

The Mission Mandate in Isaiah and Other Old Testament Books

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[This essay was read to the Arizona-California Pastors' Conference at Mesa, Arizona, on October 29, 1980. The author is the retired executive secretary of the Synod's Division of World Missions.]

Quite frankly, this introduction is to serve as a friendly sales pitch for an excellent publication of our Northwestern Publishing House, the English translation of Professor August Pieper's *JESAIAS II* by Professor Erwin E. Kowalke. For years this almost indispensable tool in the faithful pastor's workshop was unavailable, while the Kowalke manuscript was waiting to be published. The German original was out of print and sold out long ago. Some German copies are still to be picked up from the libraries of the older pastors. Although they are not generally useful for our younger theologians because of the almost total transition into English, they are eagerly sought by our overseas brethren, especially in Scandinavia.

August Pieper's Isaiah commentary represents many years of intensive study and research while he taught Old Testament exegesis and isagogics at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Pieper was a recognized Hebrew scholar whose special concentration was focused on Isaiah. He is quoted both here and abroad as a Scripturally faithful exegete. His sound, Christ-centered exposition, his discerning grasp of the literary style and structure of the second part of Isaiah, and his rendition of the poetic Hebrew of Isaiah into comparably beautiful German blank verse, all serve to make his commentary uniquely authoritative among the many modern commentaries of Isaiah. Although they are scholarly volumes, many of them deny the single, eighth-century authorship of Isaiah and the Messianic nature of his prophecies.

Erwin E. Kowalke was well prepared to have Pieper speak to us in good English. For many years he taught both elementary and advanced Hebrew and advanced English literature at our Northwestern College. He also had at his command a fluent German which was necessary to reproduce Pieper's vigorous idiom into good English. August Pieper would have approved heartily of his former student's masterly translation, now available to us for the price of two good dinners.

In assigning the topic of this essay to another of August Pieper's students the program committee had a practical purpose in mind. During the more than fifty years of service in the congregation and in world mission promotion and administration your essayist has found Isaiah, especially with the help of Pieper's *JESAIAS II*, a never-failing source of inspiration to encourage us all in a global missionary outreach. All of those who were privileged to sit at Pieper's feet at the seminary and at conferences consider it a pleasant duty to transmit to our brethren what we have learned from our venerated teacher, especially his Christ-like zeal for souls.

August Pieper exerted an enduring, beneficial influence on the entire Wisconsin Synod, especially during those early years of the crucial struggle for soundly confessional identity. Not only his seminary lectures, but also his many articles in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* and his forceful conference essays have done much to arouse the synod from its feeble missionary efforts to a growing program of mission outreach in all the world.

This new mission interest found both the opportunity and the means for expression at the 1945 convention of the synod at New Ulm, Minnesota, in early August, during the closing days of the Second World War. The opportunity was given by the announcement of a balance of \$350,000 in the synod's treasury. The occasion and means were provided by the report of the Executive Committee for Indian Missions. After enumerating the great blessings received from the Lord, the report asked the convention seriously to consider a worldwide missionary outreach, basing its appeal on the words of Isaiah:

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

Ancient Jerome's description of Isaiah as "the evangelist of the Old Testament" is still appropriate. Every Christian child knows the precious words about the virgin-born Child with the marvelous names, "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace," given to our Savior by the Holy Spirit through the pen of Isaiah. On Good Friday Christian congregations gladly accept the reading of the Scripture lesson from the book of a prophet who lived over 700 years before Jesus' death, because Isaiah presents both the fact and the meaning of our Savior's death as though he had been an eye-witness! And on the festival of our Lord's Epiphany it is again a word from the prophecy of Isaiah which exhorts the worshippers to proclaim the Good Tidings in Christ to the whole wide world:

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee....And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising!" (Is 60:1-3).

Even a child understands these and similar exhortations of Isaiah as clear mission mandates.

Still, already in his day Isaiah lamented the fact that his words were not accepted, "Who hath believed our report! and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed!" (Is 53:1). But especially in our day a disturbing note breaks in upon our joy over the familiar words of the old Testament prophet. It is the age-old voice of the arch-skeptic, "Yea, hath God truly said!"

Certain modern Bible critics dare to subject things we hold sacred from our childhood to impious suspicion and doubt. They question not only the very authorship of Isaiah, although this is attested in a score of direct quotations in the New Testament with the writer identified, also by our Lord himself, but such authenticated words of Messianic prophecy are repudiated and the missionary thrust of Isaiah and other Old Testament books is disavowed! We quote from only one of these judgments,

Now with these chief witnesses [Deutero-Isaiah and Jonah] for the idea of mission in the Old Testament no longer above suspicion, are we not led to the conclusion that we had best abandon the Old Testament as a source for the Biblical foundation of mission!—It seems to me that both sides [those who find a mission concern in Isaiah and Jonah and those who do not] are agreed that never in the whole period of the Old Testament was there any deliberate missionary activity.¹

This is but one example of the negative comments one finds about the missionary nature of Isaiah and the Old Testament. Our concern in this essay, however, is not whether there was "any deliberate missionary activity in the whole period of the Old Testament," but rather, whether the Lord ever directed or expected the Old Testament believers, especially his prophets, to proclaim this precious gospel promise to the אֲרָצוֹת, the nations.

May the Spirit guide our study and lead us to see from the Word itself that not only Isaiah and Jonah, but other Old Testament Scriptures, clearly show God's saving concern for all mankind and exhort the Old Testament believers to carry on missionary activity in his name.

The Mission Mandate in Isaiah and Other Old Testament Books

In preparing to study the evidence for a mission mandate in Isaiah one soon finds that one must deal also with the question of the presence of a missionary intention and injunction in the Old Testament itself. For this reason it will be good to examine at least some of the other Old Testament books. We will present our findings as briefly as possible to make our point.

¹ Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Christian Church* (New York: McGrawHill, 1962), p 34. Hereafter cited as *Blauw*.

I. The Mission Theme in the Old Testament

The presence of this theme is questioned by some scholars. In support of this questioning attitude it is asserted that a missionary concern or mandate in the Old Testament church is contrary to the very nature of the Old Testament dispensation as this is presented in the historical, prophetic and poetical books of the time before Christ.

It is said that God himself ordained that his chosen race should be segregated from all other people and, therefore, it was not Israel's responsibility to share the Messianic hope with non-Jewish mankind.

The basis for this assertion is found in certain texts of Holy Scripture which set forth the exclusive nature of the Jewish theocracy. Clearly, God purposed to keep his chosen people intact from influences which would contaminate, undermine or destroy the spiritual heritage which he had revealed and entrusted to them in the word of promise concerning the World Redeemer. All the Levitical laws, ordinances and ceremonies were designed to preserve this trust until Messiah came.

Exodus 23:31–33—“I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the river. I will hand over to you the people who live in the land and you will drive them out before you. Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods! Do not let them live in your land, or they will cause you to sin against Me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare unto you.”

Exodus 19:5,6—“Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

Psalms 147:19,20—“He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel. He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws.”

Similarly, certain statements found in the New Testament are also adduced in support of the assertion that God excluded non-Jews from his covenant of grace. Thus, the words of our Lord Jesus himself:

Matthew 15:24—“I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

Matthew 10:5,6—“These twelve Jesus sent forth and commanded them saying, ‘Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’”

Other Scriptures, from the pen of St. Paul, are cited:

Acts 14:15,16—“Ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God which made heaven and earth, and the seas and all things that are therein; Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own way.”

Ephesians 2:11,12—“Wherefore remember, that ye being in times past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”

Ephesians 3:5,6—“Which [the mystery of Christ] in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.”

It is, however, important to remember that we may not read into these and similar passages more than they actually say. In the first place, the dispensation, given to the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob by Moses on Mt. Sinai, may not be applied automatically to the world era from the time of the fall and the First

Messianic Promise to the time of the giving to the Law. The period before Moses is calculated to be a thousand years longer than the period from Moses to Christ. The restrictions imposed upon Israel on Mount Sinai did not apply to these first 2,500 years.

Furthermore, we must be on our guard lest we interpret the calling of Abraham and his descendants as God's chosen people as a rejection, a predestination to damnation, of all the non-Jews, the Gentiles. Note well that even the phrase, "being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," which the NIV translates, "excluded from the citizenship in Israel," may not be understood as God's decrees of damnation for the אֲרָצוֹת, the other nations.

Similar care must be exercised in the exegesis of the words of our Lord Jesus and Saint Paul, cited above.

The words of our Lord in Matthew 10 and 15, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and "Go not into the way of the Gentiles," must be read in the light of His clearly expressed need to witness also to non-Jews and in non-Jewish places. Consider a few of these instances: the healing of the centurion's servant, the Gadarene demoniacs, the daughter of the Syrophenician woman, the deaf-mute in Decapolis, the patient, soul-saving discourse of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well and the conversion of "many more," who "believed because of his own word" (Jn 4:1–42).

