love</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Supplementary to Amos' conception 29
2. A message of hope for the world 33
   c) Judah in the eighth century B.C. 34
   d) Isaiah--Yahweh a Holy God 37
      1. Holiness ethical and spiritual 39
   e) Isaiah's ministry 40
      1. Consequences of social and political corruption 42
         a. Israel a vassal of Assyria 46
         b. Sennacherib in Jerusalem 50
   f) Isaiah's historical importance 52
   g) Isaiah the prophet of faith 53
      1. Manifestations of faith
         a. His conception of Yahweh 54
            (1) God of the whole earth 55
            (2) A spiritual God 56
            (3) A rational and moral God 57
            (4) A righteous and just God 58
   h) Isaiah and the Messianic Hope 58
      1. Attractiveness of true religion 61
      2. The Immanuel prophecy 63
      3. Personality of the Messiah 64
      4. The ideal man 65
      i) Micah--Yahweh an ethical God 66
         1. Summary of prophets' teachings 68
III Period between Eighth-Century prophets and Jeremiah
   a) The prophet Zephaniah 69
   b) The prophet Nahum 70
   c) The prophet Habakkuk 71

IV The prophet Jeremiah 72
   a) Historical background for his prophecies 73
   b) Yahweh a personal God 77
   c) The New Covenant 78
   d) The significance of Jeremiah's personal life 82

V The prophet Ezekiel 84
   a) Influence of the Babylonian captivity 85
   b) Ezekiel's task 86
      1. Salvation a personal matter 89
      2. Yahweh, absolute sovereign 91
         (a) Promise of restoration 93
         (b) The New Covenant 94
         (c) The New Jerusalem 95
         (d) Value of the individual 98

VI The prophet Deutero-Isaiah 99
   a) Rise and influence of Cyrus 100
      1. Capture of Babylon 101
b) Deutero-Isaiah's message of hope

1. Yahweh a sustaining power
2. Yahweh a forgiving God
   (a) Promise of return from exile
3. Yahweh, saviour of the world
4. Yahweh sole deity
   (a) His knowledge of the future
   (b) His work as Creator
   (c) His eternity and transcendence
5. Yahweh a gracious God

c) The anointed of Yahweh

d) The Servant of Yahweh

1. His world-mission
2. His personality
3. Meaning of his sufferings
   (a) Universality of the Hebrew religion

VII The later prophets

a) The prophet Haggai
1. The future Kingdom of God

b) The prophet Zechariah
1. The city without a wall
2. Ethical conditions of the Messianic Kingdom

104
105
106
107
110
112
114
117
119
120
121
122
124
126
3. The city of truth

(c) The prophet Malachi
   1. His task
      (a) Rekindling of faith
      (b) Message of hope
      (c) Justification of Yahweh

d) The prophet Obadiah
   1. The coming judgment on the nations

e) The prophet Joel
   1. Requirements of the Day of Yahweh
   2. Degeneracy of prophecy

f) The prophet Trito-Isaiah
   1. The house of prayer for all
   2. Requirements of true religion
   3. The restored Jerusalem
   4. Yahweh's glory to all nations

VIII The unknown prophet
   a) Communion of all nations with Yahweh
   b) Hope of immortality

IX The imaginative writings of the Old Testament
   a) Missionary character of the Psalter
   b) The Book of Ruth

X The Book of Jonah
C. Summary

I Yahweh sole God of Israel 164
   a) Yahweh equal to all emergencies 165

II Yahweh a unique divinity 166
   a) Implication Israel's religion a world-religion
      1. Israel's moral opportunity and responsibility

III Yahweh a just and loving God 167
   a) God's care and love universal

IV Yahweh a holy God 168
   a) Faith an element in worship
   b) Isaiah's picture of the Messianic Age
      1. Attractiveness of true religion

V Yahweh a personal God 169
   a) Religion a matter of the heart
      1. Jeremiah's personal example

VI Yahweh Lord of all 170
   a) Israel's task
      1. Redemption of the world 171
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>vii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b)</td>
<td>Religion a sharing process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c)</td>
<td>Religion a unifying force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d)</td>
<td>Yahweh's concern for all nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. His great gift to the world</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This modern scientific age of critical analysis has not by
any means overlooked the field of religion. Missions—that
branch of religion in which we are here most interested—have
had their share of criticism. The first thing the modern
student of life asks about any institution is, what is its
"raison d'être"? If it cannot produce a satisfactory one, it is
considered unnecessary. In such a world no inherited political,
social, or economic institution can be stable.

Christian missions have been seriously questioned. They
are not taken for granted; but they are, nevertheless, one of
several movements which are profoundly affecting the human race.

But ought they to go on any longer? If so,

Missions
and the world

should there be great or little change or none?
situation

By what criterion should missions be judged?

Any institution has its place if it has sufficient value to
fulfill a need of humanity. But do modern missions have this
worthy objective? Are missions, in their effect upon individuals
good or bad? Are their influences upon the political, social
and economic structure which conditions the welfare of human
beings of this and future generations wholesome or unwhole-
some?

The initiative to answer this question has been taken by a
group of prominent laymen of seven denominations in this coun-
try. They have sent out three representative fact-finding
commissions to the three principal fields which these churches
are serving—Japan, China, and India, including Burma—"to dis-
cover what extent existing missionary organizations, policies, and programs should be continued, modified, and supplemented in the formulation of the best practical program for challenging the larger cooperation of laymen to-day."

But this was not a question which laymen alone tried to solve. Two years previous, at the Jerusalem Meeting of the International Missionary Council, held from March 24-April 8, 1928, the Church had already sought the prayers and earnest study and consideration of its most qualified men. Let us consider their answer to this challenging world situation!

They said, "Our message is Jesus Christ. He is the revelation of what God is and of what man through Him may become. In Him we come face to face with the ultimate reality of the universe; He makes known to us God as our Father, perfect and infinite in love and in righteousness; for in Him we find God incarnate, the final, yet ever-unfolding, revelation of the God in whom we live and move and have our being.

"We hold that through all that happens, in light and in darkness, God is working, ruling and overruling. Jesus Christ, in His life and through His death and resurrection, has disclosed to us the Father, the Supreme Reality, as almighty Love,

1. J.R. Mott "The Present-Day Summons to the World Mission of Christianity" p.218f
reconciling the world to Himself by the Cross, suffering with men in their struggle against sin and evil, bearing with them and for them the burden of sin, forgiving them as they, with forgiveness in their own hearts, turn to Him in repentance and faith, and creating humanity anew for an ever-growing, ever-enlarging, ever-lasting life....

"We reaffirm that God, as Jesus Christ has revealed Him, requires all His children, in all circumstances, at all times, and in all human relationships, to live in love and righteousness for His glory. By the resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit God offers His own power to men that they may be fellow workers with Him, and urges them on to a life of adventure and self-sacrifice in preparation for the coming of His Kingdom in its fulness."

"If such is our message, the motive for its delivery should be plain. The Gospel is the answer to the world's greatest need. It is not our discovery or achievement; it rests on what we recognize as an act of God. It is first and foremost 'Good News'. It announces glorious Truth. Its very nature forbids us to say that it may be the right belief for some but not for others. Either it is true for all, or it is not true at all....

"Our true and compelling motive lies in the very nature of the God to whom we have given our hearts. Since He is love, His very nature is to share. Christ is the expression in time of the eternal self-giving of the Father. Coming into fellowship with Christ we find in ourselves an overmastering impulse to share Him with others. We are constrained by the love of Christ and by obedience to His last command. He Himself said, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly!', and our experience corroborates it. He has become life to us. We would share that life.

"We are assured that Christ comes with an offer of life to man and to societies and to nations. We believe that in Him the shackles of moral evil and guilt are broken from human personality and that men are made free, and that such personal freedom lies at the basis of the freeing of society from cramping custom and blighting social practices and political bondage, so that in Christ men and societies and nations may stand up free and complete.

"...We do not go to the nations called non-Christian, because they are the worst of the world and they alone are in need--we go because they are a part of the world and share with us in the same human need--the need of redemption from ourselves and from sin, the need to have life complete and abundant and to be remade after this pattern of Christlikeness.

"...Herein lies the Christian motive; it is simple. We
cannot live without Christ and we cannot bear to think of men living without Him...

"Since Christ is the motive the end of Christian missions fits in with that motive. Its end is nothing less than the production of Christlike character in individuals and societies and nations through faith in and fellowship with Christ the living Saviour, and through corporate sharing of life in a divine society.

"Christ is our motive and Christ is our end. We must give nothing less, we can give nothing more."

No Christian can doubt that this simple straightforward statement would if understood and carried out revolutionize the world. With this motive in view no Christian can doubt the validity of missions, for Christ is The Way of Life. Yet there is great danger that the Christian forces may lose out through failure to share their responsibility, or through failure on the part of those who have united in various organizations to realize the implications of real cooperation, and to pay the necessary sacrificial price. Such failure in lack of Christian cooperation may result in allowing the initiative to pass out of Christian hands into secular or even antireligious forces.

1. "The Christian Message for a Bewildered World"
Student Volunteer Movement pamphlet p.9ff
Likewise no thoughtful broadminded person, who loves people, even though he may not be a Christian, can doubt the validity of missions if he is sufficiently acquainted with the facts and the real missionary aims. The age has demanded an apologetic for Christian missions. We have given it that. But it asks--consider all factors. Do these people really need Christ? They have their own religions. They have their own answers to their social, economic, and political questions. Anyone who has given this serious consideration soon realizes that such countries as India, China, Japan, Latin America and Africa have greatly needed all the modern scientific knowledge available to provide sane healthful living conditions. Then, too, Christianity does not make any attempt to underestimate the spiritual value of other religions. It recognizes as part of the one truth that sense of God's Majesty and the consequent reverence in worship, which are conspicuous in Islam.

It recognizes the deep sympathy for the world's sorrow and unselfish search for the way of escape, which lie at the heart of Buddhism. It appreciates the desire for contact with the Ultimate Reality conceived as spiritual, which is common in Hinduism. It admires the belief in a moral order of the universe and consequent insistence on moral conduct, which are inculcated by Confucianism; and the disinterested pursuit of truth and of human welfare, which are often found in those who stand for secular civilization but do not accept Christ as
their Lord and Saviour.

But however great our appreciation of the religious values and forces in other religions may be, it remains that God revealed Himself in history and "in an absolutely unique and unsurpassable way in Jesus Christ, who is the way to come to the Father, the divine token of mercy and reconciliation."

"Among all the religions that have appeared in history only of Christianity can it be said that it is fundamentally and consistently ethical. That is its greatness—that and the

The need fact that it has at the heart of it the supreme for missions personality of Jesus...Christianity is superior and unique and absolute in its idea of God. It has such a conception of God as no other religion has attained; and what is more, it proclaims and brings to pass such an experience of God as humanity has never elsewhere known....

The God of Christianity is one, the sole source, Lord and end of all. He is holy, being in Himself the character that is the sole standard for all beings. He is love, reaching out to save the world from sin and fill it with His own goodness. He is wise, knowing how to accomplish His heart's desire. He is Father in heart, looking upon His creatures as His own and seeking their welfare. All this truth concerning Himself He

has made known in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, in whom His redemptive will has found expression and His saving love has come forth to all mankind....The conception of God with which Christianity addresses the world is the best that man can form or entertain."

You may grant me this but wonder why I have spent so much time evaluating Christian missions when my subject is the Missionary spirit of the Old Testament. My reason is quite simple, when the missing piece is fitted into the picture. Christianity, which is the revelation of God through Jesus Christ, owes its being to the Hebrew religion.

It is in the Old Testament that we have the record of a steadily enlarging sense of a world mission in the religious development of the Hebrew people. The vital value of the Old Testament as history is a preparation for the great missionary message of the New Testament. However, if the Old Testament were a missionary book like the New Testament, the New Testament would not be necessary.

"...What we are to expect from the missionary study of the

1. C. C. Clarke, "A Study of Christian Missions" p.10f,18
Old Testament is an appreciation of the long evolutionary processes by which God prepared mankind for His supreme revelation."

The Jewish religion became, in a certain measure, missionary because the Jews were led by God to a richer conception of truth and a stronger thought of religion than that which their world had ever possessed. Professor Max Löhr says that the missionary thought is at the circumference of the Old Testament, but the opposition in which it stands to the particularism of the Law and the Jewish abhorrence of all things heathenish never allowed it to reach a practical significance.

When we consider this it will not surprise us that what became an actuality in the New Testament remained an ideal in the Old. What remained passive in the Old Testament became active in the New. But the roots of the Christian spirit are deeply embedded in the Hebrew religion. In the Old Testament we read, "I will...give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." 3

In the New Testament we have the command, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." 4

The wonderful part of this is that we could not have had

1. R. F. Horton "The Bible A Missionary Book" p.86
2. W. G. Jordan "The Missionary Idea in the O. T." preface
3. Isaiah 49:6
4. Matthew 28:19f
Jesus' commission unless the Hebrew religion had prepared the way; for Jesus came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it. Israel had a great gift which we cannot over-emphasize. Her gift was vital and lasting because she had learned life and its meaning by living it. She was saved for service!

From the very beginnings of her national life Israel regarded herself as standing in a unique relation to Yahweh. She was His chosen people. It is true that she did not realize the significance of this calling until her prophets and sages had attained a view of the great world-movements, so that they could see the relation of Judaism to the civilized people around her. But it is also true that Yahweh does nothing, "except he reveal his secret unto his servants...."

Kohler says that the central point of Jewish theology and the key to the understanding of the nature of Judaism is the doctrine, "God chose Israel as His people."

In the sphere of human politics Palestine could never afford a foundation wide or stable enough for the building of a kingdom which should hold its own against all rivals. It was only in the audacious visions of the prophets that Israel could take her stand amongst the Empires of the East. "Israel could

1. Amos 3:7
2. K. Kohler "Jewish Theology" p.323
become a blessing, because she had first been blessed; she was Jehovah's inheritance, and through election she could claim the pride of place which she could never win by the arm of flesh."

We have a right to ask why God chose Israel, one of the weakest and smallest of the ancient nations, to be his bearer of the great truths of religion; and the answer is— we do not know! But as we look back on the results it seems evident that Israel did stand in a unique relation to Yahweh, probably because she was more sensitive to his voice than other existing nations, due in part to her natural surroundings and the life that she was forced to live. Probably because she made it possible for God to work through her, the only way that he can accomplish his will. No doubt this was why she survived her oppressors. In short— she was divinely saved for service. Her part, like ours, in life was to find her place and value in the world. As other nations gave their gift— Greece, her philosophy and art; Rome, her law,— so Israel gave hers, her religion.

As Doctor Knudson says, "The appearance of the idea of the universal sway of Jehovah stands in striking contrast with the political developments of the time. Had something approaching monotheism appeared in Egypt and Assyria, it would not have been strange, for these kingdoms were practically world-powers,

1. N. H. Baynes "Israel Amongst the Nations" preface
and under those circumstances it would have been only natural for the religious teachers of either land to conclude that their chief god was God of all the world. But that this idea should appear in two such small kingdoms as Israel and Judah, and that it should be proclaimed in them with such perfect confidence at the very time they were going down to their ruin, is one of the most remarkable facts in the religious history of mankind. It has no parallel, and is so contrary to what we should naturally expect from the human mind and heart that one can hardly resist the conviction that it must to a special degree have been due to the Spirit of the living God."

In this paper my problem is to trace the rise and development of monotheism in Israel and to show that universalism is the result. It is no easy task. But if I can make myself sufficiently clear to show in some measure what Christians and their missionary objectives owe to the Jewish people, I shall be content; for we need to realize that even though the race as a whole failed to appreciate the fact, Israel's religion had become universal, for it was a personal, ethical one, showing the loving relation between man and his God and his fellowmen.

1. A. C. Knudson "The Beacon Lights of Prophecy" p.25f
Growth of the Missionary Spirit

in the Old Testament
Preprophetic Period

Israel has a unique mission, for she is the Chosen of Yahweh. When, then, did the idea of Yahweh's world-power and world-purpose originate? Genesis 12:3 is the first passage, dating from the preprophetic period, in which a world mission seems to be ascribed to Israel. First mention of a world mission This has been taken to mean that the blessings of the true religion were to be given to the world through Abraham and his descendants. We read that Yahweh said to Abram, "...I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

We get this expressed in other passages from the Jahvistic narrative and also from the Elohist one. But as Doctor Knudson says, "The Hebrew word here rendered as a passive should probably be treated as a reflexive. The meaning, then, is that Israel was to be so prosperous that the nations of the earth would bless themselves by her, that is, would express the wish that they might be as prosperous as she. An exceptional destiny is thus ascribed to Israel among the nations of

1. J document, Genesis 12:2f
2. Genesis 18:18, 26:4, 28:14
3. Genesis 22:18
4. A.C. Knudson "The Religious Teaching of the O.T." p.133f
the world, but nothing is said about a world-mission."

In speaking of this same passage Bennett says, "If we accept this translation (that is, that in Israel all the families of the earth would be blessed) the promise means that all nations shall be blessed through the Revelation given to Israel—a promise fulfilled through the universality of the Christian religion. But in Genesis 22:18, addressed to Abram, and in Genesis 24:4, to Isaac, the promise is given in the form, 'in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves', a phrase equivalent to 'be thou a blessing'. It is quite possible that the promise here and in Genesis 18:18 and Genesis 23:14 should also be translated 'in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves'."

He goes on to say that the verse may be interpreted as a proverb which men will use; as, "Mayest thou be as blessed as Abraham."  

Skinner accepts this same view, and believes that the words became a formula of benediction; and thus the ancient mind expressed its admiration of a man's prosperity.

It is apparent that at this early date we cannot ascribe a world mission to the Hebrews. We cannot think of them as being conscious of possessing the true religion, because previous to the time of Moses they seem to have been poly-

1. New-Century Bible, p. 176
2. Ibid p. 175
3. International Critical Commentary, p. 244
theists. Joshua reminds us that his people had served other gods, and he urges them to "fear Jehovah, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt; and serve ye Jehovah."

In like manner Ezekiel would call his people back from the worshipping of their fathers' idols.

It is also significant to note that the common Hebrew word for God (Elohim) is plural in form. Knudson attributes this to a polytheistic background. He says that the Old Testament idea of one God was one of the greatest contributions to the world's thought and faith; but the sole godhead of Yahweh was a truth that was only gradually attained.

Moses was the first to establish monolatry in place of the earlier polytheism. "He did not deny the existence of other gods, but proclaimed Yahweh as the sole God of Israel. He did not say that there was but one God, but insisted that it was Israel's duty to have but one God. But while he thus did not teach monotheism, the monolatry he established was an important step in that direction. And what made it such was the intensity of devotion that the worship of Yahweh called forth...."

"Yahweh in a marvelous way had delivered the Israelites

1. Joshua 24:2, 14f.
2. Ezekiel 20:24
3. A.C.Knudson, "The Religious Teachings of the O.T." p.79
from their oppressors in Egypt. At the very time when they seemed doomed to destruction he had rescued them. So great was this deliverance that only one response on the part of the people seemed adequate, and that was complete devotion to Yahweh and unlimited confidence in him. One who had wrought so remarkable a deliverance in the past could surely be trusted to meet every need of the people in the future, and was, therefore, deserving of their unquestioning obedience.

"Such was the attitude of mind inculcated by Moses, and in it we have the germ of the whole subsequent religious development in Israel. If Yahweh was really believed to be equal to every emergency, it followed necessarily that the conception of his being would expand with the expanding needs of the people, until finally they would come to see that his rule was not only not limited to Israel nor to the nations of the then known world, nor even to this terrestrial life, but that it embraced the entire universe, so that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature was beyond the reach of his power and control. This entire development of the idea of God grew naturally and logically out of the monolatrous worship established by Moses.... And here it is that the most significant feature of Moses' work is to be found. What he contributed to the religious development of mankind was not so
much new ideas as a new passion."

Dr. Knudson gave us something very significant when he said, "One who had wrought so remarkable a deliverance in the past could surely be trusted to meet every need of the people in the future, and was, therefore, deserving of their unquestioning obedience." 2

This was the germ of the religious development in Israel. Its influence was never allowed to die out. For Moses it meant Yahweh, alone, was the God of the Hebrews. None could compare with him. He had showed his superiority to other gods by his overthrow of the Egyptians. The only conclusion was that it was true that "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." 3

Scholars differ as to how far this loyalty to Yahweh was from the beginning exclusive and implied the rejection of all other deities. I believe that from the beginning this must have been exclusive; for its strength and depth demands it. If Moses had permitted the hereditary clan and family gods to be worshipped along with Yahweh, and if after the Israelites settled in Canaan there was nothing inconsistent with Moses' teaching when the Hebrews combined Yahweh worship with that of Baal, what was the religious significance and passion resulting from it?

2. Ibid. p. 80
3. E. document Exodus 20:2
It seems to me that these scholars have failed to take into account the great ideal of Moses and his successors and have rather drawn their conclusions from the fact that the people did worship other gods. We cannot account for this initial impulse without the religious devotion and fervor of Moses. We can account for it in no other personality. The fact that the people did not live up to the standard he set before them should not bother us. It is just as true today that the people as a whole are far behind the ideals of our religious leaders.

But there were always those sincere personalities who kept their eyes upward and tried to lead their people along the right path. We have already noted how Joshua was compelled to call his people from their evil ways. He said, "Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you Jehovah, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses. Now therefore put away (said he) the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto Jehovah, the God of Israel."

In like manner Samuel was forced to call his people back. "If ye do return unto Jehovah with all your heart, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you, and direct your hearts unto Jehovah, and serve him only;..."

2. I Samuel 7:3
Samuel realized that Israel's mission as a nation was bound up with loyalty to Yahweh, and so he urges his people to "fear Jehovah, and serve him in truth with all your heart; for consider how great things he hath done for you."

A further example of this backsliding is seen when Ahijah realizes that the kingdom is to be divided because the people had forsaken Yahweh, "and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the Children of Ammon; and they have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and mine ordinances,..."  

