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The influence of politics upon the prophetic message

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Thesis
THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICS
UPON THE PROPHETIC MESSAGE

by

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# Outline

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Chapter I

Introduction

Any work which is to cover the entire field of Old Testament prophecy can not be in any sense exhaustive. Too little is known of the lesser details of the periods, or perhaps we should think of it as being too highly comparative, to draw more than general truths. In addition, the mass of material to be taken into consideration is prohibitive for more than a very limited survey.

The Term "Politics". An examination of the term "politics" as stated in Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1928)\(^1\) reveals the following factors which are pertinent to the study in hand: Politics is the "Practice of managing or directing affairs of public policy or of political parties; hence political affairs, principles, or the like." This definition will probably answer our needs if we interpret it broadly enough so that the actions of external nations such as Phoenicia, Philistia, Syria, Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt, Persia, etc. be considered as directing affairs of public policy. This broad interpretation, however, does not exclude the internal direction and management of internal Israelitish affairs. We must think of the term then as both national and international in its scope.

With the emphasis in our democratic system of government upon the separation of church and state, we are possibly often prone mentally to separate the religious and the political aspects of history.

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Such a procedure is utterly impossible within the Israelitish nation, for as we shall see in the next minor division (Israelitish Conception of God) God as the essence of religion was to be found at the very heart of all life and activity.

**Israelitish Conception of God.** Regardless of the origin of the Israelitish conception of God, there are some general characteristics which, while not individually peculiar to the Israelites, form a unique basis for development when taken as a whole. As substantiating proof of this statement we find that Amenophis IV of Egypt made the first known attempt to establish a monotheistic religion.

The Babylonian stories, specifically the "Adapa Myth", the "Story of Expulsion from a Garden", and the "Babylonian Account of the Flood", all portray the practical and personal elements in the conception of Divine Beings. An Egyptian "Tale of Two Brothers" portrays a distinct ethical quality in the conception of "Ra Harakhti", the sun-god.

In none of these stories, however, do we find the combination of all of these characteristics within the conception of a single God. One of the hymns written at the time of Amenophis IV's attempt to establish a monotheistic religion, comes the closest to disclosing an idea equal to that of Israel. Some of the lines are so full of beauty and worship that we venture to quote them as illustrations of the last mentioned point. (The God Aton is the sun)

"O loving Aton, Beginning of life! When thou risest in the eastern horizon

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Thou fillest every land with thy beauty.
Thy rays, they encompass the lands, even all that thou hast made,
Thou art Re (all) and thou carriest them all away captive,
Thou bindest them by thy love.

Creator of the germ in woman,
Maker of seed in man,
Giving life to the son in the body of his mother,
Soothing him that he may not weep,
Thou openest his mouth in speech,
Thou suppliest his necessities.

* How manifold are thy works! 1
They are hidden from before us,
O sole God, whose powers no other possesseth.
--- The foreign countries, Syria and Kush,
The land of Egypt;
Thou settest every man into his place,

* How excellent are thy designs, O lord of Eternity!

* Thou art in my heart,
* --- The world is in thy hand, 2

Dr. A. C. Knudson 3 has pointed out that there are four general characteristics of the Old Testament conception of God: (1) "It was practical. It grew out of and was sustained by life." This is one of the characteristics which permitted or which linked God with all phases of life, including the political. (2) "It conceived of God as personal." God was thought of as being in the affairs men and nature as the free, active, feeling, and purposive agent who directed all things. Here is greater basis for God's action in all phases of life. (3) Inherent in it is the "tendency toward monotheism." The first commandment pointed in this direction and by its pointing steered the conception of Yahweh safely through the dangers of "poly-Jehovism" and those of "a female counterpart" as found in Canaanitic and other foreign worships. (4) It had a distinct ethical quality

This ethical quality came because Israel's religion was one of choice and not of nature, "because it rested on a voluntary decision which established an ethical relation between the people and its God for all time."\(^1\) "The mutual obligation of worship and protection between the people and their national God was one of the chief bonds of union in every Semitic community."\(^2\) "Every victory or defeat, every catastrophe or success, every battle or alliance, was merely a part of the great drama of the working out of Jehovah's purpose on the stage of universal history."\(^3\) Therefore, the prophets could never afford to be indifferent to the great political movements around them.

The characteristics of the Old Testament conception of God were not gained in a single stride, but "only gradually came to full expression."\(^4\) through the efforts of men in developing the seed-thoughts of Moses, the founder of the nation.\(^5\) The prophets especially were the ones who contributed to the growing conception of God, as we shall see during the development of this paper.

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Prophetic Conception of Duty. From the earliest mention of the term prophet\(^6\) in the Bible, the idea is set forth that God is talking to and through some chosen "vessel", or person, who is specially prepared to receive the message.\(^7\) We find the words, "the Lord sent a prophet unto the Children of Israel, which said unto them,

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3. Edghill, EOP, p. 23.  
5. Eiselen, PP, p. 25.  
7. For the beliefs underlying prophecy see Eiselen, Prophecy and the Prophets, p. 13.
Thus saith the Lord God of Israel."  

God was the one who caused men to speak, and He may be considered as the force of duty which knew no denial. This is clearly seen in the light of the words, which were spoken by the prophet Amos, "and Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." Whatever the prophet thought that Jehovah's message was, he spoke boldly and fearlessly. This was true even of the "false prophets" such as those of Ahab's court, and those of the time of Hezekiah of Judah (727-699 B.C.).

We may best judge a man's conception of his duty by what he is willing to endure in order to fulfill that obligation. (This bald statement is born out in magnificent fashion by the great and near-great characters of the Bible. No better illustration for this practical statement may be had than in a comparison of the conceptions of duty in Jesus at Gethsemane with that in the rich young ruler (Matthew 26:36-46 vs Matthew 19:16-22). From this angle of observation we see the prophet Elijah giving his message and then fleeing for his life; we see Miciah imprisoned because he dared to speak Jehovah's message; we see Jeremiah placed in stocks in a dungeon and finally carried to a foreign land against his own wishes; we see Haggai and Zechariah fearlessly facing the gigantic task of rebuilding hope within the hearts of a discouraged people. These examples,

1. Judges 6:8
2. Amos 7:15
3. I Kings 22:5
4. Micah 3:5-8

5. I Kings 18:1-19:3
6. I Kings 22:14-28
picked at random, furnish undeniable proof that the prophetic conception of duty placed the message on a higher plane than the messenger, and insured its utterance with a sincerity and passion which is worthy of emulation.

Sources for this Investigation. The first and most important, though not always the most accurate, source for investigation into the effect of politics upon the prophetic message is the Bible. The following is a general outline of the Biblical sources.

Historical

(a) I and II Kings

Later material inserted into a framework about 600 B.C.

Written sources referred to and probably used

2. Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel
3. Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah
4. Temple records
5. Prophetic narratives

(b) I and II Chronicles

Based probably upon two sets of sources

1. Canonical books from Genesis to Kings
2. A single source different from any preceding sources

(c) Ezra and Nehemiah

Probably based on

1. Memoirs of Ezra
2. Memoirs of Nehemiah
3. I and II Kings
4. Contemporary documents

Combined Historical and Prophetic

(a) I and II Samuel
Based on one mentioned source, but references to later events and duplicate narratives show the books to have been the work of more than one hand.

1. Book of Jashar

(b) The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament with the exception of Jonah (The sources of these books will be referred to under each prophet discussed).

The Extra-Biblical sources consist of the following,

1. Archeological inscriptions (translated and interpreted).
2. Archeological reconstruction of history
3. Narrative History and Legends

The above sources represent historical and political data, concerning both the Hebrews and foreign nationalities. All cases of political influence mentioned and considered in the work which follows are based upon the oldest source wherever it is possible to ascertain such.
Chapter II

Early Prophecy as Influenced by Politics (1225-760 B.C.)

Foreign Affairs. Egypt, under Merneptah (1225-1215 B.C.), was weak from internal factors of dissention. The conquered peoples of Palestine revolted and had to be subdued again. On a pillar from this period we find the first reference outside the Bible to the Israel of Palestine. Under Ramses III, who was Merneptah's successor, Egypt was subjected to an invasion of tribes from Crete and Asia Minor. The invaders, of whom the Philistines were a part, were repulsed from Egypt proper and settled along the coast of Palestine. Under the succeeding rulers Egypt lost her power to the extent that Israel was able to build up her power in Palestine under David. At least, we have no record of Israelitish vassalage to Egypt at this time. Biblically we have the marriage of Solomon to the daughter of the Pharaoh (Siamon or Pesibkheuno II). A change of dynasty about 945 B.C. brought new power to the Egyptian throne. Under Sheshank I (Shishak) both of the Israelitish kingdoms were invaded. Around 760 B.C. the Nubians were just beginning the development of their power.

Assyria's power was on the decline from its first spurt after independence (which occurred about 1430 B.C.). There seems to be no data concerning a period in her history, about one hundred years, but under Ashurnasirpal II (884-860 B.C.) her power again showed its old

2. Ibid., p. 338.
3. Ibid., p. 31.
4. I Kings 3:1; 9:16
5. Bible (I Kings 14:25-28) gives the campaign as against Judah only, but the temple walls of Karnak (Barton, Archeology and the Bible, 4th Edition) give names of nearly sixty Israelitish towns.
strength in "the best fighting machine in the ancient world". An inscription from his reign shows that he marched to the Mediterranean Sea, taking tribute from "the land of the Tyrian" and "the land of the Sidonian", but he evidently did not touch the land of Israel.  

Under Shalmaneser III (860-825 B.C.) the Assyrian power attempted to enter and subdue Palestine to a state of vassalage. A coalition of Palestinian countries against Assyria was formed in which Damascus, Hamath, Israel (under Ahab), some of the north Phoenician states (Arka, Arvad, Uzanata, Shiana), the Ammonites, and some desert Arabs took part. At the battle of Tarqara (Karkar) in 854 B.C. the Assyrians were either defeated or forced to accept a "drawn battle". Again in 842 B.C. Shalmaneser invaded Palestine, subdued most of Syria, and received tribute from Jehu of Israel. Internal troubles seemed to keep Assyria occupied for some time after this and it was evident that her power was fast declining. We find, however, that Jehoahaz of Israel (814-798 B.C.) as ruler of "the land of the Omri" paid tribute to the Assyrians under Adadnirari IV.

The Philistines who had settled along the Palestinian coast of the Mediterranean Sea (the south-eastern corner) after being repulsed by Egypt under Ramses III, established their sway in Palestine through the federation of independent states. Of their five important cities (Ashdod, Askelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Gath) the Israelites are mentioned as taking three (Gaza, Askelon, and Ekron). Later, the Philistines subjected much of western Judah and threatened to divide the tribes of Israel into two entirely separated portions of Palestine. This danger existed

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2. Ibid., p. 418.
5. Ibid., p. 360.
8. Judges 1:18
down to the time of David.\(^1\) Israel under David completely broke the Philistine power as "shown by the fact that in the distractions which vexed the later years of David—they made no effort to recover their lost ground".\(^2\) There are several sporadic appearances of the Philistine power as displayed by some of their strong cities (Gath, Jalneh, Ashdod—II Chronicles 26:6, Gaza—II Kings 18:6). In events of the Old Testament after the reign of David the name "Philistine" or "Philistines" occurs only six times in the books of I and II Kings, whereas in the book of Samuel the words appear one hundred and twenty-five times.\(^3\) (Just a comparison or a contrast).

The Syrians during the time between the Exodus and David's reign were being amalgamated with Aramaean blood. Damascus as the most important city or kingdom reached the height of its power in the ninth century.\(^4\) During David's reign Damascus was defeated and made "servants to David".\(^5\) In Solomon's reign Damascus under Rezors was an opponent of Israel.\(^6\) When the Kingdom of Israel was divided, Ben Hadad I of Damascus entered as the foe of the Northern Kingdom.\(^7\) Ben Hadad II was probably the originator of the coalition against Assyria under Shalmaneser III, but the Syrian monarch had previously tasted defeat at the hands of Ahab.\(^8\) After the coalition however the tables were reversed and Ben Hadad II defeated Ahab.\(^9\) A little later Ben Hadad II even besieged Samaria but did not

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3. ibid., p. 62.
5. II Samuel 8:5-6.
9. II Chronicles 18:3-34.
accomplish its downfall. Hazael as successor to Ben Hadad II continued the oppression of Israel. Assyria made five campaigns against Damascus before Adadnirari conquered the city, but it was still later that Tiglath-Pileser III finally overthrew Damascus (732).

The Phoenicians may be thought of mainly in the terms of their two leading cities, Sidon and Tyre. In fact the Old Testament seems to refer mostly to the Phoenicians as Sidonians. As a general rule the Phoenicians "held it to be no business of theirs to fight with the stronger powers". Instead they preferred to compromise or pay tribute, for warfare was costly and interfered with their maritime trade. At the time of David, Sidon (also Gebal and Amor) had been replaced by Tyre as the Phoenician center, and under Hiram (981-947 B. C.) an alliance was made between Israel and Tyre which was continued under Solomon and later renewed under Itto-baal (Ethbaal) as "King of the Sidonians" and Omri as king of the northern kingdom of Israel. The Phoenicians are recorded as having some part in most of the western campaigns of Assyria, most of the times paying tribute but at other times as members of a coalition against the eastern power. The development of commerce and wealth in Phoenicia was

1. II Kings 6:24-7:17.
2. II Kings 11:32-33.
4. Leslie, Abingdon Commentary, p. 111.
6. McCurdy, HPM, p. 44.
7. Leslie, ABC, p. 110. Gives Hiram's reign as 969-936 B. C.
8. II Samuel 4:11-12.
9. II Chronicles 2:3-18.
immense and with this prosperity came a moral decay, which, as transmitted to Israel, produced an effect probably similar to that caused by the introduction of "western" civilization into the Orient today.

**Beginning of Prophecy.** In a study of early Israelitish prophecy we may safely start with the activity of Moses. He was the first to fulfill the two-fold national and religious activity which was "common to all the prophets". He it was, in the capacity of prophet, priest, and leader, who "called to life a nation strong in the consciousness of a lofty destiny through common allegiance to Jahweh, their Lord and Leader". With this gigantic figure as the starting point of prophecy we have no record of any great prophetic activity down to the time of Samuel. We may, however, safely assume that prophecy was a recognized factor in Israel's life between the times of Moses and Samuel for we have one glimpse of a prophetess (the literature of Deborah is representative in part, at least, of one of the oldest pieces of Israelitish literature which we have) who, "in the name of Jehovah rallied the northern tribes against the oppressor", Sisera. We also find that/eighth century prophet looked back upon the prophetic leadership of Israel from the time of Moses, and at the time of Samuel prophets' functions are a recognized institution.