August Pieper has this to say about these seemingly contradictory passages, "The Servant of the Lord Himself even speaks as though he had been sent exclusively for the Jews (Mt 15). The reason for that is to be found in the special election and promise given to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their seed."²

R.C.H. Lenski explains Jesus' reluctance to respond to the pleas of the Canaanite woman in their way, "The divine plan according to which Jesus was commissioned was to work out redemption in the Jewish nation, and not elsewhere; as soon as it had been worked out, it would be carried to all the world."³

Referring to the restriction imposed by our Lord upon the Twelve, "Go not in the way of the Gentiles," Lenski explains that these words indicate Jesus' faithful compliance in the divine plan of redemption, and no more, "The time for worldwide evangelization had not yet come for the disciples."⁴

In the sermon at Lystra Saint Paul seems to say that God showed no concern for the eternal welfare of the heathen when he writes, "Who (God) in times past suffered all nations to walk in their ways" (Ac 14:16). These words, however, must not be torn out of context! In the very next sentence the apostle makes quite clear that God, also in Old Testament times, was indeed concerned about the heathen and about leading them back to himself: "Nevertheless, God left not himself without witness in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

Lest these words be misunderstood, the Holy Spirit inspired Saint Paul to elaborate on this theme of God's concern for the salvation of all men in another sermon of the great apostle, the one addressed to the people of Athens on Mars' Hill. With loving care he here is inspired to describe the fatherly concern of God, his dominion and guidance of every nation on earth to induce them "to seek him, to reach out for him, and to find him."

Acts 17:26–28—"From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth, and he determined the times set for them, and the exact places where they should live. God did this, so that men would seek him, and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being."

In the epistle to the Christians at Rome Saint Paul by the Spirit described the powerful double witness which God has placed into this world of himself, so that all human beings might have a concreated, or natural, knowledge of God in their hearts and of his law, warning them of his strong displeasure over sin.

² August Pieper, *Isaiah II*, E.E. Kowalke trans. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1979) p 358. Hereafter cited as *Isaiah II*.

³ R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1943) p 596.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p 391.

Romans 1:18–20—“The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them. For since the Creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

The second “natural,” or concreated, witness of God is brought still nearer to every human being; in fact, it is within everyone from birth. God has inscribed his Law, before the time when he gave Moses the written Ten Commandments, indeed, from the very creation, into the consciousness of every human soul. Human beings are all born with the awareness of their accountability to God for their thoughts, words and actions, even though sin has distorted the clarity of this inscribed Law to a greater and lesser degree. This is plainly taught in Holy Scripture:

Romans 2:14,15—“Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law unto themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.”

Even the attempt to defend or justify a violation of the Law by pleading extenuating circumstances serves to establish the Law of God as the supreme arbiter of what is right and wrong. And “situation ethics” and the contention that every man is a law unto himself is not only contrary to the truth, taught by almighty God in Holy Scripture, but it is utter nonsense, also in the judgment of those who honestly search their hearts.

This dual witness of himself, of his law, and of his judgment in the human heart is the very voice of God which no human soul can ignore or reject with impunity. Resisting this voice drives the sinner further and further from God and what is good, as God’s Holy Spirit warns us in the first chapter of Romans:

Romans 1:21–32 (in summary)—“for, although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools.... They exchanged the truth of God for lies, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator.... Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.”

From all this it is clear that God was indeed full of concern also for the heathen, that he took steps to make them aware of their sin and his judgment over sin, and that he gave them over to the just penalty for rejecting his help only after they resisted his witness and warning. This fact must be taken into full account in understanding the statement that “God in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.”

R.C.H. Lenski has this to say:

In addition to the evidence in Creation [v. 15], the living God attested Himself by means of the constant benefactions of His providence. He did this even in the case of the Gentiles whom in the generations that have passed He permitted to go their own ways. No effort is made to show why God permitted the Gentiles to wander thus, for the point to be made here is that He had nevertheless not cast off the Gentiles.⁵

⁵ Lenski, *Acts*, p 578.

There is simply no Scriptural warrant for the absence of a loving, seeking and saving concern, or—*horribile dictu!*—of an *a priori* rejection of the heathen by the Lord in Old Testament times. On the contrary the very opposite is the case. The compassionate God provided not only a witness of himself in the universe and an awareness of sin and its penalty in every human conscience, but he also provided and made known the perfect remedy.

From the very beginning, when sin and death entered his perfect creation through Adam's fall, God announced his plan of salvation in "The Woman's Seed," his Redeemer. By faith and trust in him, who would be "wounded for their transgression," the first sinners and all their progeny would be freed from Satan's servitude and would be brought back to God and everlasting life. This promise was meant for the countless generations of the woman's seed to come.

It is a sin against the name of God to assert that "never in the whole period of the Old Testament was there any deliberate missionary activity, and that even those who hold fast to a missionary interpretation of Deutero-Isaiah and Jonah recognize that the concern is for commissions and promises which will be realized only *in the future*."⁶

Under the Holy Spirit's guidance let us see that there is indeed evidence of a mission concern and mandate in the Old Testament. This is clear, even though our study must remain incomplete.

Scripture is one and the plan of salvation is the same in the Old Testament as in the New. The former announces the atonement through the sacrifice of Christ in prophecy and the latter heralds it as the great *fait accompli*. The dying Hero's shout of victory, "It is finished!" is the great seal of his promise, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." For, by the Spirit, St. John adds these words, "This he said, signifying what death he should die" (Jn 12:32,33).

In the Old Testament "righteousness," that is, forgiveness of sins, life and salvation, is imputed to Abraham by faith in God's promise (Gn 15:6). And in the New Testament we read, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law" (Ro 3:28).

Dr. C.F. Walther makes this apposite comment under Thesis IV of *Gesetz und Evangelium*:

Neither is it so, as though an angry God were revealed in the Old Testament, as though one could be saved by works in the Old Testament and in the New Testament by faith, but we find both in the Old Testament as in the New. As soon as we understand the difference between Law and Gospel, then a sun goes up over the Scriptures. Then we find the most beautiful harmony in the Holy Bible.

This "immutability of God's counsel" is clearly taught in Holy Scripture (He 6:17) as a reassurance to us, as it was for Abraham when God prevented the sacrifice of Isaac, provided the "Lamb" for the sacrifice, and repeated his promise under oath, "In thy Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gn 22:18).

In keeping with this immutable purpose of God in preparing the redemption of the whole world of sinners through the promised Redeemer, the Old and the New Testament also reveal the same means for imparting his free gift in Christ to all men, that is, by faith in his faithful Word.

In his stirring essay, "The Glory of The Lord," August Pieper makes this point,

They [the people of Israel at the base of Mt. Sinai] were not to see the Lord even in this reflected splendor of His essence, but were rather to hear His divine voice and from this recognize Him as the Lord and believe in Him. This foreshadows the method and way in which He wishes to work faith in the hearts of men. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (Jn 20:29) "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God [through that which is spoken of God]" (Ro 10:17). It is one of the most important teachings of Holy Scripture which

⁶ Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Christian Church* (New York: McGrawHill, 1962), p 34. Hereafter cited as *Blauw*. The emphasis is the author's.

none of the apostolic and later church fathers since the time of the apostles recognized in the same depth and clarity, or has been written into the Confessions of the church as has Luther: “That God grants His spirit or grace to no one except through or with the preceding, outward Word.” (Smalcald Articles, Part III, Article VIII, 3)—From the time of Paradise to the present day God has revealed His counsel of salvation in no other way than through human speech, language, words and concepts.⁷

That this is true in the history of God’s dealing with the sinful world since the time of Moses who was called and inspired to write down what the Lord imparted to him, is readily seen. But what about the 2,500 years before Moses?

There were written records, many of them legendary and mythological, even before the time of Moses. Josephus also reports (on unknown authority!) that the world history from the time of the Creation to the time just before the Great Flood was inscribed on two columns, one of stone and another of brass, by Methuselah with the help of Noah and Shem and that it survived the Flood and was still available to Moses over 800 years later! This, too, may be just another legend.

But what is incontestably true is the fact that God the Holy Spirit inspired and preserved a record of the Creation and of the unfolding of his great plan of salvation in his Word. In the millennia before Moses the believing patriarchs transmitted this history together with God’s Messianic promises most faithfully from generation to generation. If the genealogical table in Genesis 5 is complete, as it very well may be, Adam was able to talk with Methuselah for 243 years; Methuselah with Noah for 282 years and with Shem for 98 years; while Shem could converse with Abraham for 150 years (according to Bishop Ussher’s calculations). Thus the transmittal of the Word of Life and the passing on of the torch of faith involved comparatively few links from Adam to Moses. That this was done conscientiously by the patriarchs is reflected in the Lord’s Word concerning Abraham, “For I have chosen him that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord” (Gn 18:19).

