

1896

The Salutis Ordo of the prophet Isaiah as found in the first eleven chapters of the book of Isaiah

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/47752>

Downloaded from DSpace Repository, DSpace Institution's institutional repository

THE SALUTIS ORDO OF THE PROPHET ISAIAH
as Found in the First Eleven Chapters
of the Book of Isaiah.

The Graduation Thesis of S.E. Grant.

June 1896.

In mental endowments and literary attainments Isaiah was the most princely of men living in his times, and in spiritual insight his writings show that he was the greatest among the prophets of all times. If we may draw a comparison, there is such a contrast between him and the prophet ^{Amos} Amos was a typical backwoodsman or mountaineer of his times; unpolished and unswerving. Isaiah was polished, courtly and chaste. These characteristic differences were due largely to their respective vocation and surroundings. Amos was a herdsman of Tekoa; Isaiah was a royal officer having his home in Jerusalem. The scenes of Isaiah's labors appears to have been in Jerusalem where he evidently was related prominently in the affairs of state during the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah (B.C. 735-686).

Isaiah's intimate relation with the political affairs of his country furnished him with an opportunity to penetrate the surface of the economic state of the Kingdom of Israel, and to derive a knowledge as to the real vital depth and nature of its political and religious condition. And by a diagnosis of the characteristic conditions of the affairs of the body politic of his times, knowing the family record, he was enabled, as a skilled physician, to prognosticate the pathological progress and result in the moral condition of the body politic of the Jewish nation, and as a great and skillful spiritual physician, not only a palliative but also a cure for the moral disease of the nation.

Having become acquainted with Israel's moral condition he had reasons to be apprehensive of the nation's future. For even in spite of the ap-

pearance of health he saw that the germs of disease had been sown, and soon, unless counteracted, spiritual and political death would ensue. Just as a physician is filled with anxiety and solicitude for a patient that is related to him by the tie of blood or by the bond of affection, so was Isaiah concerned respecting the moral health of the nation Israel. His acquaintance with the secret life of the nation revealed to him that the career of the first years of the history of this people had been spent in dissipation, and that now as a result the present state was that of covert sin. The laws of national health had been wantonly violated, and, in consequence thereof, the body of the nation was in the clutches of disease, covered with political corruption, and dying with moral atrophy. Heroic treatment was necessary or death would soon come.

During Jotham's reign, 740-735, B.C., there was the outward appearance of success and strength. His father Uzziah (790-740) had been very successful in subjugating his enemies, and fortifying his own stronghold in Jerusalem and other cities. In times of peace he had been as equally as diligent in developing the internal resources of the country, so that prosperity followed the wake of his aggressiveness. Now Jotham, moreover, inherited this particular policy of his father, and continued in like-manner to increase the wealth and luxury of the nation. It was here where the nation erred. Prosperity brought luxury, and luxury superinduced sensuality, and the moral degeneration produced national enervation. These estranged them more and more from their God and plunged them into the depth of sin, and made them defenseless against their enemies.

Israel's sins^{at} first were of a passive or negative character, but they soon became demonstratively active. The lack of loving obedience to their Lord Jehovah changed to kinetic disobedience exhibited in their self-assertion, open rebellion and revolt from all moral restraint. The rich defrauded the poor, and the strong spoiled the weak, and the executives dealt unlawfully with the fatherless and oppressed the widow. Their princes were unprincipled, and only the wealthy could prevail in the Courts of Justice.

The social condition likewise was as corrupt as the political condition. The women were haughty and unsubstantial; given to dancing and frivolity, soulless music and capriciousness; they were extravagant in apparel, coquetish and wanton. The men were revellers, debauched by strong drink, - the harp and the lute, the tabret and the pipe, and wines embellished their feasts. The rich luxuriated in houses of stone built from the gold unlawfully wrested from the defenseless poor.

Necessarily, from political and social condition so morally corrupt the spirit of their religious institution sickened and died. But, like an Egyptian mummy, it was embalmed, and beside it was placed a wooden image - a vague representation of the religious body which was once animated with the spirit from God. The heart-worship of Jehovah had been superseded by elaborate temple ceremonies. And even worse than this, idolatries of all sorts had been introduced. Magic, witchcraft and necromancy had been resorted to by the curious and speculative, the ignorant and the superstitious. Their consciences were stupified with delusions, and, in their morally toxic state, they were possessed with the hallucination that with their plutocratic power and martial

strength they had no need of theocratic protection which had shielded their Fathers in the ages past.