But of more significance for us is Elijah's encounter with Jezebel and the prophets of Baal. Here for the first time we have a real conflict between Yahweh and another deity. These other gods that we have noted the people worshipping were not as powerful as Yahweh, but when Jezebel introduced the worship of Tyrian Baal into Israel Yahweh's supremacy was threatened. Elijah realized that one cannot serve two masters. He asks, "How long go ye limping between the two sides? If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."

What Elijah insists was that his people be consistent, that they be loyal to the God they worshipped. Moses had

1. I Samuel 12:24
2. I Kings 11:33
3. I Kings 18:21
placed loyalty as the means of showing appreciation for God's goodness; so also Elijah emphasizes it.

Lumby points out how expressive the verb (limping) is. It denotes the regular stumbling sort of dance about the altar of Baal. It indicates a lame gait, and hence suits well the conduct of Israel, which is now drawn toward Jehovah, but not earnest there, and then attracted to Baal, but not altogether satisfied with that worship.

Dr. Knudson says, "Elijah...made the first distinct advance beyond the Mosaic monolatry. Moses had insisted that Yahweh, and he alone, was to be worshipped in Israel, but he had said nothing about the existence of other gods. He apparently assumed that the gods of the neighboring nations had a real existence similar to that of Yahweh. And this continued to be the popular belief in Israel down to the time of Elijah. In his day there arose for the first time a conflict between Yahweh and a neighboring deity....Here (in Tyrian Baal) was a god of a neighboring and powerful people. There could be no question about his independence of Yahweh, or his claims to true divinity....Was his worship to be tolerated in Israel? If so, it would mean the end of that supreme and undivided allegiance which Yahweh had demanded from the outset.

1. Cambridge Bible p. 190
It would mean the recognition of two independent spiritual forces in Israel, and this in turn would mean the end of their national unity. Such a peril could not but cause the gravest concern. It brought the question of Yahweh's relation to foreign deities to a head. An immediate and definitive settlement of the problem seemed necessary. Compromise between Yahweh and Baal...was repugnant to all the best traditions of the nation. So Elijah demanded that the people make a final and unequivocal choice between the two."

He goes on to say that the fact that Baal was worshipped by a neighboring people would imply that he was not a mere product of the imagination. But in Elijah's view he was not a deity in the true sense of the word. "He was not god in the same sense as Yahweh. The two did not belong to the same class. Yahweh alone was God. This truth was not applied by Elijah to heathen deities generally. He had no occasion to do so. But when the occasion once arose it was inevitable that the application would be made. What Elijah did was to claim for Yahweh a unique divinity, such a divinity as could not be attributed to Baal or any other rival deity."

Elijah, then, was the first in whom practical monotheism

1. A.C. Knudson, "The Religious Teaching of the O.T." p.85
was clearly expressed. He realized that loyalty to Yahweh was of supreme importance. "This position taken by Elijah is the high point of pre-literary prophecy. It implies that Mosaism is in principle a world-religion."

It is significant to note that Israel's knowledge of Yahweh grew as Israel reached out and became broader in her own life. Contact with Baal worship had forced her to see that Yahweh had a "unique divinity". Contact with Assyria forced her to realize that Yahweh had control over other nations besides Israel. It was not enough that He, alone, was God; but since He was God, He was also God of all.

And yet the people did not return unto Yahweh. As Deutero-Isaiah later says in speaking of Israel as Yahweh's Servant, "Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I send? who is blind as he that is at peace with me, and blind as Jehovah's servant? Thou seest many things, but thou observest not; his ears are open, but he heareth not."

We have noted this same condition throughout Israel's Period of 8th Century Prophets history. This was why Amos, the first of the great literary prophets, was forced to

1. A.C. Knudson, "The Beacon Lights of Prophecy" p. 19
2. Isaiah 42:20f.
prophesy. His people were blindly at peace with Yahweh. Moses might have conceived that Yahweh was the God of the Hebrews, and Elijah might realize that Yahweh alone was God; but still the people as a whole did not understand what this implied. They needed to know what this God was and how they must conduct themselves if they were truly to worship and follow Him.

What makes Amos significant is the great religious conceptions which underlie his message of doom. He realized that in Israel overconfidence had led the leaders to shut their eyes to existing evils. There was a period of apparent calm; for Assyria was busy defending her own empire from attack by the northern kingdoms of Urartu, and Damascus had been conquered by another Aramean kingdom which had come to power at the beginning of the eighth-century. But conditions were not what they seemed. Injustice and oppression prevailed everywhere, but because the people brought sacrifices and met the demands of ritual, they felt confident of Yahweh's favor and protection. Yet not alone on that account; for were they not the Chosen people? Had He not brought them out of bondage in Egypt? He could not desert them now. Such was the general attitude, but Amos represents Yahweh as saying that it is true,

"You only have I known of all the families of the earth: there-

1. C.F.Kent, "The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah" p.56
2. Amos 3:2
fore I will visit upon you all your iniquities."

Harper says 'that the people refuse to credit Amos' statement here concerning Israel's future, for they believe that Yahweh is not likely to desert his own nation. Everything seemed prosperous to them, and disaster was far from their thoughts. Yahweh had chosen them for a special work, but they had forsaken him and they needed to have their own mission clarified.

"The doctrine that Israel has been chosen by Yahweh for a particular service to the world lies at the basis of every expression of Hebrew thought....This thought, carried too far, furnished the basis for a superstition almost as deadly as any of those which the Israelitish religion was to displace. Against this superstition the prophets contend. The choice of Israel by Yahweh, they maintain, is not unconditional, Israel must cherish the right mind toward Yahweh, or punishment will come; and when it comes, it will be all the more severe because of the special privileges which she has enjoyed."  

Dr. Knudson brings out the same idea. He says that it was a fact that Israel was chosen and thus Yahweh stood in especially close relation to her, yet this did not mean she had a monopoly of the divine favor, nor did it mean that she

1. "International Critical Commentary" p. 64  
2. Ibid. p. 66  
would escape the day of judgment. It meant moral opportunity.

Yahweh had revealed himself to her as to no other nation, but this did not lessen her responsibility, it increased it; and made it all the more certain that she would be called to account for her misdoings, for Yahweh is a God of justice.

This meant that Israel must suffer punishment. "It is the unmistakable expression of the condemnation of wicked Israel by the absolutely righteous Yahweh. The sentence of destruction, however, is not wholly unconditional. That Amos pointed out a way of escape, viz. repentance, open only to a few perhaps, is clear from 4:4-6, 5:14f; that he should not have contemplated such a possibility of conversion is psychologically unintelligible, since it would leave his entire prophetic activity without a sufficient 'raison d'être'."

Then, too, it is significant to remember that Yahweh's care includes more than Israel. Amos pictures him as saying, "Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, 0 children of Israel?...Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?"

"Jehovah's protecting care was not confined to Israel."

1. "International Critical Commentary" p. 120
2. Amos 9:7
It was universal. It had brought the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir; nothing, then, in Israel's outward history afforded her any ground for presuming God's care upon the divine clemency. Whatever pre-eminence she possessed was to be found in the special revelation which Jehovah had made to her of his character and will. This revelation...she had spurned. She, therefore, had no advantage over other nations."

The only hope for Israel, then, was to be found in righteousness. So Amos represents Yahweh as saying, "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let justice fall down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."²

Yahweh is a God of justice. This his people must realize if they are truly to know Him. So Amos pleads with his people to "Seek Jehovah, and ye shall live;...Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so Jehovah, the God of hosts, will be with you, as ye say."³

2. Amos 5:21-24
3. Amos 5:6a,14
Dr. Knudson in commenting on the above verses says, "These two exhortations are synonymous, and express more clearly than any other utterances in the book the most significant element in the prophet's teaching. He identifies Religion identified with the moral law absolutely with the moral law. To seek Jehovah is to seek the good. There is no other way of entering into fellowship with Him. This, as we have already seen, was a conception of epoch-making significance. When religion busies itself with rites and ceremonies, with signs and omens, it is of very slight value to the world....But when religion is identified with the moral nature, all this is changed. Religion then comes to be the chief conserving force in society and a most powerful stimulus to the development of man's highest faculties. Conscience, from this point of view, is the one way of approach to God, and those ethical principles which lie at the basis of every healthy and progressive society are the special objects of religious concern. It was, consequently, a matter of the utmost importance in the history of religion when Amos laid down the law that the one way to seek Jehovah is to seek the good and not the evil. This truth was not original with Amos. But he, so far as we know, was the first to differentiate it from the popular religion, and to make it the one fundamental principle

of all true religion. He thus stands out in history as the
great prophet of moral law."

Amos, then, gives us a significant step in the enlarging picture of the missionary spirit of the Old Testament. He sought to revive the Mosaic ideal by teaching his people that the essential nature of true worship must be consistent with the character of Yahweh. He found Yahweh a God of righteousness, a God who cared nothing for Israel's special privileges, rites, or ceremonies; but a God who required holy living.

Amos went still further. He taught his people what he meant by holy living. He condemned the unjust practices in all walks of life and upheld justice and honesty. We have noted that Amos not only moralized religion, but also universalized it. Yahweh was God of all the world.

If at this time Israel realized the implications that must follow, if she believed that Yahweh was the God of all the world and was a God of justice, the world-wide sway of her religion would have begun right then. Here we have the missionary spirit in embryo form. It is as if we were at a great play. The stage is set, but the leading character has not yet arrived. There is no real action. With Amos we have the germs of a missionary religion; but no missionaries.
Amos had for all times established the fact that God is just and religion is law; but still Yahweh's people as a whole did not know Him. God is more than a God of justice. He is also a God of love, a God whose love predominates.

Hosea, a younger contemporary of Amos,—through the suffering he endured because of the unfaithfulness of his wife, whom he still loved,—realized God's great love for Israel though she did not know Him and was unfaithful to Him.

This is the key to Hosea's message. He pictures Jehovah's relation to Israel as that of a husband. Israel, however, has been unfaithful. By her idolatry, immorality, foreign intrigue, and social injustice, she has been guilty of illicit relations with other gods; and Jehovah, as a righteous husband,
feels he must put her away. But his love for her is greater than his anger. It is so deep and real that he cannot let her be permanently separated from him, and he recalls her and waits for her to be worthy of his full affection.

Then he says, "I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in justice, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know Jehovah."

This new relationship is to be a spiritual one and it is, therefore, lifted out of nationalism. In this conception of Yahweh's relation to Israel we have the essence of Hosea's message. It is around the idea of the divine love that he centers his interpretation of Israel's history. He was the first to clearly interpret religion in the terms of love.

Harper says that Hosea's message is great because it supplements the message of Amos, and both of them together give two sides of one great conception.

Israel needed a prophet to arise with as open a conscience of law as Amos had, and yet to affirm that love was greater still; to admit that Israel was doomed, and yet to show that redemption was possible.

The burden of Hosea's message was Israel's unfaithfulness

2. International Critical Commentary p.146
and lack of knowledge of Yahweh. He represents Yahweh as saying, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."

The people were immoral, for there was no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land. There was nothing but swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery. Even the priests were corrupt. They had forgotten the law and they fed on the sins of the people. It was "like people, like priest." 2

The fundamental evil which Hosea condemns, however, is disloyalty or unfaithfulness to Yahweh. He ridicules the worship of images, which are lifeless and worthless, the work of men's hands. Such worship is unworthy of Yahweh and shows lack of faith and confidence in him. Though his people profess to be worshippers of Yahweh, in reality they are followers of Baal. In spirit and content their worship is Canaanitish. This is not only seen in their idolatry, but also in their practice of sacred prostitution. "They sacrifice unto the Baalim, and burn incense to graven images...And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, even idols according to their own understanding, all of them the work of craftsmen..."(11:2b, 13:2a) Ephraim is joined to idols;...they play the harlot continually;...the wind hath

1. Hosea 4:6
2. Hosea 4:9
wrapped her up in its wings; and they shall be put to shame because of their sacrifices....(4:17a, 18b, 19) Their doings will not suffer them to turn unto their God, for the spirit of whoredom is within them, and they know not Jehovah." (5:4)

As we have said before knowledge of God's nature is an absolute essential to true worship. What Israel needed was "goodness and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God, not burnt offerings."

This was probably why Hosea denounced foreign alliances. He said, "Ephraim is like a silly dove, without understanding: they call unto Egypt, they go to Assyria." 2

Israel's political condition was as weak and uncertain as were her morals. Knudson says 3 that it was not because these alliances were unwise from the political point of view that Hosea condemned them. His reason for opposition was deeper, for in these alliances he saw evidence of disloyalty to Yahweh. The explanation of this is found in the conception of Israel's unique mission in the world. Her mission was religious, not political; and political intriguing was not in harmony with her true mission, for it tended to secularize the people.

With such moral, political, and social conditions that

1. Hosea 6:6
2. Hosea 7:11
faced Hosea it is little wonder that he tells his people it is time that they should radically change their character. But as unfaithful as Israel had been, and as deserving as she was of punishment, nevertheless, Yahweh loved the children of Israel. His love did not stop because of human faltering. As Dr. Knudson says, "This is the great teaching of Hosea. This is the gospel that he brought into the world."

Hosea uses different terms to express Yahweh's relation to Israel. We have already noted that of the husband and wife. Another figure is that of a physician. More significant is that of Yahweh as the father of Israel. He is the head of a family for which he has a deep and never-ending love. This love is the basis and the principal factor of religion. The word for love in Hebrew represents an act or feeling of dutiful or loyal affection. There is a relationship between Yahweh and Israel which calls upon both to exercise this feeling toward each other. The obligation is not merely a legal one, it is likewise moral.

Yahweh is sorry for Israel because she will not listen to his voice. With all his love and anxiety for her welfare he calls out, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the dew that goeth early away."

1. Hosea 10:12  2. Hosea 3:1
3. A.C. Knudson, "The Beacon Lights of Prophecy" p.119
As Israel's father he called her out of Egypt, and taught her the walks of life as a father takes his child's hand and teaches it to walk. But his people were bent on backsliding, and Yahweh cries out, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I cast thee off, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? my heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together."

George Adam Smith says that these verses represent "the greatest passage in Hosea,—deepest, if not highest, of his book—the breaking forth of that exhaustless mercy of the Most High which no sin of man can bar back nor wear out." 2

Yahweh is God not man and his love is constant. This conception of the passionate love of Yahweh is a message of hope for mankind. Hosea recognized no real Deity except Yahweh, but he did not work out the practical implications of monotheism. His message of love was restricted to Israel; nevertheless, if it was at first national, it could not remain so, but must with its own momentum become international and spiritual, until one would come to realize that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." 3

1. Hosea 11:8
3. John 3:16
When we place the thought of Hosea beside that of Amos we cannot help but realize that we are getting a richer conception of God, and that this conception points to a world united through Him. Here we get the great idea that where love is, there God is. Yahweh is a God of love, and the God of the whole world must love His people wherever He finds them; for there can be no greater love than His.

The people did not realize this, and Hosea never brings out its implications; but he has taught a God of love, and this thought was to continue through the centuries until it fell on fertile ground.
To understand the place of Isaiah in the religious development of the Hebrews, we need to know something of the background he inherited and the political, social, economic, and religious conditions of his day; for his ministry was intimately connected with his nation's history.

The greater part of Isaiah's life fell within the last half of the eighth century B.C. In his boyhood, Amos of Judah had prophesied against the neighboring kingdom of Israel. In his early manhood and the first years of his own activities as a prophet, Hosea, a native of the northern Kingdom, was preaching to his own people; and about half way through Isaiah's active life his teaching was reinforced by Micah.

Isaiah's life was spent during a time of change in the political and social conditions of Judah. Her history during the two centuries following the death of Solomon had been uneventful as compared with that of Israel. For one reason Judah was shut in on nearly every side by natural and political barriers; and then, too, her resources were insignificant in comparison with those of the fruitful Northern Kingdom. Further, the dynasty founded by David had continued on the

throne until the exile, so there was comparatively peaceful internal history. During the first two hundred years of Judah's history there were no great crises and, therefore, no great prophets. The great prophetic awakening did not come until Israel was about to fall and the Assyrian armies were penetrating southern Palestine.

But with the reign of Uzziah (or, Azariah) Judah began to emerge from its obscurity and to enter into the world politics of that time. The king conquered the important town of Elath on the Red Sea coast, captured the Philistine towns of Jabneh and Ashdod, conducted successful campaigns against the Arabians and the Ammonites; and by thus extending Judah's boundaries opened the doors for trade and customs of the larger Semitic world. The Chronicler also adds that he built defensive towers about the walls of Jerusalem, provided a good water supply, developed agriculture, organized an army, and we may conclude that he developed the internal resources of his kingdom as well as extended its boundaries and commerce.

Gordon says that it was well for Judah that she remained so long in the background; for she was able slowly to consolidate, and by her relative isolation she maintained much of

1. II Chronicles 26:1-15
2. A.R. Gordon, "The Prophets of the O.T." p.82
her moral and spiritual purity. But naturally this new and close contact with the outside world and the national prosperity resulting from Uzziah's strong policy had its bad effect on the political and social conditions. The nobles and wealthy citizens, led on by the increasing taste for luxury, became regardless of their responsibility and built their own fortunes at the expense of the common people. The moral and religious conditions of Judah were the same as those of Israel in the practically contemporaneous period of Amos and Hosea. Graver dangers, still, became visible about the close of Uzziah's reign; for Tiglath-pileser III was on the throne of Assyria and was beginning to gather in, one by one, the nations of the western world. Judah lay in the direct path of his advance; but her rulers who should have been preparing her for her peril were selfish, corrupt, and blind to this danger.

Isaiah's vision came to him in the Temple where he had gone to worship, in the year of Uzziah's death, in 740 B.C. This must have made a tremendous impression on the whole nation, for he had been a strong ruler and his death must have been received as a great calamity. Then, too, his son Jotham, who came to the throne, had none of the strength and energy of his father.

In speaking of this vision Kent says, "This marvellous sixth chapter reflects the entire gamut of Isaiah's experiences; his youthful struggle with the sense of personal responsibility,
his strong, enlightened patriotism, his keen insight, and that transcendent vision of Jehovah's majesty and holiness which never faded from the prophet's memory. His task was similar to that of Amos and Hosea: it was to proclaim saving truth to his countrymen and to meet with only apathy and ignorance and contempt... Calamity after calamity was destined to overtake Judah, until but a small remnant should survive. Although Isaiah does not here develop the thought in detail, the stump of a sturdy oak surviving evidently represented his hope that when discipline had done its work, the remnant might grow again into a strong, purified nation that would realize Jehovah's purpose in the world."

This vision of Isaiah's is one of the most impressive passages in the book. His conception of the majesty and holiness of Jehovah influences his whole ministry. It is a spiritual experience in which he sees the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and he hears the seraphim saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."  

This insistence on the holiness of Yahweh was one of the great contributions of Isaiah to the developing picture of

1. Isaiah 6:13
2. C.F.Kent, "The Kings and Prophets of Israel and Judah" p.130
3. Isaiah 6:3
Yahweh. The idea was not new, but Isaiah's conception gained moral content too often wanting elsewhere. Since Yahweh was supremely good, it followed that any thing or person set apart for Him must also be good, and the nation especially consecrated to Him must justify its position by a high moral standard. It was characteristic of the teaching of Isaiah that he not only thought of Israel as being holy to Yahweh, but he also conceived of Yahweh as being holy to Israel. Israel could not dispense with Yahweh, but it was equally true that Yahweh needed Israel for His self-expression.

In speaking of the holiness of Yahweh, Dr. Knudson says that it was with Isaiah that the ethical conception of the term was first emphasized. This seems to have formed no part of the original meaning of the word; for prostitutes and sodomites, who sacrificed their purity at the sanctuaries, were called "holy" ones, and such use of the term would not have been possible if a moral quality had been expressed by it. But as the worship of Yahweh became more firmly established in Israel, the idea of holiness took its color from the prevailing conception of his character. The holiness that Isaiah attributed to Yahweh awakened within the prophet "a consciousness, not only of creaturely infirmity, but also of moral

2. Deuteronomy 23:14
unworthiness, an unworthiness that attached both to himself and the nation. As compared with the Holy One he and the people among whom he dwelt were morally unclean—'Jehovah of hosts', he says in another connection, 'is exalted in justice, and God the Holy One is sanctified in righteousness'. This particular verse, it is true, is assigned by many critics to a later hand, but the idea it expresses is one that underlies most of the Isaianic prophecies. It is Isaiah's general teaching that Israel's sin is rebellion against God and that the divine holiness has manifested itself and will continue to manifest itself in righteous judgments on his people.... Holiness was...a unique characteristic of Deity. It denoted no particular attribute. But when some attribute such as power or purity or righteousness was especially emphasized, the idea of holiness came naturally to be closely associated with it....In the development of the Old Testament idea of the divine holiness there was a tendency toward a more distinctly ethical and spiritual conception."

Isaiah's prophetic work may be divided into four distinct periods. The first one extended from the time of his vision in 740-735 B.C., and is represented by his social sermons of

1. Isaiah 6:5
2. Isaiah 5:16
chapters 2-5 and 9:6-10:4. The second period was the period of the great crisis when in 735 B.C. Tiglath-pileser's impending invasion of Palestine led the kings of Damascus and Israel to attempt to force Judah to join them in opposing this common foe (17:1-11, 7, & 8). The third period extends from 720-701 B.C. and ends with the first invasion of Sennacherib. The fourth period was apparently connected with a second western campaign of Sennacherib @ 690 B.C.

It is impossible, owing to the lack of chronological arrangement in the book of Isaiah, to determine which chapters contain his earliest public address. However, chapter five more than any other, seems to fit the situation.

Isaiah's ministry: Here Isaiah comes before the elders of Jerusalem as an unknown, inexperienced prophet who is nevertheless aware of his need of tact and poetic skill to attract a hearing for his unpopular message. His theme is social injustice. He is indignant with the greedy monopolies, the intemperance and disregard of responsibilities (5:10&13), and with the sceptical and defiant attitude of the rulers (5:14). The occasion was very likely one of festival when the people who were assembled at Jerusalem were eager to hear stories of the professional story-tellers and the songs of their poets.