After the time of the patriarchs God called Moses, “whom the Lord knew face to face,” (Dt 34:10), to write down this history, as God the Spirit revealed it to him. For this assignment this unique prophet received a twofold gift of prophecy, to look backward to the Creation and forward to the great Day of the Lord, when the Prophet greater than Moses would be raised up (Dt 18:18) who would speak God’s Word with authority as the only true Mediator between God and man, as the only One who could say, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me” (Jn 14:6).

As God revealed only one Plan of Salvation in the Old and in the New Testament, so he provided and ordained only one means for imparting the forgiveness of sins and the new state of guiltlessness which Christ has won for the sinner. This sole means for imparting and receiving the grace proffered by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel is faith.

Luther writes that this faith changes a human being radically:

The real faith, of which we are speaking, cannot be brought into being by our own thoughts. On the contrary, it is entirely God’s work in us, without any cooperation on our part. Therefore it is also a very mighty, active, restless, busy thing, which at once renews a man, gives him a second birth, and introduces him to a new manner and way of life, so that it is impossible for him not to do good without ceasing.⁸

Since “without faith it is impossible to please God” (He 11:6) or even to come to him, and since “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, (Ro 10:17), and since God “will have all men to be saved,

⁷ A. Pieper, “The Glory of the Lord,” translated by J. Schaadt and C. Lawrenz in *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* in installments running from April 1955 to January 1957. The citation is on p 178 of July 1955. The original German article ran from April 1932 to April 1934.

⁸ WA, 10, III, p 285.

and to come unto the knowledge of the Truth,” (1 Tm 2:4), then it must also follow, as Jesus himself said, “the gospel must first be published among all nations” (Mk 13:10). And God has done this and will continue to have it done until the end of time, as he has promised.

To that end God has caused his Word to be spoken and recorded in human language, so that it might be understood and believed by all men. The gospel can effect the miracle of conversion in whatever language it is proclaimed. The angel of the Lord, flying in mid-heaven, has “the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell upon the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Re 14:6). Accordingly, the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost miraculously gave access to the witnessing of the Apostles “to every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born” (Ac 2:8). Without discrimination of race, Saint Luke reports, “Then they that gladly received his Word were baptized” (Ac 2:41).

This indiscriminate preaching of the gospel to all nationalities was God’s will and purpose also in the Old Testament. This is asserted frequently, and most clearly, in the Psalms, “Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.” (Ps 96:3). It is our purpose in this essay to show that God both expected and directed his Old Testament saints to share their hope in the Redeemer, as it was revealed more and more clearly in his Word, with the other nations in their day. This is true, even though there was no record of any deliberate and continuing missionary activity in the Old Testament era.

This missionary mandate was given added emphasis in the New Testament through the glorious fulfillment of all the Scripture in Christ. Saint Paul refers to this: “Which [the mystery of Christ] was not made known to men in other generations [Lenski: ‘in the way’] it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in their promise in Christ Jesus,” (Eph 3:5,6). Saint Paul does not say that the “mystery of Christ” was not made known to the Gentiles in Old Testament times. That would, patently, be contrary both to the concern of God for the salvation of the heathen, to his repeated exhortation to his saints to share their hope with them, as well as to the recorded fact that he caused many heathen to be brought to faith and even to be grafted into the human ancestry of his Savior.

God called Israel, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to be his “chosen people” to preserve and to perpetuate his great plan of salvation, revealed to them through his Word; to bring forth the World Savior, according to the flesh; and to make known his salvation in this Savior to all the world.

Israel perverted this spiritual calling into a mundane, nationalistic ambition. The hope for a Savior from sin became distorted into the expectation of a mighty national hero who would set up an earthly kingdom and free the Jewish nation from the foreign yoke. Even after the resurrection Jesus’ disciples appear to be laboring under this unspiritual dream. “So when they met together, they asked him, ‘Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’” (Ac 1:6).

The Scriptures do speak of the Jewish race as “the people whom you have chosen” (1 Kgs 3:8); “O sons of Jacob, his chosen ones,” (1 Chr 16:13; Ps 105:6), and many other passages. But the purpose of this choosing, or electing is always coupled with the privilege of serving God in carrying out his saving purpose. This is clear from the beginning in the choosing of Abraham. “I will make you into a great nation and will bless you; I will make your name great, and *you will be a blessing....* And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you,” (Gn 12:2, 3—italics added). This same divine purpose with Israel is expressed in other periods of Old Testament history. Thus Isaiah is inspired to record the Lord’s exhortation to his servant, “But you, O Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend, I took you from the ends of the earth, from the farthest comers I called you. I said, ‘*You are my servant*’; I have chosen you and have not rejected you” (Is 41:8, 9—emphases added). “Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back!’ Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.... ‘You are my witnesses,’ declares the Lord, ‘and my servant whom I have chosen...the people I formed for myself, that they may proclaim my praise,’” (Is 43:5–7, 10, 21).

H.H. Rowley referring to Moses' words to Israel at Mount Sinai, "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself," (Dt 7:6,7) remarks, "The purpose of the election of Israel is service, and when service is withheld, the election loses its meaning, and therefore fails."⁹

Another quotation, translated from the German, asserts:

God has made the way of salvation possible for all men, regardless of race, age, culture, or erudition, namely this, he has declared all men righteous for Jesus' sake, making simple faith and trust in his spoken and written Word of Truth the only way for man to apprehend with the Spirit's power the full benefit of Christ's atonement. In keeping with this great fact the whole Bible is full of mission thoughts in all its parts and pages. Beginning with the Creation and the undivided human race and God's promise of the woman's seed, Christ, the star of hope has risen over the entire human race. This story of hope and salvation always aims at the preparation [*Vorbereitung*] and the promulgation [*Ausbreitung*] of the salvation of God for all people.... The election of Israel also follows this great purpose, because in Abraham and his Seed all families on earth are to be blessed, that is, led back to God. The new covenant on Mount Sinai is made and sealed by God with clear reference to the *priestly vocation* of Israel is to be shared *through* Israel with all people who are also to learn to praise God. It is in line with this purpose that the prophets always speak of the coming to faith of the heathen as the very crown of Israel's glory.¹⁰

From another well-known author comes the declaration:

In the plan of Scripture Israel has a special place. Among the nations Israel is the congregation of God which has become the center of the world of nations, so that the heathen may join it and through Israel learn to know the one true God and the true worship of God. This was the Call of Israel and the meaning of its election. In and through Israel, therefore, the Kingdom of God became apparent so that it could also come to the other nations.¹¹

With reference to Isaiah 41:8,9 our own August Pieper has this to say, "Israel is the spiritualized Jacob who prevailed over God and man (Gn 32:28); he is עֶבְדִּי, My servant, the servant of the Lord who has a spiritual mission to carry out on earth in God's name, namely, the same mission that the Servant of the Lord κατ' ἐξοχήν (Christ Jesus) actually carries out: to bring the Gospel to the Gentile world [43:10,21]."¹²

Finally, the Holy Scriptures reveal both implicitly and explicitly the God was indeed concerned that also the Gentiles should come to faith, also the Gentiles in the Old Testament, and that he both expected and directed the believers to make known his saving health among all nations.

This is already implied in the words of the first promise, given to Adam and Eve right after the Fall in the Garden of Eden. The Lord God gives our first parents new hope and indicates that the promise and the hope are to be shared with "her seed," her descendants. He does this by telling the devil in their presence unequivocally that he will terminate Satan's enslavement of the woman and her race and will bring about for them an enmity, a hatred, of all that is evil. As the God of love and compassion he himself will bring this to pass. He will bring forth the great "Woman's seed," who will crush the power of the great deceiver by himself bearing the sting and pangs of death for the guilty children of men.

Promising this deliverance, this escape from and hatred of all things evil, also to her progeny, the "woman's seed" in the generic sense, the Lord God implies that the good news, the promise of the coming of

⁹ H.H. Rowley, *The Biblical Doctrine of Election* (Chapessville, Ill.: Allenson, 1965), p 52.

¹⁰ Pastor E. Strumpfel, *Was Jedermann Heute von der Mission Wissen Muss* (Berlin, 1902), p 2-3.

¹¹ George Vicedom, *The Mission of God* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965) p 34.

¹² *Isaias II*, p 150.

the great deliverer, should be passed on from generation to generation and to all the descendants of Adam and Eve. Professor Carl Lawrenz has this comment,

Through this victory the believers, the woman's seed in the wider sense, would win continual victories over Satan. Thus Saint Paul in Romans 16:20 alluded to Genesis 3:15 as he gave the Roman Christians, and all Christians, a promise of victory over those creating divisions and offenses contrary to the apostolic teaching. He says: "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet."¹³

That this very thing, the relaying of the promise, was carried on is reported in the very next chapter concerning the son and grandson of our first parents. The clear implication is that this was done not only within the believing families, but openly in public worship, so that others could come to faith and live.

"Seth also had a son and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Gn 4:26).