It was while pondering over the lethal state of this people that Isaiah saw the urgent need for a messenger from God, who with a Divine communication, would arouse the nation and warn them of the very great danger which was without abiding its time to destroy them. It was while musing in the Temple, the place where Jehovah was believed to meet in spiritual communion all the devout ones of Israel who tarried there to worship him, and contrasting the sinfulness of the nation with the holiness of Jehovah, and the earthly temple with its empty worship with the true spiritual abode of the Holy One of Israel that Isaiah received a vivid manifestation of the hallowed presence of Jehovah. While thus meditatively occupied, in his reverie the earthly temple grew dim and more dim and finally faded away as a sense-image passing into space, and now in the place of the temple which had vanished was a sanctuary of mysterious abstraction, and Isaiah himself was ~~was~~ within this fancied structure. It was a grander and nobler temple than the last, an ideal conception of a spiritual and heavenly counterpart to the earthly temple. In this temple instead of the ark which was the symbol of Jehovah's presence, Isaiah beheld, exalted in the midst of this temple the throne of Jehovah itself. And on this throne, clothed in a royal robe, the train of which filled the temple, was seated the Lord the Holy One of Israel; instead of the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat as in the earthly temple, hovered seraphim, creatures of composite form, the holy attendants of Jehovah. In this vision in so glorious a manner did the

attributes of Jehovah appear in symbolism that Isaiah saw only the skirts of the robe of Him that sat on the throne. Even the attending seraphim each with one of its three-paired wings veiled its face from the glory of the Divine Majesty. Instead of the chantings of the priests and Levites Isaiah heard the voices of the seraphim as as they kept calling one to the other in perpetual hymn, proclaiming:

Holy, holy, holy is the Jehovah of Hosts;

All the earth is filled with his glory!

And as often as one seraph cried to the other, the whole foundation of the glorious temple was shaken, and the temple was filled with smoke, smoke not caused by the seraphim nor from the altar, but by the glory of Jehovah's presence. Isaiah, self-conscious, is now filled with conviction of his own sinfulness and uncleanness, and of his personal unworthiness to be the bearer of a holy message to his sin-stricken people. He confesses his solidarity with the sinful nation:

"Woe is me! I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of Hosts". Because of his unclean lips and the unclean lips of the people among whom he dwelt, he trembled in the presence of Jehovah. - It was not the presence of Jehovah but it was the sin-accused conscience while in the presence of Jehovah that made him tremble with fear. Upon acknowledging his unworthiness, Isaiah received salvation from his sins. Yet it was not through the altar sacrifice of the temple, nor through faith in anticipated mediatorial and vicarious sacrifice, but it was through the cleansing fire of Divine grace which was ever present to purge away sins from the

heart that was convinced, convicted and self-acknowledged and repentant of its sinfulness. He himself having received personal salvation on sanctifying terms of loving obedience, through Jehovah's help was ready now to receive instructions and to go on his prophetic mission. He heard the voice of the Lord saying: "Whom shall I send?" and the assembled courts of heaven calling: "Who will go for us?" And being now ready to respond to the call for a messenger, having a new and a true attitude, Isaiah promptly responds: "Here am I; send me". Then, at this juncture, Isaiah received his commission to preach to the people. In this commission was a stern sentence of condemnation that was intended to convict the perverse and unrepented and unrepentend people. The message, however, which was given to the prophet, must fall on unresponsive hearts and unreceptive ears. the people will not respond nor even heed the message of the prophet. The proclamation, therefore, is stern, and will carry with it condemnation to all who refuse to hear, and finally will bring judgement upon the people. According to the economy of God's grace, the message would work life unto life or death unto death: unto them that had within them unvitiated the seed of spiritual life, this would germinate and increase abundantly; but upon them who nurtured not this germ of obedience which should and would ripen into spiritual life would be the visitation of Jehovah's displeasure. Notwithstanding, however, the nation Israel was deadened spiritually, and as a natural sequence the message which would be delivered to the prophet would make more obdurate the already obdurate heart. Nevertheless, according to the commission delivered to the prophet, the preaching should endure until only one out of every ten

be spared. And, likewise, even this remaining tenth is to endure the ensuing judgement until the defiant nation is consumed by these judgements of God. Judgement upon judgement is to follow until the corruption is purged, even though the nation be annihilated. But Isaiah is assured that a "holy sprout" is to be left, and that this sprout, because of its holy nature, is to live and to grow. The figure that the prophet has in mind here is that of a tree which has had its branches lopped off, and then the limbs, and finally it is felled to the ground, having nothing but its dead trunk, and leaving a gnarled and twisted trunk remaining; but from this dried-up stump, near its roots, there springs up a sprout which ^{grows} and continues until it reaches the proportions of the tree which had been destroyed. Likewise it is to be with the nation to whom the prophet proclaims the message from God. He is to preach and hurl judgement after judgement against the nation until like the tree only the gnarled and apparently dead stump remains, and from this stump in compliance to the terms of salvation a germ or sprout is to spring up and become an Israel renewed.