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1. Olmstead, HPS, pp. 380-381.
2. Eiselen, PP, p. 25.
4. Judges 4:4-5:31
5. Driver, LOT, p. 171.
6. Edghill, EVP
7. Hosea 12:13,10
8. I Samuel 3:2

[References]
Samuel. At the time of Samuel the Philistine advance into Canaan had carried them to the place where they controlled both the agricultural and military operations of Israel. This fact together with the Israelites' unorganized condition of government which seemed to invite further encroachment, could easily be the stimulus for a vision from Yahweh ordering a monarchy to be established. In fact, this is the very thing which happened according to oldest narrative thread in the book of I Samuel.

"Now Jehovah had revealed unto Samuel—saying, I will send thee a man—, and thou shalt anoint him to be prince over my people Israel; and he shall save my people out of the hand of the Philistine: for I have looked upon my people because their cry is come unto me." Then in Samuel's turn, he spoke to Saul after anointing him; "Is it not that Jehovah hath anointed thee to be prince over his inheritance?---And let it be --- that thou do as occasion shall serve thee; for God is with thee.

Here then is the basis for the foundation of the monarchy with Jehovah as the originator, speaking through his prophet, in terms of meeting a definite political situation. The founding of the monarchy by Samuel is of the utmost importance to later prophecy, for without a national unity it is hardly probable that the development of God-concepts would have advanced beyond those of the other Palestinian nations.

whose nationalities were absorbed by stronger nations.

As speaker for Jehovah, Samuel ordered the complete destruction of Amalek, and when Saul disobeyed the prophet pronounced his doom. "Because thou hast rejected the word of Jehovah, he hath also rejected thee from being king."¹ Obedience to Jehovah then, politically, was one of the features of Samuel's message and the position of the offender was no barrier to the message.

Viewing the effect of external political forces upon the prophetic conception of God we can see where Yahweh was conceived of as a national God whose home is the land of the Israelites.² In connection, also, with these external forces we have for the first time the appearance of groups of ecstatic prophets³ who, while not contributing any recorded announcements here, later played a greater role.⁴ Their conception of God (from I Samuel 10:5) seems to have been one in which induced methods would reveal His message.

There is a possibility that the organization of these prophetic bands was the result of political forces. The Philistine oppression of Israel could not help but create within Israel a feeling of hatred. The Israelites had been too long a free nomadic people to submit kindly to domination. The desire for independence and freedom could easily be the cause for the inspiration and the banding together of small groups of men. The purpose of these bands would be to travel through the country and stir up the people to a fighting pitch. The ecstatic meth-

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1. I Samuel 15:23
2. I Samuel 9:15,16
3. I Samuel 10:5-6, 11-13
4. Budde, RIE, p. 100
ods which they employed would be admirable accompaniment to inflaming words. Samuel placed himself at the head of these groups of prophets as became a patriot and a follower of Yahweh. The extent to which politics affected these prophet bands may best be drawn from the fact that they "were possessed of an intense and consuming loyalty to God and country -- a loyalty that alone made possible the independence of the people and the establishment of the monarchy". Philistia then through her oppression was the political factor involved in the establishment of the Israelitish monarchy, and the prophetic bands.

From an internal view of political forces (in particular the disobedience of Saul) we find the point at which priestly and prophetic views of religion are distinct. "Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of "divination" and "presumption" is as "the guilt of the teraphim"." The distinction here which the priestly view followed was one in which creed played a large part while prophecy was more concerned with conduct.

1. I Samuel 10:5-7
2. I Samuel 18:20
4. I Samuel 15:22, 23
5. Bewer, LOTOT, p. 97. (See also Amos 7:10-17 and Micah 3:11)
Court Prophets of David. There are two prophets to be considered during the reign of David, Gad and Nathan.

Gad's appearances within the Bible history are very brief but we may be able to draw some conclusions from the glimpses we get. This prophet warned David to leave Moab at the time when Saul was anxious to dispose of his former favorite. It is entirely possible that Gad considered the possibility of Saul demanding that the Moabites kill David and for this reason warned him to leave. Again, it is possible that the old enmity between the Israelites and the Moabites still existed, for there is the Biblical inference that a bond existed between the Moabites and the Ammonites and Amalekites. Against these last two peoples, Saul is reported to have waged war.

The next appearance of Gad comes close to the end of David's reign in connection with the taking of a census of the people in Israel. The prophet condemns the king for numbering the people, but it is important to note that the numbers are given only in terms of "men that drew the sword." The account in I Chronicles (VI) gives what seems to be, literally, a cause for an enumeration, "And Satan (an adversary) stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel." This account coming from a much later date may be basically correct from our point of view. In view of his military exploits and the fact that his "power, and the whole position of

1. I Samuel 22:3
2. Judges 3:12-30
3. Judges 3:13
4. I Samuel 15:2-9
5. II Samuel 24:1-19
6. I Samuel 24:9
Israel as created by him rested on his sword." David probably needed such a procedure to develop an effective organization. The evil which inhered in the plan, and which called forth the denunciation by Gad possibly lies in the fact that "it seems to have been on the ground of the practical appearance gained in these (David's) wars, that the work of organization was taken in hand." This attitude would be inconsistent with the basic principle which caused the denunciation of Saul by Samuel, namely, "presumption". The effect of the plague upon his land, the building of the altar, and the humble offering of sacrifice, may well be considered as a counteracting agent to "presumption".

Nathan as the other prophet of David's court appears first, authentically, as Jehovah's condemnatory messenger to the king because of the latter's adultery. Nathan's vibrant, "Thou art the man", may be considered as the representation of the "public conscience", for it is likely that some of the constituency of Israel were able to foresee the results which a continuation of this evil policy would bring. It did in fact, have its counterpart within David's own family and possibly was one of the indirect factors which later led to the revolt of Absalom. In connection with Nathan's condemnation, we find a clear expression of "the ethical genius of Old Testament prophecy".

2. Ibid., p. 156.
3. I Samuel 15:23
4. II Samuel 24:18-25
5. For a good synthesis of views concerning authenticity and date of material see Eiselen, Prophetic Books of the Old Testament, pp. 68-83.
6. II Samuel 12:1-15
The next important situation in which Nathan was involved came at the time when David's career was almost ended. Adonijah as the eldest son of the King, and probably the most favored, prepared to have himself anointed David's successor. Politically there were two parties with which he had to reckon, one which favored his kingship, and another which opposed it. We do not know upon what grounds the opposition was based.) Nathan belonged to the party which was opposed to Adonijah, and it was through the scheme which the prophet concocted and carried out that Solomon became king. To what extent this may be considered as politics effecting prophecy we have no way of determining. "The supposition is that Nathan was dominated by genuinely prophetic motives, which were not only political or patriotic, but also profoundly religious." 

Ahijah. During the reign of Solomon, political events were taking place in Judah which led Ahijah to instigate or at least sanction the division of the Hebrew monarchy.

According to Solomon's policy of alliances with other nations, he married princesses from many countries, Egypt, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Sidon, and others. Each of the foreign wives was permitted to retain her own religion, and in his old age, Solomon worshipped "Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians", and "Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites", and "Chemosh the abomination of Moab", and "Molech the abomination of the children of Ammon". Regardless of their economic

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1. I Kings 1:1-4  
2. I Kings 1:5-6  
3. I Kings 1:7-8  
4. I Kings 1:11-27  
5. Smith (J.M.P.), PTT, p. 27.  
6. I Kings 11:29-39  
7. I Kings 11:1-3  
8. I Kings 11:4-8
or political importance these worships would draw the opposition of the prophets upon the government.

Another feature of internal politics which would cause the prophets to withdraw their sanction from the established rulers, was the heavy tax which the people had to bear.

Political as well as religious forces were present then, when Ahijah divided the new cloak into twelve pieces and said to Jeroboam "Take thee ten pieces; for thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee".  

Elijah and Elisha. In order to see clearly the political problems which influenced the message of Elijah and Elisha we must go back to the reign of Omri (887-876 B. C.). This ruler reconquered the Moabites, established the capital of Israel at Samaria, established friendly relations with Judah, and married his son Ahab to the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre. These were all strategic moves on his part, but we also find that in addition to these gains he was forced to make concessions to Damascus in his new capital, and was one of the first of Israel's rulers to pay tribute to the awakened power of Assyria under Asurnacirpal III.

Ahab as the next ruler continued his father's policies but also developed a much better fighting force.

1. I Kings 11:31  
3. McCurdy, HPM, p. 257 (Moabite stone discovered at Dileon in 1868)  
5. I Kings 16:24  
6. Gordon, POT, p. 23  
7. Barton, AB, p. 360  
8. I Kings 20:1-30
The political event which bore the most heavily upon the prophetic message of that day was the alliance between Israel and Phoenicia as shown in Ahab's marriage to Jezebel. As the outgrowth of this union the spread of Phoenician cult was threatening the worship of Jehovah. This meant a moral decay for there were obscene and degrading rites practiced in the new form of worship. "To Israel moral deterioration meant political as well as spiritual death."  

To counteract the foreign worship Elijah (according to a trustworthy narrative as far as date of writing is concerned) exhorted the Israelites to choose between Jehovah and Baal. Regardless of whether or not Elijah uttered the words accorded to him or performed the miracles ascribed to him, the historical kernel seems to indicate that some conflict occurred between Elijah and Baal's followers, much to the disadvantage of the latter. It is not at all improbable that the prophet's fervor, power, and persuasiveness were responsible for an uprising of the people against the Baal prophets. As a reprisal for the killing of the prophets of her religion, Jezebel probably threatened Elijah's life and forced him to flee.

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1. I Kings 18:19-24
2. McCurdy, HFM, p. 258
4. I Kings 18:21-38
5. Based on Sellin, IOT, pp. 120-126.
6. I Kings 18:40
"The result of the ordeal (at Mount Carmel) was decisive for the whole future history of religion. --- It became evident --- not merely that Jahweh was the God of Israel, but that other gods were vanities."

This is without doubt a great step forward in the conception of Yahweh and its connection with political influences is an incentive to further study in the same field.

The moral turpitude which permitted Jezebel to secure Naboth's death and Ahab to accept the dead man's property, may be considered as political in-as-much-as it concerned the policy of government. "The contemporaries of Ahab --- had the feeling as if heaven and earth would fall, since a king of Israel was capable of committing such a crime. Elijah made himself the mouthpiece of the general indignation". In condemning the royal murder and confiscation, Elijah "pledged the cause of Jehovah as the cause of civil order and righteousness. --- The sovereignty of Jehovah --- was the refuge of the oppressed, the support of the weak against the mighty". The conflict here would then seem to be between the democratic tendencies of the nation and the autocratic tendencies of the rulers.

These political influences as we have seen were, therefore, both external and internal. The external or international influences were indirect but none the less forceful. The internal ones as shown by the fact that there was a group of followers of Baal, with

2. I Kings 21:1-16
4. Smith (W.R.), The Prophets of Israel, p. 87.
5. The alliance with Phoenicia (Tyre) probably at stake.
the queen as the prime power, proved to be the more direct ones.  

The outcome of Elijah's flight seems to be that he realized the futility of his lone battle against Baalism, and decided upon a policy of quiet planning. In pursuance of this plan Elisha was designated to carry on the fight of Jehovahism against Baalism. It is difficult to select from the "prophetic legends" the historical portions or "kernels" concerning Elisha. Bearing this thought in mind we look for political forces which would be apt to bear upon his message and his actions.

Elisha's "energies were directed to two great ends: the extirpation of Baal worship, and the consolidation of the forces of Jahwism". In the following out of his determination to exterminate Baal worship he is credited with instigating Hazael's usurpation of the Syrian (Damascus) throne, and Jehu's usurpation of Israel's throne. We find here the same forces which were at work during the time of Elijah. The syncretism of foreign worships with that of Yahweh had given rise to two antagonistic parties. This is shown perhaps the most vividly in Jehu's friendly attitude toward the Rechabites. The fact of Elisha's sanction of Jehu's bloody deeds shows that forces of great power were behind the movement of which he

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1. Work now in progress upon Phoenician parallels to the Old Testament will probably throw much light on this point. (Professor Burrows of Brown University, Lecture 2/19/33.)
4. I Kings 19:19-21
   Sellin, TO, pp. 123-124.
   Driver, OT, pp. 194-196.
   Smith (J.M.P.), PTT, pp. 36-39, 42.

(See next page for notes 6-11)
was the head. Incidentally it shows also that the prophetic concep-
tion of the nature of Yahweh had not as yet reached an especially
high level in the gentler, milder qualities.

Damascus under Ben HadadII had been a constant "thorn in the
flesh" to Israel and in view of Elisha's reputed knowledge of Syria, it is not improbable that he was able to judge the Syrian potential-

ties, and in the light of these, make his "play" upon Hazael. When the
prophet foretold the departure of the Syrian troops besieging Samaria, it is possible that there was another invasion of the Assyrian forces
taking place in Syria. Another alternative is the possibility of
the prophet sending a false messenger to the Syrians knowing the
effect which it would have. If the stories of Elisha's thwarting of
Syrian plans be true even in "kernel" there would seem to be some
evidence that he (perhaps through his leadership of the bands of
prophets) had some sort of an espionage system.

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7. Mercer, EBSHJH, p. 32.
8. II Kings 8:7-15
11. II Kings 10:15,16
12. From the fact of visits there such as II Kings 8:7.
At the time of Elisha's death Syria was being subjected to another invasion of the Assyrian forces under Adadnirari IV. It is an interesting conjecture to wonder if this great prophet of Israel might not have seen in the Assyrian the force of Jehovah which would permit Israel to "smite Syria but thrice". There seems to be within this prophet the idea which developed much more fully a little later, of Jehovah as the God who used Syria for a chastening rod, and other nations as His "tools".

Court Prophets of Ahab. Because of Ahab's numerous wars it is only natural that the court prophets of his period should also be deeply concerned with the course of events. In fact, as being associated with the court they were in a position to see that "the very existence of the kingdom was at stake". The accounts which we have of the prophetic activity (aside from that of Elijah and Elisha) during Ahab's reign, come from a later narrative source although they "are in substance historically true".