Luther's translation of this passage affords a clearer understanding: *Zu derselbigen Zeit fing man an zu predigen von des HERRn Namen*. Other expositors agree with this interpretation:

The family of Seth was the family of believers, and it was during the lifetime of his son Enosh that men began formally to proclaim the Name of Jehovah, that is, to institute public services for the purpose of worshipping Him in prayer, public praise and the giving of thanks. So the Name, or Word, of the God-man Jehovah, in Whom Eve had trusted, was now preached openly; the coming of the Messiah was openly declared.¹⁴

To whom was this open, public proclamation of the first Word from God made in these early times of mankind! Most assuredly to the family of the believers. This is recorded about Abraham: "I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him" (Gn 18:19).

The gospel promise was surely also preached to those who were outside of the family of believers. The series of questions raised by Saint Paul certainly apply also here, "How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?" (Ro 10:14,15).

The Holy Spirit provides the evidence of this missionary activity in the seventh generation after Adam, while Adam was still living:

When Enoch had lived 65 years, he became the father of Methuselah. And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch *walked with God* 300 years and had other sons and daughters. Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. *Enoch walked with God*; then he was no more, because God took him away. (Gn 5:21–24—emphases added).

The Holy Spirit gives us a clearer understanding of this righteous man in the New Testament. "Walking with God" is not to be thought of as a passive meditative existence, but as an activity of witnessing to others. This is repeatedly stated in Holy Scripture: "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant, whom I have chosen." (Is 43:10,12; 44:8; Luke 24:48 and others). This is also revealed of Enoch as a man "who walked with God":

¹³ Carl Lawrenz, "Genesis Commentary" in *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, October 1981, p 299. The writing is being prepared for book-form publication.

¹⁴ P.E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary*, I, 13.

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: ‘See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.’ (Jd 14).

Thus it is clear that the early believers in keeping with God’s saving purpose preached the Word of God, his judgment over sin and his promise of salvation, in the world and to men who were forgetting God and, as a result, “became vain in their imaginations and their foolish hearts were darkened” (Ro 1:21). Although they ignored God’s warnings, as we have seen earlier in this essay, the Lord God and his faithful believers did not ignore them, but faithfully preached his Word up to the very time when the judgment of God befell and destroyed them in the great flood.

We again quote Carl Lawrenz:

A different attitude, however, showed itself in the descendants of Seth, whom Adam and Eve had humbly and gratefully acknowledged as a divine compensation for the loss of God-fearing Abel. Of the Sethites we hear that they began to call upon the Name of the Lord. In public worship they proclaimed and extolled God as Jehovah, as the Lord, as the God of free and faithful, saving grace.¹⁵

Another outstanding instance of this missionary activity, specifically authorized and directed by the Lord God as his warning witness to the world, when unbelief and godless immorality overwhelmed the earth, is the history of Noah. The Holy Spirit inspired Moses to write of this hero of faith, “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. These are the generations [the history] of Noah. Noah was a [צַדִּיק תָּמִים] righteous-devout man among his contemporaries; Noah walked with God” (Gn 6:8,9—Carl Lawrenz’ translation).¹⁶

For 120 years Noah faithfully carried out his God-given assignment, witnessing in word and deed to a reprobate world, while God graciously delayed his judgment and the ark was being built. In retrospect we know that his was a lost cause, his witness of God’s law and gospel fell on deaf ears, and his faithful perseverance in his God-given assignment to build a great house-boat on dry land for an announced use over a hundred years later met with jeers and taunts of derision. His example should shame us and spur us on when our zeal for God’s saving mission begins to flag because of hindrances or a visible lack of more prompt results.

That Noah pursued an active missionary effort during the century of God’s longsuffering is amply attested in Scripture. The Apostle Peter writes, “Through the Spirit Christ also went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the Ark was being built” (1 Pe 3:20) and again, God “did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected *Noah, a preacher of righteousness*, and seven others” (2 Pe 2:5—emphasis added)—The author of Hebrews writes, “By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith” (He 11:7).

Thus God’s witness to the nations went on during the 350 years of Noah’s life after the Flood. But shortly after the days of Noah the Lord God again intervened with his judgment to stem the tide of mankind’s rebelling against his lordship and he demolished their arrogant project by confusing their language. The judgment of the Lord over Babel [Babylon] was also felt by the believers of that day, for from the day forward the families and races of mankind were scattered over the face of the earth and became far more difficult to reach with the preaching of God’s Word. And from that day to the end of time God’s witnesses had to overcome the formidable barrier of the many languages and dialects.

¹⁵ Carl Lawrenz, “God’s Unique Judgment of the Flood,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* (October 1974), p 262.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p 269.

But the gracious God who had given his word of promise did not abandon mankind, though so many had turned their back to him. Again his love and compassion prevailed and he called Abram, a descendant of Shem, the son of Terah, from Ur of the Chaldeans to carry forward the Promise and to bring forth from his race the World Savior. But even in choosing one family as his chosen people, the Lord in love and mercy remembered all mankind, as he declares in the call given to Abram, “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great;—and in thee [“through you” NIV] shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gn 12:3).

Through Saint Paul the Holy Spirit calls Abraham “the heir of the world,” not because all men are descended from him according to the flesh, but because he is “the father of all who believe,” also of those who are without the Law, the Gentiles (Ro 4:11,13,16).

This was not merely given to Abraham as a title because in the course of time many became believers like himself, but the Scripture records that Abraham became active in making open confession of his faith and proclaimed the Word of the Lord, as his ancestor Noah and Enoch had done.

“And Abram built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him.” And again, after he moved to Bethel—still a heathen land—“there Abram builded an altar unto the Lord, and called on the Name of the Lord” (Gn 12:7,8). The same practice is reported in the next chapter, after Abram had separated from Lot and settled at Hebron, “and [he] built there an altar unto the Lord” (Gn 13:18). Thus Abraham witnessed his faith also among the heathen.

The encounter of Abram with the king of Salem, Melchizedek, who blessed Abram in the name of “the most high God,” shows that the true worship of the true God was not restricted to the family of Abram (Gn 14:18–20). Abram also gave expression to this faith by giving tithes of all that he had gained to this royal priest to advance the cause of the true religion, although the later order of priests, the sons of Levi, “were already in his own loins” (He 7:9–11).

The Lord’s institution of the covenant of circumcision was certainly designed to mark the children of Abraham as God’s chosen people, but also in this matter the Gentiles who were brought into Abraham’s household were not excluded. God ordained, “For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner, those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised,” (Gn 17:12,13).

By clear implication even the new names given to Abram and Sarai served to remind them of this original call, “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed,” (Gn 12). For the name Abraham and Sarah signify that they will be the progenitors “of many nations,” (Gn 17:5,16).

Abraham’s sincere concern for the sparing of the lives of believers in Sodom and Gomorrah implies that the worship and witness of the true God, as practiced by Lot, presumably produced some believers. His deep sorrow at learning that less than ten believers were there underscores his concern for souls (Gn 18:23–33).

Once more the Lord God repeats the original promise to the obedient believer Abraham, after he had interrupted the sacrifice of Isaac, thereby prefiguring the “more excellent sacrifice” of his own son (He 11:4). Under solemn oath he again tells Abraham, “By myself have I sworn...that in blessing I will bless thee; ...And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice” (Gn 22:16–18).

There may be more Scriptural evidence of God’s loving concern to bring this blessing to all people, but this will suffice to show that he not only promised but also directed “the father of believers” to have spiritual children from among the heathen, that is, from those who had drifted away from the true God, whom the Lord himself in no way had given up or rejected at this time.

Later on, after the 400-year sojourn of the Children of Israel in Egypt, it was indeed true that the Lord God rejected some of these heathen nations and commanded Moses to exterminate them. This the Lord already revealed to Abraham, “But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full” (Gn 15:16).

The cause of these terrible judgments of the Lord against entire nations is always the same as it was in his judgment of the Great Flood, as the Lord Himself states it, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man

forever, for he is flesh” (Gn 6:3) Luther’s translation seems more to the point, “*Die Menschen wollen sich meinen Geist nicht mehr strafen lassen, denn sie sind Fleisch.*” The cause is always obdurate, prideful resistance against the Lord’s repeated warnings. Thus it was with Pharaoh, as the Lord revealed it to Moses, “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honored upon Pharaoh and upon all his host, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord” (Ex 14:4). As the writer of Hebrews states by the Spirit, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!” (He 10:31).

But let us not overlook what these judgments reveal about the Lord! Until these people obdurately rejected his witness, the Holy Spirit sought to win them from their evil ways. In the case of the earth’s people before the Flood this witnessing went on for 120 years!

Having called Abraham and his descendants to carry the promise forward, God proceeded to prepare them for the coming of the great Redeemer. This training continues during the 400 years in Egypt and the forty rigorous years of their exodus from Egypt, until he brings them back into the land he had promised them.