With his strong nature thoroughly imbued with his realization of personal salvation experienced during his communion with the Holy One of Israel, Isaiah is saturated with the belief that it is his duty to offer the terms of salvation to Israel according to the commission received from Jehovah and His Hosts of attendants, even though his preaching will tend only the more to estrange the perverse. It is the burden of his soul to warn and to persuade. His soul broods with mingled anxiety and despair over the condition of Israel; and then commingled there is hope culminating in joy over the thought that a rem-

nant may take warning and be saved. *no ill for us*

Now in his preaching or prophesying to the people, in the first eleven chapters of the book of Isaiah, we have the theology of the prophet Isaiah. He has a keen conviction of the infinite majesty and holiness of Jehovah who he characterizes as the Holy One of Israel. In the description given in his vision, he portrays Jehovah as possessing these attributes ineffably and unapproachably. These convictions of the prophet become more and more intense throughout the progressive conception in his preaching of Jehovah's salvation tendered to Israel. On the other hand, he sees ^{that in} the antithetic wickedness of Israel which has produced discord and caused estrangement from Jehovah. ^{God} has not forsaken Israel, but that they themselves despised the Holy One of Israel; having rejected his teachings and despised his word. Jehovah's goodness and mercy is outraged, and so his character must be vindicated by visitation of righteous judgement upon the people, and harmony between himself and his people reestablished. According to his prophetic commission, Isaiah arraigns the people for their stupid perversity; bewails their ingratitude to their Maker; shows the baseness and folly of such perversity. In these arraignments and denunciations against the wickedness of the nation, we get many glimpses of Isaiah's emotional and sympathetic nature. When prophesying the purpose of Jehovah to purify the nation by punishments and judgements until all the dross should be smelted out and the penitent ones redeemed. Isaiah, with emotions of surprise and grief, exclaims: "O, how the faithful city become an harlot!" Yet the pity does not deter him in performing his stern duty. With bitter sarcasm he

characterizes the worship of the heathen's gods as the worship of "nothings" and "idols"; claims that these idols of the heathen nations and their own horses and chariots will avail them nothing, but will be a hindrance to them in the Day of Jehovah; that the people in vain will hide themselves to the clefts in the rocks and the caverns of the earth from fear of the presence of Jehovah.

Arraignment after arraignment of Judah and Israel follow consecutively throughout the eleven chapters of the book, as does also the corresponding visitation of the judgements of Jehovah as a natural and deserved consequence of their evil doing. All their acts react, as invariable and inviolable as the law of motion. In 2/5_11 it is shown where they had abandoned Jehovah for idols, and had put their trust in their wealth and in their military strength; consequently Jehovah abandons them. Then, it is that their idols prove themselves to be indefensible, and their strong towers prove themselves as naught. Judgement of war was pronounced upon the nation, which should continue until every support of Judah, and of Jerusalem, and the hero and the warrior, judge and prophet, soothsayer and elder would be removed; and a person of childish judgement would rule over them. This is to be because the leaders were oppressive, and persons of influence demoralized the people. In Ch. V., the parable of the unprofitable servant is an allegory where it is shown that instead of "order" which was required from the houses of Israel and Judah there was "murder", and in the place of "restraint" there was "complaint". Woe after woe was pronounced against evil doers, and an awful judgement of God is predicted. Orelli, speaking of this fifth chapter of Isaiah, says: "The song

struck up at first has passed into a sevenfold woe, and the woe into a thunderstorm of doom which dies away into unrelieved horror".