"Let me sing for my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he digged it, and gathered out the
stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also hewed out a wine-press therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes."

Then Isaiah asks the people to judge betwixt him and his vineyard and as they approve of his justice in tearing down the vineyard and making it waste, he interprets the parable. "For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for justice, but, behold, oppression; for righteousness, but, behold, a cry." ²

The woes that follow describe the evils which make it necessary for Jehovah to destroy his vineyard Judah. Even in the women there is no trace of love or pity, but they are proud, ambitious to surpass each other in displaying their personal beauty. Isaiah saw that these women could learn only through the oriental disgrace of childlessness and the woes of widowhood, how dangerous it is to stifle the divine impulses of kindness and mercy. This is vividly portrayed in chapter 3:16-4:1.

In the ninth and tenth chapters and in the closing verses of chapter five Isaiah develops still further the inevitable

1. Isaiah 5:7
2. Isaiah 5:1f.
consequences of social corruption. He portrays the false con-

fidence of the Israelites, who were shutting their eyes to the 
calamities which had overtaken them, and were vainly dreaming 
of Israel's future glory. He finds the reason for national 
decay as had Amos in that the people have not "sought Jehovah 
of hosts". The rulers have decreed unrighteous decrees, they 
have turned "aside the needy from justice, and to rob the poor 
of my people of their right, that widows may 

be their spoil, and that they may make the 
fatherless their prey!...Ho Assyrian, the rod 
of mine anger, the staff in whose hand is mine indignation! 
I will send him against a profane nation, and against the people 
of my wrath will I give him charge, to take the spoil, and to 
take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the 
streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart 
think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and to cut off 
nations not a few." 2 

But because the Assyrian's sole purpose is to destroy, 
God the impartial judge will in turn punish Assyria. "And 
it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, 
and they that are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more 
again lean upon him that smote them, but shall lean upon 

1. Isaiah 9:13 
2. Isaiah 10:2-7
Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. A remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. For though thy people, Israel, be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them shall return: a destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness....Therefore thus saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, 0 my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian, though he smite thee with the rod, and lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt. For yet a very little while, and the indignation against thee shall be accomplished, and mine anger shall be directed to his destruction."

Jotham probably ruled Judah from 740-735 B.C., when he was succeeded by Ahaz. Pekah was on the throne of Israel and his policy was to throw off the Assyrian yoke. Thus he formed an alliance with Rezin, king of Damascus; and together they set about forming a coalition of the neighboring peoples to check the advance of Tiglath-pileser. Before this time Judah had been protected by its remoteness and insignificance, but when Ahaz refused to join the league against Assyria, Judah was threatened with invasion.

It was at this crisis, when the northern foes were reported as rapidly advancing, that the young Isaiah and his son Shear-

1. Isaiah 10:20-22 & 24-26
2. II Kings 16:1-6
jashub (a remnant shall return) sought the king to give him prophetic advice. His aim was to influence Ahaz not to submit to the demands of Israel and Damascus, but rather to trust calmly in Jehovah and to enter into no entangling alliances. "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

In his zeal to convince the king of the truth of his prophetic message, Isaiah tells the king to ask a sign of Jehovah; but the king refused. This led Isaiah to mistrust Ahaz for the sign was intended to make the king realize that the events predicted would transpire soon, and that not only would Judah's foes, Aram and Israel, be destroyed at the hands of the Assyrians, but Judah also would suffer from her cowardly policy.

In a series of bold oracles Isaiah paints the picture of the fate which would overtake Judah in common with the other states of Palestine. In one picture the Assyrians are represented as coming like great swarms of flies and bees and settling down on all parts of the land. In another they are compared to a razor with which Jehovah will destroy the inhabitants of the land.

From the obdurate king Isaiah appealed to the people, and spared no effort to impress upon them his important message.

1. Isaiah 7:9
2. Isaiah 7:16-17
3. Isaiah 7:18-19
4. Isaiah 7:20
On a tablet he wrote an inscription which briefly formulated his teaching at this time—if Ahaz persisted in his policy of throwing himself into the hands of the Assyrians, rather than of trusting in Jehovah, Judah would soon experience the horrors of foreign conquest.

In their fear of the two northern kings they had not only lost faith in Jehovah's care, symbolized by the softly flowing waters of Siloam, but by their foolish policy they had incurred Jehovah's wrath. Like the Euphrates at flood time the Assyrians would come at Jehovah's command, sweeping over Aram and Israel even into Judah. It was probably at this same period that Isaiah's oracles (chapter 17) concerning the speedy and complete overthrow of Damascus and Israel, came.

According to II Kings (16:7ff) Ahaz sent to Tiglath-pileser to save him from Pekah and Rezin. Thus the Assyrian army came to Israel. Archaeology reenforces the Biblical account. Barton has given us a translation of the fragments of the record of this campaign. "The country of the house of Omri.....all its people, (and their possessions) I carried away unto Assyria. Pekah, their king, they had overthrown. Hoshea (as king) I placed over them. 10 talents of gold.....talents of silver I received as tribute from them."

1. Isaiah 8:6-8
2. G.A.Barton, "Archaeology and the Bible" p.426
It was while Tiglath-pileser was at Damascus receiving tribute that Ahaz went there to carry his tribute for the help that Assyria had given him. A heavy tax was imposed upon Judah which produced a strong reaction against the policy of Ahaz, and during the next century the Hebrews knew well what it meant to be both subjects and foe of Assyria.

Under Jotham Isaiah had worked undisturbed, but under Ahaz there was this open rupture, because the king in spite of the prophet's opposition, had called in the aid of the Assyrians and voluntarily become tributary to them. Isaiah, therefore, withdrew from public life for several years and confined his activity to the narrow circle of his disciples. Like Jesus he seems to have seen the advantage in a few faithful disciples.

In Israel, in the meantime, the vassal king Hoshea, relying on the help of Egypt, had rebelled against Assyria with the result that Israel was again invaded. Samaria was under siege for three years and before it fell Shalmaneser who had succeeded Tiglath-pileser had died, and Sargon had come to the throne and was successful in capturing Samaria and annexed it to the Assyrian Empire.

1. II Kings 16
2. Isaiah 8:16ff.
3. II Kings 17:1-6
In Judah Ahaz had died leaving his country under the heel of the Assyrian conqueror. Between 721&710 B.C., Merodach-baladan, of Babylonia, successfully rebelled against Assyria and ruled in the lower Tigris-Euphrates valley. All along the Mediterranean the spirit of discontent and rebellion prevailed against Assyria. Egypt also had been recently conquered by Shabaka, an Ethiopian who, recognizing that Assyria was his rival, sent emissaries to incite the Palestinian states to rebellion. The Philistine cities were at the height of their prosperity, and it was natural the revolt should first be raised there. Ashdod and Gath took the initiative.

Judah was evidently among those who were on the point of defying Assyria; for it was at this crisis that Isaiah by his words and dramatic action apparently saved his nation from fatally compromising itself. He threw off his prophet's mantle and sandals, and went for three years barefoot and in the dress of a captive, as an object lesson to the people of Judah of the fate that would overtake them if they rebelled against Assyria.

When the Assyrian army appeared in Philistia the rebellious cities were quickly conquered. Judah gave assurance of her loyalty and peace was re-established.

1. Isaiah 20:2-6
The death of Sargon in 705 B.C. was the occasion for uprisings again. Merodach-baladan appeared again and led a successful revolt in Babylonia, and sent representatives to the vassal states to influence them to join with him against Sennacherib who had succeeded his father Sargon.

Hezekiah favorably received these representatives. Isaiah, however, realized the danger of giving encouragement to these representatives of a king who was in open rebellion against Assyria, and he denounced Hezekiah's policy. He said, "Hear the word of Jehovah of hosts: Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith Jehovah."

Whether or not Isaiah's views would allow for a Babylonian captivity does not so much matter now. The point remains that Isaiah's advice was sound, the king, however, remained undisturbed.

In chapters 28-32 we have extracts from sermons which Isaiah preached during these critical years. The contempt with which his sincere and sane counsels were received by the rulers of his people are reflected in 28:9. They received his message with indifference, and it had no more significance

1. Isaiah 39:5&6
to them than the jargon of a foreigner.

Since they failed to listen to him and to see that peace was to be secured not through diplomacy and dangerous alliances, but by putting their faith in God, they must learn from the lips and cruel acts of the foreign conqueror (30:12, 15,18). Isaiah was also aware that no help was to be counted upon from Egypt. In 31:1-3 he tells his countrymen, "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek Jehovah!...Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit: and when Jehovah shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall stumble, and he that is helped shall fall, and they all shall be consumed together."

Nevertheless, Judah with Tyre, Edom, Moab, Ammon, and others all united in alliance against Assyria and counted on the promised support of Egypt. The coalition was weak, and in 704 B.C. Merodach fell before the forces of Sennacherib. By 701, the Assyrian king was free to turn against the rebels in the west. Instead of uniting their forces, each state attempted to defend its own territory, and as a result fell in rapid succession before the Assyrian army. Hezekiah by the payment of an exorbitant tribute and with the loss of his treasures and members of his own family, retained his position as a
Barton has given us an inscription concerning this event:

"Hezekiah, the Judaeans, who had not submitted to my yoke, 46 of his strongholds, fortified cities, and smaller cities of their environs without number, with the Sennacherib in Jerusalem onset of battering rams and the attack of engines, mines, breaches, and axes (?), I besieged, I captured. 200,150 people, small and great, ... horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen, and sheep without numbers I brought out of their midst and counted booty. He himself I shut up like a caged bird in Jerusalem, his capital city; ... in addition to their former tribute, I added a tax as the impost of my overlordship and laid it upon them. ... With 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, precious stones, ... ivory, ... ; also his daughters and the women of his palace, male and female musicians he sent after me to Nineveh, my capital city, and sent his messenger to present the gift and to do homage."

It was apparently while the Assyrian army was in Judah and Hezekiah was shut up like a bird in a cage, that Isaiah spoke the addresses in the first chapter of his prophecy. His picture of the sick and wounded nation (1:5), the desolate land (1:7), and burned cities gives us the other side of the

1. G.A. Barton, "Archaeology and the Bible" p.433
boastful description of Sennacherib. Isaiah places the blame directly on the leaders of the nation and their false trust in sacrifices and ritual which was only hateful to God (1:10-12). Isaiah's only hope was in the very small remnant that was left (1:9); however, this remnant was to become the seed from which a new nation would grow.

After Sennacherib had taken tribute from Judah he seems to have changed his mind and demanded the unconditional surrender of Jerusalem. He sent his chief officer and an army to Jerusalem to take it. The officer stood outside the wall and told Hezekiah's representatives to tell him if he depended on Egypt for help, it was like depending upon a bruised reed for a staff with the result it would go into his hand and pierce it. On the other hand if he is depending on Jehovah does he not know that Sennacherib has come at Jehovah's command to destroy the land?

Isaiah's advice was that Jehovah would protect Jerusalem and Sennacherib would be forced to return to Assyria. Although there was no outward indication that this would happen, either because of a pestilence or political trouble at home, Sennacherib was forced to return to Assyria and never again appeared in Judah.

1. Isaiah 36:6
2. Isaiah 36:10
3. Isaiah 37:33-37
This was the most critical period of Judah's history.

"To be, or not to be,"--that was the question. Cornill says, "If Judah weathered this crisis and held out for over a century, it is essentially due to the endeavors of the prophet Isaiah who knew how to make clear to his contemporaries the wondrous plan of God. In Isaiah we find for the first time a clearly grasped conception of universal history....In religious depth and fervor Isaiah is far surpassed by Hosea....His (Isaiah's) historical and religious importance lies in something quite different, namely, in that he saved Judah, and in doing so saved religion. That their ruin was delayed a century and time was gained in which religion could firmly establish itself and strike deep roots, so as to survive the overthrow of Judah and Jerusalem, was Isaiah's work and merit."

With keen insight Isaiah saw the political, economical, social, religious, and national evils of his day, because he had an underlying basic principle which determined his attitude toward life; the principle of faith.

Dr. Knudson has struck the key-note of Isaiah's teaching when he said, "At bottom he (Isaiah) was a religious teacher. And the burden of his message was the doctrine of faith."

1. C.H. Cornill, "The Prophets of Israel" p.55f, 69
2. A.C. Knudson, "The Beacon Lights of Prophecy" p.154
We have seen this doctrine most clearly applied to the political conditions of his time, but it was something more than a mere political principle, it was a profound personal experience.

Bewer says' that Isaiah penetrated through the outward events to the underlying spiritual realities. Faith to him was the eternal foundation; while the measures which the people had taken for such a crisis were without avail, because they had neglected moral and spiritual preparation. Further on he says, "His most significant contribution was his teaching of faith in the holiness of God, which meant to him faith...in His overwhelming reality and righteous rule of the world and in His direction of all history."

Isaiah has reduced moral and religious life to the underlying principle of faith; and shown us that Israel's sin was unbelief or pride. We have already noted this faith manifested in Isaiah's conviction that Jerusalem would be saved at the time of the invasion of Sennacherib (7:7, 37:33); we have seen it in his belief that a remnant would be saved (7:3, 10:20-23); and it was further emphasized in his belief that the coming judgment would be followed by a glorious restoration.

1. J.A. Bewer, "The Literature of the O.T. in its Historical Development" p.111
2. Ibid. p.117
Although faith is the condition of salvation in Isaiah's teaching, it seems to me that we must go back further than this and see why Isaiah had this great faith. This can be explained in his conception of God. His God was such that he could have faith in him and trust him on all occasions. The very nature of God demanded faith. (30:15)

The appearance of Assyria in the West made it necessary to point out God's relation to this world-power and to other nations. The thought that Yahweh had authority over other nations was not a new idea, it was implied in the thought of His free act in choosing Israel. Amos had already assumed that the people knew it. (9:7) Isaiah applies it to a new situation. God uses Assyria to accomplish his purpose. As Dr. Knudson says, "Isaiah is a practical monotheist when he sees that the whole earth is full of his (God's) glory."

Here is distinctly the idea of a world-purpose. "There is a world-goal to be attained, and Yahweh is directing the course of events toward that end. In the accomplishment of this end Israel has a unique mission. She is the chosen of Yahweh. But what this mission implied, so far as other nations were concerned, apparently did not form a subject of special

1. A.C. Knudson, "The Religious Teaching of the O.T." p. 87
reflection with the eighth-century prophets....But however late this thought may have been in developing, and whatever the attitude of the eighth-century prophets God of the whole earth may have been toward it, there can be no doubt that from their time on the idea of the universal rule of Yahweh was well established in Israel. They made it unmistakably clear that Yahweh, God of Israel, was the moral ruler of the entire world."

Then, too, he conceives of a spiritual God when he contrasts the Egyptians as men and their horses as flesh with God and spirit. God and spirit are here synonymous terms, and are both identified with Yahweh, who is A spiritual God opposed to all material and fleshly existence. The Egyptians and their horses were, therefore, not to be relied upon. For opposed to them stood God and spirit, the invisible principle that guides the course of human history.

This spirit was one of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel, might, and knowledge. Thus we see the test of the Spirit's presence is a moral one. The spirit is a rational and moral power in whom men may in confidence put their faith---He is the Holy One of Israel.

It was the fact that Yahweh was regarded as above the

1. A.C. Knudson, "The Religious Teaching of the O.T." p.132
2. Isaiah 11:2
limits of time and space and in so far as he was a rational
and moral Being that sacrifices could have no value for him.

They might be outward signs of devotion and
A rational and moral God
thus be in keeping with ethical worship, but
what Isaiah condemns is that they were offered as a substitute for righteousness and did not come from
the heart. In this sense he also condemned prayer. (1:15)

Along with this condemnation of ceremonialism went the
insistence on righteousness as an essential element in the
worship of Yahweh. "Jehovah of hosts is exalted in justice
and God the Holy One is sanctified in righteousness."

Like Amos Isaiah emphasizes social justice as essential
in the nature of righteousness. "...cease to do evil; learn
to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the
widow."

It was in connection with Judah's political policy that
Isaiah's doctrine of faith received its clearest expression,
and we can better understand now what Isaiah meant when he
said, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." And again, "In returning and rest shall ye be saved;
in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

1. Isaiah 5:16
2. Isaiah 1:17
3. Isaiah 7:9
4. Isaiah 30:15
Finally, "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not be in haste. And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-places."

For Isaiah God is a righteous and just God in whom we may trust. He is one who therefore requires goodness, justice, and faith from us. The controlling force in the world is spiritual and divine and requires obedience. Our capacity for faith becomes the test of our religion.

However, this is not all there is to the teaching of Isaiah. There is one phase that we have not yet considered, the Messianic hope. By this we mean the belief in the coming of the kingdom of God. There are four elements concerned here, the new age, the redemption of Israel, the judgment of foreign nations and Israel, and a personal Messiah. There is a wide difference of opinion concerning the origin and value of this hope. Some scholars regard it as a comparatively late development and reject most, if not all of the Messianic passages attributed to the pre-exilic prophets as the work of later hands, who sought in this way to relieve the severity of the

1. Isaiah 28:16-17
earlier prophetic utterances.

Dr. Knudson, along with distinguished scholars such as Grossmann, Sellin, Gunkel, and others believes that this view is inadequate because it assumes that the prophetic books are made up of connected discourses that were originally arranged by the prophets themselves in logical or chronological order. We have seen in the case of Isaiah, as is true also of the other prophets, that this is not so. The different types of oracles grew out of different situations and moods, and originally had no connection with each other.

Dr. Knudson concludes that the preexilic prophets shared to some extent in the Messianic hope of their day. They gave Isaiah and the Messianic Hope it an ethical character and declared that its realization was dependent on repentance and moral regeneration. Righteousness was an essential characteristic of this new kingdom, but before its establishment Israel would be visited by divine judgment. After this there was to be a glorious future for the chosen people, and a marvellous transformation of the entire world. In its essential nature the change was spiritual.

The coming of the new kingdom was not dependent upon the appearance of an ideal king; but in a number of significant

1. A.C.Knudson, "The Religious Teaching of the O.T." p.366
2. Ibid. p.367
passages the Messianic hope is made to center in the Messiah.

When and how this popular expectation of a Messiah arose we do not know. There are a number of theories, but we need not go into them here. Isaiah declared that the expected Messiah would come soon and establish the righteous rule of God in the world. (11:5) The fact that his prophecy did not come true during his day does not detract from its value. It is just as much a message of hope for today as it was then.

"It is now coming to be seen that we do not do justice to the prophets (and psalmists) when we place an almost exclusive stress upon their ethical and social teaching. The ethical idealism of these ancient seers was born out of and sustained by their Messianic hope....It was this hope, and this hope only, that made possible the lofty idealism of the Hebrew seer and saint."

With this in view we turn to the Messianic prophecies in Isaiah. Here it is evident that he had no final conception of the transformed Israel. "The only essential thing was the conviction that Jehovah through the faithful in Israel would work out his own righteous and beneficent purpose in the world."

2:2-4 occurs also in Micah 4:1-4 and therefore raises a difficult literary problem. Did Isaiah borrow from Micah

1. A.C. Knudson, "The Religious Teaching of the O.T." p. 366
2. A.C. Anudson, "The Beacon Lights of Prophecy" p. 158
or Micah from Isaiah, or both from some unknown earlier prophet? Micah's prophetic career did not begin until much later than the date of these chapters; but its position in Isaiah and lack of connection with what follows mark it out as a quotation, and further it appears to be the more original form in Micah. Hence the third view has been widely accepted by critics. However, the theory reached by elimination cannot command much confidence; and possibility of later insertion in both places cannot be ignored. A certain presumption in favor of Isaiah's authorship is furnished by resemblances both in matter and style to other passages (9:1-8, 32:1-8). At the same time it cannot be denied its connection here is loose, and must remain doubtful whether it was originally composed as an introduction to this group of prophecies or belongs to a later stage of Isaiah's life. The assertion that the conception presented would be unintelligible in the age of Isaiah is one that would be remarkable in any age; it is perhaps even less surprising from the pen of Isaiah than of a later prophet.

"And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all the nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and

say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Here we see Zion as the center of a universal religion and the seat of Yahweh's dominion. True religion is effected, not by conquest; but by the moral influence of Israel on other nations, who are attracted and eager to learn the ways of Yahweh. These nations are to keep their political identity; a necessary factor which is only now being recognized by modern missionaries, who realize that God's reign can only be universally established through indigenous churches.

Here we see that it is God, not Israel, who rules the world, and He rules it by His word, not by the sword. His authority, appealed to in all international disputes, brings war to an end, and creates universal peace and international

1. Isaiah 2:2-4
goodwill. Think of the implications here! If only nations did believe, and appeal to God there would be more international trust and friendly feeling. It is true that today, perhaps more than ever before, there is more effort in this direction. Such institutions as the International Missionary Council, the League of Nations, the International Labor Office, the Stockholm Conference Continuation Committee, the Institute of Pacific Relations, the World's Student Christian Federation, the World's Y.M.C.A., the World's Y.W.C.A., and many other international bodies indicate progress in the right direction.

It is when we consider Isaiah's message in relation to the present that we realize how vital it is for us. Perhaps his representation is an ideal, "yet it contains little to which the hope of the Church does not look forward as the issue of the Christian dispensation. The only traces of the limitations of the Old Testament standpoint spring from the idea of Zion as the earthly centre of Jehovah's sovereignty. Even this had been understood literally by many Christians. But it is more in accordance with the analogy of prophecy to regard it as one of those symbols of spiritual truth, which, although conceived realistically by the prophets, were destined to be fulfilled in ways that could not be perfectly revealed until the true nature of God's kingdom was disclosed by Christ."

Isaiah 4:2-6 is also in general harmony with this picture. And, although it does not seem to be part of Isaiah's spoken message in the time of Ahaz, its main ideas—salvation of the remnant, purification through judgment, and the regeneration of nature—are parallel in Isaiah and are probably authentic.