Through the mediation of Moses the Lord established the covenant of the law with his people, not because they deserved it as a privilege, but because he would thereby train them for his great service. August Pieper makes this clear, “The names Israel, Jacob, and Abraham’s Seed are here. As elsewhere, terms of endearment and honor, through which the Lord as the very outset wishes to give assurance of his love and of his faithfulness to his covenant. Israel is the spiritualized Jacob who prevailed over God and man (Gn 32:28); he is עֶבְרָיִ, My servant, the servant of the Lord who has a special mission to carry out on earth in God’s name, namely, the same mission that the Servant of the Lord κατ’ ἐξοχήν actually carries out [chapter 42]: to bring the Gospel to the Gentile world [cf. chapter 43:10,21].”¹⁷

A similar thought is expressed by H.H. Rowley, “Moses was the first missionary of whom we have any knowledge, for God had sent him both to save Israel and to lead them to worship Him, to the end that in Israel all the families of the earth will be blessed.”¹⁸

When the Lord declared through Moses on Mount Sinai, “Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:5,6), he described the role of Israel in his plan of salvation. The Hebrew word קֹדֶשׁ, or holy, defines the nation as “set aside for God’s purpose, for God’s service.” And as “a kingdom of priests” they were designed to be God’s agents, or go-betweens, to bring the Redeemer in word and fact to all the world.

To the end that also the Gentiles might have access to the hope of Israel, the physical Temple included the Court of the Gentiles. And the Lord made provision for them spiritually also, as he says through Isaiah:

Let no foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, “The Lord will surely exclude me from his people.” And let not any eunuch complain, “I am only a dry tree.” For this is what the Lord says, “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what please me and hold fast to my covenant—to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off. And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to serve him, to love the name of the Lord, and to worship him, all who keep the sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. (Is 56:3–7)

Our Lord Jesus quotes these words after he had cleansed the Temple (Mk 11:17). His anger moved him physically to drive the hawkers, vendors and money-changers out of the Temple, presumably, the Court of the

¹⁷ *Isaias II*, p 150.

¹⁸ H.H. Rowley, *The Missionary Message of the Old Testament* (London: Carey Press, 1945).

Gentiles, because they frustrated God's purpose in providing for this large court to give non-Jews access and at least auditory benefit from the worship and the reading of his Word.

It is significant that Moses in his farewell hymn, just before his death, sings of this participation of the heathen in the great hope of Israel, "Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land and to his people!" (Dt 32:43). Saint Paul provides the exegesis for these last words of Moses, when he quotes them to the Roman believers as an exhortation to accept the Gentiles (Ro 15:10).

To illustrate this point still further, we quote Georg Vicedom:

In the plan of Scripture Israel has a special place. Among the nations Israel is the congregation of God which has become the center of the world of nations, so that the heathen may join it and through Israel learn to know the one true God and the true worship of God. This was the call of Israel and the meaning of its election. In and through Israel, therefore, the Kingdom of God became apparent so that it came also to the other nations.¹⁹

Reference will now be made to other witnesses to the mission theme in the Old Testament.

The Prophet Jonah

As stated earlier in our study, some authors deny the missionary mandate in the book of Jonah and in Isaiah 40–66. We quote, "But others, both at an earlier period and more recently, deny that the book [Jonah] is concerned with the commission to proclaim to all nations the message of salvation...It cannot be denied that a real plea for mission to the heathen is lacking in the book of Jonah; at most it can only be deduced from the book."

However, Blauw admits: "Most of the exegetes are unanimous in the judgment about Jonah, too. Here, as far as they are concerned, the missionary ideal is proclaimed unambiguously, and in this book Israel is directed toward her proper calling in the world."

Once more he vacillates, "Even those who hold fast to a missionary interpretation of Deutero-Isaiah and Jonah recognize that the concern is for commissions and promises which will be realized *only in the future*. During the Old Testament period no one could arrive at mission as an *act* of going out for proclamation among the nations."

He adds, "I believe that those who advocate a missionary exegesis of Deutero-Isaiah and Jonah are right in so far as they understand that these passage of Scripture are concerned with *more* than universalism as defined in Chapter 1. On the other hand, I believe that those who reject such a missionary exegesis are right in so far as they understand that there is no thought of mission in the Old Testament in the centrifugal sense in which it comes to the fore in the New Testament."²⁰

On the basis of clear texts of Holy Scripture, both in the Old and New Testament, it is evident that Jonah is a historical person who received a twice-repeated, direct commission to "preach the preachment that I bid thee." The fact and the importance of this mission mandate to the capital of the leading world power, Assyria, are underscored by the Lord's intervention with several miracles to induce the reluctant missionary prophet to carry out his assignment to preach the Word of God to heathen Nineveh. The seemingly inadequate means for accomplishing such a stupendous task, the simple proclamation of the Word of God, contrary to Jonah's expectation and much to his chagrin, proves entirely effective: "The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth" (Jon 3:5). When Jonah expressed his anger over the fact that his dire prediction of doom was not fulfilled because of God's compassion and reprieve for penitent Nineveh, the Lord rebuked him sharply and again asserted His concern and saving love, also for the

¹⁹ Georg Vicedom, *The Mission of God* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965) p 34.

²⁰ Blauw, p 33,34. The emphases are Blauw's.

heathen, saying “Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?” (Jon 4:11).

It would be unthinkable indeed, unless one joined the ranks of the unbelieving Bible critics, to deny this historical event as clear evidence of God’s concern for the salvation of the heathen and his determination, also in the Old Testament, to send his chosen missionary prophet to carry out his saving will!

God’s Witnesses During the Exile

“God meant it unto good to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Gn 50:20). So Joseph reassured his brothers when they feared his vengeance on them after their father Jacob had died.

Thus the Lord also used the captivity and exile of his people to bring his Word of promise to the heathen people of Babylon. The thousands of exiled people who languished for seventy years in Babylon were not reconciled to their fate by the divine assurances sent to them by the prophet Jeremiah who had remained at Jerusalem, when he sent them word of their promised release and return to their homeland.

He had written:

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon: Build ye houses and dwell in them, and plant gardens and eat the fruit of them; take ye wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whether I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace....For thus saith the Lord, ‘That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you in causing you to return to this place [Jerusalem].’ (Jr 29:4–10)

But there were people of nobility and prominence among the exiles at Babylon, like the prophets Ezekiel and Daniel, who obeyed God’s Word and served him despite their adversity. Both had been carried away by King Nebuchadnezzar in their youth. The former was the son of a priest, and he performed his Levitical duties as soon as he was of age. In the fifth year of this captivity he also began his prophetic activity, serving chiefly among the Jewish exiles. He enjoyed the freedom of uttering his prophecies and was consulted for counsel by the Jewish elders, also through his correspondence with the Jews who were left in the homeland. He warned them repeatedly of the imminent fall of Jerusalem, but found little acceptance of his warning until the city fell. Although there is no explicit record to that effect, it may be assumed that Ezekiel, like other prominent Jewish exiles, had contact with and some influence on the Chaldeans because of his staunch loyalty to his faith, his God-fearing life and the freedom he enjoyed to utter his prophecies openly. (Eze 8:1; 14:1; 20:1).

The career of Daniel as an exile in Babylon was quite different. During his 63 years of service under four Chaldean kings, he was a man of great influence and authority at the royal court because the Lord gave him the ability to interpret the royal dreams. Nebuchadnezzar elevated him “as ruler over the province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon” (Dn 2:48). With his three Jewish companions, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, he was singled out to serve the king and received training in all the wisdom of the Chaldeans.

Although Daniel remained faithful to the Most High God of his fathers, he spent his long life in Babylon as a trusted statesman in charge of the business of the king. After the miraculous preservation of the lives of Daniel’s three companions in the fiery furnace, King Nebuchadnezzar not only legitimized the Jewish faith, but he himself issued a decree which extolled the supremacy of the God of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. “It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most high God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom, his dominion endures from generation to generation” (Dn 4:2,3). Nebuchadnezzar did not himself remain faithful to

this confession; but it is a fact that the prophet Daniel was permitted and encouraged to confess his faith in the Lord God and his spoken and written witness was accessible to the Chaldeans, since five chapters of his book were written in Aramaic, which was known to them and the exiles.

Professor John Schaller makes an interesting comment about the influence which Daniel exerted on the Babylonian magi, or wise men, of his time and, through them, on the “wise men from the East” who came to worship the Christ-child:

As governor of the wise men Daniel was in a position of authority to suppress much of the superstition of the Chaldean magi. That his activity among them was not without great spiritual blessing is incontestably shown by the visit of the wise men from the East to the Child Jesus.²¹

We may ask, what motivated the wise men to make the arduous journey to Jerusalem when Jesus was born? Did they receive a special vision from God? This is not recorded. They simply told Herod, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him.” Why would they want to worship the “King of the Jews,” unless they knew about him from the Scriptures? Did they know about the prophecy of Balaam, another wise man from the hill country of the Euphrates, who prophesied what the Lord revealed to him, “I shall see him, but not now; I shall behold him, but not nigh; there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel” (Nu 24:17). Did they still know the Book of Daniel with its prediction about the time of the coming of “the Messiah, the Prince” (Dn 9:25, 26)?