The first instance like all those following, is concerned with the Syrian warfare. Benhadad (Hadadezer) was besieging Samaria when a prophet (we cannot be sure it was a court prophet, however) conceived the plans of counter attack upon the besieging forces. The words of the prophet give us one of the clearest pictures we have of the effect of prophetic message upon politics: "Thus saith

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2. II Kings 13:14-19
3. Smith (J.M.P.), PTT, p. 34.
4. I Kings chapters 20, 22.
Jehovah --- I will deliver it (the besieging forces) into thy hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah". Even the details of the plan were worked out by the prophet, for "Ahab said, By whom? And he (the prophet)said, Thus saith Jehovah, By the young men of the provinces. Then he (Ahab) said, Who shall begin the battle? And he (the prophet) answered, Thou". The plans worked out very successfully, which fact would lend strength to prophet's assertions of "Thus saith Jehovah".

The prophet who spoke the first plan of attack seems to have been an astute judge of Syrian power and perseverance, for after the defeat of the besieging forces he "said unto him (Ahab), Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest; for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against thee". This prophecy also came true, and in the invasion a prophet (perhaps the same one) again spoke to Ahab saying, "Thus saith Jehovah, Because the Syrians have said, Jehovah is a god of the hills and not a god of the valleys; therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thy hand, and ye shall know that I am Jehovah".

From the foregoing situations we may see that the political events were merely the causes by which Ahab should learn that Jehovah was God, -- God not only of the hills, but of the valleys as well, -- God who would teach the Syrians his nature as well as the Israelites. Politics here, then, came as the force which sowed additional seeds.

1. I Kings 20:13
2. I Kings 20:14-15
3. I Kings 20:16-21
4. I Kings 20:22
5. I Kings 20:23b
for the later prophetic conception of Jehovah as God of nations who
spoke through successes and defeats as much as through direct com-
mmands.

To guard against a too high placement of the regard for the
prophetic conception of Jehovah in this period, we have the condem-
nation of Ahab, by one of the sons of the prophets, for the wise
political move of sparing Ben Hadad's life. 1 It would seem that
the political horizon of the sons of the prophets was not as great
as that of the king, for the Assyrian power under Shalmaneser III
was looming as a menace over Palestine 2 and Ahab was preparing to
resist it. 3 Not only does this show a God who was merciless and
cruel, but also a God who demanded the obedience of every dictate
of selfish nationalism.

This point seems to mark the first step in the deteriora-
tion of the ecstatic band of prophets which we first noted during
the time of Samuel. 5 Based as they were upon physical enthusiasm
they became the tools of the rulers and "soon sank to depths of
hypocrisy and formalism". 6 The beginning of this deterioration is
shown in connection with Ahab's last attack on Ramoth-Gilead. 7
Four hundred prophets of Jehovah were gathered to be consulted con-
cerning the advisability of attacking Ramoth-gilead. Their message
was "Go up; for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king". 8

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2. 1 Kings 20:31-43
5. 1 Samuel 10:5, 6, 11-13
7. 1 Kings 22:1-35
8. 1 Kings 22:6b
In the light of Ahab's previous successes against the Syrians and his active part in anti-Assyrian coalition it is little wonder that the sons of the prophets urged combat. One lone prophet, "Micaiah the son of Imlah" stood opposed to the contest. It is interesting to note that this seems to be the first step which separates the true prophets from the false. In this step it would seem that the prophets of the court were swayed by secular matters although sincere enough in intent. Just how far politics entered into Micaiah's prophecy it is impossible to determine, especially since the King credited him with previous "evil" prophecies which may or may not have come true.

False Prophets. In the time of Elijah and Elisha the ecstatic bands of prophets which we noted first as playing a large part in the founding of the Israelitish monarchy, had become more numerous, and were now designated as "sons of the prophets" or "persons endowed with the spirit of the prophets". Bethel, Jericho, and Gilgal had groups of these men who lived in communities and depended in large part upon gifts for their livelihood. The dependence upon gifts for livelihood meant the prostitution of prophecy by some for monetary gain, and the constant use of prophetic inspiration of the ecstatic type would lead to a professional attitude. In its earliest recorded activity the national and religious interests of the prophetic bands were fused together, "But as the nation became more worldly and wicked,

1. I Kings 22:17-29
2. From I Kings 22:20-23
3. I Kings 22:8,18
5. II Kings 2:3-18; 4:38; 9:1
6. I Kings 14:3; II Kings 5:15; 8:9f; Micah 3:5.
7. Sanday (W), Inspiration, p. 133.
the two parted company until it became necessary to choose between the
national spirit, on the one hand, and the will of God, on the other."1

Many prophets, however, did not realize that a choice was necessary while
others who did realize the impasse, opposed the former class. Out of the
cleavage in the prophetic ranks came the great literary prophets as the
ones who recognized the necessity of subjecting the national spirit to
the religious spirit. Many nationalistic prophets were absolutely sin-
cere in their belief that the national hopes and wishes were identical
with the divine will, but their sincerity of belief did not exempt them
from the scathing attacks of the spiritual prophets. Both national zea-
lots and those who prostituted the prophetic office for gain were included
in the same catagory which is characterized by such descriptions as blind
watchmen, greedy dogs,2 deceivers,3 avaricious fools.4

Those of the prophetic bands who were not included in either of
the classes branded as false prophets, "must have had a very useful
function"5 in the life of Israel. Their work would be to interpret the
messages of the great prophets to people who might otherwise never hear
of them. "It is not enough to propound a great truth; it must be spread
abroad, and carried home, and hardened by iteration."6 Such was probably
the story of the group movement with the often ill-applied 'homen' of false
prophets and false prophecy.

2. Isaiah 56:10-11
4. Amos 7:10-17 (implied); Ezekiel 13:6, 10 etc.; Micah 3:11.
5. Sanday (W), Inspiration, p. 141.
6. Ibid., p. 141.
Chapter III

Influence of Politics Upon Eighth Century Prophecy

(With special reference to the effect upon the distinctive contribution of each prophet of the period.)

Foreign Affairs. Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 B.C.) of Assyria was the one who revived Assyria's activity from the passivity into which the nation's forces had fallen after the reign of Adad-nirari III (810-782 B.C.). The Assyrian monarch ("Tiglathpileser" or "Tiglathpilneser" or "Pul") freed Babylonia from the Arameans and subdued Armenia and Media. He then made a campaign against the western countries in 738 B.C. and exacted tribute from Rezon of Damascus, Menahem of Israel, and Hiram of Tyre. From 738-734 Damascus and Israel attempted to coerce Judah into an anti-Assyria coalition. Judah under Ahaz appealed to Assyria and Tiglathpileser III responded with a campaign in which he overwhelmed Damascus, killed Rezon, carried away at least 2,300 Israelites into captivity, and conquered the Philistine cities of Ashdod and Gaza. The Assyrian monarch then returned home and subdued Babylonia.

Shalmaneser V as the next monarch to the throne was forced to deal with rebellion in Israel on the part of Hoshea (who had purchased his throne for about $300,000 in gold and $2,000,000 in silver). The rebellion

1. Mercer, EBSJH, pp. 35-36.
3. II Kings 15:19
6. II Kings 16:6-9
7. Mercer, EBSJH, pp. 38,39
8. Ibid., p. 36.
was made on the strength of an alliance with the Egyptian power under So (or Sewe). Shalmaneser V besieged Samaria for three years but died before the city capitulated. His successor, Sargon II, accomplished the capture of the Northern capitol and "carried away 27,290 of its inhabitants". He replaced those who were taken away with people from other conquered lands and set up his own governors over them. Later, in 713-711 B.C., Sargon was forced to put down the combined rebellious forces of Philistia, Egypt, Moab, Edom, and Judah. During his reign Babylonia under Merodach-Baladan established its freedom from Assyria and maintained that freedom during most of this Assyrian monarch's lifetime. Sennacherib, as the next Assyrian king, saw Merodach-Baladan's established power in Babylon stir up trouble in Judah. Babylon was again forced to bow before Assyria and then the time of reckoning came for Judah. Sennacherib in 701 B.C. besieged Jerusalem and "Hezekiah became his tributary."

In Egypt the policy of government was to provide a number of "cushion" states between itself and Assyria. In accordance with this the Palestinian states were encouraged to revolt. In 715 B.C. Egypt was forced to pay tribute to Assyria, and in 701 Sennacherib defeated the Egyptian army under Taharku (during the reign of Shabaka 712-700 B.C.).

1. Smith (H.P.), Old Testament History, p. 228. II Kings 17:4
2. Biblical narrative (II Kings 17:3) gives Shalmaneser as the conqueror.
3. Assyrian records (Mercer, EBSHJH, p. 43) give Sargon II.
4. II Kings 17:24-27, Mercer, EBSHJH, p. 43.
5. Mercer, EBSHJH, pp. 45f.
9. Mercer, EBSHJH, p. 41. 10. Ibid., p. 41. 11. Ibid., p. 42.

The distinctive contribution of Amos we may conceive of in its totality, as the conception of Jehovah as a universal God of justice. 1

Conditions in Israel were at high peak as far as wealth and power went, for "Israel was the ruling nation between the Nile and the Euphrates" 2, people reclined on "ivory couches", lived in "houses of ivory", and anointed themselves with fine perfumes. 3 These were the luxuries of the time, but luxuries bought at the expense of the laborer, through knavery, cheating, corruption of justice, and cruel greed. 4 Internally, then, the government of the people was corrupt and foul. From the religious side, the people still adhered to practices which were introduced by foreign cults as far back as the time of Canaanitish amalgamation, and fostered by King Ahab's wife. 5 Here again we have political influence but this time from without the kingdom, and that in days long past.

Amos conceived of God as an absolutely righteous Being, and as such, His "righteousness could not be a force operative only within the confines of Israel, but must bear universal sway". 6 Despite the fact of God's special relation to Israel for which he punishes

2. Ibid., p. 39.
5. Amos 2:7-8; 5:4
6. Edghill, *EVP*, (Amos 1:3-2:3)
the sins of other nations against her (also against each other), Israel must suffer also for every transgression against moral and religious law. Politically as well as spiritually the government of Israel was like a cracked and crooked wall which had to be destroyed before it could be rebuilt. Jehovah through his prophet says, "lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all the nations, like as grain is sifted in a sieve". There is every probability that the instrument by which the Israelites were to be punished and "sifted" was the Assyrian power which had loomed upon Israel's horizon many times since Ashurnasirpal I first appeared. "If ever there was a time when the task of shaking off religious nationalism was both supremely difficult and absolutely imperative, it was at the moment when Amos heard above the clash of the temple music, above the sounds of revelry and merriment; above the hum of industry, the warlike tramp of the dread nation of the North." 

In accordance with his conception of Yahweh as a god of justice, the surrounding nations, Damascus, Philistia, Ammon, Moab, Tyre, Edom, and Judah were to be punished for wrongs they had committed. Moab was to be punished "because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime". This barbarous act by a foreign nation would not be excused by Yahweh, and the offender would surely be punished. International politics were thus amenable to interpretation on the basis of the just righteousness of Jehovah.

1. Amos 7:7-8
2. Amos 9:9, (not textually from time of Amos but true to spirit.)
3. Not named but suggested in Amos 5:27.
7. Amos 2:1
It is no exaggeration, then, to say that politics through Amos' conception of Jehovah, was largely responsible for the distinctive features of his prophecy.

Hosea. The criticism for the literary work of the Book of Hosea, as followed in this paper, comes from Scott, The Message of Hosea, published at New York in 1921 by the Macmillan Company.

The distinctive contribution of Hosea was his conception of Jehovah as a God who was above all else a "God of love". 1

Internally, the corrupt politics and oppression which Amos had faced still existed, only on a greater plane, for the throne of the Northern kingdom was insecure to any occupant. 2 The religious acts of the people still contained idolatry and debauchery. 3 The entire gamut of sin is summed up in one scorching epithet, "whoredom".

Externally the forces of Assyria and Egypt exercised great influence. The government of Israel was attempting to establish alliances and treaties with the foreign powers which would be the most advantageous. "Sometimes the policy of dependence upon Assyria was dominant; but when the burden of such support became too heavy, interest turned to Egypt." 4 These alliances seemed to involve the idea that the foreign god was superior to Jehovah. 5

The policy of Assyria in dealing with Israel was one of tolerance as long as the tribute was paid regularly and as long as the nation participated in no rebellion against Assyrian domination. The Assyrians desired only wealth and power, and their policies toward the captive kingdom would be governed solely by these motives.

The Egyptians were interested mainly in keeping a number of "cushion states" between themselves and Assyria, -- states which would weaken any blow directed at Egypt from the north. In addition to this desire for protection, Egypt had been a conquering power in Palestine before Assyria had appeared there, and the former tributes and prestige were probably remembered. These great nations had no interest in the moral or spiritual welfare of the Israelitish people, material ends were their only interests. Yahweh on the other hand, loved his people as a father loved his son, or as a husband loved his wife. Hosea saw and this contrast/preached adherence to Yahweh because He alone was interested in the welfare and the betterment of the Israelites. A more practical reason also existed for Hosea's preaching of an exclusive loyalty to Jehovah. This was the size and population of Israel as compared to the size and population of Assyria or Egypt. In spite of her indomitable spirit the tiny Israelitish nation, nor even all of Palestine, could hope to successfully contend against the crushing weight of numbers of Egypt or Assyria. Adherence to Yahweh, then, meant Israel's betterment, for, despite her insignificant size, Yahweh acted only for love of her. In the past, the political fortunes of Israel had been taken care of by Jehovah, and in the nation's rejection of Him came its sin. To Hosea, sin was the betrayal of love. There was no escape and punishment must come because of the nation's sins. Jehovah is represented as saying "Shall I set thee free from the hand of Sheol? Shall I redeem thee from death? Hither with thy plagues, O death! Hither with thy pestilence, O Sheol! Repentance is hidden from mine eyes".

The powers of Assyria and Egypt (especially the former) are considered by Hosea as the instruments by which punishment is to be meted out.\(^1\) Political punishments are not the only ones\(^2\) but they are the ones we are concerned with here. The "east wind" of Assyria, "the breath of Jehovah", shall devastate the land, and put Samaria to the sword.

Hosea had greater opportunity to judge the power of Assyria, or rather a greater opportunity to judge its efficacy as a weapon in Jehovah's hand, than had Amos, for it is very probable that he lived during Menahem's reign (743-737 B.C.) when tribute was paid to Tiglathpileser.\(^3\)

There is a possibility that politics might have had some part in Hosea's idea of a remnant or restoration.\(^4\) Just as his conception of a loving God gave rise to the idea of captivity as discipline,\(^5\) so his conception of God's love might have given rise to the idea of restoration after punishment by Assyria for false dealing. We know that he did recognize the fact that punishment would follow the vacillating policy of Israel's people,\(^6\) but we cannot know whether this was one of the causes of the remnant idea, we may only surmise.