In Isaiah 7:14-17 we have the famous Immanuel prophecy. Skinner gives an account of the difficulties raised by this passage. It is applied in the New Testament (Matthew 1:23) to the birth of Christ, but obviously this does not express the historical meaning. The Hebrew word for "virgin" can also be translated "young wife", and simply means a young woman of marriageable age.

Dr. Knudson believes that the clause "whose two kings thou abhorrest" in verse 16 is an addition and the real key to the passage is to be found in Amos 3:2 and 5:18. It was the popular belief in the coming of a Messiah that some well-known young woman, a young wife or a virgin, was to bear a son, who was to be called Immanuel ("God-is-with-us"), and who as a child was to deliver Israel from her enemies. Isaiah says that this child is soon to be born, but instead of bringing deliverance to the people, its coming will be marked by desola-

tion and ruin. As Amos had taken the popular belief in the election of Israel and in the day of Yahweh and turned them against the people, so Isaiah took the popular belief in a Messiah and turned it against Ahaz and his followers.

Thus Isaiah did not completely repudiate the popular Messianic faith, but he did give it a higher ethical interpretation. It would mean ruin to the unbelieving world, but to the faithful remnant it would mean the rule of an ideal King in peace and righteousness.

In chapter 9:6-7 we get a clearer picture of the personality of this child. The people that walked in darkness now see a great light; "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever."

Verses 1-9 in the eleventh chapter of Isaiah give us a more spiritual picture of this ideal king of the Davidic line.

1. Isaiah 9:6f.
The spirit of Yahweh rests upon him, "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah... with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;..."

Even the animal world is to share in this reign of righteousness and peace; for the wild beasts are to lose their predatory instincts. "And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea." 2

The representative man in the Messianic State shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as streams of water in a dry place, as the shade of a great rock in a weary land. 3

1. Isaiah 11:2,4
3. Isaiah 32:2
storm or against the sun's rays, meant. The ideal man was also to protect his fellowmen. He would realize his responsibility to society. He would enlighten public opinion and continue in noble things.

This picture Isaiah gives us is one of lofty idealism for all times and for all men. He purged the traditional belief of nationalism. His faith was like that of Abraham, who when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place, not knowing whither he went. But by faith he became a sojourner in the promised land, as in a land not his own; for he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Isaiah's conception of faith is of great significance. He is the first religious leader to demand this as an absolute essential in the worship of God. It is a necessary element in salvation. Through faith Isaiah felt God's existence and presence at all times. It is only when we possess this that we can "remove mountains" and overcome the world. But faith is a universal attribute. It is not something for one nation; it is for all.

Isaiah might have said, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty."

He did believe that Yahweh was directing the course of human events toward a world-purpose, but it is not yet clear what Israel's mission implies toward other nations. Yet in
Isaiah, for the first time, we do get a distinctly missionary spirit. Here there is something more than universalism. Amos had taught that Yahweh was the God of all, but Isaiah goes a step further. Because Yahweh is the One God, all nations shall seek Him and they shall come to be taught His ways.

Although this picture is limited to the Old Testament standpoint of Zion as the center of Yahweh's sovereignty, yet there is the suggestion that "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem." This is the missionary spirit. It is the picture of the moral influence of Israel on the other nations, but it is also an ideal which was not yet destined to be fulfilled nor to be perfectly revealed.

The advance of the Assyrians toward Jerusalem and the national distress of the years 703-701 B.C. furnish the background for the prophecies of Micah. He is not as great a prophet as were his contemporaries; but he supplements their message. Like them he, too, pronounced doom as inevitable.

Micah--Yahweh an ethical God

He laments the disaster about to fall on his nation; and he pictures the effect of this devastating advance of the Assyrians on the towns of Judah situated along the highway, even to the capital.

(1:8f) Nevertheless, this judgment is justified for the leaders devise iniquity, covet fields and houses, and oppress men. (2:1f) They hate the good and love the evil. (3:2) Added to injustice the false prophets encourage the rulers in their crime and prophesy peace and prosperity. (3:5) "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet they lean upon Jehovah, and say, Is not Jehovah in the midst of us? No evil shall come upon us."

We have the suggestion here that the people are to be destroyed because of lack of knowledge. It is asked, "Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

But Yahweh has never even thought of child-sacrifice and he certainly does not require this nor the other heathen practices. Micah sums up what the other prophets have been demanding that Yahweh commands. Yahweh is the God of justice and love, and as such "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good;

1. Micah 3:11
and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

In speaking of this statement, Dr. Knudson says that it is the most comprehensive one of the ethical teaching of the prophets. Weston regards it as the greatest social passage of the Old Testament. It is worthy to be compared with Jesus' great commandment: "Thou shalt love thy God...and thy neighbor as thyself."

In Jeremiah 26 reference is made to the fact that the people heeded the words of Micah. During Hezekiah's reign there seems to have been a reformation which marked an advance in the social development of Judah and that Period between 8th century prophets and Jeremiah social teachings of the great prophets were finding a response. But with the accession of Manasseh, B.C. a reaction swept over Judah which threatened to obliterate all the prophets had accomplished. The accession of the young king Josiah, in 639 marks an important transition in Hebrew history. During his reign the authority of Assyria passed away; and a new world power, the Chaldeans, appeared in south-

1. Micah 6:8
2. A.C.Knudson, "The Religious Teaching of the O.T." p.166
3. S.A.Weston, "The Prophets and the Problems of Life" p.130f.
4. Mark 12:28-31
western Asia. King Josiah stands out as one of the few who ruled in behalf of the people and in accord with the counsels of the religious leaders of his realm. Biblical records are silent as to why he reversed the policy of his immediate ancestors; but it is probable that the prophet Zephaniah was his teacher.

The occasion of Zephaniah's prophecy was apparently the advance of the dreaded Scythians from the north; and it was around 626 that some of them passed along the Mediterranean to Egypt. Their sudden appearance and their barbarous methods of warfare filled the people with terror. Although Judah was not in their direct line of march it had good reason to fear; and religious indifference was brought to an end.

Zephaniah clearly portrays the religious and moral situation of his day. While some of his people worship Baal, others the Babylonian gods and the Ammonite god Milcom, still others are indifferent. (1:4ff) Not only are the leaders corrupt, but the prophets are treacherous persons, and the priests profane the sanctuary. (3:4) The prophet tries to arouse the conscience of his people by telling them of the day of Yahweh. It will not be one of joy as many expect; but because of their sins it must necessarily be one of punishment. (1:17f) Apparently the teachings of the prophets had made no inward change in the lives of the people.
But like all true prophets Zephaniah's real aim was constructive. He was trying to establish Yahweh's rule on earth. He preaches a God of righteousness and meekness (Zephaniah 2:3), a God who does not fail but brings his justice to light every morning. (3:5)

The closing verse of Zephaniah (3:20) represents Yahweh as saying that he will make Israel a name and a praise among all the peoples of the earth; but the verse clearly presupposes the exile, and is probably of exilic or post-exilic date.

Around 615 B.C. we have the prophecy of Nahum. He seems to have belonged to the narrow party which believed in the inviolability of Jerusalem and the Temple, the Prophet Nahum and he believed that Yahweh was ready to take vengeance on the enemies of Judah. For this reason it was inevitable that Nineveh should be destroyed. In chapter three he gives us a graphic picture of the evils of that great city. Our interest in this prophet is his teaching that Yahweh's nature is such that he must punish the wickedness of these people, for to let them continue in their wicked ways would reveal that Yahweh were not the sole ruler or he must be unjust. Therefore, to vindicate his holy name, Nineveh must be destroyed.

1. J.E. McFadyen, "Introduction to the O.T." p.209
Most scholars date the prophecies of Habakkuk around the close of the seventh century. He is the first prophet to question the justice of Yahweh's dealings with his nation. He is troubled by the unjust conditions he sees; and he wonders how Yahweh can be indifferent. "O Jehovah, how long shall I cry and thou wilt not hear?" "Thou that are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that canst not look on perverseness, wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy peace when the wicked swalloweth up the man that is more righteous than he?" (1:2&13)

We do not know whether it was the sufferings of Judah at the hands of the Assyrians, or at the hands of the Egyptians, or the Chaldeans, or conditions within Judah itself, that gave rise to his problem. The main thing however, is that Judah is represented as a righteous nation oppressed by a wicked foreign power. After the Deuteronomic reform of 621, Judah was conceived as a righteous nation. God's answer to the prophet's question is to wait in confidence for the fulfillment of the vision. The prosperity of the wicked is not explained, but he is assured that their pride cannot last, and Judah will be saved. "Behold his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him; but the righteous shall live by faith." (2:4)
Jeremiah's prophetic ministry began in the year 626 B.C.; and he was, therefore, a contemporary of King Josiah and the prophet Zephaniah. In this same year Ashurbanipal, the last of the great kings of Assyria, died; and the rapid decline of Assyria took place. This was due in part to an invasion of the Scythians, who, according to the historian, Herodotus, terrorized southwestern Asia for over a quarter of a century (640-612 B.C.). However it was the new Chaldean kingdom that finally fell heir to what was left of the Assyrian empire.

When Assyria's weakness had become apparent to the outside world and Nineveh, its proud city, had fallen; Pharaoh Necho II of Egypt felt it was an opportune time to annex Syria, one of the rich provinces of the passing empire, to his own kingdom. In 608 B.C. Josiah met Necho at Megiddo, at a point where the Egyptian king's line of march cut into Judah, and attempted to stop his progress. Here Josiah was defeated and killed, and Judah became a tributary of Egypt.

In 605 Necho's army had advanced to meet the Babylonian army at Carchemish, on the upper Euphrates. Necho was defeated by Nebuchadrezzar, and Babylon reigned supreme. For three

years Jehoiakim, Judah's ruler, was a vassal of Babylon; but probably at the instigation of Egypt, he decided to throw off the Babylonian yoke and revolted. Nebuchadrezzar sent his army against Jerusalem (597), and followed later himself. When he reached there Jehoiakim had died and his son Jehoiachin was on the throne. After a short siege in 596 B.C. Jerusalem fell, and the young king and the flower of the nation were carried into captivity in Babylon.

Zedekiah, whom Nebuchadrezzar had made king instead of Jehoiachin, failed to profit by the first captivity and called in the aid of Hophra, King of Egypt, against Babylon. Therefore, in 587 Nebuchadrezzar marched on Jerusalem again and in 586 it fell a second time. Part of the nation was transported to Babylon, and others emigrated to Egypt after the events which concluded with the murder of Gedaliah, the governor Nebuchadrezzar had put over Jerusalem.

Such, in brief, was the period in which Jeremiah lived. His own activity may naturally be divided into three periods, that under Josiah (B.C. 626-608), that under Jehoiakim (B.C. 608-597), and that under Zedekiah (B.C. 597-586).

As we read Jeremiah's prophecies, we note, as in those of

1. II Kings 24:10-16
2. II Kings 2:5
Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, the prominence of the message of doom. His commission was to pluck up and to break down. (1:10) He realized as the other prophets had that true prophecy is moral and that he must condemn the sins of his people. At first he conceives of destruction as coming through the dreaded Scythian invasion we have noted in the prophecy of Zephaniah. Later he saw it was to come through the Babylonians; but Yahweh might bring his will to pass in a number of ways.

The background of Jeremiah's message of doom is essentially the same as that of the eighth century prophets. The social and moral conditions had really not changed much. It is true that the finding of the book of the law in the temple and the Deuteronomic reform under Josiah was significant. It put an end to many evils, but in their stead arose a self-confident nationalism, as a result of the people's supposed righteousness. Jeremiah realized that there was no fundamental change in the hearts and lives of the people who failed to realize the higher spiritual ideals of the prophets. Their inner attitude toward Yahweh remained much the same, and after Josiah's death heathen practices were again revived. Among them was child-sacrifice.

In chapter 2 Yahweh contrasts his people's former love

2. Jeremiah 28
3. Jeremiah 13:27
4. Jeremiah 7:31
with their present attitude toward him. Their uncleanness is deeper than eye can penetrate. Yet they say, "I am innocent; surely his anger is turned away from me." 2

We have noted the root of Israel's sin according to the other prophets. Jeremiah sees it in man's inner self. As Isaiah had lamented because Israel did not know or consider Yahweh, when even the ox knew his owner, and the ass his Master's crib, so Jeremiah says, "Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle-dove and the swallow and the crane observe the time of their coming, but my people know not the law of Jehovah." 3

As instinct is to the birds, so religion should be to man; but conditions are far from this. The prophets prophesy falsely, the priests bear rule by their means, and the people love to have it so. 4 They have continued in their wicked ways so long that they cannot change them anymore than an Ethiopian can change his skin or a leopard his spots. 5

There was only one remedy and that was a change of heart. Jeremiah says, "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to Jehovah, and take away the foreskins of your heart." 6

"The ideality and universality of religion--these are the

3. Ibid. 1:3 4. Ibid. 8:7
5. Ibid. 5:31 6. Ibid. 13:23
7. Ibid. 4:3f.
two new grand apprehensions which Jeremiah has given to the world. Every man, as such, is born a child of God. He does not become such through the forms of any definite religion or outward organization; but he becomes such in his heart,...

A pure heart and a pure mind are all that God requires of men; let his piety choose what form it will, so long as it is genuine. Thus we have in Jeremiah the purest and highest consummation of the prophecy of Israel and of the religion of the Old Testament.

After him One only could come, who was greater than he.¹

As we have so often noted before, the people refused to take warning and so it was inevitable that Jeremiah's message should be one mainly of doom; but there was also an element of hope. When Yahweh gave him his commission he had set him over the nations to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow; but also to build and to plant.²

Gordon says, "This conviction of God being behind him is... the central nerve and backbone in the activities of Jeremiah, and the man will be a perpetual dilemma until we see this to be the urge and the energy that never gave him peace."³

Jeremiah, however, had no difficulty in seeing that Judah at heart was not righteous. There were still sufficient reasons

2. Jeremiah 1:10
3. T.C. Gordon, "The Rebel Prophet" p.51
in the wickedness and disloyalty of the people to explain the disasters which overtook the nation. There were so many conflicting elements in national life that one would probably always be able to find a reason for suffering due to some past guilt. When the law of retribution is applied to an individual, it becomes a different matter; for it is a fact that the innocent do suffer, sometimes, while the wicked prosper. This was a problem which greatly concerned Jeremiah. He flatly contradicted the common proverb—"The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." He realized, "Everyone shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge."

He thus enunciated the doctrine of individualism. He does not elaborate or insist upon his ideas, but he has brought the great truths of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah to a focus by making them inward and personal. "He then, in turn, by his conception of the inwardness of religion, became the starting point of a new development, leading to the individualism of Ezekiel and the universalism of Deutero-Isaiah."  

Still that did not solve the problem. "Righteous art thou, O Jehovah, when I contend with thee; yet would I reason

1. Jeremiah 31:29,30
2. A.C.Knudson, "The Beacon Lights of Prophecy" p.194f.
the cause with thee: wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they at ease that deal very treacherously?...Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their hearts." (12:1ff)

His only answer was, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses?" (12:5a) It was a fact he must accept.

Yet, he conceives of a wonderful future for Israel. "Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called: Jehovah our righteousness." (23:5-7)

He is to be not only a righteous king, but also a moral and spiritual redeemer of his people. Then, too, there is to be a new covenant between Yahweh and his people. "Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband to them, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall
be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his
neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah;
for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the
greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their
iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." (31:31-34)

Dr. Knudson says, "This is one of the profoundest and
most significant utterances in the whole Old Testament. It
contains the quintessence of the whole theology of Jeremiah.
Henceforth, in the new covenant, the law is to be inwardly and
individually appropriated. Religion, in a word, is to be a
matter of the heart. And if so, it can recognize no limits
of race. It must be as broad as humanity itself."

Peake says, that the external law had proved a failure
because of the stubbornness of man's heart. The laws must be
written on their heart, which is itself renewed and there can
then be no conflict between the Divine injunction and nature
which is summoned to fulfil it. Man does God's will naturally
and spontaneously because it is his own will, it has become
an integral part of his person, the law of his nature.

Thus when the rotten surface of national life broke under
the Prophet he fell on the deeper levels of the individual
heart, and not only found the native sinfulness of this to be

2. A.S. Peake, "The New-Century Bible" Vol.II Jeremiah-
   Introduction p.44
the explanation of public and social corruption, but also the
tool for the seed-bed of new truths and hopes.

Jeremiah saw the evil which existed in the religion of
his day. His plan of attack was to publicly inform the people
of their wrong doings. He pled for national repentance and
after tearing down the existing evils, he gave a positive plan
to take the place of the common practices— that is, the New
Covenant. He was like Jesus, in that he not only destroyed
but also planted, he not only criticized but also advised and
his advice like that of Christ came from his own personal life's
experience, plus a relationship with God that was very close to
ideal. If the right relationship existed between God and man,
it would solve all of the problems of life.

We cannot over-emphasize the importance of Jeremiah's con-
ception of the new covenant in Old Testament prophecy, yet we
must note the significance of his own personal religious life.
His was a life of loneliness and suffering. It was not alone
that his people refused to accept his message, but even Yahweh
at times seemed to have deserted him. "O Jehovah, thou hast
persuaded me, and I was persuaded; thou art stronger than I, and
hast prevailed: I am become a laughing-stock all the day, every
one mocketh me. For as often as I speak, I cry out; I cry,

1. G.A. Smith, "Jeremiah" p.368
violence and destruction; because the word of Jehovah is made a reproach unto me, and a derision, all the day. And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak anymore in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain." (20:7ff)

"O Jehovah, thou knowest; remember me, and visit me, and avenge me of my persecutors; take me away in thy long-suffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered reproach... Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? Wilt thou indeed be unto me as a deceitful brook, as waters that fail?" (15:15&18)

But this sense of unjust treatment from Yahweh was not an established conviction with Jeremiah. It was a passing mood that we would wonder more if he did not experience, knowing his emotional nature and his depth of feeling.

"Jeremiah's steadfast obedience to his call did not mean that he was able to preserve a perfect serenity of Spirit throughout his long dangerous career. That nervous inquiring spirit advanced to the discovery of religious problems which would have never arisen for a more passive and contented piety."

Though we admit his human tendencies, this outcry was

1. L.B.Longacre, "A Prophet of the Spirit" p.89
hardly the attitude a prophet should take toward Yahweh. So he turns to him and says, "If thou return, then will I bring thee again, that thou mayest stand before me; and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth..." (15:19)

The greatness of Jeremiah's soul is brought out here. In Yahweh's reply, He says nothing about Jeremiah's great suffering. He expects him to bear them like a man. Jeremiah has done wrong to complain, but Yahweh readily forgives him and gives him another chance to fulfill his prophetic office simply through fellowship with Him. Jeremiah, at life's best, realized there was nothing to compare with this. His prayer was, "Heal me, O Jehovah, and I shall be healed, save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise." (17:14)

And he found rest for his soul. Jeremiah had not solved the mystery of suffering. God's ways are so far above ours that none of us can do that; but Jeremiah found something more precious. Through his own life he realized that fellowship with Yahweh was so wonderful that in comparison his sufferings lost their sting. It was this that the suffering people of his nation needed.

Dr. Knudson says that the most significant thing about Jeremiah is not his public message to Israel, but his own personal religious life. Probably the earlier prophets had experiences similar
to those of Jeremiah. They had laid down the essential principles of religion, had made it a matter of ethics, of holy love, and of moral faith, and had no doubt exemplified these qualities in their own lives. But religion with them was primarily a national affair.

Jeremiah, however engrossing his public tasks were, could not overlook the fact that as a prophet he stood in an intimate personal relation to God, and that this relationship was a matter of vital religious concern. "In him personal religion came to self-consciousness. It is this fact that gives to him his unique significance in the history of religion....It was he who first made the soul of the individual the true seat of religion. But this does not mean that he gave up the national point of view...It simply means that he made the conception of religion deeper and more inward. He made its essential nature consist in personal fellowship with God. This implies the ascription of new importance to the individual....Jeremiah not only gave verbal expression to the idea that true piety consists in the fellowship of the individual soul with God, but he also illustrated it in his own life....He had a depth of feeling and insight into human nature, in the power of sympathy, and in the grasp of those truths of religion.

which most completely meet the common needs of men...In these regards he comes nearer than any other Old Testament prophet to the Christian standpoint."

Between the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, we have seen no advance in the missionary idea. But in Jeremiah we have another great prophet. He realizes that there is need for a new covenant of Yahweh with Israel. The old one has been broken, and the only one that can avail is one of the heart. The external law had proved a failure, and so Jeremiah teaches that the law must be inwardly and individually appropriated. Before this, religion was a national institution, and it was therefore limited and narrow. But when religion becomes a matter of the heart, it cannot be limited to any race; for each individual has the capacity provided he maintains the right relationship with God.

Jeremiah was a living example of this relationship. His life was a personal fellowship with God. What does this mean in the development of the missionary spirit? It means that the conception of religion becomes deeper and more inward. It thus implies the ascription of a new importance to the individual, where forms and ceremonies and external things can never be a substitute. It means that where people are, there God is ready and waiting to commune with them and even taking the

initiative. Yahweh says that he shall put his law in their inward parts. It is something with which people are endowed; and it cannot be limited to any locality; for Yahweh is the God of the whole earth.

Ezekiel's call to be a prophet came in the fifth year of the first Babylonian captivity (592 B.C.). Jeremiah was one of those who remained in Jerusalem, but Ezekiel was carried away with the captives and it is here in Tel-Abib that we first meet him. (Ezekiel 3:15) He was the son of a priest and he was a priest himself. He is a transition prophet. As a prophet he stressed the great ethical teachings of his race; but as a priest he held to the high values in ritual and ceremony, and his ministry enables us to see that both have their place in the development of spiritual religion. He possessed the power and insight to realize that his people needed concrete and perhaps non-essential elements in their religion to make it effective. Because of this initial impulse, which was carried on especially by Ezra and Nehemiah, Judaism was able to withstand the disintegrating influence of Greek naturalism.