Although Daniel and the Jewish exiles were long gone from Babylon, is it possible that there was still a remnant of wise men in Babylon who looked forward to the day of Messiah?

Referring to the witness of these men of God during the Exile, Paul E. Kretzmann writes, “While Ezekiel labored among his captive countrymen on the banks of the Chebar, Daniel preached the Name of God at the court of the kings who had conquered the Jews. His preaching produced a profound impression.”²²

Other Heathen Converts in the Old Testament

The preaching of the Word cannot always be traced to a specific commission, given by the Lord in the Old Testament to his chosen witnesses, as in these cases of Jonah and Daniel. Still, we may not overlook the conversion of individuals and other groups in the preChristian era. We will list some of them here.

The Kenites

Jethro, a priest of the Midianites, was the father-in-law of Moses. His son, Hobab, of the family of the Kenites, was invited by Moses to join Israel after they had left Mount Sinai and to lead them on their conquest through the rough country near the Dead Sea. At first he refused, but later changed his mind, joined the Israelites, and settled with them in the Promised Land. Hobab’s father also turned to Israel, rejoiced in their deliverance and victories, and offered sacrifices to Jehovah. Later, he was even instrumental in lightening Moses’ administrative burdens and helped him to organize and delegate this work to judges. Thus an entire family of Abraham’s descendants through Keturah was converted from heathen worship to the true God (Nu 10:29–32).

Another comment of P.E. Kretzmann is germane to this point: “The words of Moses apparently did not lack in persuasive power at this time, for it seems that Hobab joined the host with his tribe [the Kenites], (Jdg 1:16). This passage contains a fine hint in regard to missionary methods which might be applied to this day.”²³

Rahab

This is the heathen harlot who lived on the wall of Jericho and gave refuge to the spies sent by Joshua. When the city was taken by the host of Israel, Rahab and her family were spared. Convinced that the true God

²¹ John Schaller, *Kurze Bibelkunde* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1899) p 59,60. Hereafter cited as *Bibelkunde*.

²² P.E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible*, II, p 603.

²³ *Ibid.* p 255.

was with the Israelites, she and her people were converted to the hope of the Jews and were incorporated into the people of God. This led to her becoming the mother of Boaz and being linked into the ancestry of King David and of our Savior himself (Jos 2:1–17; Mt 1:5; He 11:31; Jas 2:25).

Ruth

The story of Ruth, the greatgrandmother of King David and ancestress of our Lord Jesus according to the flesh, is well known. Her reason for leaving the heathen land of Moab is worth repeating, because it illustrates the value and effectiveness of the witness and example of true believers. In this case Naomi, the Jewish mother-in-law of Ruth, finds that faith in the true God supersedes love of family and country when Ruth declares, “Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God,” (Ru 1:16).

John Schaller finds the history of Ruth valuable, not only because it supplies an important missing link in the genealogy of David and our Savior, but he adds, “In this little book we are shown that admittance to the kingdom of God was open also to the heathen, as they placed their faith and trust in the covenant God of Israel.”²⁴

Naaman the Syrian

“A captive out of the land of Israel, a little maid,” is the missionary whom the Lord used in the days of Elisha to convert Naaman, the captain of the host of the king of Syria, to faith in the God of Israel, and through Naaman the worship of Jehovah was brought into the land of Syria (2 Kgs 5).

Our Lord himself referred to the healing of Naaman as an example of God’s concern for the heathen in the Old Testament and to illustrate his saying, “No prophet is accepted in his own country,” (Lk 4:24,27).

Surely, these instances of the Lord’s sending and empowering his witnesses in the Old Testament to carry out his saving will, also among the heathen ought to dispel the notion that either God was indifferent to their fate or rejected them. Rather, it was only by the Holy Spirit’s guidance and control that these conversions could take place at all.

God’s Censure as Proof of His Mission Mandate

The evidence for God’s mission mandate to his believers in the Old Testament to share the hope of Israel with the other people of their time is corroborated by his sharp censure of their inactivity in witnessing and their offensive example among the heathen. There are many instances of this in Scripture; we will cite only a few of them.

King David

After David had committed both adultery and murder, the prophet Nathan rebukes him for his sin and brings him to repentance. Nathan assures the king of the Lord’s forgiveness, but adds these words, “Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die” (2 Sm 12:14).

The same Word applied to King David and the other believers in the Old Testament as the Holy Spirit made it known through Saint Paul: “Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God; even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved” (1 Cor 10:32, 33).

The Rulers of Israel

When the wealthier Jews exacted unlawful interest of the poorer families on loans made to them for various purposes, Nehemiah “rebuked the nobles and the rules, and said unto them, ‘Ye exact usury, every one

²⁴ *Bibelkunde*, p 21.

of his brother.’” Then Nehemiah added, “It is not good that ye do; ought ye not to walk in the fear of the Lord because of the reproach of the heathen, our enemies?” (Ne 5:6–9).

Instead of giving offense to the heathen, the people of God should have given their enemies cause with their words and their deeds to acknowledge the God of Israel, as Nehemiah told them: “So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes, for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God,” (Ne 6:15,16).

King Solomon

The well known ‘mission’ petition of King Solomon at the dedication of the Temple is quoted as proof of the missionary concern of the Old Testament believers. It deserves our study:

As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name—for men will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm—when he comes and prays toward this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwellingplace, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the people of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your name. (1 Kgs 8:41–43)

In his *Popular Commentary of the Bible* Paul E. Kretzmann describes this “foreigner” as “not a member of the chosen nation by birth, but as a proselyte of the gate, if not of righteousness, in short, a convert to the worship of Jehovah, eligible to join the congregation of Israel in worship.” This may be true.

However, in view of what Scripture reports about King Solomon, there is good reason to study the matter more closely.

It is recorded that “as Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart to other gods and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of his father David had been. He followed after Ashtoreth and the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done” (1 Kgs 11:4–6).

Although this refers to the aging Solomon whose idolatrous foreign wives had corrupted him to erect idol shrines at Jerusalem and to join in their idol worship, the Holy Spirit records that already at the beginning of his reign Solomon “did not follow the Lord completely.” These details are supplied:

And Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt and *married his daughter*.—
Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the statutes of his father David, *except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.* (1 Kgs 3:1–3)

These were no light offenses, because both of them had been strictly forbidden by the Lord. The king’s sinful actions became a stumbling-block for all his people.

Intermarriage of Jews, also of the king, with heathen was emphatically prohibited by the Lord. Also the early marriage of Solomon to Pharaoh’s daughter is specifically included:

King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh’s daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, ‘You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods! Nevertheless Solomon held fast to them in love. (1 Kgs 11:1,2)

The second offense was also in direct violation of the Lord’s clear commandment: “he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.” To put an end to the random offering of sacrifices and burnt offering to the Lord on “high places,” as the heathen did, God had commanded David to bring the ark of the covenant from

Kiriath-Jearim to Jerusalem as the divinely designated place of worship. After King David had formally done this God's clear ordinance was to be observed:

You must not worship the Lord your God in their [heathen] way! But you are to seek the place the Lord your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; there bring your burnt offering and sacrifices.... You are not to do as we do here today, everyone as he sees fit, since you have not yet reached the resting place and the inheritance the Lord your God is giving you.... Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings anywhere you please! Offer them only at the place the Lord will choose in one of your tribes, and there observe everything I command you! (Dr 12:4–14)

Since both of these violations occurred before the Temple dedication, they cast a cloud over Solomon's "mission" petition. Was Solomon asking for tolerance of his own syncretistic attitude regarding idol worship and acceptance of his marriage to Pharaoh's daughter? Or, as we prefer to think, did God's guidance on this occasion lead him to this concern for the conversion of the heathen as the condition for the propriety of their prayer at the Temple? In any event, Solomon's statement, "They shall hear of thy great name," envisions a proclamation of the gospel beyond the confines of the Holy Land.

Although great importance has been given to King Solomon's petition as proof of the mission concern of the Old Testament believers, we believe that the entire context must be taken into consideration.

The People of Israel

Like their leaders the children of Israel gradually intermingled and intermarried with the heathen who lived among them and in the nations round about them, although it had been forbidden: "I will hand over to you the people who live in the land and you will drive them out before you. Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods! Do not let them live in your land, or they will cause you to sin against Me, because the worship of their gods certainly will be a snare unto you." (Ex 23:31–33)

Not only did they allow the heathen people to live among them in Israel, but the Jews traveled, traded and settled among the Gentiles in the entire then known world. The philosopher Philo quotes from a letter of King Agrippa to the Emperor Caligula, "Jerusalem is the capital not only of Judea, but by means of the Jewish colonies, of most other lands."²⁵ With regard to the presence of Gentiles in Israel we are told, "Solomon took a census of all the aliens who were in Israel, after the census of their father David. And they were found to be 153,600" (2 Chr 2:17).