There is something pathetic about the dealings which Israel carried on with Egypt and Assyria, for here was a small nation of little political significance in the ancient world trying to use the forces of the two greatest nations within her horizon, for her own ends.

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1. These are the specific countries mentioned, Hosea 7:11-12; 8:9; 9:3; 10:6; 11:5. Inferred, 10:2; 13:15.
2. Hosea 2:6-8 is one example.
Assyria dared not permit Israel to flaunt the flag of lies and rebellion. If Israel were permitted to carry on intrigues unmolested, Assyrian power among other nations would be seriously undermined. If on the other hand, Egypt were to be the suzerain, Israel would be no better off than under Assyria. Many false promises and treaties had evidently been made to both Assyria and Egypt, so that no matter who ruled Israel, punishment must inevitably follow. "They (Israel) speak vain words, swearing falsely in making covenants; therefore judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field."¹ This political intrigue had grown to the place where it furnished a great enough and a sure enough crisis to be the occasion for the appearance of Hosea and his message.

Politics, then, formed the occasion for the prophetic message of Hosea, and was an important factor (probably the greatest external factor involved) in the enunciation of his doctrine of exclusive loyalty to Jehovah. This much we may say for politics in the face of the statement that, "Hosea's message was based not upon political considerations primarily, but upon moral and religious convictions".²


The distinctive contribution of Isaiah (son of Amoz) may be considered as his "conception of the divine holiness, sovereign and supreme", which "dominated his thought and determined his message".³

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1. Hosea 10:4
As a prophet of Judah, "there are three special occasions when Isaiah intervened at a time of political crisis". Previous to the first "special occasion" the same message with the same conditions behind it that Amos dealt with became also the burden of Isaiah's prophetic activity.

The first "special occasion" was during the Syro-Ephraimitic war when Reszon of Damascus and Pekah of Israel attempted to coerce Judah, under Ahaz, to join an anti-Assyrian coalition. Ahaz appealed to Assyria to save him, but this he did contrary to the advice of Isaiah. In four oracles the prophet tried to show Ahaz that Jehovah had spoken saying that the besieging nations would fall.

Isaiah tried to tell the people of Israel in two ways that they should trust in Jehovah. One way was through his personal belief, (as shown in the naming of his son). The other way was through the direct words of God. In substance he told the people that Assyria was the "razor" of God with which God would sweep away Damascus and Ephraim. "The Lord bringeth upon them the waters of the River, -- the king of Assyria --- and it (Assyria) shall sweep onward through Judah" and all but cause her to perish. The law will tell them to trust in Jehovah alone, so why should they deprive themselves of sustenance and transgress against the covenant when Jehovah hath given them proof of his intentions? The Assyrian party at Jerusalem would point to Menahem's example in Israel and public opinion as a whole in Jerusalem probably favored the appeal to Assyria. In what Jehovah had spoken concerning the

1. Thorn, PITT, p. 62.  5. II Kings 16:7-8
3. II Kings 16:5 (Joram previously--II Kings 15:36,37).
7. Isaiah 8:2-4.  8. Isaiah 7:7,16; 8:5-6, 1-10.
fate of Syria and Israel, and in those words by which Isaiah tried to portray the holiness of God as the vital factor, there was a definite political influence. Both Syria and Israel "were actually in no condition to carry on a prolonged siege. It was certain that in the near future, Assyria must interfere in order to conserve its own prestige." This political crisis, then, besides being an opportunity was also responsible in large measure for the idea of faith in Jehovah. This is not meant as an intimation that Isaiah's conception would have been different had this crisis not arisen; it only means that the elements in it lent themselves admirably to the formation of such an interpretation as would "emphasize the positive side of holiness." In connection with Ahaz's rejection of Isaiah's advice, and the latter's retirement to his disciples, it is possible that we have the grounds for the Messianic hope of the Jews. Kittel, as admitting the truth of this conjecture says: "The hour in which Isaiah parted from Ahaz gave the world the thought of the Messiah." If this should be true, politics has played a greater part in the history of Christianity than is generally recognized, for many inferences are involved both theologically and historically in this "Hope".

The "second crisis", apparently, came after Hezekiah's accession to the throne of Judah in 727 (? B.C. There had evidently been a gradual growth of an anti-Assyrian, pro-Egyptian party in the country which led the king to at least consider revolt from Assyria, for we have the record of Sargon which states, "Judah,

1. Thorn, PI, p. 64.
4. Isaiah 8:16ff.
5. See Eiselen, FBOT, Vol. 1, pp. 135-139.
Edom, Moab, planning rebellion and untold evil against me bore their pledges to Pharaoh, King of Egypt. "1 Isaiah was convinced that Egypt was an inferior power to Assyria and in pursuance of this conviction, "Jehovah spoke to Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saying", "Walk naked", and he did so --- "And Jehovah said, Like my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign --- concerning Egypt --- so shall the king of Assyria lead away the captives of Egypt." 2 Here, again, was a political situation which elicited from the prophet the idea of faith in Jehovah. It seems probable that here Isaiah's "urgent and powerful admonitions prevailed" to some degree 3 for there is no mention of unusual punishments upon Judah, either in the Bible or in Sargon's accounts.

The third crisis came after the death of Sargon, when Hezekiah had definitely turned anti-Assyrian. Isaiah pronounced the folly of hope in Egyptian aid in no uncertain terms. 4 To the prophet, Assyria was the rod of Yahweh's anger and, therefore, to rebel against her was to rebel against God, which act would be punished. 5 It should be noted that in this crisis the message of the prophet had changed from that given at the time of the Syro-Ephraimitic war. Here the Assyrian power is seen as overwhelming and the only method of accounting for the havoc which it has wrought is to conceive of it as the rod of Jehovah. This surely must be a case of politics.

1. Mercer, EBSHJH, p. 43.
2. Isaiah 20:2-4
3. Thorn, PI, p. 66.
changing the direction of the prophet's distinctive contribution. This probability is further born out by the encouragement which Isaiah gave when "Sennacherib broke faith with Hezekiah, and demanded the surrender of Jerusalem and the deportation of its citizens to Assyria". Again the prophet's message changes so that the holiness of Jehovah shall transcend the conditions brought on by Assyria.

"Stark (Das Assyrische Weltreich) thinks that the conviction as to the transitory character of Assyria and the permanence of Judah was not from the beginning in Isaiah's mind, but emerged through the prophet's experience of the real character of Assyria and Sennacherib."

(Philosophy of History) Regardless of the time in his life when the idea of the transitory character of Assyria emerged, Isaiah first clearly laid the basis for a theological philosophy of history. The Assyrian party in Judah would be stressing the advantages of Assyrian domination, stressing the superiority of the strength of Assyria over that of Judah, and pointing out the fact that every nation (within the world horizon) had been forced to bow to Assyrian superiority. As previously mentioned foreign alliances seemed to involve the idea of the superiority of foreign gods. Isaiah, with truly prophetic insight, looked beyond the present and pronounced his message of eventual doom upon Assyria because of her failure to recognize Yahweh as the giver of her success, while to Israel should ultimately come (through a remnant) freedom and blessing upon earth.

"When the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria." 1

"A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness. For a full end, and that determined, will the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, make in the midst of all the earth." 2 Jehovah uses the nations of the earth in working out His ends upon the earth. A nation may rise to power, but it shall fall because it does not recognize or follow Jehovah, even though it does his will. Israel as the chosen people of Yahweh, and as the people who follow Him furnish the "light" which "will be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame; and it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day". 3 This is the philosophy of history which emerged because the political force of Assyria, could not be reconciled in any other way with Isaiah's conception of Jehovah.

So far our consideration has been of external political forces. Now we shall glance at the internal ones.

The voluntary subjection of Ahaz to Assyria "involved a recognition of the Assyrian gods and so involved disloyalty to Yahweh". 4 The effect of such idolatry upon Isaiah's conception of the holiness of Jehovah, is apparently that it made him fear a lowering of the moral standard of the people. This sin along with the other sins of oppression, greed, and drunkenness must and shall be punished. 5

As a summary statement of our dealings with this great prophet, we may say that he "saw the Lord high and lifted up", and he "knew that all issues were in His hands, so he counselled submission

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1. Isaiah 10:12
2. Isaiah 10:22-23
3. Isaiah 10:17
4. Smith (J.M.P.), PTT, p. 75.
and obedience to the divine will as the true statesmanship.1 Political events impinged upon his conception and changed the direction of thought, but were helpless to modify or minimize the truth of the conception.


Micah's distinctive contribution is, probably, his championing of the cause of the "masses" against the oppressing force of the wealthy.2 Internal politics seem to have caused the message of Micah to come forth. He conceived of the social wrongs (with political backing) of cruel appropriation of the lands of the poor by the rich3, of the corruptness of the rulers in robbing the weak, of the covetousness of some prophets --- all, as the cause of Jerusalem's destruction.6 Micah saw no hope of salvation, "Therefore thus saith Jehovah: Behold against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks." Internal politics which damned the lives of the poor were the cause of Micah's distinctive contribution, while unnamed external political forces were to be the weapons of correction. It is also entirely possible that the example of Samaria, where similar conditions had existed, were partly responsible for this prophet's conception.8

1. Thorn, PI, p. 69.
2. If Micah 6:1-8 be attributed to the prophet, his greatest contribution would be giving of the relation of the individual soul to God (so Thorn).
3. Micah 2:2, 8, 9; (4) 3:1-4; (6) 3:5-8; (6) 3:9-12; (7) 2:3-5.
Chapter IV

Influence of Politics Upon Seventh Century Prophecy

(With reference to the effect upon the distinctive contribution of each prophet of the period.)

Foreign Affairs. Esarhaddon followed Sennacherib to the Assyrian throne. 1 This monarch directed most of his attention and energies toward the conquering of Egypt. His first effort in 673 B.C. was unsuccessful but his second in 670 B.C. enabled him to defeat Taharka and subjugate the delta district (as far as Memphis). 2 In Palestine he conquered Sidon, besieged Tyre, and received the vassalage of Judah (under Manasseh), Ashkelon, Edom, Moab, Ekron, Amon, and Ashdod. 5 Egypt rebelled from his rule and he was never able to return to reconquer it. Ashurbanipal, as the next monarch (668-626 B.C.), was occupied with other affairs (notably Babylonian, Arabian, Hauranian, Ammonite, and Arvadian). 6 During his reign the Scythians appeared in Media and Western Asia. This king continued the conquest of Egypt started by Esarhaddon and destroyed the city of Thebes in 663 B.C. 7 Ashur-tililani followed Ashurbanipal and during this reign Nabopolassar of Babylon founded the Chaldaean kingdom and maintained its independence. In 612 B.C. Nineveh fell to the combined forces of the Chaldeans, Medes, and Scythians under Nabopolassar of Babylon and Assyria was a nation of the past to all practical purposes, although the final collapse did not come till

1. II Kings 19:37
several years later. In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, who had succeeded to the throne of Babylon, defeated the Egyptian forces under Pharaoh-Necho at Carchemish and thereby became the ruler of all of Western Asia. It was under this monarch that the final decline and fall of Jerusalem took place with consequent captivity for the Jews.

In Egypt, Taharka (689-664 B.C.) defeated the forces of Esarhadon on the latter's attempt in 673 B.C., but was forced to give way in 670 B.C. It is probable that this Egyptian ruler was the cause for revolt as soon as the Assyrian army had left the country. Tanutamon as the next Egyptian ruler saw his city of Thebes sacked by Ashurbanipal of Assyria. Under Psammetichus I, Egypt extended her power to the north but was unable to accomplish much because of the Scythian invasion. Necho as the next ruler advanced to the aid of the Assyrians against the Medes and Scythians. He it was, who completely invaded Philistia, caused the death of Josiah, and the placing on the throne of Judah of Jehoiakim. In 605 the Egyptian power in Palestine was completely broken by Nebuchadnezzar in the battle of Carchemish. Apries (Hophra)(588-566 B.C.) was indirectly the cause of Jerusalem's destruction in 586 B.C. His forces were defeated just before Jerusalem fell.

A non-Semitic people called the Scythians, swept over Western Asia as far as Syria, conquering as they went. The fall of

3. The Egyptian history is taken from Mercer, Extra-Biblical Sources for Hebrew and Jewish History, pp. 142-144 unless otherwise designated.
5. II Kings 23:29-34.
Assyria was due in some measure to their efforts and Egypt was saved from plunder probably by the payment of tribute (under Psammetichus I). Their appearance in Palestine caused much apprehension and some prophetic activity.

Zephaniah. To get the setting of Zephaniah's activity we must go back to the reign of Manasseh. This ruler ascended the throne as a mere boy. It is possible that the religious reaction which took place in his reign was due both to the women of the court and the stringency of thought and prophecy as represented by Isaiah. The reaction had as its results the introduction of Assyrian sun and star worship, and also the sacrifice of human life. As was only to be expected, the prophets of Jehovah were persecuted and driven to silence. Such a state of affairs existed well into the reign of Josiah when the Scythian peril gave opportunity for prophetic duty to be aroused.


The distinctive contribution of Zephaniah may be considered as his emphasis upon the "Day of Yahweh".

Most of the nations which surrounded Judah are mentioned specifically as coming under the judgment, and Judah is not exempt.

1. Herodotus, History (Vol. 1) - (Translated by Rawlinson), pp. 103-106.
2. II Kings 21:1
3. Ottley, SHH, p. 205.
4. II Kings 21:5-9
5. II Kings 21:16
ed from it. 1 It is significant for our purpose to note that the fall of the nations is coming "because they have sinned against Jehovah". 2 This is the basis upon which the prophet works, but we see also that in connection with Judah it is particularly the worship of foreign gods which is condemned. 3 The judgment upon the peoples around, "Canaan, the land of the Philistines", "the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon", the Assyrians (the worship of stars, etc., as introduced by Manasseh), the Egyptians (as the perveyors of idolatry probably under Sheshonk I), -- all of these seem to indicate that the basis upon which Zephaniah formed his judgments was the religious connection between Judah and the other countries. This religious connection had, in the past, been formed by the political dealings, wars, subjugations, the aid of national dieties in battles, and international alliances. Thus, it would seem that political factors were equally responsible with religious factors in the emphasizing of the great "day of Jehovah" upon the nations of the world.