Such a man was bound to be greatly influenced by the exile. As Cornill says, the consequences of the Babylonian

1. C.H. Cornill, "The Prophets of Israel" p.110
exile were momentous in every way; the exile in Babylon quite transformed Israel and its religion and created what is known in religious history as Judaism, in contradistinction to Israelitism.

Another writer of the Old Testament compares the Babylonian captivity to a sieve, in which the house of Israel is sifted, through which all the chaff and dust passes, but not the least grain falls to the earth. For in the fall of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the prophetic religion won a complete victory over the old religion of the people, and the latter lost every possibility of further existence.

The Babylonian captivity had a moral influence on the exiles. They were bowed down by fate, they had lost confidence in themselves and their God, and they were despised and oppressed. What an effect the grandeur, the power, and the magnificence of Babylon must have had on them!

Influence of the Babylonian captivity

The art, the luxury, and the temples to the Babylonian gods must have made many a weak Israelite feel that Yahweh had indeed forsaken him and he and his family might just as well be as the nations, as the families of the countries, who served wood and stone and seemed

1. C.H. Cornill, "The Prophets of Israel" p. 111
to prosper better than he did. It was the braver but sadder heart that cried out in anguish, "How shall we sing Jehovah's song in a foreign land?"  

Because of the extraordinary strength of character that it took to remain true to the Hebrew religion, a weeding-out process took place and religion was destined to undergo a deep change. The state had been destroyed, the national life stopped, and nothing but the ecclesiastical element remained. The first person who clearly saw the situation of the exiles and sought to adapt them to the change of conditions was Ezekiel. "The significance and influence of this man cannot be rated too highly."  

Since the beginning, one of the central themes of the prophets had been the doom of Israel or Judah, because the people had not followed Yahweh. Ezekiel's message, at first, is also one of doom, although it is delivered under different conditions than those of the earlier prophets. Here his people have already experienced doom; they are in exile. With the clear insight into the conditions of his day, which was so characteristic of the true prophets, Ezekiel aimed to dispel the vain hopes of the exiles, who expected an early return to Jerusalem, and tried to prepare

1. Ezekiel 20:32  
2. Psalms 137:4  
3. C.H. Cornill, "The Prophets of Israel" p. 113
them for the coming catastrophe so that their religion would not fail them. Ezekiel tries to impress his people with the fact that because God is a God of justice, He had to punish Israel for her sin.

The people as a whole believed that they were righteous and that they were being punished unjustly. There had been a successful reform under Josiah, but both Jeremiah and Ezekiel realized that this reform was superficial and not a change of heart. The people were still guilty of injustice and immorality (Ez.9:9; 22:6-12; 27:34); and they even worshipped idols in the temple precinct (8:1-13). Ezekiel reminds his people that their history has been one long apostasy from Yahweh; for even in Egypt and the wilderness, they worshipped idols and disobeyed God (20:5-13; 23:3). Many of the prophets had falsely deceived the people telling them there was peace when there was no peace (13:10). Ezekiel pictures Jerusalem as a useless vine that needs to be destroyed (15:5). Her priests have profaned the holy things, for they made no distinction between the holy and the common nor taught men the difference between the clean and the unclean (22:26). The people have used oppression and exercised robbery; they have vexed the poor and needy. (22:29)

In view of these facts Yahweh must punish Israel, and there was nothing in the fall of the nation that need upset the religious faith of the people. Yahweh was still God!
To the people the exile offered many grounds of discouragement. We have already noted that some of them felt there was no use in trying to do right (20:32). Others felt that they were unjustly being punished for the sins of their fathers. From this time on Ezekiel's message was one of hope. He realized that what his despairing people needed was comfort. He says, "What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth, it shall die."

"But if the wicked turn from all his sins...and keep all my statutes,...he shall surely live,...But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity,...none of his righteous deeds that he hath done shall be remembered."

According to this view Ezekiel assures his people that they are to be judged for what they do themselves. He tells them that even such righteous men as Noah, Daniel, and Job could not save them if they were unrighteous. Their destiny

2. Ezekiel 18:21&24
3. Ezekiel 14:14
Salvation depends on them alone, but they have the power to shape their own character and thus determine whether they shall live or die.

Ezekiel thus makes salvation a personal matter. It was the assurance that the exiles needed, for it not only gave them confidence in themselves and the courage to go on, but it also satisfied their demands for divine justice. When we look at this from a critical standpoint we see that Ezekiel did not allow for hereditary guilt nor vicarious suffering.

Dr. Knudson says that the criticism which holds that Ezekiel's doctrine of individualism asserts itself at the expense of the actual facts of life rests on a misunderstanding of Ezekiel's teaching. His standpoint is ideal. "What he is considering is the soul simply in its relation to God; and this he thinks of as finally settled at the great day of Jehovah which is not far distant....that the super-empirical or eschatological factor was prominent in the thought of Ezekiel cannot be questioned. Life and death with him did not mean merely physical life and physical death. These terms carried with them a higher spiritual connotation. Something of what we mean by eternal life and death attached to them. Only as

1. A.C. Knudson, "The Beacon Lights of Prophecy" p.237
we realize this can we fully appreciate the religious energy of the prophet's message. And from this higher point of view his teaching concerning the individual is eminently true. The ultimate destiny of every person must rest with himself alone. This is a necessary requirement of absolute ethics."

Dr. Knudson goes on to remind us that it was not due to Ezekiel alone that the life of the individual was thus disentangled from that of the nation. We are all well aware that God does prepare the way; so this, too, was the outcome of a long development. Even in Genesis (18:25) we have the idea that the righteous will not perish with the guilty. But while the idea was not new with Ezekiel, he seems to have been the first to formulate it into a doctrine and to have made it a correlate of the divine justice. He pictures Yahweh as saying, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, 0 house of Israel?"

"This is the most precious saying in the whole book of Ezekiel. It comes nearer than any other to the heart of the New Testament. As we read it, we can almost hear the voice of the Master saying, 'There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth' (Luke 15:10)."

1. A.C.Knudson, "The Beacon Lights of Prophecy" p.238
2. Ibid. p.238
3. Ezekiel 33:11
4. A.C.Knudson, "The Beacon Lights of Prophecy" p.239
There was another element of consolation in Ezekiel's teaching that we must consider. It was a belief among the ancient peoples that when they were overcome by a more powerful people it followed that their God must be weaker than the one of their conqueror. Ezekiel tells his people this is not so in their case. For him Yahweh was absolute sovereign and the people must completely submit to his divine will. It was because Judah had not submitted that she was carried into captivity, and because the heathen had also profaned his holy name by attributing the exile to Yahweh's weakness that Judah must be restored. "I do not this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for my holy name, which ye have profaned among the nations,...And I will, sanctify my great name,...and the nations shall know that I am Jehovah,..."

Ezekiel's view concerning the suffering of his nation was in essential agreement with that of the eighth-century prophets and Jeremiah. Judah's suffering was to be expected as the result of her unfaithfulness. "His own problem is not to reconcile with justice the hard fate of Israel, but to clear the fair name of Yahweh from the aspersions cast upon it. If he seeks to justify the ways of God to man, it is rather that

God may be vindicated than that man's heart may be at peace."

Dr. Knudson says that the prophet's thought here seems to be that Yahweh was actuated by the motive of self-defense. His honor was at stake, and must be protected. The other nations saw in the exile an evidence of his weakness, and so rejected the idea of his universal sovereignty. Therefore, he must restore Israel and make such a display of his power that none could doubt it. This seems like a non-ethical element in the divine nature. Yahweh appears to act by impulses of resentment and offended dignity. And yet back of them lies the profound ethical principle of self-respect which is at the basis of the moral life. "God must as God be true to his own nature, to his own position in the world, and so must demand reverence from men. His holiness, his transcendent greatness, requires it."

Yet according to Ezekiel's doctrine of individualism, we know that every man has certain rights which others and even God must respect. "No one may justly be damned for the sake of anyone else, not even for the glory of God. And so it is also, on the other hand, with God. God by virtue of the fact that he is God has certain rights which men and nations must respect. He must at times act out of regard for his own holy

1. A.S. Peake, "The Problem of Suffering in the O.T." p.23
2. A.C. Knudson, "The Religious Teaching of the O.T." p.148
3. Ibid. p.149
name. Duty requires it. It is this profound ethical truth that lies at the basis of Ezekiel's conception of the divine holiness, as majesty or irresistible power."

Thorn also brings this idea out. He says that Ezekiel represents Yahweh as always acting for His own name's sake to reveal his glory to the world. Lofthouse admits that this seems to be a dark trait in the portraiture of Yahweh, but he goes on to say that 'for my name's sake' means, therefore, 'for the sake of all that is worth having or being',---as we might say, 'in the name of morality, humanity, and religion'. To prevent the pollution of Yahweh's name is necessarily the highest possible motive, because such pollution is nothing but the tainting of purity itself with corruption, calling good evil and evil good, giving sweet for bitter and bitter for sweet, and summoning 'red ruin and the Promise of restoration breaking up of laws'. To assure Israel her restoration was demanded by the vindication of Yahweh's honor was to give a satisfying promise.

In speaking of this fact that the restoration of the exiles did not depend upon their own desserts, but upon the sovereign will of God, Dr. Knudson reminds us that if the exiles were to be dealt with according to their own merits,

1. A.C.Knudson, "The Religious Teaching of the O.T." p.149
2. G.W.Thorn, "The Prophets of Israel and Their Message for Today" p.138
there would be little hope for them. Their ground for confidence lay in the gracious will of God. He says, "We have here an anticipation of the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith."

He goes on to say that we have a more remarkable anticipation, however, of Pauline teaching in Ezekiel's doctrine of regeneration and the impartation of the divine spirit. Before Israel could be restored, she had to undergo a complete change of character. Jeremiah had taught that Yahweh would make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and write the law in their hearts. But Ezekiel goes beyond Jeremiah. He hears Yahweh tell his people, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my ordinances, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God."

Thus we see that Ezekiel makes a new birth a necessary

1. A.C. Knudson, "The Beacon Lights of Prophecy" p. 234
2. Jeremiah 31:33
3. Ezekiel 36:25-28
4. Ezekiel 36:25-28
condition of salvation. He had pictured Yahweh as saying, "Return ye, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin."

With this in mind Ezekiel had preached restoration for Israel. This was to be preceded by a destruction of her enemies (ch. 25-32, 28f), for he could not conceive of peace with them still powerful. The foreigners now in Israel would be put out to make room for the returned exiles (36:2), and the land would be unusually fertile (36:8f).

This new Jerusalem would no longer have corrupt rulers, but Yahweh himself would be their shepherd. "For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out...I will seek that which was lost, and will bring back that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but the fat and the strong I will destroy; I will feed them in justice."

Yahweh will also appoint an earthly representative to rule over his people. "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd."

In this new age Yahweh will also make a covenant of peace

1. Ezekiel 18:30
2. Ezekiel 34:11&16
3. Ezekiel 34:23
with his people, in which the beasts of the land will be destroyed, the rains will come in their seasons, the trees will bear fruit abundantly, the ground will yield its increase so that there will be no more famine, "and they shall know that I, Jehovah their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, saith the Lord Jehovah."

The land once desolate shall be so changed that all that pass by shall say, "This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden;...then the nations that are left round about you shall know that I, Jehovah, have builded the ruined places, and planted that which was desolate: I, Jehovah have spoken it, and I, will do it." 2

Then if an enemy should appear (ch. 38f), Yahweh would defeat him and all Israel would have to do would be to burn up the enemy's weapons and bury the enemy's dead. An attack upon Israel by the nations of the world formed a part of the traditional eschatology, but Ezekiel seems to have been the first to apply it to the distant future after the Messianic era had begun. "This representation exercised an important influence on the development of apocalyptic. It also served a practical purpose in helping to keep alive faith in the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God. No matter how discouraged

1. Ezekiel 34:30
2. Ezekiel 36:35
and harassed the later Jews were, it was always possible for them to turn to these chapters in Ezekiel and find consolation in the thought that eventually all powers hostile to the people of God would certainly be overthrown."

Ezekiel was not content with predicting the restoration and the changes accompanying it; he also put his convictions and ideals into concrete form. The earlier prophets had not been able to bring about the moral and spiritual transformation upon which they insisted. Ezekiel realized that one of the causes for their failure was the inability of the people as a whole to grasp the teachings of the prophets and apply them to life. Ezekiel tried to offset this difficulty and to secure purity and righteousness in the life of every individual in the community by mapping out a scheme for the establishment of an absolute theocracy in Judah. "The underlying idea was the holiness of Yahweh and the conviction that only as this holiness was reflected in the life of the people did real and permanent fellowship between Yahweh and Israel become possible."

"If Ezekiel could only succeed in making of every individual a sanctified personality, who at the same time felt himself to be a member of a community and was steeped with the conviction that he could find true salvation only in this

2. Ezekiel 40-48
community, then would there be some hope of obtaining citizens worthy of the Kingdom of God, which was sure to come."

Cornill says, "If religious personality be the true subject of religion, the inestimable value of every individual human soul follows directly from this fact. Here it is that the lever must be applied, and in Ezekiel thus prophecy is transformed into the pastoral care of souls." 1

Ezekiel knew God as omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and holy. To him God was real, active, and living, and his one desire was to convince his people of Yahweh's power and justice. But in doing this we have seen that he appeals to each individual. He believed in the sacredness of human personality. He had caught Jeremiah's vision which emphasized the individual's relationship with Yahweh, but he went further and added fellowship to it. This increased sense of personal responsibility was of great significance. For Judaism it meant that the individual would gradually supplant the nation as the unit of value in religion; but it meant more than that. It meant that Christianity was on its way, for only when religion becomes personal can it have far-reaching influences which will reach out and include all peoples. Religion no longer is confined to a nat-

1. C.H.Cornill, "The Prophets of Israel" p.121
2. Ibid. p.119
ion, but it becomes broad and universal.

"While his people sank to ruin, Jehovah rose to an ever new supremacy, as greater than all other gods, as finally the sole ruler of the world... The genius of Israel, single, intense, consummately religious came to its superlative expression in men who sought to know God, that they might do his will. They found God in Jehovah righteous, just but merciful, ready to punish but eager to pardon, exalted but tenderly loving, a mighty God but spiritual, God supreme and eternal."

Ezekiel had tried to comfort his people by giving them a hopeful picture of their future restoration, and he had tried to show them that a change of heart was necessary before this could happen. But life on the whole went on as usual. Nebuchadrezzar's empire still stretched from east of the Euphrates to the borders of Egypt. His long reign of forty-two years was spent mainly in consolidating his empire and beautifying his capital. In 562 Amel-Mardul (whom II Kings 25:27 calls Evil-Merodach), his son, succeeded him on the throne. He was assassinated after three years; and his son-in-law, Neriglisar, ruled only four years when the priestly party put Nabon-

idus on the throne. He had more interest in temple building than in military affairs and the outside pressure from Media.

Meanwhile Cyrus, the king of Anshan, had been giving proof of his commanding ability and energy which was soon to raise him to the front ranks of the conquerors of the East. Through the defeat of Astyages in 549 he annexed Media, and laid the foundations of the great Medo-Persian empire which controlled the destinies of Western Asia for more than two hundred years.

His next move was to overthrow Croesus, king of Lydia (540); but the crowning enterprise of his life was the taking of Babylon in 539 B.C.

Barton gives us an account of this capture from the Nabuna'id-Cyrus Chronicle. "...On the third day of Marcheswan (Oct.-Nov.) Cyrus entered Babylon. The walls (?) were broken down before him. Cyrus proclaimed peace to all of Babylon...From Kislen (Nov.-Dec.) unto Adar (Feb.-March), the gods of Akkad, whom Nabuna'id had brought to Babylon, returned to their cities...."

In another inscription of Cyrus we read, "...On account of their lamentation the lord of the gods was exceeding angry and (left) their territory; the gods who dwelt among them left

1. R. Levy, "Deutero-Isaiah" Introduction p. 6
their dwellings. In anger because he brought (them) into Babylon, Marduk.... Through all lands he made his way, he looked, he sought a righteous prince, a being whom he loved, whom he took by the hand. Cyrus, King of Anshan, he called by name and designed him to rule over all lands....Marduk....

Capture of Babylon return of his people, his kindly deeds and upright heart. To his city, Babylon, he commanded him to go; he caused him to take the road to Babylon, going as a friend and companion at his side....He caused him to enter Babylon without war or battle......

"I am Cyrus, king of the world, the great king, the mighty king, king of Babylon, king of Sumer and Akked, king of the four quarters of the world,....an everlasting seed of royalty, whose government Bel and Nabu love, whose reign in the goodness of their hearts they desire. When I entered in peace into Babylon,....Marduk, the great lord, moved to understanding the heart of the people of Babylon to me, while daily I sought his worship......May all the gods, whom I have returned to their cities, pray before Marduk and Nabu for the prolonging of my days,......."

Allusions to Cyrus in the prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah make

1. G.A.Barton, "Archaeology of the Bible" p.445
it certain, from the conditions given above that the date lies somewhere between 549 and 538. He regards Cyrus as a well-known conqueror whose victories have already sent a thrill of excitement through the world. (41:2f) In harmony with the references to Cyrus are the circumstances of Israel. The nation is in exile on the eve of deliverance (42:22; 51:14; 49:9); while Palestine lies in waste (51:3; 52:9). Then, too, the capture of Babylon is still future (48:14; 52:10), but the prophet undoubtedly knows of Cyrus's custom in dealing with conquered peoples, for Deutero-Isaiah assures his people that it is Yahweh who has raised Cyrus up. He even pictures Yahweh as saying, "I have raised him (Cyrus) up in righteousness, and I will make straight all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let my exiles go free, not for price nor reward, saith Jehovah of hosts."

We have already noted from the Nabuna'id Cyrus Chronicle that it was Cyrus' custom to return gods to their native lands, and we may even believe that he furnished money to restore them. It is little wonder that a man with such a poetic and imaginative soul as was Deutero-Isaiah's should arise to comfort his despairing people and give them the hope for the immediate present that they needed. Ezekiel had given them

1. Isaiah 45:13
the promise of a future restoration, but they were living and suffering in the present.

"Where, in similar circumstances, other prophets had raged and threatened Israel with doom, the Deutero-Isaiah, with greater sympathy, attempted to convince the people by argument that Yahweh was omnipotent."

However, we have already noted the effect of the fall of Jerusalem on Ezekiel's preaching, and so it is not strange that Deutero-Isaiah should arise to the occasion when his people in their national humiliation and depression needed encouragement.

Skinner calls him the "inspired Interpreter" of Yahweh's action in a great crisis of history. "...it is in the disentanglement and solution of a situation which was to all others a hopeless mystery that he realizes his vocation as a prophet. Dismayed by the might of Babylon, and fearing continually because of the oppressor (50:13), confronted on every hand by the monuments of a vast system of idolatry, the exiles had given way to gloomy thoughts and doubts of the power or willingness of Jehovah to redeem. To counteract this despairing mood something more than a bare announcement of deliverance was needed. This first requisite was to revive their con-}

1. R. Levy, "Deutero-Isaiah" Introduction p.18
Unconsciousness of God, to impress them with a sense of His infinite power and resources, and the immutability of His word; and also to impart to them a new and inspiring view of their own mission and destiny as a nation."

Deutero-Isaiah's opening words strike at once the burden of his message, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God."

Then the prophet goes on to tell his people why they should be comforted. He realized that the true function of religion is to help and sustain men. (55:3)

Deutero-Isaiah's message of hope

He illustrates this by contrasting Yahweh with the heathen gods. The latter are a burden to those who worship them. Their idols are a load on the weary beasts who bear them; but Yahweh has been a sustaining power to his people throughout history. (46:1-4)

Yahweh lives and moves and has his being in the destinies of his people. He helps those who seek his aid, and he comforts his people by assuring them of his presence. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (41:10)

2. Isaiah 40:1
Yahweh even tells them they need not be discouraged because of their sins. Although these have Yahweh a forgiving God burdened and wearied him; yet, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake; and I will not remember thy sins." (43:25)

Another note of hope which Deutero-Isaiah sets forth is the announcement of the restoration of the exiles from Babylon and the four quarters of the earth. This Promise of return from exile return is to be such that it will even exceed the marvels of the exodus from Egypt. Yahweh says, "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing;...I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert....to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people which I formed for myself, that they might set forth my praise." (43:18-21)

These words were addressed to Israel, but Yahweh does not confine the blessings of the new age to any one nation. He says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the Yahweh saviour of the world ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. By myself have I sworn, the word is gone forth from my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." (45:22f)

These words, if taken seriously, are very significant.
Here we have a direct statement to the effect that Yahweh alone is God and there is none else. More important still, Yahweh, as a righteous God, will not be satisfied until the people from all the ends of the earth are saved. He does not say all the Jewish people, who have been scattered to the ends of the earth. He does not say all the people of the white race shall be saved. He says that his word will not return until every knee shall bow to him, and every tongue shall sing his praise. This is akin to the missionary spirit of the New Testament. When such an idea was sown, it was sure to take root and grow until a greater than Deutero-Isaiah should arise to teach its full meaning.

It is Deutero-Isaiah's conception of God that colors his whole thinking. He does not assume or incidentally say that Yahweh alone is God, but he makes it "almost an abstract truth of religion, and strives to bring it home to the reason and imagination of his readers."

One argument he uses is that from prophecy. Yahweh alone has been able to predict the future, and this knowledge of the future is a symbol and expression of the intelligence and moral purpose operative in the world.

"Produce your cause, saith Jehovah; bring forth your strong

2. A.C. Knudson, "The Religious Teaching of the O.T." p.88
reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and declare unto us what shall happen: declare ye the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or show us things to come. Declare the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work is of nought; an abomination is he that chooseth you.... I am the first that saith unto Zion, Behold, behold them; and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings. And when I look, there is no man; even among them there is no counsellor, that, when I ask of them, can answer a word."

(41:21-24; 41:27&28)

Another argument was his work as Creator. He created the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth. He has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance. He not only created the world, but he formed it to be inhabited. (42:5; 45:18)

It was only natural that the prophet thought of Yahweh's eternity and transcendence also. He says, "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand forever.

....Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? The everlasting God, Jehovah,...fainteth not, neither is weary;...they that
wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount
up with wings as angels; they shall run, and not be weary; they
shall walk, and not faint."

Nothing earthly can compare with him: "Behold, the nations
are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust
of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little
thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts
thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. (40:15f) ....To whom
then will ye liken God? (40:18)....It is he that sitteth above
the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as
grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain,
and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in; that bringeth
princes to nothing; that maketh the judges of the earth as
vanity. (40:22f) ....Lift up your eyes on high, and see who
hath created these, that bringeth out their hosts by number;
he calleth them all by name; by the greatness of his might,
and for that he is strong in power, not one is lacking. Why
sayest thou, 0 Jacob, and speakest thou, 0 Israel, my way is
hid from Jehovah, and the justice due to me is passed away from
my God? ....The everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the
ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no
searching of his understanding." (40:26ff)

1. Isaiah 40:8,28,31
Deutero-Isaiah pictures Yahweh as again and again asserting his sole deity. (43:10f; 44:6; 45:5,22) We have noted that this idea was implicit from the beginning in Israel's religion; but because of the exile it needed to be made explicit. The exiles were face to face with the heathen world where on every hand they were surrounded by the worship of heathen deities. If they were to maintain their faith in Yahweh, they had to be convinced that he alone was God. "Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am Jehovah; and besides me there is no saviour. I have declared, and I have saved, and I have showed; and there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and I am God." (43:10ff)

This last verse sounds very much like Christ when he said, "It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority. But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:7f)

But there is yet a more tender side of Yahweh that the prophet conceives. He is a just God and he is, therefore, a loving one. We see the Divine mercy when Yahweh said, "For the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but my
lovingkindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall my
Yahweh a covenant of peace be removed,..."
Yahweh is the Creator and Father of all (63:16), and as
such he is also the saviour; but he must use human instruments
for this end. Cyrus, as the anointed of
The anointed Yahweh Yahweh, (who far surpassed the historic
reality) is not only to let the exiles go free and to rebuild
Jerusalem (45:13); but he is himself to become a worshipper of
Yahweh (41:25), and to be the means of bringing about the
universal recognition of the true religion.
"Thus saith Jehovah to his annointed, to Cyrus,...I will
go before thee and make the rough places smooth;...For Jacob
my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I have called thee by
thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known
me....That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from
the west, that there is none besides me...." (45:5f)
Another great picture of the Second Isaiah's is that of
the Servant of Yahweh. In the first servant passage (42:1-4)
Israel is represented as the chosen of Yahweh,
The Servant who has put his spirit upon him to bring
of Yahweh forth justice to the Gentiles. He will quietly and privately
persuade men to the right by his spiritual influences. We

1. Isaiah 54:10
have the suggestion (42:4) that the best of the heathen are
dissatisfied with their own religion and feel the need of the
purer faith.

Skinner says that the divine ideal represented by the
Servant of the Lord becomes the basis of a new national life,
inasmuch as it expresses that for the sake of him Yahweh
enters into a new covenant relation with His people. "I,
Jehovah,... will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the
people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that
sit in darkness out of the prison-house." (42:6f)

In the second servant passage the (Isaiah 49:1-6) Servant
tells how Yahweh has hidden him away under his protection and
secrecy, during the period of his development, and until he
was ready for his allotted task. Yahweh's hiding of his
Servant may express the truth that Israel has been provident-
ially preserved through the long ages for the sake of the
spiritual endowments which made it the mouthpiece of revelation.

Although the Servant's words are as trenchant and power-
ful as a sword, whereby his teaching would penetrate the hearts
of men; (49:2) he is ignorant of his true destiny and feels
that the toil of his development is so much wasted labor, yet

1. J. Skinner, "The Cambridge Bible" Isaiah 40-65 p.29
2. Ibid. Vol.II p.90
he is confident that Yahweh will not forget or fail to recognize his worth and efforts; and it is here that Yahweh assures him that merely to undertake the restoration of Israel is a task not sufficiently great or noble for one who is specially appointed to be the Servant of the Lord. His sphere of action must be the whole world, and his function as wide, profound, and catholic as Yahweh's spirit itself. Here is an end, once and for all, to the idea that Israel's sole duty is his own salvation.

"It is too light a thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." (49:6)

The third servant passage (50:4-9) gives us a more intimate contact with Yahweh through whom he has learned his ministry of comfort (50:4). The Servant has given himself to his mission willingly, even though he has been persecuted. (v.6) "For the Lord Jehovah will help me; therefore have I not been confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame." (50:7)

1. R. Levy, "Deutero-Isaiah" p.224
Here we have the conception of the Servant as a sufferer at the hands of the people; and in the last Servant passage (52:13-53:12) we see him as a sufferer at the hands of Yahweh as well as at the hands of men.

In speaking of these last verses Torrey says, "This is a composition which no thoughtful student of history can read without a feeling of awe. It is the most wonderful bit of religious poetry in all literature. This idea out of which it is built—so broad and high, and filled with a spirit which is at once fervid and catholic—is such as no other ancient religious philosophy ever equalled....It is truly Israelite in its atmosphere and yet universal in its tone, written with deep sympathy for the whole human brotherhood....With all its originality, it is the legitimate fruit of that marvelous religious development which produced the Hebrew scriptures."

This is the last and greatest, as well as the most difficult, of the four delineations of the Servant. Before this the Servant has been described as the ideal prophet or teacher, conscious of a world-wide mission in the service of God, which he pursues amid discouragement and persecution with inflexible purpose and unfaltering assurance of his ultimate success. There has been no hint that his activity was interrupted by

1. C.C. Torrey, "The Second Isaiah" p.409
death. Here the presentation is different. The passage is partly retrospective, partly prophetic. In so far as it is retrospective there is no allusion to the prophetic activity of the Servant; it is only after he has been raised from the dead that he is to assume the function of the great religious guide and authority of the world.

The most striking feature of the passage is the unparalleled sufferings of the Servant, and the effect they produce on the minds of his contemporaries. The tragedy of which they have been spectators, makes an impression far more profound and convincing than any direct teaching could have, compelling them to recognize the mission of the Servant, and producing penitence and confession of their own sin. The whole conception makes the prophecy the most remarkable anticipation in the Old Testament of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

Here we have the figure of a man, so marred and deformed as to be universally shunned and despised as one bearing manifest tokens of divine displeasure. Yet the dignity and patience of his demeanour so impressed his contemporaries, that after his death they could not help but think of his fate,

1. J. Skinner, "The Cambridge Bible" Isaiah 40-65 p.120
and feel that he must have been the Servant of Yahweh; and that
his sufferings were due not to his personal guilt, but to the
guilt of his nation, which is by them atoned for and taken
away. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sor-
rows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and
afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was
bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was
upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:4f)

Thus Deutero-Isaiah brings out the moral significance of
suffering by which it is deprived of the appearance of arbitra-
riness or injustice. The suffering of the innocent on behalf
of the guilty is a moral necessity, since it was only through
such sufferings as the Servant alone was capable of, that
punishment could reach its end in the taking away of sin and
bringing in of righteousness.

There is little wonder that Christians have seen the
picture of Christ in these words. We cannot accept this view
as historical, yet there is a marked similarity between the
Servant and the Christ who said, "And I, if I be lifted up from
the earth, will draw all men unto myself." (12:32 John)

Dr. Knudson says, "Nowhere in the Old Testament have we
such a lofty religious ideal as in the suffering Servant....
his life was a sacrifice for the sins of others, and a sacrifice
voluntarily borne....This was the divinely chosen method of
redeeming Israel and of redeeming the world. In this concep-
tion we have the high-water mark of the Old Testament spirituality... What remained a pure ideal in the Old Testament became an actuality in the New."

And in his "Religious Teaching of the Old Testament" he adds, "The very fact that Israel's sufferings were undeserved, that they were endured for others, brought home to the heathen a poignant consciousness of their own sins, and wrought in them a change of heart. It led to repentance and confession, and to the recognition of Israel's God as God of all the world. Such an end might well justify and sanctify any affliction and any sacrifice."

Israel's great contribution to the world was her religion which was to be a light to the Gentiles, their means of salvation. "A law shall go forth from me, and I will establish my justice for a light of the peoples. My righteousness is near, my salvation is gone forth, and mine arm shall judge the peoples; the isles shall wait for me, and on mine arm shall they trust."

This idea that one nation should share its gift with others was a great idea. It is the basis of Christianity, for Christianity is something that cannot be kept. Nevertheless, this great idea remained an ideal in postexilic Judaism. The

1. A.C.Knudsen, "The Beacon Lights of Prophecy" p.273
2. A.C.Knudsen, "The Religious Teaching of the O.T." p.284
impenetrable armor with which Ezekiel had helped to encase legalism also had its part to play, and it saved the Jewish religion from Greek naturalism.

It is true as Robinson says that the Exile gave birth to two distinct ideals of the future of Israel---to the priestly ideal of Ezekiel, with a nationalism centered Universality of the Hebrew religion in the restored temple and its ritual, sharply separated from the outside world, and to the prophetic ideal of Deutero-Isaiah, which anticipated the conversion of all other nations to the religion of Israel, through the missionary work of the Servant of Yahweh.

Dr. Kohler says that it is because of this twofold nature that we have Judaism preserved as it is. It took the most tenacious adherence to forms originally intended to preserve the Jewish people in its priestly sanctity and separateness, to keep its religious truths pure and free from the encroachments of foreign influences, especially Greek. But on the other hand, it manifests a mighty impulse to come into close touch with various civilized nations, partly to disseminate among them its sublime truths, appealing alike to mind and heart, partly to clarify and deepen those truths by assimilating the wisdom and culture of those very nations. Israel's

2. K. Kohler, "Jewish Theology" p.8f.
relation to the world thus became a double one. Its priestly
world-mission gave rise to laws and customs which were to
separate it from its idolatrous surroundings, and this occas-
ioned the charge of hostility to the nations. In contrast,
Israel's prophetic ideal of humanity united in justice and
peace gave to history a new meaning and larger outlook.

Although this undercurrent of true prophecy kept below
the surface for a time, when it did appear it was richer for
its depth; and it strove in Christianity to become a reality
when "There cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncir-
cumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ
is all, and in all."

Here we get a clear conception of the missionary spirit of
the Old Testament and the direct statement that Israel's pur-
pose in the world is to be a light to the Gentiles, their means
of salvation.

Deutero-Isaiah is the first prophet to see the logic of his
own position. He realizes and he tells Israel that it is her
duty to take her message to the world.

The other prophets had implied that Yahweh was the sole
deity. Deutero-Isaiah now makes this explicit. Yahweh was not
only God, the Father Almighty, but he was also the maker of
Heaven and Earth. As such he was also the saviour, and the

1. Colossians 3:11
Second Isaiah says that He will not be satisfied until every knee shall bow to Him, and every tongue sing His praise.

This is the reason Israel has been saved that she might become a light to the Gentiles; to open the eyes of the blind and to free those who sit in darkness. Israel has been given a great and noble task where her sphere of action must be the whole world. It is not enough that her religion is a universal need, but it is her duty to see that the world will be saved through her. She is obliged to carry the message of salvation to the ends of the earth.

The divinely chosen method of redeeming Israel and of redeeming the whole world was the way of suffering. It was the suffering of the innocent on behalf of the guilty, but it was a moral necessity, since only through such sufferings could punishment reach its end in the taking away of sin and bringing in of righteousness. Yet as lofty as is this message of Deutero-Isaiah, it remained in the Old Testament an ideal; but it was an ideal that gave a new meaning and a larger outlook on life until in the fullness of time it became a reality.
With the seizure of Babylon in 538 B.C. Cyrus was king of both the Jews who had remained in Judah and of those who had been living in Babylonia. As he was concerned for the dwellings of his newly conquered people of Babylon and for the restoration of their temples and the return of the gods to the various cities of Babylonia, it was not surprising that he should take thought for the Jews of Palestine and of Babylonia.

The historical account is vague here. In 537 Cyrus seems to have issued a decree that the temple of Yahweh be
rebuilt in Jerusalem and the sacred vessels restored to it which Nebuchadrezzar had removed to Babylonia.

The later prophets (Ezra 6:3-5; II Chron. 36:23) Those Jews wishing to go back could; but most scholars agree that the number was probably not great and that the groups gradually penetrated back and that the Biblical account is a dramatized account of it.

However, some of the exiles seem to have gone back under the leadership of the Persian Commissary, Sheshbazzar. The government and management of internal affairs was lodged in a council of twelve advisors, among whom and occupying the highest offices were Zerubbabel, grandson of King Jehoiachin, and Joshua, grandson of Seraiah.

Cornill believes that immediately on the arrival of the exiles the altar was erected on the sacred spot where once stood the sacrificial altar of the temple of Solomon. In 537 the cult was restored, "but the most definite and indubitable evidence forces us to conclude that no attempt was made to rebuild the temple for seventeen years."

Around 520 conditions seem to have been more favorable. It is at this time that prophecy once more awoke; and here, again, there is a great historical crisis. Cambyses, the degen-

1. C.H. Cornill, "The Prophets of Israel" p.148
2. Ibid. p.149
erate son and successor of the great Cyrus, had subdued Egypt in 525 and thus completed his empire but he nearly destroyed it by his cruelty and tyranny. He committed suicide, leaving no son, and the pretender, Magus Gaumata ruled for nearly a year unmolested; but then Darius, who was directly connected with the royal house, was raised to the throne. Cornill says that this was the signal for uprisings throughout the whole empire, and it took two years for Darius to succeed in restoring order and consolidating the kingdom of Persia.

When the Persian rebellions were at their height, Haggai appealed to the Judean community. Zerubbabel of the house of David had suddenly appeared as the Persian viceroy in Judaea, at the same time there seems to have been a bad harvest which brought famine and hunger into the land. Haggai believed that this whole situation gave promise not only of deliverance from Persian rule, but an opportunity at last to realize the national hopes of the Jewish race. Jehovah, through poor crops and hard times, had showed his displeasure with his people in Judah; because they had built comfortable homes for themselves, and let his temple stay in ruins. Then, too, the upheaval of the Persian empire gave promise that if they would be true to Yahweh and rebuild

1. C.H. Cornill, "The Prophets of Israel" p.150
2. Haggai 1:10f.
3. Haggai 1:4
his temple, he would at last fulfil the predictions voiced by their earlier prophets. Haggai's words met with immediate response. When the people's energy and enthusiasm began to wane, the prophet declared that Yahweh was about to overthrow the great world powers and that Zerubbabel, would be Yahweh's signet, the earthly representative of that divine power which was about to work great revolutions in the history of the world.

Haggai pictures Yahweh as saying, "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations; and the precious things of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts."  

In speaking of these verses Driver says that Haggai's picture of the future kingdom of God, portrays, like other prophets, an ideal. As he looks into the future he idealizes it: he pictures the restored Temple as the religious centre

1. Haggai 2:23
of the world, nations coming in pilgrimage to it, delighting to honor it with their gifts, and so making it more glorious even than the Temple of Solomon. The vision cannot be fulfilled except in a spiritual sense. "All nations may own one religion and one God; but the one Temple in which, when this consummation has arrived, they will offer their worship and their gifts can obviously be only a spiritual Temple."

However, Haggai realizes that Yahweh's kingdom survives the shaking of the world, and he exerts great influence on the people and later Judaism. His one aim was to get his people to rebuild the Temple, for he realized that people do need a visible and organized public worship.

Two months after Haggai had delivered his first address to the people and a little over a month after the building of the temple had begun Zechariah appeared with another message of encouragement. He, too, was concerned with the rebuilding of the temple and the future Messianic kingdom of Zerubbabel. From a literary point of view his prophecy is depicted in visions which are explained to him by an angel. His visions prepare the way for the symbolical representations of the later Apocalypses, as Daniel, Enoch, et

cetera; but he is not to be classed with them for we find in
him constant regard for, and emphasis on, the ethical consider-
ations.

In Zechariah's introductory message, he tells the people
that their fathers suffered for their sins and that they them­
selves will be held accountable for their own conduct. He asks
them not to be like their fathers, and he represents Yahweh as
saying, "Return unto me, and I will return unto you." All God
asks of them is a chance to be their God and to have them for
his people.

His first vision is typical of the conceptions of the time.
A man stands among the myrtle trees, to whom come four
apocalyptical riders on four horses of different colors.
These horsemen have been sent to walk to and fro through the
earth and bring news of what takes place. They report, "All
the earth sitteth still, and is at rest."

These verses may have been recast in the light of what did
happen. This was in reality the unrestful and critical period
of the Persian empire and a time of great excitement among
the Jews. We even learn from Zechariah that the Jews in
Babylon sent a crown to be worn by Zerubbabel as the future
Messianic king. The events of the world were followed with

1. Zechariah 1:6
2. Ibid.1:3
3. Ibid.1:7-17
4. Ibid.1:11
5. Ibid.6:11
anxious curiosity whenever a storm gathered on the political horizon, for they saw in it signs of a great future. They felt that with the overthrow of all existing circumstances, there would arise the Kingdom of God. But here their hopes were in vain. Darius proved equal to the situation. The Persian empire stood firmer than ever, but the temple building progressed, and Darius even permitted it and promised state aid. By 515 it was completed.

Zechariah goes on to tell his people that Yahweh's wrath is past. It is time to build his temple, for the cities of Judah are again to prosper, "and Jehovah shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem."

The second vision is a picture of judgment on the enemies of Israel. The third vision is especially interesting. Here we see a young man with a measuring line trying to measure the length and breadth of Jerusalem. An angel tells him Jerusalem is to be inhabited without walls, "For I, saith Jehovah, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and I will be the glory in the midst of her."

These verses show the boldness of Zechariah, for in his time no city was safe without a wall. Jordan says that the

1. Zechariah 1:17
2. Ibid.1:18-21
3. Ibid.2:1-5
4. Ibid.2:5
5. W.G. Jordan, "The Song and the Soil" p.112
vision of a city without a wall may be thought by some to be
the dream of a religious enthusiast, for the Jew received not
permanent peace but continual torment—a torment largely
accounted for by the fact that he has clung with such unswerv-
ing loyalty to the peculiar forms of his own faith and law.

"Is there not a permanent truth in the thought that the
strength and security of a community is found in the faith
that unites it to God and not in the wall that separates it
from mankind?"

It is only slowly that men learn that the presence of
God, in so far as it is truly and intelligently realized, tends
to unite men rather than separate them; the "Divine fire which
protects the righteous breaks down the hard material barriers
which have served their purpose and had their day."²

In the fourth vision ³ Joshua, the high priest, and Satan,
his adversary, are before the angel of Yahweh. The filthy
garments which the priest wears represent the sin of Israel.
These are removed and Yahweh tells Joshua that if he will
walk in his ways, then he will be made judge of the temple and
given a place of access to Him. Now that Israel is clean, the
temple must be rebuilt, for Yahweh is to bring forth his
servant the Branch.

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1. W.G. Jordan, "The Song and the Soil" p.112
2. Ibid. p.113
3. Zechariah 3:1-10
The fifth vision depicts Joshua and Zerubbabel under the spirit of Yahweh supplying power to the early church. It is here that we have the words of encouragement to Zerubbabel, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts." These verses remind us that "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

In the sixth vision the prophet pictures sinners being eliminated from the land; and in the seventh vision sin itself is put out of the way. The last vision closes with the idea of protecting agents staying round about Jerusalem. Thus we see that all that hinders the coming of the Messianic days is to be removed, whether it be the alien world powers or the sinners within Jerusalem itself.

The two concluding chapters of the prophecy were delivered two years later than the rest of the book. They deal with the ethical conditions of the impending Messianic kingdom. "As former disobedience had been followed by a divine judgment, so would obedience now be rewarded with blessing, fastdays would be turned into days of joy and gladness, and the blessing would be so great that representatives of every nation would be

1. Zechariah 4:1-14  
2. Zechariah 4:6  
3. John 4:24  
4. Zechariah 5:1-4  
5. Zechariah 5:5-11  
7. Zechariah 7&8
attracted to Jerusalem, to worship the God of the Jews."

Fasting is one of the problems that the prophet deals with. He says that Yahweh is indifferent to it because the people eat and drink for themselves not Him.

He urges his people, who have stopped up their ears so that they could not hear and made their hearts as an adamant stone, to follow the teachings of the former prophets; to execute true judgment, to show kindness and compassion, to oppress not the widow, nor the poor, and to devise no evil in their hearts against their brother.

The prophecy closes with a decalogue of promises to the people. Yahweh loves Israel and he will return unto Zion, "and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth; and the mountain of Jehovah of hosts, the holy mountain."

There are to be old men and women here, and the streets will be full of boys and girls for Yahweh, himself will restore his people. The land also will prosper, "For there shall be the seed of peace; the vine shall give its fruit, and the ground shall give its increase, and the heavens shall give their dew;..."

However, the people in turn are expected to fulfil their

1. J.E. McFadyen, "Introduction to the O.T." p.225
2. Zechariah 7:9ff.
3. Zechariah ch.8
4. Zechariah 8:3
5. Zechariah 8:12
part. They are to speak every man the truth with his neighbor; to execute the judgment of truth and peace in their gates; to devise no evil in their hearts against their neighbor; and to love no false oath. The elevated character of these people will be so conspicuous, and their justice, good-will, truth, peace, and righteousness so magnetic, that they will indeed be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. For such "a city on a hill cannot be hid", and its people must so let their light shine before men; that they may see their good works, and glorify the Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:13ff.)

Then, indeed, religion would be so attractive that other nations would say, "Let us go speedily to entreat the favor of Jehovah, and to seek Jehovah of hosts:...In those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, they shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

Here we see that the missionary spirit of Isaiah and Deutero-Isaiah is not completely under the surface. Although we have no command to go to other nations, we see other nations coming to Israel for enlightenment. (8:20ff.)

Israel's religion is pictured as being the universal religion, but there is here no indication that it is missionary.