Commerce and trade, the need for imported materials for the building of the Temple, not to mention the dispersion of the tribes into Assyrian and Babylonian Exile, caused the Jews to settle in foreign lands as far north as Europe. One example in the Bible can be cited: "King Solomon conscripted laborers from all Israel—thirty thousand men. He sent them off to Lebanon in shifts often thousand a month, so that they spent one month in Lebanon and two months at home" (1 Kgs 5:13).

Wherever the Jews settled they formed isolated communities, observing the ceremonial and dietary rules and gathering in synagogues for instruction, meditation and the reading of the Scriptures. St. Luke reports this in the response of St. James after Paul and Barnabas had given their mission report of gentile conversions to the council, "for Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath" (Ac 15:21).

These Jewish colonies engaged in a certain amount of missionary activity to gain Gentiles to Judaism. Especially after the Hellenization of the world through Alexander the Great threatened also the foreign Jewish colonies with Greek thought through the medium of the Greek language, the Pharisees made strenuous efforts to gain Gentiles either as proselytes of the gate or of righteousness. Jesus took note of this when he warned the people not to let these zealots "tie up heavy burdens" upon them of performing the Law and their ordinances,

²⁵ *Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, p 140.

depriving them of the freedom he had come to win for them: “Woe unto you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win one convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are!” (Mt 23:15).

Not the missionary zeal was denounced by the Lord, but the profanation of God’s holy name, that is, the perversion of the way of salvation through faith in Christ to the futile attempt to win God’s favor by works of the Law. The prophet Ezekiel had already witnessed to the people in exile that it was by the unmerited longsuffering compassion of God, and not by their own inadequate performance, that they could escape God’s wrath. Ezekiel brings the exiles this word of the Lord:

I dispersed them among the nations and they were scattered through the countries; I judged them according to their conduct and their actions. And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name, for it was said of them, “These are the Lord’s people, and yet they had to leave his land!” I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel profaned among the nations where they had gone.

Therefore say to the house of Israel, “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them! Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.” (Eze 36:19–23)

This is strange reasoning indeed! It is the reasoning of the God of love and grace for the sinner (Is 1:18), the Lord who does not reward according to what we deserve, but because he keeps his covenant for his name’s sake: “I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you,” (Eze 36:25,26).

For this he had promised his people through Moses and this great glory of his he wanted them to show forth: “The LORD, The LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin!” (Ex 34:6).

Now let us turn to a truly rich repository of hope in the coming Redeemer, the Book of Psalms, as it is intended for all the world sinners. Here indeed we will find evidence of the mission concern of our gracious God and the mandate to bring to the peoples not “crumbs which fall from the master’s table,” but that which is truly their God-given right and property as the spoils won for them by the victory of the suffering Servant of the Lord.

In heightened measure the Holy Spirit in the Psalms inspires the sacred singers of old to chant the praise of the Lord and to arouse the thankful believers to share their joy with all people. It is strikingly apparent that many of the Psalm strophes find their climax in some statement or exhortation of proclaiming the Lord’s glory to the heathen. Outstanding examples are:

Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. (Ps 2:8);

Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name. (Ps 18:49);

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord’s; and he is the governor among the nations. (Ps 22:27,28);

Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. (Ps 33:8);
O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph! For God is the king of all the earth; sing ye praises with understanding! God reigneth over the heathen; God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people

of the God of Abraham; for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted. (Ps 47:1,7,9);

Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world; both low and high, rich and poor together. (Ps 49:1,2);

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands!...All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name. (Ps 66:1,4);

God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. (Ps 67:1,2);

His name shall endure forever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name forever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen, and Amen. (Ps 72:17–19);

O sing unto the Lord a new song, sing unto the Lord, all the earth! Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; show forth his salvation from day to day! Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people...Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear before him, all the earth. Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth; the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved; he shall judge the people righteously. (Ps 96:1–3,7–10);

O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory! The Lord hath made known his salvation; his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen. (Ps 98:2);

So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory. (Ps 102:15);

O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the people. (Ps 105:1);

O praise the Lord, all ye nations; praise him, all ye people. (Ps 117:1).

Saint Paul quotes several of these exhortations from the Psalms in his letter to the Roman Christians to persuade them to receive the heathen converts into their fellowship. He writes, “Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy, as it is written, ‘For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name’” (Ro 15:7–9).

In view of these exhortations in the Psalms it is difficult to understand how a theologian could arrive at Johannes Blauw’s conclusion on page 34 of his *The Missionary Nature of the Church* that in the whole period of the Old Testament “the concern is for commissions and promises which will be realized *only in the future*.” And still more difficult it is to understand that the missiological passages in Isaiah are not mandates of the Lord to his people to let the Gospel light shine upon the nations with whom Israel was in commercial contact in that period. With these thoughts in mind we turn to our study of Isaiah.

II. The Mission Theme, as Prophecy and Mandate, Reached A High Point in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

Permit me to share with you the advice which Professor August Pieper gave to our Seminary class in 1924, as we began our never-to-be-forgotten course in Isaiah exegesis with him. Faithfully recorded in the margin of my *Jesaias II* are his words: *Studiere den Jesaias gruendlich!*

This advice has not been followed perfectly during the intervening 57 years, so we make no pretense or promise that this will be a thorough study of this precious book. Our present assignment is, rather, to

concentrate on the mission theme in Isaiah. Pieper told us that a good understanding of the book, both the First Part, chapters 1 through 39, the *Book of Denunciation*, and the Second Part, chapters 40 through 66, the *Book of Comfort* requires some acquaintance with the world of that day, about 750 to 700 B.C., or halfway between Moses and Christ.

Isaiah was called by the Lord as a true prophet, that is, as one who both *told forth* and also *foretold* what God the Holy Spirit revealed to him. According to Thayer a prophet is, primarily, “one who speaks forth, makes known.” Still, so much emphasis has been laid on Isaiah’s utterances regarding the future that the relevancy of his admonitions and reassurances to the people of his time are in danger of being slighted.

Professor Pieper says in his Introduction:

The Lord has finally become so wearied with this incurably rebellious [cf. chapter 1, which is an epitome of the whole book] that He has determined its rejection, but at the same time also the preservation of a remnant, out of which he will build the future Kingdom of the Messiah. It is Isaiah’s mission, by his preaching, to carry out the part assigned to him to bring this plan to fruition. The manner in which this plan of God is realized in Israel by the preaching of Isaiah and its application to existing historical situations, or to put it more concretely: How the persistent preaching of the prophet more and more hardens the hearts of the house of David and of the people and hastens the coming of the judgment, and how the same preaching detaches a remnant from the rejected mass of the people, and how this remnant is to be saved and become the kernel of the Kingdom of God of the future—that is the point of view from which the prophet has arranged his prophecies.²⁶

Again we quote Pieper’s Introduction, “Particularly of Part II, Isaiah is preaching to an incurably hardened people and to a preserved remnant.”²⁷

Thus Isaiah did not preach or write his book “in a corner” (Acts 26:26), in some hidden place or for some time capsule where it would be buried for 800 years, with his denunciations and reassurances to be relevant for people after the time of Christ. His revelation of the will of the Lord is addressed, first, to the people then living. The very brilliance of his prophetic vision of the future, viewed as finished action, as though he had seen the suffering of Christ in fulfillment and his resurrection, ascension, and exaltation on the throne of his heavenly glory (Is 52:13) as already accomplished, all this is to serve to inspire faith in the preserved remnant. These words were clung to and sustained the believers during the remaining Old Testament centuries and inspired people like Simeon and Anna to wait “for the consolation of Israel” (Lk 2:25).

This is another marginal note gleaned from Pieper’s Isaiah lectures: “With the double announcement of the coming judgment of the nations and backsliding Israel Isaiah prophesies the return of the believing remnant and the conversion of the Gentiles even before the coming of Christ.”

Many of Isaiah’s prophecies reach very far into the future, such as his vision of flourishing missions among the heathen in the Golden Age of the church. These revelations must have been mighty incentives to the Old Testament believers to proclaim the Word of hope to others. After all, as Pieper says, “Zion, the Church, God’s congregation, is a preacher by birth, by calling and profession, called and endowed by God to be a herald of salvation [43:21,25ff.; 51:16; 54:13; 59:21; 1 Peter 2:9], to preach the gospel, that great message of the comfort of God, whose chief exponent in the Old Testament is the prophet Isaiah.”²⁸

Johannes Blauw makes a distinction between what he terms “centripetal” and “centrifugal” mission texts in Isaiah, those which speak of the Gentiles flowing toward Israel, because “the glory of the Lord is risen upon her,” and those which direct Israel to go out to the nations with the Gospel. This terminology must not be taken too literally. Before the heathen can appreciate the “glory of the Lord” at all or come to the “Light,” they must

²⁶ *Isaiah II*, p 24.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p 30.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p 102.

be called by the gospel. Compare Romans 10:14 and the Third Article. This was also the only way to salvation in the Old Testament, for “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Ro 10:17).