Within Judah, and especially Jerusalem, the political conditions are best summed up in the prophet's word "polluted". The reflection of conditions 4 shows that Judah, as a guilty nation in which politics have played their part in introducing and maintaining sin, must pay the penalty with the rest.

The Scythians, as the consecrated guests of Jehovah 5 are

3. Zephaniah 1:4-6
the instruments by which "Jehovah's sacrifice" will be made. The invasion of a people from beyond the Hebrew horizon would lend itself very well to an interpretation as an act of Yahweh. Besides, who may say but what, in reality, it was just that.


The distinctive contribution of Jeremiah may be considered as the formulation of a new conception of religion in which the individual rather than the family or nation was the spiritual and ethical unit.

In considering the effect of politics upon the prophet's conception of a "personal religion", there are, at least, two angles to be considered. The first is the external effect of politics in the formation of the idea. The second is the effect of the outcome of political events, and of policies upon the prophet's personal experience.

"Jeremiah saw that the national life of Judah was rapidly nearing its close, and with the national life would disappear the holy city, the Temple, and other institutions that were closely bound up with the religious life of the past."

Jeremiah was always looking for a nation as the "instrument of Yahweh" which would punish Judah for its sins, since it was in the political sphere that "God's moral government of the universe must justify itself."

The Scythian invasion as the first major event would be the logical place to find the "seeds" for the political doom of Jerusalem, out of which the individual relationship to God might grow. We do find what seems to be a personal note, in its infancy, so to speak. "Thus saith Jehovah to the men of Judah, and the dwellers in Jerusalem--- circumcise yourselves to Jehovah, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah."

The next great political event would be the death of Josiah at the hands of Pharaoh-Necho and the placing of Jehoiakim on the Judaean throne. This would demonstrate forcibly the possibility of Jerusalem falling before a nation as strong as Egypt. Then the growth of the Chaldean power with the fall of Assyria "and the defeat of the Egyptians at Carchemish confirmed his anticipations, and brought Judah within the orbit of the new world-empire."

Here was a new world power as an instrument in the hands of Yahweh, which might well bring the destruction to pass. The point at which surety of the doom of Jerusalem came is reckoned as the time when Jehoiakim burned the roll of prophecies which Jeremiah had written. Up until that time it is thought that the prophet hoped to turn the people from their sins, but that at this time "he became convinced that

5. II Kings 23:34.
The first captivity was a proof of the life-long prophecy, but the need for the conception of a personal relationship had not yet reached its greatest test. There followed the destruction of the city, the times when the need was greatest, for the conquerors left behind only "the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and husbandmen."

The advice of the prophet to submit to the yoke of Babylon need not be considered as evidence against the idea of personal religion coming partly from political forces. The wish was not to see how few could be saved to promote the idea, but how many --. The fact that, as a man of the people "he could never dissociate his personal emotions from his prophetic word", lends strength to this conclusion. No greater proof could be offered of his tender feeling for his people than his poignant cry as he contemplates their destruction, "My bowels! My bowels! I writhe in anguish!
0 the walls of my heart!
My heart is in tumult within me; I cannot keep silent!"

"Religion burst the husk of the material and national, and revealed its universal and spiritual nature," clearly in Jeremiah's correspondance with the exiles. There in captivity in a foreign land the people could "lift up their hearts in prayer both for themselves and their oppressors, that they might receive a common blessing -- for He was one, and His people one."

2. II Kings 24:10-16.
3. II Kings 25:12 (see also verses 10-26).
From the second angle (the effect of the outcome of political events, and of policies upon Jeremiah's personal experience) we see a sensitive, timid nature played upon by harsh circumstances. It was through the discipline of trial and suffering that Jeremiah was driven into an "intimate fellowship with God such as none of his predecessors had attained." His predictions concerning the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem at the hands of the Scythians were not fulfilled. The menace melted away. This meant that censure and condemnation from the people would fall upon him as a false prophet. "Such disillusionment --- was a stunning experience for a young man just entering upon the exercise of his prophetic gifts", and the years of silence which followed were probably filled with much meditation, and with much communion with God. After the death of Josiah, and the ascension of Jehoiakim to the throne of Judah, Jeremiah prophesied the violent death of the king but this prophecy did not come true. Here again is a place at which the prophet's sensitive spirit would force him to retreat within himself and to commune more closely with God. If we may trust the dating of chapter 26 (verse 1) the condemnation of Jeremiah may be thought of as an attempt to counteract the feeling that with the death of Josiah the "day of Jehovah had come and gone". Regardless of the exact time of utterance this prophecy could hardly be

2. Thorn, The Prophets of Israel, p. 112.
3. Jeremiah 1:8
6. 2Kings 24:6
7. Jeremiah 7:10
interpreted as the result of other than political forces. The prophecy as denouncing the temple caused him to be placed on trial for his life.¹ Because of his prophecies even the people of his native village turned against him and plotted his death.² The prophecies against the encouragement of the priests and false prophets brought him torture and ridicule.³ His message of destruction gained him hate, and his message of mercy to those who would desert to the Chaldeans gained him dark, passionate, suspicion which flamed into terrible imprisonment.⁴ All of the dealings in which Jeremiah was concerned as the voice of Jehovah speaking about situations which were (either directly or indirectly) the result of political forces, all, caused him to turn toward God in a closer personal relationship. "At the very time when he was farthest removed from God he felt most keenly ---- that he could not leave God, ---- because God did not leave him."⁵

Thus we may see that as political forces from without drove home the need for personal relationship with God, so solitude and loneliness, as induced by political factors, brought out the sacredness and beauty of personal relationship with God which only the experience itself can describe.


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It is rather difficult to determine just exactly what Nahum's distinctive contribution (addition) to prophetic thought was for "there is no direct religious message in the book."¹ Therefore we are faced with the necessity of considering his contribution as a re-emphasis upon an idea previously enunciated. This we find in his "sole aim to point out the hand of Yahweh in the impending doom of Nineveh."²

Basically, Nahum's prophecy is grounded in the conception of Jehovah as the God over the nations which was enunciated probably as far back as the time of Elijah and Elisha, and certainly from the time of Amos.³ The historical situation with which the prophet is concerned probably does not go back beyond the reign of the Assyrian monarch, Essarhaddon, except possibly in the traditions dealing with the fall of the northern kingdom. The political event, specifically mentioned which shows relation to the prophet's aim, is the fall of No Ammon.⁴ It is evident that the fall of this Egyptian city to the Assyrians was responsible in some measure for Nahum's conception of the cruelty which placed "Jehovah of hosts" against the Assyrian power. Another important political factor involved in this prophet's aim, was probably the tribute paid to Assyria by Manasseh, for there is a specific mention of endless stores of gold, silver, and furnishings.⁵ Another religio-political factor involved seems to be the hatred caused by the introduction into Judah of

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4. Nahum 3:8  
5. Nahum 3:10 (The friendly attitude toward Egypt reflected here raises some interesting problems.)
Assyrian forms of worship, which took place probably with Manasseh. The direct causes of Assyria's downfall are not mentioned by name but the forces of the Babylonians, the Medes, and the "Unnan-manda" are probably the forces which bring forth the words of Jehovah, "Behold, I am against thee", "the fire shall devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off." 

Political factors, then, formed the circumstances which made possible Nahum's prophecy of doom upon Nineveh.


The distinctive contribution of Habakkuk may be considered as his conception of the universal moral government of Jehovah giving rise to eternal truth that "the righteous shall live by his faithfulness." 

Internally the condition of politics was probably that mirrored in Jeremiah, when the rulers and the wealthy oppressed the poor and resorted to all sorts of immoral (or unmoral) practices. As the outgrowth of these conditions the prophet boldly asks the question "How long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear?"

In external political affairs the Chaldeans had supplanted the Assyrians and had defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish. This

1. Nahum 3:4 (compare II Kings 21:3,5,6).  (2). Nahum 2:1
3. Nahum 2:13; 3:5 (Zephaniah and Jeremiah do not mention the Scythians by name, either.)
8. See Foreign Affairs -- this section.
Chaldean activity connected with these accomplishments "had furnished ample opportunity for becoming acquainted with them" and for observing their cruelties. It was also at about this time that another prophet in Judah was conceiving of the Chaldeans as the old "foe from the north." It was perfectly logical from the political angle that Jehovah should make the Chaldeans the executioners of judgment upon Judah. This solution presented the still greater problem of conceiving of an unrighteous instrument chastising a more or less righteous nation. To this great question the Assyrian downfall could furnish a clue, politically, for as a nation founded, expanded, and maintained by the sword, it had perished by the sword. However prosperous a wicked man or nation might seem, the seeds of death and destruction lay hidden within its desires, its ill-gotten gains, its idolatry, while "the righteous, confident in God will manifest qualities of endurance and steadfastness and by these will survive all the convulsions that shake the world." Babylon will fall. "Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come (fall)."

Politics, then, with its inherent weaknesses, when linked up with God's moral government, was responsible for Habakkuk's prophecy of Babylon's doom, and was also a sizable factor in determining his distinctive contribution.

1. Eiselen, Prophecy and the Prophets, p. 176.
2. Habakkuk 1:5-11
3. Habakkuk 1:12-17
4. Habakkuk 2:5-19
6. Habakkuk 2:3
Chapter V

Influence of Politics Upon Exilic Prophecy

(With reference to the effect upon the distinctive contribution of each prophet of the period.)

International Affairs. Babylon continued under the reign of Nebuchadrezzar to be the dominating power of Judean politics and of Western Asia. With his death in 562 B.C., however, the great Babylonian empire began to totter. This is shown most effectively in the rapid succession of rulers down to that of "Nabuna'id", or Nabonidus (556-538 B.C.). Amel-Marduk (Evil Merodach) (562-560 B.C.) was the ruler who freed Jehoiachin from imprisonment and gave him special honor. This "must mean a particular political attitude that he (Amel-Marduk) took, and it is possible that the king's early death was in some way connected with this." The Scythians made no encroachment upon Babylonian territory as long as Nebuchadrezzar lived but after his death they extended their domains, under the leadership of Cyaxares of Media, as far as Haran in Mesopotamia.  

Cyrus as king of Anshan, and a vassal of Astyages of Media probably revolted from his suzerain. Astyages attacked him and the former's troops revolted, giving the victory to Cyrus. Thus, instead of the Medes, the Persians became the rulers of a large portion of western Asia.

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1. II Kings 25:27  
4. Rogers, HAP, p. 37.
Cyrus conquered the Scythians (Umman-manda)¹ and then extended his campaigns to Asia Minor. Here the Persian conqueror captured the province of Lydia and then reduced the entire portion of Asia Minor as far as the Aegean Sea.² With this accomplished Cyrus then turned his attention to Babylon. Two Persian armies advanced against the nation holding Judah captive. One army under Cyrus met and defeated Belshazzar's forces at Upi (Opis). The other Persian army under Gobryas (Ugbam) approached Babylon from the east, and both forces converged upon the capital city. Instead of a great siege of the Babylonian stronghold taking place Cyrus says, "My numerous troops marched peacefully into Babylon."³ This took place in 538 B.C.

**Ezekiel.** The textual criticism is taken from Redpath,


The distinctive contribution of Ezekiel may be considered as his conception of the individual responsibility before Jehovah. In this conception "he carried to a logical conclusion Jeremiah's principle of personal religion."⁴

The political events which led up to the first captivity of Judah may be considered as the background for his work, but the most direct political forces came with the captivity itself. In dealing with the Jews in exile "it was impossible to gather crowds as -- in Jerusalem. --Ezekiel had to deal with individuals and small groups of individuals."⁵ Here was a factor which as the direct re-

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3. Rogers, CPOT, p. 382. Ezekiel 8:1; 14:1; 20:1; 33:30-33.
result of political forces, would tend to make the prophet's message to applications and conceptions of the individual. In pronouncing constant doom upon Jerusalem Ezekiel was not unmindful of the political situation there, nor of the results of rebellion, for after remarking on the broken covenant between Judah and Babylon he says, "they that remain shall be scattered toward every wind." Another feature arose to bring forth the idea of individual responsibility. In exile the people thought of their past nationalism in the form of a "social solidarity", and under this idea the exiles must still pay the price for their fathers' sins. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." It was in direct answer to this last feature that Ezekiel gave forth as Jehovah's words, the doctrine that only "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." There is a feature in this idea of individual responsibility as Ezekiel expressed it which does not close the way to a new form of social solidarity or new nationalism. Even before the final downfall of Jerusalem there seems to be an idea expressed or implied that out of individual responsibility there will grow a new nation. Following close upon the individual discourse and seeming to link the individual and the nation comes this phrase, "Make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit; for wherefore should you die, O house of Israel?" Thus, while he released religion from its nationalism on one hand, he prepared the way for a nationalism of a different sort.

1. Ezekiel 17:13-19
2. Ezekiel 17:21; 12:14
3. Ezekiel 18:2
4. Ezekiel 18:3-23; 33:10-20
on the other. The type of nationalism for which he laid the basis was one of holiness as attained partly through ritualistic measures, in which a "holy people in a holy city, (were) worshipping their God in the beauty of holiness." Here is a significant point from the political angle, in the fact that the downfall of Jerusalem changed Ezekiel's message from doom of Judah to one of hope and deliverance. The whole of the future, as bound up in his conception, came forth with strong emphasis upon the individualistic-nationalistic brilliance which would come.

It is possible, then, that the need for individual responsibility, as brought on by political forces, had some effect upon the individual and nationalistic conceptions of Ezekiel which were later to develop into legalism.


The distinctive contribution of Deutero-Isaiah may be considered as his conception of Israel's religion becoming the religion of the world, or "his universalism". The controversy among scholars as to both the authenticity and interpretation of this great prophet, makes any statement of the effect of political forces upon the contribution a rather hazardous one.

1. Shown early by his emphasis of ritualistic with the moral in 18:5-9; 22:7-12 but more later in 40:48:-
When Deutero-Isaiah first issued his message it was probable that Cyrus had already made some conquests, and had displayed his power, but had probably not attacked Babylon as yet. Then, too, it is possible that some spirit of the intellectual renaissance which brought such men as Zoroaster, Solon, Thales, Mimnermos, Pythagoras, and Xenophon into prominence, gave to "Deutero-Isaiah in Babylon the mental atmosphere of the times. --- Hence we can understand whence he had his world-flight of thought." The method and route by which such an atmosphere would reach Babylon would probably be the result of political forces (such as road development, or embassies, or prisoners of war, or mercenaries).