We have already noted that Haggai and Zechariah succeeded in getting their people enthusiastic over rebuilding the temple. Four years after the work was begun the temple was finished.
This meant that at last the Jews had a common rallying place, and that Yahweh could again be worshipped by his own people at his traditional place of abode. It made it possible to revive the ancient religious customs, and in time it would attract from the lands of the dispersion patriotic Jews whose interest was fixed on the ceremonial side of their religious life. It also furnished a center about which gradually grew up a hierarchy with an increasingly elaborate ritual, and a body of laws which in time became the characteristic features of Judaism.

Although the people now had their temple, there was still no sign of the promised Messianic Kingdom. With Zechariah's prediction that Zerubbabel would reign on the throne of Judah, the descendants of the house of David suddenly and forever disappear from Old Testament history. Contemporary history states that within a short time after Zechariah voiced the patriotic hopes of his people, the authority of Darius was fully established throughout the empire. He began thoroughly to organize his vast realm, and as a rule Persian governors were substituted for the native princes. This event must have made a profound impression on the messianic expectations of the Jews, because for three or four centuries the temporal kingly type of messianic hope disappeared and was not revived until the military victories of the Maccabean era. As a result Israel's hopes were now universalized and spiritualized.
Regarding the seventy years which intervened between the completion of the rebuilding of the temple and the appearance of Nehemiah in 445 B.C., the Biblical historians are silent. During the latter part of his reign Darius undertook the conquest of the western world. Later, under his son Xerxes, the hordes of eastern warriors were turned back, and the growing weakness of the Persian empire was revealed.

"The defeat of Persia by Greece at Marathon (490), Thermopylae and Salamis (480), and Plataea (479), with the revolt of Egypt aided by the Greeks (460), may have awakened expectations in the soul of our prophet."

For it was during this period (460) that the prophecy of Malachi voices the despairing cries and doubts of those of the faithful who failed to rise above the existing social and religious evils. It was a period of innocent suffering, for the man who was righteous and faithful to Malachi's task the demands of the law was thereby condemned to poverty and persecution at the hands of the corrupt rulers. Their poverty and wretchedness were interpreted as convincing evidence of Yahweh's displeasure with them because of their sins.

Added to this there was the terrific disillusionment be-

cause the Messianic Age had not dawned. Apparently Israel was
as far from exaltation to influence and power now as she had
ever been. Yahweh apparently had no interest in his people
or any vindication of justice and righteousness. The brilliant
images the prophets had drawn of the future Israel and the New
Jerusalem were not true, especially those of Deutero-Isaiah.
We can imagine what the reaction must have been when the
reality was compared with what the people had hoped for. And
Yahweh demanded yet more. He called for costly cultus and
ritual, and a mode of life governed by the harshest laws.

Malachi's task then was to rekindle the faith of his dis-
couraged people. "The immutability of God, in both aspects of
His unchanging love to Israel is at the root

Rekindling of faith of all His controversy, and is the key to
all His dealings with His people. They are not 'consumed',
though their sins deserve it, or His promise would fail; they
must be purified and to that end chastened, or His holiness
would cease. The argument of this Book may be gathered up in
the word of God to Israel by an earlier prophet: 'You only
have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will
punish you for all your iniquities.' (Amos 3:2) That is the
summary of His whole revelation, the epitome of their entire

history;..."

With this background in mind, it is not surprising that Malachi's opening words are words of comfort in which he assures his people that Yahweh has always loved them. The proof of his love is shown by the contrast of their history with that of their closest of kin, the Edomites.

Then in true prophetic fashion he transfers the responsibility for the delay in the coming of the Messianic Age from the shoulders of Yahweh to those of Israel. The corrupt and careless priesthood must mend its ways and return to the ideal condition of ancient times, sacrifices and offerings must be kept up to proper form and quality. "If Israel will but discharge its obligations to the full, Yahweh may be counted upon to fulfill all his promises made through the prophets." 4

But here even the priests do not respect Yahweh. They offer him sacrifices they would not think of offering to their governor. Even the Gentiles show Yahweh more respect than this. Moore says that one of the most notable words in the Bible stands in this indignant denunciation (Malachi 1:11ff). Jehovah's own priests in his own temple treat his worship with contempt; he refuses their offerings.

2. Malachi 1:2-5
3. Ibid. 1:6ff.
He says also that the idea that the sacrifices of the heathen may be "pure"... though not according to the Mosaic rite, because all true worship is the worship of the true God, is a conception quite unparalleled in the Old Testament. The author's polemic against the priests of Jerusalem has doubtless made him say more than he would have stood by as a dogmatic statement. But it was fitting that it should be said, for it is the final consequence of the ethical conception of religion of which the Hebrew prophets from Amos on are exponents.

In speaking of this, McFadyen says, "Coming from one to whom correct ritual meant so much, his utterance touching heathen worship is not only refreshingly, but astonishingly bold. In all the Old Testament, there is no more generous outlook upon the foreign world than that of Malachi 1:11".

But Yahweh's people snuff at their religion. Their neglect is the symptom of the state of their mind and heart which shows that their lack of reverence, faith, and love is the sin of their religious life.

1. G.F. Moore, "The Literature of the O.T." p.214
2. McFadyen, "Introduction to the O.T." On Malachi, p.236
Then, too, the people have profaned the sanctity to which their race was pledged by taking commonly in marriage the worshippers of heathen gods. It is little wonder that their offerings have been unacceptable to Yahweh, who has witnessed this unfaithfulness to their Jewish wives. His very altar is covered with their tears.

Malachi says, "Ye have wearied Jehovah with your words. Yet ye say, wherein have we wearied him? In that ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of Jehovah, and he delighteth in them; or where is the God of justice?"

Yahweh's people have challenged him to make good his title "the God of justice". The prophet assures them that Yahweh changes not, but they are so far from being a purified and refined people that Yahweh cannot manifest himself to them. Malachi then continues to rebuke his people. He tells them that they have continuously turned aside from Yahweh's ordinances, and if they will return to Yahweh, Yahweh will return to them. In reality now they are robbing God, for they keep from him his due tithes and offerings. And yet they say, "It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his charge, and that we have walked mournfully before Jehovah of hosts?"

2. Ibid.2:17
3. Ibid.3:6
4. Ibid.3:14
Yet Malachi assures them that God is a God of justice. He hears them who fear him and hearken unto him. If things seem unjust now, it will not always be so, for the names of the righteous shall be written in the book of remembrance: "And they shall be mine, saith Jehovah of hosts, even mine own possession, in the day that I make; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not."

In conclusion Malachi warns his people to turn from their wicked ways before the great and terrible day of Yahweh arrives. He urges them to remember the law of Moses and he tells them that Yahweh will send them Elijah, who will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; "lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

Malachi does not settle the problem why the fortunes of Israel are not commensurate with her position as the people of Yahweh, but he gives them hope and comfort that if they will but have faith, Yahweh will bring in his own kingdom.

Malachi's importance for us lies in the fact that he has given us so favorable a picture and so generous an outlook upon the foreign world. It is a picture that is found too often

1. Malachi 3:17f.
2. Ibid. 4:6
wanting with Yahweh's chosen people. Here, (Malachi 1:11) once again, we have the idea that Yahweh is God of all and that all he requires of his worshippers is a pure heart and clean hands.

We have the statement that Yahweh's name is already great among the Gentiles, but we have no indication that this is the result of missionary endeavor of Yahweh's chosen people.

The tendency of modern scholarship is to date this little
book of Obadiah around 450-400 B.C. Eiselen believes that the resemblances with Joel suggest the book should be placed @ 400, and he places Joel between 400-350 B.C. The purpose of the book is twofold: to announce the judgment on Edom, and thus to bring comfort and hope to the cruelly wronged Jews. This is hardly the Christian spirit, or that of the earlier ethical prophets.

The well-known features of Petra, Edom's capital, as regards both the famous defile, their chief way of access to it, and the nature of its dwellings, hewn out of solid rock, were calculated to raise to the utmost pitch the spirit of haughty defiance, with which the Edomites contemplated the prospect of attack.

But their confidence was in vain. They had made the invasion of Judah by the armies of Nebuchadrezzar the occasion for cruel and malicious indulgence of their ancient hatred of the Jews. They had aided in the humiliation of those whom they ought rather to have helped and befriended. This is why Obadiah announces that the pride of Edom shall be humbled.

He is convinced that Yahweh has special interest in Israel, although he may temporarily let her enemies

The coming judgment on the nations triumph. There is hope for Israel because

1. F.C. Eiselen, "The Prophetic Books of the O.T." p.438
2. T.T. Perowne, "The Cambridge Bible" p.19, Introd. to Obadiah
3. Obadiah 1:10ff.
the day of Yahweh is near upon all the nations and the Kingdom of Yahweh is to center in Jerusalem and Mount Zion. Obadiah says, "For the day of Jehovah is near upon all the nations; as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee; thy dealing shall return on thy own head."

There is little chance of Edom's escaping judgment here, but Israel as a holy nation will escape and have Yahweh for her sole ruler, for "the kingdom shall be Jehovah's." 2

The occasion for the book of Joel was a scourge of locusts, repeated perhaps over a number of years, which was looked on as Yahweh's means of carrying out his will.

The teaching of the book centers around the day of Yahweh. The book starts off with a description of the devastation of locusts, who are described as a nation of fighters. The scene is so terrible that the people cannot easily forget it, and the prophet urges them to remember its implications and tell it to their children, who in turn will pass it on to their children, so that the devastation cannot again be repeated. 3

The prophet believes that his people are still being punished for their sins, and he urges them to repent for the

1. Obadiah 1:15
2. Ibid. 1:21
day of Yahweh is at hand. The character of the day will be determined by their attitude of heart and life toward Yahweh. It will be one of terror for Israel if she continues in her present spiritual condition, but it may on the other hand be one of blessing if she will truly repent.

"Yet even now, saith Jehovah, turn ye unto me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your garments, and turn unto Jehovah your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and repenteth him of the evil."

Although the prophet puts great emphasis on the externals of religion, he makes here a change of heart the basis of salvation. If his people will but turn their hearts to him, Yahweh will again favor them, and no more make them a reproach among the nations. He will destroy the locusts, the harvests will be abundant, and the rains will come in their season.

Not only that but "it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants

1. Joel 2:12ff.
2. Ibid. 2:19ff.
3. Ibid. 2:28f.
and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. ...And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered;...

If Joel had stopped with the thought that Yahweh's spirit possessed men and women of all rank, it would have been an important realization for all; but he goes on to say that the approach of the day of Yahweh is marked also by extraordinary phenomena in nature which shows the apocalyptic tendency of the prophet. In those days he pictures Yahweh as executing judgment on the nations for what they have done to his people. There is to be no salvation for them; "but Jehovah will be a refuge unto his people, and a stronghold to the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am Jehovah your God, dwelling in Zion my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more."

This is hardly the salvation the isles are waiting for, nor is it making Israel's religion so attractive that nations will come to her. This prophet shows how Degeneracy of prophecy the voice of true prophecy has degenerated in Israel since Deutero-Isaiah had represented Yahweh as saying, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none besides me. By myself have I

1. Joel 3:16f.
2. Isaiah 45:22f.
sworn, the word has gone forth from my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."

What a contrast to Isaiah's picture of the day of Yahweh! Joel says, "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears:...Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe:...for their wickedness is great."

Israel needed, again, one who could reinterpret her history to her; one who would make her old men dream dreams and her young men see visions; but the visions needed to be of the time when "the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

Trito-Isaiah shows this same broad universalistic spirit of Isaiah and Deutero-Isaiah. Some of his words breathe so much of Deutero-Isaiah's spirit that many scholars have believed they were written by Second Isaiah in the later years of his life. But most scholars agree that one man was mainly responsible for Isaiah 56-66, and we may date them @ 450 B.C. before the time of Nehemiah and Ezra.

Skinner classifies 56:1-8 as an independent oracle on the

1. Joel 3:10&13
2. "The Cambridge Bible" Introduction p.16
admission of foreigners and eunuchs to the new Israel. We have here a Jewish community in Palestine. The people are urged to strictly keep the Sabbath, and the fears of the foreigners and eunuchs that they would be excluded from the religious privileges and blessings are removed. The principle on which the privileges rest is that the destiny of Israel's religion is to supersede the distinctions of race and to unite men of all nations in the common worship of the true God. "...For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. The Lord Jehovah, who gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides his own that are gathered."

The Jews of the restored temple, gathering together their devotional literature for use in their house of prayer and in their daily life, helped to make that house "The House of Prayer" for all nations in a different and larger sense than they had dreamed of. The time was not too far distant when a voice should proclaim that God the creator and the Lord of heaven and earth does not dwell in temples, which are made by hand, but "he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek

1. Isaiah 56:7f.
God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being;...for we are also his offspring." (Acts 17:24ff.)

A typical prophetic criticism of the corrupt rulers and a message of consolation to the true Israelites follows. The prophet attacks their unbridled sex life, child sacrifice, the pilgrimage to the shrines of foreign deities, their worship of idols, and their unfaithfulness to Yahweh.

One of the most alarming features of the situation is the gradual removal of the righteous members of the community. "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from evil to come."

Then, true prophet that he is, he comforts his people. "...but he that taketh refuge in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain...I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite....But the wicked are like the troubled sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." 2

1. Isaiah 57:1
2. Ibid. 57:13b&15b&20
It cannot be God's purpose to destroy his own creation, therefore, when chastisement has produced a humble and contrite spirit, Yahweh relents and shows his mercy.

When his people understand what true religion is and comply with its requirements their salvation will be at hand, their prayers shall be answered, their darkness turned to light, and their waste places restored. It is little wonder their prayers cannot reach God. Yahweh says, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?...Then shalt thou call, and Jehovah will answer; thou shalt cry, and he will say, Here I am."

The prophet realizes that true religion is not a receiving process, it is much more a sharing with one's fellowmen. In the next chapter Trito-Isaiah points out the hindrances to Israel's salvation, and tells her that they will be removed by Yahweh's own intervention. As long as his people's hands are

1. Isaiah 58:6ff.
defiled with blood, and their fingers with iniquity; as long as their lips speak lies and their tongues muttereth wickedness; as long as none pursue righteousness, nor plead in truth, but trust in vanity and speak lies and increase their wickedness, "The way of peace they know not; and there is no justice in their goings;..."

The more righteous ones in the community were troubled because justice and righteousness was far from them, and Yahweh saw it. "And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his own arm brought salvation unto him; and his uprightness, it upheld him."²

Thus when his people confess their sins, Yahweh can forgive and restore them.

Chapters 60-63 picture the restored Jerusalem, and their tone is very much like that of Deutero-Isaiah. Chapter 61 is even thought by some to refer to the Servant of Yahweh.

The prophet starts out by giving us a picture of glorified Zion. The glory of Jehovah is upon her, and in comparison the other nations seem in darkness and they will come to her because she is the one place that has the light of the Eternal. These nations will bring her costly tribute from all parts of the earth.

1. Isaiah 59:8
2. Isaiah 59:16
Foreigners shall build up her walls, and their kings shall minister unto her. Even those that despised her will bow down to her and call her the "city of Jehovah, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel."

Her gates also shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night. (Isaiah 60:11) Judaism has a real contribution to make to the life of the world, something of spiritual quality and abiding significance. Jordan says that the strength of the vision lies in the fact that the Jews gave a central place to Yahweh and believed that what comes from God the world needs and will want to share. The prophet grasped the thought that the light and glory of the true God is an attractive, unifying force. Men still see in her the symbol of an unconquerable kingdom. The prophet wished that the door of the Church should stand ever open to receive tribute. This was his way of expressing the ideas, God is supreme, religion is central, and the Church is divine.

"Thy people also shall be all righteous;...I, Jehovah, will hasten it in its time."

When the spirit of the Lord is on the prophet he realizes that Yahweh has annointed him to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the

1. Isaiah 60:14
3. Isaiah 60:21f.
captives, and to comfort those that mourn. Later on Christ uses these words as a description of himself and his message.

Jerusalem is to be restored. While the foreigners are rebuilding her waste places, Israel shall become the priests, the ministers of Yahweh. "For as the earth bringeth forth its bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord Jehovah will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." 2

That is, (Skinner) "as surely as the seed germinates in the earth, so surely will Jehovah bring to pass the great redemption here promised through the self-fulfilling power of His word." 3

He can be depended on to do this because he loves justice.

Yahweh says, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth." 5

In a prayer Yahweh's mercies of old are recalled. The people pray to him to return for their sake. They are in great distress, and they appeal to that which distinguishes Yahweh from all other deities. He is the only God who works for them that wait for him in righteousness. They cry unto him, "But

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1. Isaiah 61:1ff. 2. Isaiah 61:11
now, O Jehovah, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O Jehovah, neither remember iniquity for ever; behold, look, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. Thy holy cities are become a wilderness, Zion is become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned with fire; and all our pleasant places are laid waste. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Jehovah? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?"

In the next chapter, (64) Yahweh threatens to punish the rebellious, and to reward his servants. He will create a new heaven and a new earth, and weeping shall no more be heard in Jerusalem. The people shall inhabit the houses that they build and enjoy the fruit from their own vineyards. "And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox; and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah."

In the closing chapter the prophet condemns insincere worship, and renews the description of universal judgment.

1. Isaiah 65:24f.
This judgment is to be followed by manifestations of Yahweh's glory to all nations. The survivors of the nearer nations, who have witnessed the catastrophe, shall be sent as messengers to the more distant countries, and these shall then bring back to Zion the dispersed Israelites. Israel's religion is to be universal. "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith Jehovah, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith Jehovah."

Trito-Isaiah, like Malachi, is sympathetic toward the Gentiles. He possesses the missionary spirit when he pictures Yahweh's house as the house of prayer for all nations. Here we distinctly note that the destiny of Israel's religion is to supersede race distinctions and is to unite all nations in the common worship of the true God.

Trito-Isaiah, too, pictures the attractiveness of Israel's religion. He realizes that the other nations are in darkness, and that they must come to Israel because she possesses the light of the Eternal. Here we have the missionary idea that what comes from God the world needs and will want to share. He

1. Isaiah 66:22f.
does not realize what this implies; for he does not sense that Israel should go out and proclaim her religion, although he does see that the world wants and needs it.

It is true in chapter 62:1 the prophet says that Yahweh will not rest until Israel's righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth; but this is merely a statement and not a command, for in the next verses it is Jerusalem that is to be glorified.

Even in the closing chapter, although messengers are sent to the more distant countries; they are not sent to proclaim the good news, but to bring back the dispersed Israelites. Israel's religion is to be universal, but the prophet's vision is limited as to how this must be accomplished.

At a later date, we have an unknown prophet who gives us a picture of the universality of salvation and the hope of immortality. Scholars agree that this section of prophecy (Isaiah 24-27) is one of the most interesting, peculiar, obscure, and unique groups in the Old Testament. Cheyne believes that the historical background may be found in the events which preceded the dissolution of the Persian Empire (c. B.C. 350-330). The premature songs of triumph (24:16) might be called forth by the rumors of the expedition of Alexander the Great, and the interspersed
lyrical passages celebrate the Jewish deliverance achieved by
the Macedonian victories.

Skinner also favors this view and says that this group
becomes more intelligible the later we place the composition
in the Persian period.

The general theme of the prophecy is the day of Yahweh.
The first chapter is mainly an announcement of the last judg-
ment, but it is partly also a gloomy survey of the actual
state of the world.

In the next chapter (25:6ff) we have the description of
a feast that Yahweh prepares for all peoples. "And in this
mountain will Jehovah of hosts make unto
Communion of
all nations
with Yahweh

all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast
of wines on the lees, of fat things full of

marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy
in this mountain the face of the covering that covereth all
peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He hath
swallowed up death for ever; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe
away tears from off all faces, and the reproach of his people
will he take away from off all the earth for Jehovah hath
spoken it."

Skinner regards this feast as a coronation-festival,

inaugurating the reign of Yahweh on Mount Zion, although he feels that the state of things which is thus symbolized is not transitory but eternal. What is signified is the admission of all nations to communion with the one true God, and, as a consequence of this, the cessation of all the evils of human life. "The whole passage, standing out as it does from a gloomy background of judgment and terror, is one of the most remarkable and fascinating in the Old Testament."

Verse eight contains the clearest expression of the hope of immortality to be found in the prophetic writings. This was a hindrance to the blessedness of the Messianic Age, but the prophets had rarely touched the theme, and then only in a late period. "...not until the advent of Christianity did this higher hope become a living and burning faith. Stripped of its national limitations, it now became a universal hope, the hope of every man as man. It also, when linked up with the established fact of the resurrection of Christ and the thought of eternal fellowship with him, carried with it a certainty of conviction and a richness of content that were altogether new. In a very real sense Christ brought life and immortality to light;..."

Nevertheless the way for the acceptance and the joy of

immortality was coming to the surface where the Kingdom of God would be at hand. Growing individualism, the idea of divine retribution, and the deepening sense of fellowship with God made it inevitable that immortal life should be predicted for the individual. And the Messianic idea determined that the hope should take the form of the belief of the resurrection of the body. In Isaiah 26:19 Yahweh says, "Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead."

Thus even the members of the community whom death had seemed to rob of their share in the hope of Israel are to be rewarded. And it naturally follows that this is a message of joy for all peoples for the just and loving God would not be just if he destroyed his children because they were not Jews. Nationality is not the means of salvation, but faith in and fellowship with the Eternal.

The steadfast faith of all must be rewarded with peace, as the prophet says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." (Isaiah 26:3)

But the prophet's thoughts are not all of this high degree, and he closes his prophecy with an announcement of judgment on the great World-powers (27:1ff), and the restoration of the dispersed of Israel (27:12f).
It is not alone in the prophetic books of the Old Testament that we get the view of the universality of God's kingdom. The imaginative writings of the Old Testament are rich in missionary meaning. The Psalter or poetry of the most particularistic nation in the world meets the universal need. Here there is constant anticipation of a King that shall reach to the uttermost ends of the earth. The theme is perpetually recurring; although, of course, there is national coloring. (Psalms 8:9; 22:27f; 24:1; 33:5; 46:1c; 48:2; 66:4; 90:2; 96:1; 98:3)

The missionary character of the Psalter lies not only in its forecast of the Messianic kingdom; but much more in the fullness and richness with which it delineates the experiences of the human soul in its relation with God. Righteousness and the blessedness of the righteous are described in full detail. The contrition of the heart that has sinned, the passionate cry for pardon, the bliss of being forgiven, run through the Psalter from beginning to end. The 103rd psalm is one of the best in praise of Yahweh's mercies. All through the psalms we are met with the words "Praise ye Jehovah."