Isaiah does not confine his denunciations to the common and ignorant and class, even though they are in depth of degradation and sin, - he has much pity for them in their helpless condition, but he severely rebukes those occupying high places in political and social realms. When Ahaz had succeeded in securing the alliance of the powerful king Tiglath-Pileser against Rezin and Pekah, Isaiah upbraided him for his lack of faith in God, and denounced him for his cunning devisings, and for his simulations; he shows to him that his safety or personal political salvation lay in faith in and obedience to God. "If ye do not believe, surely ye shall not be established". Judgement soon would be expected against temporal prosperity. Soon, because of their trust in human aid alone, Assyria shall destroy Damascus and spoil Samaria, and the House of Judah will fall. Now, although Isaiah has arraigned them in such strong terms because of their sins, and has declared to them the inevitable judgements of a righteous God, the Holy One of Israel, whose power they have defied, whose justice they have violated, and whose dignity they have offended, yet by predicting these terrible disasters he shows them their need of salvation from their sins. According to his teachings, salvation from sin implies and includes salvation from enemies. After showing them the folly and baseness of their attitude to God, and revealing the consequent and approaching judgements, he explains how salvation may be obtained, and how the impending doom may be averted, or, at least, how the judgements may be transmuted to blessings, and thus make harmony between the people and their God. His

indignation against these offenders of the Divine Majesty Jehovah, after his passionate outburst of wrath against their wickedness, melts into pity. In terms of persuasion he offers to them terms of salvation, for he sees that they in their spiritual and political blindness do not consider, and do not know what they are doing.

With Isaiah, salvation according to the requirements of Jehovah, could not be obtained the multiplying of sacrifices, or by paying regard to the sacred feasts; their "New Moons" and sacrifices were an abomination in the sight of Jehovah. He ^{dis}reputed them because they were clothed in formalism and covered with hypocrisy. God required of them to put away their sins and to cleanse themselves. Every evil must be replaced by a corresponding virtue; they must learn to do well, to seek virtue, enforce justice and show mercy. The people were invited, or, we might say, challenged to meet Jehovah at the Bar of Justice in order that the one might appear against the other so as to implead ~~them~~ their respective causes. The implication is that the crimes against their God are very great, and that judgement is overhanging against them, and that a trial would prove this. Yet notwithstanding that their sins are of the deepest hue, upon the turning away from them and becoming submissive to the divine will their sins will be cancelled, and a general amnesty declared. And, moreover, as a result, should they repent and become obedient, there was promised to them for their disposal the good of the land. "Say to the righteous it shall be well with him, for they shall eat of the fruit of the land." "If ye be obedient ye shall eat the good of the land". But should they refuse and spurn these gracious overtures, then the pending judgements of God's wrath

and indignation would fall upon them.

Now in summary of the foregoing: Isaiah's conversion, according to his experience described by the vision, both by concept and act, illustrates very clearly the prophet's Idea of personal salvation. But this, however, according to the theology derived from his writings in the first eleven chapter of the book of Isaiah, is but one phase of salvation. The other phase is shown in his interview with Ahaz, political salvation. Now these two phases of personal salvation, salvation from sin and salvation from enemies, one the complement to the other, and both dependent upon the attitude of faith in, and obedience toward Jehovah is applied to the nation. Through obedience toward and faith in Jehovah, according to Isaiah, a theocratic government would be established in which God would be the ruling and protecting sovereign.

Isaiah's conception of salvation, we see, was not as the elaborately and closely defined dogmatical *Salutis Ordo* of the present history of Christian belief where the order of Grace is divided and subdivided until the line of demarcation is finally and finely drawn between Enlightenment, Awakening, Conviction and Invitation of the preparatory stages, and in Conversion which follows in order, which implies Repentance, Faith, Justification, Regeneration and Adoption; besides these there are the further stages of Sanctification or holiness. These are all the outgrowth of later revelations and developement and amplification of Christian experiences. We are the heirs of the prophets and apostles, and in the later and fuller revelations through Jesus Christ we have ~~broader and deeper conceptions of truth and grace.~~

The scheme of salvation according to the theology of Isaiah was much more simple. We dare not read into it our present ideas of heaven and hell, for Isaiah dealt only with temporal salvation, neither do we find anything respecting Original Sin and the scheme of mediatorial redemption. But then the germ of the great scheme of salvation is to be found in his teachings. In his vision we have his theology in embryo. Here he had a revelation of the majesty and holiness of Jehovah exhibited by his glory which filled the temple. Isaiah, because of the sinfulness of character and his solidarity with the people among whom he dwelt, found himself out of all harmony with Jehovah. But when he acknowledged his sins and repented of them, through the forgiveness of divine grace, harmony between the prophet and his God was reestablished, and he became obedient to the will of the Holy One of Israel who had exhibited to him His majesty and holiness. This expresses Isaiah's thought as to the relation between God and the nation. Salvation was unto the Jews, and only unto this nation by a perfect theocratic government on earth. Disobedience brought upon the nation God's wrath and judgements which would continue until theocratic government should be restored through obedience.

S. S. Grant