There is a possibility of political forces being responsible for the entire message of universalism, although the probability of such an extreme position is very low. Cyrus had already extended his control, as far as the islands in the Aegean Sea (Cos and Rhodes) on the west, and to the Jaxartes River on the east. This would include most of the nations of importance (excepting Babylon and Egypt) in the Hebrew world. The Persian monarch dealt justly with the peoples whom he conquered. A line from the "Cylinder of Cyrus" describing the treatment of vanquished peoples reflects what must have been apparent to the exiled Jews, "he (Cyrus) took them in righteousness and justice". Such a man would then lend himself to the conception in which Jehovah could say "Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden."

The success of the Persian conqueror would be another political

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1. Isaiah 41:2,25; 45:1-3. 
2. Kittel, Great Men and Movements. 
3. Rogers, HAP (see also Isaiah 41:2-6). 
4. Ibid., Cover Map. 
5. Rogers, CPOT, p. 381. 
6. Isaiah 45:1 (see also Ezra 1:1-4)
factor with religious implications, in which as master of most of
the world (the other's to follow 43:3,14) he must either become the
servant of Jehovah over the whole world or else be seen as the fav-
orite of a god who was greater than Jehovah. Then recognizing that
Cyrus would ascribe his successes to Marduk, as one whose eyes were
blinded or as one of those "that sit in darkness", the great proph-
et, added the instruction to the Jews, to go out and open the eyes
of the Gentiles, of which Cyrus would be one. This supposition is
strengthened, somewhat, by the words of Jehovah in Isaiah 45:4, as
compared with 45:1. "Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed, to Cyrus,
whose right hand I have holden (45:1); I have surnamed thee, though
thou hast not known me (45:4), --- I will gird thee though thou hast
not known me (45:6). The implication which I draw from this is that
Jehovah has guided Cyrus in the past but that Cyrus does not recognize
Jehovah's hand as the hand of "the God of Israel". It is not at all
improbable, if this hazardous surmise be correct, that much of the
universalism was to be fostered by Cyrus who would carry out Jehovah's
words "that they may know from the rising of the sun and from the
west, that there is none besides me."2

Through a mountain of possibilities, then, we are able to
dig a very small tunnel for the passage of a postulate of political
influence. Any tremor among the possibilities is likely to result
in a complete blocking of the passage and the burial of the idea.
All that is certain is that Deutero-Isaiah (if he wrote at this time)
was conscious of the activity of Cyrus, and probable release of the
Jews.

Chapter VI
Influence of Politics Upon Prophecy in the Persian and Greek Periods
(With reference to the effect upon the distinctive contribution of each prophet of the periods.)

Persian Period

Persian Affairs. During the reign of Cyrus in Babylon, the captive peoples among the Babylonians were permitted to return to their homes,¹ and among these were the Jews.² Cyrus died in 529 B. C. and his son Cambyses ascended the throne of the Persian Empire. This monarch carried out plans already laid by Cyrus, and subdued Egypt under Psammetichus III. He died in Syria while returning from the Egyptian expedition.³ Gaumata, a pretender to the throne of the Persian Empire was put to death by Darius, son of Hystaspis, and the latter then laid claim to the throne in 521 B. C. In order to secure it he was forced to put down rebellions on every hand. According to his own account he fought no less than nineteen battles to quell nine insurrections.⁴ He next turned his attention to his other dependencies. Cyrene and Egypt were brought to terms and the Jews at Jerusalem had their building operations investigated.⁵ His next accomplishment was the organization of his vast empire. This he did in a manner which was superior to anything the Orient had previously known. The greatest of his military exploits consisted in his attacks

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¹. Rogers, CPOT, p. 381.
³. Rogers, HAP, pp. 71, 72, 75-86.
⁴. Ibid., pp. 89-98.
⁵. Ezra 5:3.
upon the Greeks, the records of which provide some of the classic literature of the world. In the latter days of his life Darius prepared for another conquest of Greece and for a re-subjugation of Egypt, but he died before either operation was begun.¹ Xerxes I followed Darius as king of the Persian Empire, and his first task was to subdue the rebellion in Egypt and also the one which broke out in Babylon. With this accomplished he made preparations for, and carried out an attack on Greece. Thermopylae and Salamis are probably the two best known battles of this expedition. In its intentions the expedition failed and Greece remained free.² Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) next came to the throne (464-424 B. C.). Rebellions in Bactra and Egypt were put down, but the latter one required great effort. Under his rule it is probable that Nehemiah secured royal aid and sanction for the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls.³ Artaxerxes II during his reign had much trouble in quelling rebellions on the part of his brother Cyrus and other satraps. The Greeks were at times his friends and at other times his enemy, and his whole period of reign is one mass of intrigues. Egypt revolted and managed to retain her freedom but this was the greatest territorial loss which he sustained.⁴ Artaxerxes III also had many rebellions to deal with, the most notable of which were those of the Phoenician cities and the Cyprian Island. He succeeded in subduing Egypt anew after that nation had stirred up revolts against Persian power in Syria and Palestine. His life ended in the plot of a usurper of the throne.⁵ Darius III came to the throne in 336 B.C.

when Alexander the Great began his auspicious reign in Macedonia. This was the beginning of the end for the Persian Empire. Darius' forces were defeated at Issus and the way was paved for the elevation of Macedonian prestige through the cracks in the walls of a crumbling Persian edifice.¹


The distinctive contribution of Haggai may be considered as his emphasis upon the rebuilding of the temple,² which was probably a step in preparation for the Messianic age to come.

When Cyrus issued his edict, permitting the Jews to return to their own land, only a few had returned.³ Many of the exiled Jews of this time had grown up in Babylon, and many had established for themselves places of influence and wealth. Jerusalem also was none too attractive for it had become a defenceless ruin, where a broken and discouraged people eked out a precarious existence.⁴ After sixteen (?) years conditions in Jerusalem had not changed much, but then the leader of Jerusalem, Zerubbabel, with the help of Joshua, the high priest, attempted to lay the foundations of the Temple and establish an altar.⁵ For some reason (poverty, indifference,

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1. Rogers, HAP, pp. 261-328.
3. Haggai and Zechariah 16 to 18 years later mention no return.
and opposition of neighboring tribes have been suggested) interest in the project lacked the dynamic to produce results. This is the internal situation which Haggai faced.

The scattered condition of the Jews made it necessary that some external binding element be found if the Jewish religion were to survive. This could be considered as a measure either of safety or preparation. The condition within the Persian Empire was one of strife and rebellion,¹ and the reverberations of this struggle seemed to point toward a great upheaval from which would come the time of the Messiah for Judah.² The Messiah or the servant of Jehovah is seen in the person of Zerubbabel. He is the one of whom Jehovah says "I will take thee --- as a signet."³

Political conditions, then, played a part in Haggai's emphasis. If his idea were to build the temple as a source of national solidarity then the political conditions which caused geographical separation were effective. On the other hand, if the restoration of the temple was a step in preparation for the coming Messianic king and kingdom of God, then the external political factors which presaged the collapse of the Persian Empire were effective in determining his emphasis.

Zechariah I. The textual criticism for Zechariah I (chapters 1-8) is taken from Eiselen, The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament; published by the Methodist Book Concern of New York and Cincinnati

1. See Darius I under "Persian Affairs".
2. Kittel, GBtl, p. 412.
in 1923; pages 558 to 586. (Zechariah 6:9-15 is subjected to the additional criticism of J.M.P. Smith in the Prophets and Their Times, pp. 201-202.)

The distinctive contribution of Zechariah I may be considered as the messianic hopes which he centers around Zerubbabel, "the Branch."¹

The political situation both internally and externally were the same for Zechariah I as they were for Haggai. The difference in the messages and actions of the two may possibly be laid at the door of individual temperament. It seems from a consideration of Zechariah's message that the idealic element of his nature² probably led him to misjudge the political aspects of Persian domination. His work, coming from the time of great internal strife in the Persian Empire, seems susceptible to political forces. There is the possibility that the revolts of so many Persian satrapies encouraged the prophet to believe that the time for appointing the Messiah had come. Again it is possible that the dissolution of the Persian Empire seemed inevitable and, that in his unguarded enthusiasm, the prophet was led by intrigue to set up a king. Judging from the insignificant size and power of Judah, the latter possibility has little force. The effect of politics may best be judged by the fact that, in all probability, Zechariah actually crowned Zerubbabel as the Messianic king.³ The widespread revolts with which Darius I had to deal would seem, from the political angle,

¹. Eiselen, PBOT, pp. 585, 586

Zechariah 3:8; 6:12,13; 4:9.

². As shown by the Apocalyptic trend of his prophecies.


as the fulfillment of previous Messianic prophecy.¹

We are fairly safe in assuming that politics were responsible for the abortive attempt to set Zerubbabel up as the Messianic king. Though the idea of a Messiah was probably not in this case the result of political forces, the attempt to give root to the "Branch" was decidedly political in aspect.

There is one feature of the message of Zechariah which, though not included directly under political forces, is indicative of a decided theological trend. The Apocalyptic elements in his work² give rise to the beginning of the transcendentalism of Jehovah and to the activity of a force which is opposed to Jehovah (the adversary).


The distinctive contribution of Malachi may be considered as "Prophecy within the Law" or a transition from the prophetic truths to the discipline of the law.³

The Temple had been rebuilt but the Messianic kingdom was not as yet in sight. There had been no "Day of Yahweh" as yet, and the Persians had been adding to the burden of the people by levies and taxes. In addition to these, the conditions of internal politics and morals were bad. Wealth had been obtained by some and had been

² Zechariah 1:7-6:8.
³ Eiselen, PBO2, p. 606.
unscrupulously used. Jews had lost their national purity by inter-
marrriage with people of heathen nations, and sorcery and adultery
flourished.

The effect of the tangled internal conditions, and the break-
ing down of the political barriers between the Jews and other nation-
alities, brought home to Malachi the need for the use of forms and
institutions in worship. The poor conditions among the Jews themselves
had been brought on by the absence of political proof of earlier prom-
ises and prophecies. There was a distressing lack of a common bond
among the Jews and to counteract or remedy this it is quite probable
that the fullest powers of the law were stressed. In developing his
case for the need of observing the law, the prophet sets forth the
belief that the heathen hold a greater reverence and respect for Je-
ovah than the Jews. In this attitude "we can hardly fail to feel
the influence upon Israel of their contact, often close and personal
with their wise and mild tyrants the Persians. The occasion for the
appearance of the prophet, may have been the cumulating troubles of
the Persians. Specifically, "the defeat of Persia by Greece at Mar-a-
thon (490 B. C.), Thermopylae and Salamis (480 B. C.), and Plataea
(479 B. C.), with the revolt of Egypt aided by the Greeks (460 B. C.),
may have awakened expectations in the soul of our prophet."

There is a possibility, then, of political forces bringing
forth the work of the prophet Malachi, and a probability that the
practical needs of the Jews, in which political forces were active,
were responsible in good measure for his specific contribution.


The distinctive contribution of Obadiah, may be considered as his cry for vengeance upon Edom. 1

There is no doubt here of the political forces which brought forth the cry for vengeance, regardless of the time in which the prophecy was written, and although the spiritual tone is rather low, 2 the political forces stand forth plainly (for the first time). By considering the activity of the prophet as coming at about 460 B.C., we see that the conditions which were responsible for this hatred of Edom were recent as well as inherited. The Edomites had evidently killed off many of the people who had remained in Judah after the second captivity. 3 But here is not yet the latest situation of oppression by the "Tribe of Esau". It is probable that the Edomites were being gradually pushed out of their own lands by bands of Nebathaeans 4 of Aramaic or Syro-Chaldean origin. 5 The probability of such a situation is strengthened by the fact that the Nebathaeans were known to be in possession of Petra, the capital city of Edom 6 in the third century before the Christian Era. Earlier than this we cannot be sure of dates. The invasion of this Arabian people would well furnish the "tidings from Jehovah". As G.A. Smith points out 7 "it is very singular that we never hear in the Old Testament of the Edomite gods."

This alone is proof that the connections and dissensions between Edom and Judah were of political aspect for if the relations were not political how else could we interpret the words, "For the violence done to thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off." \(^1\)

Political forces from the past thus brought forth the cause for Obadiah's cry of Vengeance and political forces probably caused the message to be delivered at the time it was.


The evident fact that the work ascribed to Trito-Isaiah is the result of the work of several men, denies the possibility of a single distinctive contribution. Several of the more important ideas involved in the chapters will therefore be considered, in the light of possible political forces. The scenes depicted seem to give the following political situations; \(^2\) (1) Israel is governed poorly and corruptly within. \(^3\) (2) Possibly the Samaritans had stirred up trouble and had succeeded in hindering the plans of the Jews. \(^4\) (3) Edom had preyed on the helpless land. \(^5\) (4) The city walls were not as yet rebuilt. \(^6\)

\(^1\) Obadiah 1:10.
\(^2\) After Eiselen.
\(^3\) Isaiah 56:10,11; 59:3-9,14.
\(^5\) Isaiah 63:1-6.
\(^6\) Isaiah 58:12.
The above situations show the need for encouragement, resistance to external influences, and cheer.\(^1\) These are only the political factors. The external forms of religion are emphasized as a means of stiffening and deepening the resistance of the people, and as a means of combating the internal political corruption.\(^2\) In accordance with the policy of encouragement and cheer, the idea of the "servant of Yahweh" was changed to include all of the people as Yahweh's servants.\(^3\)

The failure of the Messianic expectations to materialize is probably the cause of this change, and though we do not know, certainly, of more than one Messianic attempt in the early years of return,\(^4\) the force of Persia could be trusted to stifle any such procedure.

It would seem, then, that political forces were active in bringing forth both the changed emphasis of the Messianic hope and the emphasis on ritual and institutionalism.

**Joel.** The textual criticism for the Book of Joel is taken from G. A. Smith, *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, Vol. 2; published at New York by A. C. Armstrong and Son in 1901; pages 375 to 436.

The teaching of the book centers around the day of Yahweh and although this is not a distinctive contribution it is an old idea expressed at a different day and under different circumstances than formerly.