It is here also that we have the hope of immortality expressed (psalm 49&73). In the 73rd psalm the psalmist says of Yahweh, "Thou hast holden my right hand. Thou wilt guide me..."
with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." (73:23ff)

The wide outlook of the imaginative element in Israel also appears in the Book of Job, where the writer, desiring to portray a character of lofty excellence and faultless piety, does not choose one of his own nationality. But it is in the story of Ruth that we get the remarkable description of a Moabite woman who became the grandmother of David. The Book of Ruth The story itself is written at a much later date. The words and phrases point to Exilic or postexilic date, but the story may have been current in tradition from quite early times and later and more common words added from time to time; or it may have been written by a writer acquainted with the language of Samuel.

Naomi, the mother-in-law, of Ruth had been forced to leave her house in Bethlehem-Judah because of a famine which came during the period of the judges. It was here that her son married Ruth, and it was here that Ruth’s husband died and also Naomi’s husband and other son. Later Naomi heard that the famine in her own country was over and she made plans to return

1. G.W. Thatcher, "The New-Century Bible" Ruth p. 177
home. Her two daughters-in-law started to go with her, but she urged them to remain in their own country. Orpah did, but Ruth said, "Entreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." (Ruth 1:16ff)

Here was a woman who was willing to give up her own God and to accept Yahweh. She is the first one we hear of, but in the New Testament we note that the implication is still not seen clearly. In Acts we read how Samaritans and an Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8) believed in Jesus and that the gospel did for them what it was supposed to do for the Jews. Yahweh was the universal God.

This must have been a tremendous decision for Ruth to make. She was not only renouncing her own God; but the Deuteronomistic law (Deut. 23:3ff) forbade any descendant of a Moabite to the tenth generation to enter into the assembly of Yahweh, and Ruth was herself a Moabite.

In Israel she married a kinsman of Naomi, and through him became the ancestress of an illustrious family. "If this be true, the story must have been a favorite with those who did not share in the zeal of Ezra and Nehemiah against mixed marriages...It may be owing to this that the Book of Ruth
achieved that popularity which saved it. But its reception at a later date into the third Canon was doubtless due to its connection, by the geneology, with David.

In the Book of Ruth we have seen that a foreigner became a worshipper of Yahweh and an ancestress of the royal line of David. This same broad spirit is shown in the Book of Jonah.

Horton says, "The little book of 'Jonah' touches the high-water mark of Old Testament theology. No other pre-Christian writer quite reaches the universalism which it implies....Here the prophetic message rises above the particularism of Israel, and God appears as the God of all flesh, calling all to repentance, willing to have mercy upon all." 2

Bewer places the book between 400-200 B.C., and says that the book could not be later than the third century B.C. because it is included among the twelve by Jesus Sirach. 3 George A. Smith believes that the style shows most affinity with Ezra and Nehemiah, and this would bring the date to the beginning of the third century B.C. in time to be included in the Canon of Prophets, which was closed around 200 B.C. (Ecclus. 49:10)

Israel's prophets had taught that Yahweh was not only

2. "The New-Century Bible" Jonah p.197
Israel's God, but also God of the whole world; and since he is the only God that exists, it follows that he is interested in all and his love goes out to them. He punishes sin wherever he finds it but, as we have seen, he does not desire the death of a sinner but that he repent and live. This is a universal truth for all, but many of the Jews had lost sight of the fact. They felt that the nations which had dealt cruelly with them deserved nothing but punishment. However, the hope of Deutero-Isaiah and his idea of Yahweh as the one and only God who could bring salvation to all had not entirely died out. The author of Jonah realized how far Israel was from her ideal.

The prophet opens his book by showing that even cruel Assyria, Israel's most bitter enemy in pre-exilic times, is the object of Yahweh's care. He has seen their wickedness, and he wants to avert their punishment by giving them a chance to repent, so he sends Jonah to Nineveh to preach to them.

Jonah not only goes in exactly the opposite direction, but also flees as far as possible from Yahweh. For this reason Yahweh sends a mighty tempest on the sea, and the mariners' lives are in danger. They tried to lighten their load to see if that would help matters, and each one on board prayed that they might be saved.

While the whole ship is so concerned for its safety, Jonah peacefully sleeps on in the innermost parts of the ship. It
is here that the shipmaster finds him and calls, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not."

What a scene this is! The heathen sailor admonishes the Hebrew prophet to pray! Since the sailors had done everything they knew of to avert the danger, they concluded somebody on board must be responsible for the storm and they cast lots to determine who it was. Naturally, the lot fell on Jonah. When they questioned him and found out that he was a follower of Yahweh, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land, they were exceedingly afraid. They realized that Yahweh had sent the storm, and that he was pursuing Jonah. Jonah also realized it, and did the gentlemanly thing to save them. He suggested that they throw him into the sea, and when they did the storm ceased. This made so much of an impression upon the sailors that they feared Yahweh. They prayed that he would not lay innocent blood upon them, and they recognized his existence amongst their other gods.

The story goes that Jonah was swallowed by a great fish, and that he remained in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights; and then Yahweh spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah on the dry land.

1. Jonah 1:6
Then the word of Yahweh came to Jonah again to preach in Nineveh, and this time he accepted his commission; and the people of Nineveh believed in God, and they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least.

Bewer says, "The quick effect of Jonah's preaching is most wonderful, even if we take into account the emotional nature of the orientals. It stands in striking contrast to the unbelief and indifference with which Israel treated the prophetic announcements."

The king decreed that everyone and even the beasts, herds, and flocks should fast and repent of their evil ways and pray to Yahweh that he might repent of the evil Jonah had said he would bring upon them. Yahweh heard their prayers.

This made Jonah angry for this was the very reason he had tried to avoid preaching, he knew that Yahweh was a gracious God, slow to anger, merciful, and abundant in loving-kindness. If God could spare these wicked Ninevites, life was not even worth living. "Therefore now, O Jehovah, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live."

Yahweh tries to show Jonah the impropriety of his anger. Jonah went outside the city and waited to see if Yahweh would not destroy it. Then Yahweh prepared a gourd to shade Jonah,

1. "International Critical Commentary" p. 54
2. Jonah 4:3
and it made him very happy; but the next morning the gourd had withered, for in the night Yahweh had sent a worm to destroy it. Then Yahweh sent a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah; and he was angry again and wished that he could die.

Yahweh asks him if he thinks he has sufficient cause to be angry because a gourd which he has neither labored for nor made grow, has come up and perished in a night. Such a little thing as a gourd had made Jonah very happy, and he had also been in despair when it had been taken from him. First he had been angry because Nineveh had not been destroyed, and now he was angry because the gourd had been. His petty narrowness and blind prejudice serves as a foil to Yahweh's patience and love for all. Yahweh says to Jonah, "should not I have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

"With this closes the last book of the prophetic literature of Israel. More simply, as something quite self-evident, and therefore, more sublimely and touchingly, the truth was never spoken more sublimely and touchingly in the Old Testament,

1. Jonah 4:11
that God, as Creator of the whole earth, must also be the God and Father of the entire world in whose loving, kind, and fatherly heart all men are equal, before whom there is no difference of nation and confession, but only men, whom He has created in His own image. Here Hosea and Jeremiah live anew. The unknown author of the Book of Jonah stretches forth his hand to these master hearts and intellects. In the celestial harmony of the infinite Godly love and of the infinite Godly pity, the Israelitic prophecy rings out as the most costly bequest of Israel to the whole world."

"If Israel became in the matter of religion the chosen people of the whole world, it owes this to prophecy, which first clearly conceived the idea of a universal religion, and established it in all its foundations. The whole history of humanity has produced nothing which can be compared in the remotest degree to the prophecy of Israel. Through prophecy Israel became the prophet of mankind. the costliest and noblest treasure that man possesses he owes to Israel and to Israelitic prophecy." 2

2. Ibid. p. 178f.
As we read this last book of the Old Testament prophecy it would almost seem as if we had defeated our aim. We have called this paper the missionary spirit of the Old Testament, and this picture of the Jewish nation is intensely and narrowly nationalistic. The author pictures Israel not only opposed to Yahweh's plan of preaching salvation to other nations, but also eager for their destruction. But the book does not stop here; it is one of the most missionary books of the Old Testament; for it teaches that God does care for other people and that the Jewish nation does have a mission of service to the world. Israel may be "flinty-hearted", but that was not God's plan for her. Here for the first time we see Israel being sent to save, and the entire heathen world is now opened as a mission field to the messengers of Jehovah.
In the introduction to this paper we said that what we were to expect from the study of the contribution of the Old Testament to the missionary ideal was an appreciation of the long evolutionary processes by which God prepared mankind for His supreme revelation and the true missionary spirit of the New Testament.

The word mission means a sending by authority on some service (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 4th ed. 1931), and it implies that the missionary spirit expressed in service is an essential factor of true religion. The lack of this raises a question as to the depth and vitality of one's religious experience. Its manifestation is the most convincing proof of the sincerity and reality of one's knowledge of and life with God; for this is the missionary spirit.

It is true that we do not find this spirit in the Old Testament in its ideal expression; but is it not true also that even in Acts the disciples of Christ do not realize the logic of their own position, and is it not just as true today of the great masses of people who profess to be Christians?

The Old Testament is limited in its missionary content. It is nationalistic and narrow; but what is much more to be wondered at, is that its prophets do see visions and dream dreams worthy to stand by the great men of all times. They had the task of preparing the way for the great and "good news" to come. Their religion became missionary because they were led by God to
a richer conception of truth and a stronger thought of religion than that which their world had ever possessed.

We have noted that at first the Jews were worshippers of more than one God, but when Yahweh so marvelously delivered them from the hands of the Egyptians, Moses taught them that it was their duty to worship but one God—a God who was equal to all their emergencies. As their religious experience deepened, they were to realize that this God was the only God in the true meaning of the term. Then they had to learn his nature. They found him just, but loving, a God on whom each individual might rely. Gradually they realized that they had a unique possession, one that the whole world would need and want. Isaiah pictures the nations coming to Jerusalem to seek this religion, but Deutero-Isaiah realizes that Israel has been given to the world for just this purpose. But because these great leaders were ahead of their own time their visions were not then fulfilled. Reactions set in. Sometimes we get a favorable picture of the Jewish attitude toward the heathen world as in Malachi; but the Jews were very human, and in the closing prophetic book we find the prophet rebuking the Jews for their narrow outlook. Here he tells them they have been sent by divine authority on this mission of service to the whole world.

It had taken centuries to bring about this result, but it was only because the way had been prepared for Him that Christ came in the fulness of time to preach good tidings to the poor,
to proclaim release to the captives, to recover sight to the blind, and to set at liberty those who were bruised.

It was only after Israel had lived and developed and had been trained and disciplined that she could produce the Christ. Only then could she realize she had been sent and that she must go to make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe His commands, and to remember He is with them always, even unto the end of the world.
From a critical handling of the Old Testament I have tried to indicate the missionary significance of Israel. Long perspective reveals such riches. Here it has shown us how Israel was gradually led under prophetic guidance from a primitive obscurity of Semitic immorality and idolatry, through a chequered history of trivial wars and insubstantial dynasties, into the Exile, from which it emerged to realize a greatness which it had never known in the past. Her religion was founded in the nature of things.

The idea of one God was one of the greatest contributions to the world's faith; but, as we have seen, it was a truth that was only gradually attained. Moses, the first to establish monolatry in place of the earlier polytheism, Yahweh, sole God of Israel did not deny the existence of other gods; but he proclaimed that Yahweh was the sole God of Israel. It was Israel's duty to have but one God; and that God must be Yahweh, who had in such a marvelous way delivered the Israelites from their oppressors in Egypt. The only adequate response on the part of the people was complete devotion to Yahweh and unlimited confidence in him. One who had accomplished so remarkable a deliverance could be trusted on all occasions.

This is the germ from which the religion of Israel develop-

ed. When Yahweh's people as a whole should realize that he was really equal to all emergencies, it would necessarily follow that the conception of his being would expand with the growing needs of the people, until they must realize that his rule embraced all life.

The next important contribution was a result of the conflict between Yahweh and another deity. When Jezebel introduced the worship of Tyrian Baal into Israel, Yahweh's supremacy was threatened. Elijah realized that if the worship of Baal was to be tolerated in Israel it would mean the end of that supreme and undivided allegiance which Yahweh demanded. He, therefore, claimed for Yahweh a unique divinity, such a divinity as could not be attributed to Baal or any other rival deity.

Baal was not a deity in the true sense of the word. Yahweh alone was God. Here for the first time we have practical monotheism expressed. This implies that Israel's religion is in principle a world-religion; for since Yahweh alone is God, he must also be God of all. This we see was a world crisis. No other nation in the world had believed that there was only one God.

We have noted also that although Yahweh had chosen Israel for a special work, she needed again and again to have her...
mission clarified. Her close relationship to Yahweh did not mean that she had a monopoly of the divine favor. It meant moral opportunity and responsibility; for Israel's moral opportunity and responsibility Yahweh is a God of justice. His protecting care was not alone confined to Israel. We recall that Amos pictured Yahweh as saying, "Are ye not as the children of Ethiopians unto me, 0 children of Israel?...Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?" (Amos 9:7)

The only hope for Israel--and consequently for all nations--was to be found in righteousness. Yahweh's people must realize this and then they will know that his justice must reach out to the ends of the earth. Not until they realize this can we expect to find the true missionary spirit.

But Yahweh is more than a righteous God. He is also the God of love, and it is around the idea of the divine love that Hosea centers his interpretations of Israel's history. The moral, political, and social conditions of Israel were such that Hosea realized that his people must radically change their character; but as unfaithful as Israel had been, nevertheless, Yahweh loved the children of Israel. His love did not cease because of human faltering. The most significant term Hosea uses to express Yahweh's relation to Israel is that of father. He is the head of a family for which he has a deep and never-ending love. Hosea's message of love
God's care and love universal was restricted to Israel; but, if it was at first national, it could not remain so, but must of its own momentum become international and spiritual. Yahweh loves His people wherever they are, for He is the God of all.

Isaiah's insistence on the holiness of Yahweh was one of his great contributions to the development of the picture of God. Isaiah's conception gained moral content too often wanting elsewhere. He believed that since Yahweh was supremely good, it followed that any thing or person set apart for Him must also be good, and the nation especially consecrated to Him must justify its position by a high moral standard. Yahweh needed Israel for His self-expression. Just think what that idea should mean to man! If every follower of God felt that he must live a moral life because he had been set apart by Him, the missionary problem would take care of itself.

Isaiah saved Judah in this most critical period of her history. His own great faith in Yahweh brought him a conception of universal history and a realization of the Faith an element in worship evils of his day. He was thus able to penetrate through the outward events to the underlying spiritual realities. The weakness of Israel was this lack of complete allegiance that Yahweh had always asked from His followers, this faith in His overwhelming reality and righteous rule of the
world.

Isaiah asks his people how they can expect to be established, if they will not believe in Yahweh. (Isaiah 7:9) He tells them that they can only be saved through faith in God; for that is the only way to acquire strength through the quietness and confidence Yahweh alone can give. We know that faith is essential to salvation, and more than that it is a universal attribute.

As comforting as this assurance is, Isaiah's picture of the Messianic Age is even more comforting. It is the promise and the hope of all ages that the time will come when the world will be united through security and comfort. Isaiah is confident that through the faithful in Israel God's own righteous and beneficent purpose in the world will be carried out. He sees Zion as the center of a universal religion, and the abode of Yahweh. Israel's moral influence will be such that other nations will eagerly seek her way of life. They will realize that Israel knows God and they will come.

Attractiveness of true religion to her for that knowledge. This picture is limited; but it is our best example, so far, of the missionary spirit. Isaiah goes even further and suggests that the law shall go forth out of Zion, but we do not see its fulfillment here.

With Jeremiah we find a further advance in the missionary
spirit of the Old Testament. Jeremiah sees that Israel's sin is in man's own inner self, and thus the only remedy is a complete change of heart. They who have a pure heart shall see God. Judah at heart was not righteous, but it was not alone of collectivism that Jeremiah spoke. He did not confine himself with one-half of human life. He enunciated the doctrine of individualism. He makes the great truths of Yahweh a personal God of Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah inward and personal. Every man has his own responsibility in life.

Jeremiah also conceives of a wonderful future for Israel. Her ruler is to be not only a righteous king, but also a moral and spiritual redeemer of his people. There is to be a new covenant between Yahweh and Israel; and Religion a matter of the heart this time there will be a complete change of heart, and man will know God's will because it has become an integral part of his own nature. When religion is a matter of the heart it is as broad as humanity, and it can recognize no limits of race.

Jeremiah not only preached the right relationship between God and man, but also through his life he set an example. Because he had a great soul he was able to find rest and to enjoy fellowship with the Divine. He realized that this fellowship was so wonderful that in comparison his own sufferings lost their sting. Jeremiah freed religion from nationalism, and by
making it personal he gave it the start that would force it to become universal and missionary.

Deutero-Isaiah, however, gives us a clear conception of the missionary spirit. He tells Israel that it is her duty to take her religion to the world. Yahweh has promised that all who bow the knee to him shall be saved, and Yahweh Lord of all He will not be content until every knee shall bow to Him, and every tongue shall sing His praise.

There is nothing narrow, petty, or small about this, for all people belong to God and He will not be content until all people know of Him. Does it not follow that those who possess knowledge of Him have a moral responsibility to share that knowledge with those less fortunate?

Yahweh assures his people that it is not a task sufficiently great or noble to save merely Israel. He has appointed Israel as His Servant to be a light to the Gentiles, and the means of salvation unto the ends of the earth. (Isaiah 49:6)

This is no easy task. It will mean much suffering and scorn, but in the end the dignity and patience of His Servant's demeanour will so impress the world that after his death it will recognize his mission, that he has suffered for them and atoned for and taken away their guilt. This was the divinely chosen method of redeeming the world. This was truly missionary in spirit.
Zechariah also pictures the influence of Israel on other nations, but here it is a passive influence. In the Messianic Age the elevated character of these people will be so conspicuous, and their justice, goodwill, truth, peace, and righteousness so magnetic, that other nations will seek the Jews because they have heard that God is with them. (Zechariah 8:21ff)

In Malachi (1:11) we get the statement that Yahweh's name is already great among the Gentiles, but we have no indication that this is the result of Israel's missionary endeavor.

Trito-Isaiah shows the same broad universalistic spirit of Isaiah and Deutero-Isaiah. He pictures Israel's religion as superseding the distinctions of race and uniting men of all nations in the common worship of the true God. (Isaiah 56:7ff)

He also sees that true religion is not merely a receiving process. It is much more—a sharing with one's fellowmen. (58:6ff) The hindrance to Israel's salvation is the lack of God-like character in Yahweh's people. When the people are ready for the day of Yahweh, the glory of God will be upon her and other nations in comparison will seem to be in darkness. Then they will come to Israel because she will be the one place that has the light of the Eternal. The prophet has grasped the thought that the light and glory of the true God is an attract-
ive, unifying force which the world needs and will want to share; but he does not realize that it is Israel's duty to take this to the world.

The Jews had lost sight of the fact that they possessed the true religion, and the author of Jonah saw how far Israel was from her ideal. Throughout the story the petty narrowness and blind prejudice of Israel serves as a foil to Yahweh's patience and love for all. Whenever there are people who cannot discern between their right hand and Yahweh's concern for all nations, their left, Yahweh is concerned. He makes it plain to Israel that it is her responsibility to teach these people about God. He is the Creator, the God and Father of the whole earth, and he loves all of the people whom he has created. The time had arrived when a prophet should realize that Israel had been sent to make disciples of all nations.

When we keep these teachings of the prophets in mind we cannot fail to note the catholicity in their thinking. Although they did not fully appreciate its logical consequences, their conception was the root of the missionary movement of Christianity. Between the God of Jesus Christ and the God of the Old Testament prophets there is no breach. "In the experience and thought of Jesus appear facets of testimony to God which do not appear together nor in the same intensity in any single Old Testament figure, but no facet in His dazzling
testimony is entirely new.

"...Jesus accepted the conception of God which the great Hebrew prophets had proclaimed. He took for granted the high and pure ethical monotheism, the conceptions of the goodness and justice of God, and the truths concerning the creative and sustaining relation of God to men through them. He did not undertake by argument to prove God's existence and character, nor even to discuss His attributes in any complete way, so far as our records show. All this He assumed. It was part of the Hebrew inheritance. He came not to destroy, but to fulfill the law and the prophets."

We, who believe in Jesus, believe that the God whom he has revealed to us, and the way of life He would have us lead, is the only way to real life. We believe that that way is the only solution to the world's problems at any time in its past, present, or future. Therefore, we cannot overestimate Christ's Hebrew inheritance.

"It is not difficult to see that Christianity, the missionary religion, strikes a deep root into history. Manifestly it is the product of the Jewish people, for it is inconceivable that Christianity could have come out of the pantheism and pessimism of the Further East, and it is hardly more conceivable

that it should have sprung from the sensuous polytheism of Greece, or from the hard and practical religion of Rome. No; Christ, if he is to be derived from any human family, must come from Israel, and Israel lived and developed Yahweh's gift to the world and was trained and disciplined in order to produce Him. The missionary religion which could suit the East and the West, and could offer a spiritual satisfaction to men of all cultures and of all ages, could come only out of a people whose training and discipline had been prolonged through many centuries under the guidance, not of chance, but of the Divine mind which works through centuries and milleniums to its foreseen results."

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