The day of Yahweh which is to come is connected to, or played upon by, recognizable political forces only in the "judgement of the heathen". It is possible that political forces are active in other parts of the prophet's message but lack of knowledge of political

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1. Smith (J.M.P.), PTT, p. 211.
2. Isaiah 63:17; 65:8,9,13,14,15.
3. Isaiah 56:2,6,7; 59:2,13,14; 60:7; 62:6,9; 66:20,21,23.
circumstances forbids even the postulation of results. 1 Four nations are singled out for judgment, Phoenicia, Philistia, Edom and Egypt. Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia are represented as having robbed the Jews and as having sold some of them as slaves to the Greeks. 2 Egypt and Edom are charged with shedding innocent blood. 3 It is possible that the entire condemnation of foreign nations was based upon the practice of slavery, for Egypt, Edom, and Phoenicia are mentioned in the Bible as slave markets. 4 We know also that in "the fourth and fifth centuries Syrian slaves were in demand in Greece" 5, and who could furnish them more easily than the Phoenician traders.

Thus we see that political factors were probably the basis for the prophet’s conception of the specific nations upon whom judgment would fall, but it was the plague of locusts, and that alone, unmixed by any political alarm, "which was the omen of the coming Day of the Lord". 6

Greek Period

Alexander, after he defeated Darius III at Issus in 333 B.C. proceeded along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, and took Tyre and Gaza among other towns. 7 Josephus has recorded the fact that Alexander visited Jerusalem during his Palestinian Campaign, but this account is the only record of the event and, therefore, its authenticity is doubted. 8 By 331 B.C. the Persian Empire had come to an end. 9

1. Silence concerning Persia seems to make such a statement plausible.
4. Ibid., p. 382.
end and Greek culture and customs as well as Greek force, had supplanted the old. Alexander died in 323 B.C. and the kingdoms of Egypt and Syria were the result of a partition of the great conqueror's kingdom among his generals. Egypt fell to Ptolemy I (Soter) and Syria to Seleucus I (Nicator). During the first fifty years of the period after the division Judah "changed masters no fewer than eight times, belonging first to the Seleucids of Syria and then again to the Ptolemies of Egypt." 

Zechariah II. The textual criticism for Zechariah II (chapters 9 to 14) is taken from Eiselen, The Prophetic Books of the Old Testament, Vol. 2; published by the Methodist Book Concern of New York and Cincinnati in 1923; pages 561 to 582. There are a number of reasons for placing the date of Zechariah II as coming within the Greek period, but these shall be left to the commentators. One verse alone will be analyzed to some degree in order to ascertain its place within the Greek period. This one is in 9:13 where the sons of Greece are mentioned as the opponents of the "sons of Zion." Mitchell denies the authenticity of the reference to the Greeks, claiming that it is a gloss which shows the idea of the later Jews concerning the situation of which the verse was written. Eiselen (also G.A. Smith), however, believes that there is not sufficient reason for regarding the phrase as a later interpolation. Proceeding on the last assumption, the situation mirrored...

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1. Rogers, HAP, p. 336
2. Ferita, OTH, p. 279.
3. Also Mitchell, HZ, (ICC), pp. 218-357.
4. Ibid., p. 207.
in 9:13 might come from the period of the struggle between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, or it might come a little after the time of Alexander's campaigns. The exultation and fierce hatred expressed in verses 11-15 seem to infer the conflict between Judaism and the introduction of new forms of religion and culture which the Greeks propagated. Incidentally, it is unessential whether the words were spoken during Alexander's campaign or not, or whether they are a later gloss, for as coming from a later age they might well be the voice of hatred raised against customs or influences introduced at the time of Greek conquest.¹ The very nature of the exultation, and the apocalyptic character of the means by which the heathen are to be overthrown, "betray Israel in a state of absolute political weakness."² This statement is suited to the situation after Alexander's campaigns. There is a blank wall of ignorance concerning the history of Israel during the Greek period which prevents an attempt to show the play of political forces upon the whole of the message.

It is peculiar that this portion of prophecy should contain a thought of awful hatred³ and another thought which conceives of the Messiah as lowly and peaceful.⁴

As a summary of Zechariah II we may say that while undoubtedly there are political forces at work, and that while at least some parts of chapters 9 to 14 are from the Greek period, we are forced to admit that we do not know just what the effect upon the message is.

¹ See Baily-Kent, HHC, pp. 298-304. The wording of 9:13 shows, unmistakably, the idea of direct communication and dealing with the Greeks as a warring people, and not as a distant people to whom Jews were sold as slaves. (Compare with Joel 3:6)
³ Zechariah 9:9, Davidson, OTP, p. 193.

Isaiah 24: -27 has been called by some authors, "the Little Apocalypse". The political situation (regardless of the age of the composition) was one in which the Israelites had been forced to give up the present hope of the Messianic kingdom for a future hope.1 The situation which might well have been a logical cause for the admonition to the Israelites to 'enter into their chambers and shut their doors, while Jehovah worked out his indignation',2 came with the death of Alexander the Great. At any rate, some great crisis was at hand. In the imminent catastrophe a punishment was to come upon the nations because of their sins. "In that day --- Jehovah will punish the host of the high ones on high and the kings of the earth upon the earth"3 and "Jehovah of hosts will reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem; and before his elders shall be glory."4 Here is a different Messianic conception from those of previous prophets for it seems to form a transitory step between the previous prophetic enunciations, and the apocalyptic enunciations which were to follow. Either Jehovah or the elders might be considered as ruling the Messianic kingdom. "The two ideas are unreconciled yet not irreconcilable."5 The mention of the elders alone is "accounted for by the intentional resemblance to the theophany of Exodus 24:9, 10",6 but there is no mention of a Messianic figure who compares

2. Isaiah 26:20
3. Isaiah 24:21
4. Isaiah 24:22
5. Edghill, EVP, p. 240.
6. Ibid., p. 240.
with Moses. Political forces had evidently destroyed too many Messianic hopes in the past for this apocalyptist to fall into error on that score.

The political forces which were responsible for the dissemination of the world-view which the Israelites had acquired, were indirectly the cause of the ideas of universal salvation, immortality, and happiness which this author expressed.\(^1\) There were also political forces active in determining the form (apocalyptic) of the message but they will be dealt with under Daniel, the first "full-blown" apocalyptic book.

We may say, then, that political forces brought out the cause for the change of a present hope of Messianic fulfillment to a future hope; the past disillusionment of the Israelites had led to a change in the conception of the head of the new kingdom; and political forces had expanded the scope of, and influenced the form of, "the Little Apocalypse".


The Book of Daniel is generally recognized as more apocalyptic than prophetic. It is, however, "difficult to draw any hard-and-fast line between prophecy and apocalyptic",\(^2\) for we find a process in prophecy leading up to apocalyptic. The nearest that we may come to a distinction between the two, lies in the transcendent elements of the

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1. Isaiah 25:6-8
apocalyptic writings, and in the fact that, the prophets teach that
the present is to be interpreted by the past and future, while the
apocalyptic writers derive the future from the past and present, and
make it an object of consolatory hope. With the prophets the future is
the servant and even the continuation of the present, while with the
apocalyptic writers the future is the brilliant counterpart of the
sorrowful present, over which it is to lift them.

In accordance with the above distinction we find that the
"dominating conception of the book is that history is the unfolding of
divine purposes, and a movement toward a universal and an everlasting
kingdom of righteousness," in which the Jews rule.

The conditions under which the book was written are given more
cconcretely in the Books of Maccabees than in the Book of Daniel for the
latter deals much in symbolism. We find that Antiochus IV (Epiphanes)
"conceived it to be his mission to spread Hellenic culture throughout his
domain". It was natural that the Jews in the light of their great
religious conceptions, should resist his efforts to the extent where only
the sword would suffice as a propagating agent. In 170 B.C. Antiochus IV
plundered Jerusalem (including the temple). Then in 168 B.C. he sent
his men to Jerusalem "where they destroyed much people out of Israel" and
instituted reform measures which aimed at the "new nationalism" of
Israel as well as at the worship of the God of Israel. "Many Jews ac-
cepted the reform but many chose to die, that they might not be defiled
with the meats (swine especially), and that they might not profane the
holy covenant (by worshipping Zeus) and they died."

1. Behrmann (Quoted by) McFadyen, JOT, p. 79.
2. Gray, CIOT, p. 238.
4. I Maccabaeans 1:20-23
5. I Maccabaeans 1:30
6. Ibid., 1:41-62
7. Ibid., 1:63
In this crisis the author of the Book of Daniel held out his visions, inspired by a deep passionate faith in God, and faith in the belief that the Kingdom of God was about to be consummated. The message from the history of the past, gained by watching the fall of nations such as Babylon, Media, Persia, is that the preparation heralds the coming day when the Kingdom of God will be established.¹

There seems to be a general spirit of progression in dealing with the kingdoms of the past, and though all four great empires are mentioned in some of the visions, and although there are backward references, the spirit of the unfolding of the divine purpose seems to dominate. There is no place at which the progression and encouragement are stronger than in the re-interpretation of the seventy years for the accomplishing of the desolations of Jerusalem.² To anyone reading the Book of Daniel in 165 B.C., there would be many points at which the Jewish reader could see close parallels to his circumstances, and from which he could draw encouragement and hope.³ There is a moral behind each tale of persecution of the Jews that pointed unalteringly toward a day of Jehovah's triumph.

As an outgrowth of former prophetic work the book carries several tendencies to greater conclusions than the sources. The idea of the transcendence of God is developed by the introduction of angels who are represented as the tutelary angels of different nations.⁴ This is done in order to explain the national reverses and likewise the delay in the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.⁵ Another point of previous prophetic emphasis, comes as an expansion of the idea that "the

⁵. Charles, CHDFL(2nd Ed.), p. 188.
world's history will terminate in the culmination of evil, and that Israel will be delivered by supernatural help in the moment of its greatest need.¹ In the triumph of the Kingdom of God over all of the kingdoms of the world, apocalyptic expressed the idea that it was necessary for an absolute change to take place in the conditions of the world. This emphasized the difference or accentuated the contrast between human and divine ideals. The idea of development of a world wide empire only shaped a greater burden of contrast between human and divine ideals. Thus, it (apocalyptic) "became a theological philosophy of history, that had built on and developed out of the prophetic conceptions of Jehovah's universalism from the time of Isaiah² to the time of Haggai."³ There is a strange and magnificent surety in the pacifistic attitude of the Book of Daniel. It is possible that the continued political instability of the Messianic hopes had led to a discarding of political methods, but it seems more as though political retrospection and contemporary study, led the author of Daniel to transcend the temporal forces of conquest. He was aided, however, in interpretation of history by the fact that, the "hours" facing the Jews while Antiochus IV worked his will, were the darkest in the history of their race. It seemed, indeed, the culmination of evil, the moment of greatest need, --- the time for Jehovah to enter and destroy him who "shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god".⁴

As an indirect outgrowth of political factors, and in keeping with deductions made from the philosophy of history, the author of Daniel gave voice to a belief in a resurrection of the righteous martyrs

¹. Charles, CHDFL (2nd Ed.), p. 126.
². Isaiah 10:5f. (Compare Daniel 7).
³. Montgomery, Daniel (I.o.o.), p. 80.
⁴. Daniel 11:36.
who should share in the Messianic kingdom. The evil and apostate Jews were also to be raised from Sheol, but raised only to be banished into Gehenna.\(^1\)

Political forces were responsible for the apocalyptic form of the Book of Daniel, by aiding in the crystallization of the law (preventing new prophecy) and by removing the lay heads of the state (permitting national control to rest in the hands of the priests).

As a summary of the political influence upon the Book of Daniel we may say that political forces; (1) seemed to be the fulfilment of previous prophecy and thus gave rise to the hope and possibility of such a message as would advance the old conceptions of world philosophy; (2) they were also responsible for much of the form of the book; (3) they also brought the occasion and need for the comfort and strength of the book.

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1. Daniel 12:2
Chapter VII

Summary

**Salient Points of Political Influence**

**Universalism.** Through the stream of prophecy as played upon by political forces we may see certain tendencies making their ways toward lofty goals. This is true only if we stand aloof from confusing details, and endless criticism.

One thing stands out from the religio-political study. That is the tendency, from early days to the Exile, for the conception of God and the religion of the people, to develop and grow toward a universalism or internationalism. Yahweh was first conceived of as dwelling at Mount Sinai and as a God who held the destiny of Israel in His hands through His support, or through the withdrawal of His sanction, of the Israelites as a nation. Then, in the period of written prophecy came the conception of God as over other nations. This took place through a development in the attributes ascribed to Him. Out of this grew the idea of obedience to an oppressing nation, and rebellion against political forces became a sin. A little later came the collection and application of the attributes of Yahweh to political entities, in a day when Yahweh would judge the world. Then came the conception of the permanency of certain laws established by Yahweh which were applicable to either an individual or to a nation. The next step toward universalism was the idea of praying to Yahweh for blessing upon a foreign nation. At the same time the basis was laid for a renewal of nationalism in a conception of a personal relationship to Yahweh. At the time of exile universalism
spread out gloriously in the conception of Yahweh trying to tell foreign nations of His sole reign in the universe. Here in exile also, came the conception of individual responsibility to Yahweh upon which the development of a new nationalism grew into legalism. Greater emphasis upon ritual marks the stages of prophecy down to the Maccabaean period. The nationalism fostered here grew until it attained even to bitter hatred of heathen religions and nations in spite of the universalism of conception. But in prophecy at its lowest ebb, the vital spiritual elements of Yahweh were not forgotten nor entirely subjugated to formalism.

Like a skyrocket across the night of history, the universal conception of Yahweh soared upward, and before it reached its peak, released a flare of nationalism for the Jews, which remained to light the world after the rocket itself had burned out against the higher realms of heathenism.

Appearance of the Prophets. Throughout the course of prophecy we find the prophets appearing at the time of political national crisis. In the pre-literary stages of prophecy Philistine oppression brought forth Samuel and the ecstatic groups of prophets. The division of the Israelite kingdom brought forth Ahijah and Shemaiah. The Syrian conflicts brought Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, and the court prophets. The Assyrian aggression looming on Israel's horizon brought forth Amos and Hosea. In Judah the Syro-Ephraimitic war and Assyrian appearance brought forth Isaiah and Micah. The appearance of Scythian hords in Southwestern Asia brought Zephaniah and Jeremiah into prophetic activity. The Chaldean displacement of Assyria brought Nahum and Habakkuk into activity and gave rise to numerous crises preceding Judah's fall in which Jeremiah
reappeared. The political downfall of Jerusalem and the ensuing Israelitish exile brought forth the activities of Ezekiel, and the possibility of national restoration brought Deutero-Isaiah. The gigantic task of rehabilitation of Jerusalem brought Haggai and Zechariah I. With the impact of the Greek civilization upon Palestine, and the attempt to disseminate Greek culture among the Jews by force, Zechariah II, the author of Isaiah 24 to 27, and the author of Daniel, appeared.

The appearance of the prophets at these times of national crisis was not accidental. In the early stages of prophecy the national and the religious ideals were one. But as time went on, the spiritual (religious) assumed predominance over the national for the "true prophets". The national interest (or the political factors) would then be interpreted in the light of spiritual conceptions, and would be the occasion for prophetic activity.

**Messianic Hope.** In tracing the influence of politics upon the prophets' conception of the Messianic hope we see that the hope was not so much concerned with the form of the regenerated community as it was with the insistence that the divine will of God be realized within the community. The "day of Yahweh" (which would be the day of Israel's vindication against her enemies through Yahweh)¹ was the conception which constituted all but exclusively the subject of pre-exilic prophetic teaching as to the future. With the conception changed so that the nation, no less than the individual, began to maintain his claims to righteous treatment.² The prophets conceived of the future hope as the antithesis of the past, -- a day in which the harmful political forces

¹. Charles, CHDFL (2nd Ed.), p. 88.  
². Ibid., p. 86.
of the past were to be changed. We shall follow one phase of the political influence as an illustration of what was true of all phases with regard to the Messianic kingdom. Israel (both kingdoms) was involved in endless warfares, rebellions, and persecutions. Therefore, the Messianic kingdom was to be one in which Yahweh would give his people peace. Hosea prophesied the time that Yahweh should "break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the land" and make the people to lie down in peace and safety (2:18). Micah, in his conception of the Messiah, says, "And he shall be our peace" from the Assyrian (5:5). Isaiah prophesied that the people "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (2:4). Jeremiah thought that there would come an "abundance of peace and truth" (33:6). Deutero-Isaiah proclaimed: "peace, peace to him that is far off and to him that is near" (57:19). Ezekiel foresaw the era when Israel "should dwell securely and none should make them afraid" (34:28). Haggai announced the divine promise that "in this place will I give peace" (2:9). Zechariah sees "the counsel of peace" between the religious and civil rulers. The author of Isaiah 24 to 27 saw Jehovah keeping Israel night and day "lest any hurt it" "in that day" (27:2). Righteousness, holiness, justice, wealth, honesty, and many other phases of life and character were included in the Messianic hope as the antithetical qualities of those which actually existed. 1 The potency of political factors in determining the prophetic conception of the Messianic hope is one of the strongest features of the effect of politics upon the prophetic message.

1. Isaiah 9:6-7 and 11:1-5 give an excellent illustration of the many phases of the antitheses.
The Monarchy. The impact of corrupt governments in Palestine upon the prophetic consciousness led the prophets to reject the monarchy and pronounce the certainty of doom upon the Hebrew kingdoms.

In the time of Samuel, the prophetic element of Israel was behind the monarchy. But, as the "true prophets" saw the increasing sin and corruption of the national government and began to separate the nationalistic ideals from the spiritual ideals, they began to withdraw their sanction of the Israelitish monarchy. The pre-exilic prophets attempted to change the political evils of the monarchs, but as the evils continued to exist, the hopelessness of effecting any change seemed to become clear. We hear Hosea in Israel cry "where now is thy king that he may save thee" (3:10), and then again we hear him speak the words which seemed to typify the attitude of later prophets toward the monarchy Jehovah says "I have given thee a king in mine anger, and have taken him away in my wrath" (13:11). What better reason could Hosea have for his opposition to (at least not enthusiasm for) the monarchy than the example of the frightful period of murder, usurpation, and corruption of the years in Israel following the death of Jeroboam II? In Judah, Isaiah continued the idea of opposition to the monarchy for he says in speaking of the future, that "a man shall take hold of his brother saying --- be thou our ruler" (3:6). In addition, Isaiah contributed the idea that the future idealistic government would be one of judges and counsellors as at the beginning (1:26). It is a point of conjecture as to the extent to which the prophetic opposition to the monarchy influenced the idea of a Messiah, for no unquestioned passages in Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk make mention of a Messianic king. From Ezekiel to Daniel the theocratic form of government was followed with one exception.
The pre-exilic prophets preached doom, doom, almost exclusively, as their message to the Israelitish kingdoms. This burden of prophecy had at least these three things behind it. (1) The first and foremost thing was the prophet's conception of Jehovah. Every fact which he saw would be interpreted in this light. Amos' conception of Yahweh as a just God, led to the pronouncement of the surety of punishment for sin. Hosea, out of his personal experience conceived of God as a loving deity, and thus any punishment would be in the form of discipline. Isaiah, from his own faith, could not conceive of God as utterly destroying His own.

(2) The prophets saw murderers and "men of blood" seize the throne of Israel; they saw the kings marry foreign wives; they saw them tolerate, sanction, and even indulge in the worship of gods other than Yahweh; they saw the monarchs press all they could in taxes from the poor, and then seize ancestral lands; they saw the monarchs make treaties in the name of Yahweh and then violate those treaties; they saw all of these sins and many more besides. These sins could not go unpunished if Yahweh was just and righteous. (3) We noted the appearance of the prophets in times of national crisis. The impending doom was always seen as the judgment of God about to descend upon a sinful government as part of (often the leader in sin) a sinful nation.

Treaties and Alliances. In viewing the influence of foreign treaties and alliances upon the prophets we see that in all cases the prophets were opposed to treaties if any other safe course of action was open. Behind this policy lay the fact that the making of a treaty with a foreign nation involved the recognition of (if not the acceptance of) the gods of the other nation. Despite Isaiah's strong protest against an alliance with Assyria Ahaz concluded a treaty, with the result that Assyrian religious customs were introduced into Judah. The literary
prophets were for the most part astute judges of the political strength of the world-nations. Thus, Hosea denounced Israel's attempt to play a role in international politics, and counselled adherence to Yahweh as the safe course. He realized that the international endeavors of Israel would bring down upon her head the wrath of Assyria, just as her alliances 'had multiplied her altars for sinning'. Isaiah realized the feebleness of Egyptian power, and, accordingly, he did his utmost to prevent an alliance between Israel and Egypt. He saw the danger in receiving the Babylonian embassy and opposed it. Once Judah was under Assyrian power and he counselled submission to it as the will of Yahweh. He counselled desertion to the Chaldean forces, and opposed the alliance of Israel with Egypt. The religious and the practical here combined to effect the prophet's judgments.

Destruction of the State. When the Israelitish kingdom fell and the national existence (geographically speaking) came to an end at the hands of Babylon, the task which confronted the prophets was a staggering one. The downfall seemed to indicate that the Babylonian gods were stronger than Yahweh. Or if this were not true, then why should Yahweh permit a heathen nation to oppress a more righteous one? Also as a god whose home was Jerusalem, how could the exiles worship Yahweh? Jeremiah in a letter to those exiled in first captivity had represented Yahweh as saying "call upon me, and --- pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me" (29:12-13). Ezekiel met these problems which grew out of the political forces of exile, and waged a winning fight to save the divine justice and power out of the complete ruins of the state. This prophet first saw Jehovah in a vision as the ruler of the firmament, and as such he would be present in Babylon. Over and over again he stresses the fact that it was the sin of Jerusalem which Jehovah himself punished,
for Babylon was merely an instrument in His hands. The sins of the people, the rulers, the prophets, and the priests in Jerusalem had caused the destruction. Ezekiel even gave the contents of a vision (10:1-18) in which he saw Jehovah leave the Jerusalem temple before the destruction took place. Destruction of Jerusalem and the temple was not the sign of a weak or an unjust god. In fact, it was a vindication of the justice of God, and in the future the power of God would be vindicated by the return of the captives to Jerusalem.

Deutero-Isaiah along with Ezekiel met the problems of the exile by pointing out that the fact that Israel had to pass through the experience of losing its national existence so that the religion of Yahweh may spread throughout the earth and bring life to the other nations of the world.

With the fall of the state the prophets changed their messages from one of doom to one of encouragement and hope. The restored community and the future destiny of the Hebrews was, however, conceived of in two different ways. It was still necessary to preach judgment to the people, but the Messianic kingdom was now the main interest. The day of Yahweh was to inaugurate the Messianic kingdom by meting out individual retribution, but the entrance of other nations into the kingdom brought forth diverse views. To Ezekiel judgment would take place individually in Israel and collectively among the Gentiles, Israel will be cleansed (11:17-21; 38:25-32) and reunited as one in the Messianic kingdoms. The heathen powers under Gog and Magog will march against the restored community and be destroyed by Yahweh (38:-39:). The other conception which was based on the teaching of Jeremiah, thought of the Messianic kingdom as uniting all nations through the efforts of Israel's missionary activity
and the willingness of other nations to be included. The particularist view held to the subjugation or destruction of the Gentile world (reflecting the previous hostility of the Gentiles) in favor of the Israelitish, while the universal view as represented by Deutero-Isaiah held the voluntary subjection of foreign nations to Israel who herself was a 'Servant of Yahweh'.

Both conceptions revealed a belief in the Messianic community at Jerusalem as a beautiful, peaceful, secure, magnificent place into which all nations pour their treasure and homage.

Doom on Foreign Nations. The doom on foreign nations was predicted upon the political grounds of the future peace and security of Israel. Edom, Moab, Philistia, Ammon, Tyre, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece had all been oppressors of Israel and in order to insure the peace and security of the Israelitish kingdom, these nations had first to be disposed of in some way by the prophetic mind. Then, too, the attributes of Jehovah as conceived of in the minds of all of the great prophets from Amos to the author of Daniel could not see any way for Yahweh to be just and righteous except He visit his wrath upon nations which were more guilty of sin than Israel.

Religious Reaction to Oppression. The first interest of Israel's great prophets was religious or spiritual. Consequently, when Israel was oppressed by a foreign nation the first interest of the prophet was to transcend that oppression with regard to the power and justice of Yahweh. In all cases of oppression the sin of the Israelites was the basic cause, but we see several instances where a swift political change necessitated an equally swift re-adjustment of the prophetic message. Isaiah offers a
classical illustration of this change. In the Syro-Ephraimitic war
Isaiah counselled Judah to trust in Jehovah alone, and then in the re-
bellion of Hezekiah against Assyria, the overwhelming Assyrian force was
conceived of as the rod of Yahweh, so that rebellion against her would be
rebellion against God. Then when Sennacherib broke faith with Hezekiah,
Isaiah advised opposition to Assyria. A philosophy of history was the
outgrowth of Isaiah's reaction to the oppression of Assyria, and the later
prophets and Apocalyptists built upon it. This, in fact, was one of the
greatest ideas which political forces were instrumental in bringing out.
Another idea arose from this impact of material and military might of
foreign nations upon Israel. As the oppressions continued the conceptions
of the prophets turned toward the religious and spiritual survival of
Israel. Thus the temple became the future center of Israelitish thought
and the mission of Israel in the world was seen to be religious. The use
of foreign nations as the tools of Yahweh, and consequently a step toward
universalism in the conception of Yahweh, came also as the result of the
effort to transcend foreign power.

False Prophecy. The prophetic office as practiced by bands of
men about the time of the founding of the Hebrew monarchy, occupied an
important place within the prophetic field for a considerable length of
time. The place at which the "sons of the prophets" began a deterior-
ation of the quality of their messages, seems to be the time when they
came under the special care of the monarchs. The deterioration led to
what is termed false prophecy. The sincerity of purpose of these men
was not questioned at first but it would seem that the messages came to
be flavored too highly with desire and political "syrup", and too little
with spiritual "honey".
Government. From the establishment of the monarchy by the prophetic hand, down to the last of the Judean kings, the prophets, while censuring the actions of the monarchs, did not seem to object to the institution of government by a single head. The ideal, though, seems to have been one of a theocratic government and more than one instance shows the willingness of the prophets to sacrifice the nation to an adherence to religion. With the exile a greater stress was laid on the future king of Israel. We know of one attempt to establish the ideal king before the Maccabean period but with this failure the kingship was placed farther in the future and the people became the conceived head and hope of the government.

Political Influence Apart from Prophecy. The influence of politics was fairly even in division between external and internal forces, with several of the prophets limiting themselves to one of the phases, and the others including both phases. Practically all of them were aware of political forces, for such was a factor in their duty. The prophets of the earlier periods dealt fairly well with political conditions, and it is probable that the later ones did also. The only trouble is that we do not know much about some periods of Hebrew history and cannot, therefore, do much more than say that political influence was present. The apocalyptic tendency of later prophets also helps to obscure the political situation surrounding the message.

In an attempt to see the political forces apart from the great stream of prophecy we may summarize the period influences briefly in topical form.
(a) Period—Pre-Literary

Political Forces—Philistine oppression
   Establishment of monarchy
   Canaanitic influence
   Phoenician influence
   Syrian influence

(b) Period—Eighth Century

Political Forces—Syrian influence
   Internal forces (due to misconception of the attributes of Yahweh)
   Assyrian influence
   Egyptian influence

(c) Period—Seventh Century

Political Forces—Scythian influence
   Babylonian influence
   Egyptian influence
   Probability of national destruction

(d) Period—Exilic

Political Forces—Edomite influence
   Babylonian influence
   Persian influence
   National condition of Jews

(e) Period—Post-Exilic (to Maccabean period)

Political Forces—Persian influence
   National reconstruction
   Greek influence
   Egyptian influence

Summary Statement. As a summary statement of the influence of politics upon the prophetic message we may say that political forces brought the need (and even demanded) a re-interpretation of God's will with regard to the world, and especially with regard to His chosen people. Then, political forces, by the peculiarities and complexities of the circumstances which they brought on, through interpretation gave new insight into the will and the character of God.
Personal Conclusion. Many personal ideas have come to me as the result of this investigation. I think that, without doubt, the most beneficial one is the relegating of politics to a place of secondary importance. By this I mean that political factors have little force as compared with personal experience. While it is impossible to separate the messages of the prophets from such political conditions as existed in their times, I have felt, strongly, that the message of Yahweh would have come forth just as forcibly and as courageously had the crises been social or moral (with no political factors involved) instead of political. The attributes of Yahweh as conceived of in the inner-most sanctuaries of the prophets' lives were responsible for the messages with their political subjects. It has been difficult at times to continue this investigation under the growing conviction (as new evidence continually presented itself) that a secondary factor of prophecy was being followed.

One idea has come as the result of an effort to assimilate the truths, revealed in the process of this study, into sane usefulness. Our universe, packed with force, is behind the idea that the spiritual truths of the prophets are as valid today, as they were in the days during which they were uttered. Present situations are pointing toward a day in which "Yahweh" will judge (and is now judging) the world on a basis which makes every nation and every individual responsible to Him.
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