We will see that demonstrated even in texts which appear to say that the heathen are attracted without apparent previous contact on the part of Israel:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountains of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountain, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths; *for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* (Isaiah 2:2,3)

Unless the law, the Word of God, has gone forth to call the nations, they will not come and be saved. This is true even of those who are rejected, because they have resisted the Word of God obdurately. To his people who have rejected him, the Lord formally sends his prophet with this word of judgment:

And he said, Go, and tell this people, hear ye, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be healed. (Isaiah 6:9)

When the Lord sends Isaiah to unbelieving King Ahaz, he is still charged to proclaim the sweetest gospel and to announce the greatest sign of all, although the king refuses to believe and be saved. “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Is 7:14).

The sending of the prophet with the Word extends also to those who are on the fringe of heathendom, those living in Galilee of the Gentiles. Paul E. Kretzmann says, “The ‘darkness’ here mentioned is that of heathendom.”²⁹ In fact, the prophet is inspired by the Holy Spirit to include the redemption of the Gentiles in many of his prophecies.

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined...For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:2,6)
And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots...And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious. (Isaiah 11:1,10)
And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things; this is known in all the earth. (Isaiah 12:4,5)

Even in the words announcing the Lord’s dire judgments to the ten nations which harassed God’s people: Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Ethiopia, Egypt, Edom, Arabia, Tyre and Sidon, Isaiah is inspired to speak words of hope for the heathen peoples:

All you people of the world, you who live on the earth, when a banner is raised on the mountains, you will see it; and when a trumpet sounds, you will hear it...At that time gifts will

²⁹ P.E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary*, OT, II, 303.

be brought to the Lord Almighty from a people tall and smooth-skinned, from a people feared far and wide, an aggressive nation of strange speech, whose land is divided by rivers—the gifts will be brought to Mount Zion, the place of the Name of the Lord Almighty. (Isaiah 18:3,7—NIV) In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the heart of Egypt, and a monument to the Lord at its border. It will be a sign and witness to the Lord Almighty in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the Lord because of their oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and he will rescue them. So the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the Lord. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the Lord and keep them. The Lord will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. They will turn to the Lord, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them. In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrian will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance. (Isaiah 19:19)

P.E. Kretzmann comments, “‘In that day’ is a reference either to the establishment of the religion of Jehovah in Egypt in the second century before the Christian era, when Alexandria became the center of Jewry in Egypt, or, better still, to the foothold which the Christian religion gained in Egypt at a very early date in the new era.”³⁰ The conquest of the civilized world by Alexander the Great in 330 B.C. and the subsequent spread of the Greek language led to the translation of the Old Testament into Greek about 285–246 B.C. The translators are reported to have been sent from Israel, according to the legend, six from each of the twelve tribes, and they completed their translation into Greek within 72 days. Called the Septuagint for this reason, this version of the Old Testament was in itself a mighty missionary endeavor for that time, because the Word of God was thereby made available to all the world.

But whatever the reference might be to Isaiah’s prophecy of the time when hostilities between Assyria, Egypt and Israel would cease, this promise must have been a great source of comfort and encouragement for the believing remnant in Israel, still confidently looking forward to the coming Redeemer.

Someone calls to me from Seir [Edom], “Watchman, what is left of the night?” [Is there hope for the early dawn of deliverance?] And the watchman replies, “Morning is coming, but also the night. [The reply of the prophet promises deliverance, but also rejection, night.] If you would ask, then ask; and come back yet again!” (Isaiah 21:11–12) [The invitation to come to the Lord God of Israel to be saved is still being extended!]

It is not recorded for us just how this sincere invitation to this heathen people was extended, but it is written down by Isaiah and, assuredly, was addressed to the Edomites.

A clear exhortation is next given by Isaiah to the believing remnant to witness to the Lord, when they are scattered at the time when the Lord lays waste to the earth and scatters its inhabitants (24:1): “Therefore in the east give glory to the Lord, exalt the name of the Lord, the God of Israel, in the islands of the sea! From the ends of the earth we hear [the believers] singing, ‘Glory to the Righteous One!’” (24:15,16).

The concern for the conversion of the heathen to the Hope of Israel goes on:

On this mountain [Mount Zion] the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of the meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p 319.

remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The Lord has spoken. In that day they will say, “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the Lord; we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation!” (Isaiah 25:6–9)

In the very midst of their song of praise, sung in Judah-Jerusalem, the people confess their disobedience in not having witnessed of the Lord’s salvation also among the heathen, as he had bidden them to do:

We were with child, we writhed in pain, but we gave birth to wind. We have not brought salvation to the earth; we have not given birth to people of the world. (Isaiah 26:18)

Here the Holy Spirit clearly teaches that it was God’s will that his chosen people bring salvation to all nations, as he had promised it to Abraham: “All peoples on earth will be blessed through you,” (Gn 12:3). And through Moses, “You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,” (Ex 19:6).

As the Lord God has punished the nations for sins of oppression against his chosen people, so he will also visit his wrath and punishment upon Samaria and Judah-Jerusalem for their unbelief and disobedience. At the same time he promises to keep his covenant of grace to the believing remnant and to return them to their homeland to worship and serve him. As Kretzmann says, “Like flashes of sunlight on a dark day these Messianic promises are found in the midst of the gloomy denunciations of the prophet.”³¹

It is not revealed just how Isaiah transmitted his messages of doom and deliverance to the heathen nations, but by the Holy Spirit he calls them to witness what God has done, first, for his people Israel and, then, what he is ready to do for them, if they turn to him.

You who are far away, hear what I have done; you who are near, acknowledge My power!... Your eyes will see the king in his beauty and view a land that stretches afar!... Look upon Zion, the city of our festivals; your eyes will see Jerusalem, a peaceful abode, a tent that will not be moved; its stakes will never be pulled up, nor any of its ropes broken!... No one living in Zion will say, “I am ill,” and the sins of those who dwell there will be forgiven. (Isaiah 33:13,17,20,24)

The prophet continues his witness to the heathen nations, saying to what lengths the Lord will go to deliver his people from all their enemies:

Come near, you nations, and listen; pay attention, you peoples! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it!... The Lord is angry with all nations; his wrath is upon all their armies. He will totally destroy them,... For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution to uphold Zion’s cause.... Look in the scroll of the Lord and read: None of these will be missing. (Isaiah 34:1,2,8,16)

The first part of Isaiah’s prophetic utterances closes with chapter 35 and the thrilling promise of the return of God’s people from Captivity, couched in beautiful, poetic language.

Chapters 36–39, the bridge between the “Book of Denunciation” and “Book of Comfort,” relate the history of God’s gracious dealing with King Hezekiah and Israel. When King Sennacherib of Assyria invaded Judah and besieged Jerusalem, the Lord revealed through Isaiah that God himself would intervene and not one arrow would be shot into the holy city. This came to pass when in one night “the angel of the Lord went out and put to death 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp” (Is 37:36). Again, it was revealed to Isaiah for his dying king that the Lord had heard his prayer and would add fifteen years to Hezekiah’s life (Is 38:5). This part of Isaiah’s

³¹ *Ibid.*, p 330.

book closes with the account of King Hezekiah's boastful display of the wealth of his kingdom to the king of Babylon and Isaiah's revelation of God's judgment in the imminent Babylonian Captivity.

Of concern to us in this study is the intimate part played by the prophet Isaiah in the international affairs of the kingdom and his almost informal access to the king. This fact may be the answer to the question as to the manner in which the words of Isaiah, revealing God's judgment over them, were transmitted to these governments. It affords reasonable basis for the assumption that these messages, as well as the divine invitations to worship the God of Israel, may have been transmitted through official channels in the Jewish theocracy.

Herewith we have arrived at the high point of our study of the missionary theme and mandate in the Old Testament:

The Second Part of Isaiah, Chapter 40–66

There is a noticeable difference between the first and second parts of Isaiah. This has led exegetes who deny the divine inspiration of the text to postulate that the second part must have been written by another author, whom someone has called "The Great Anonymous."

In his thorough *Introduction to Isaiah II* Professor August Pieper has this to say about the authorship:

It remained for the rationalists to question Isaiah's authorship, first of the whole of Part II, and later also of a number of sections of Part I.—The ingenious J.B. Koppe then declared that the second part of Isaiah was a collection of 85 different fragments!³²

In his class lectures on Isaiah Professor Pieper demonstrated the differences in style, language and historical allusions to be reasonably attributable to the changing scene at different stages of Isaiah's life and career. He labeled the involved "scientific" arguments of the higher critics who deny the single authorship as so much illogical *Schwindel*. He told us:

If one cuts Isaiah in two, as the modern critics have done, then one finds no second author indicated anywhere in the book, because Isaiah does not have two heads. But when one leaves him intact, then one finds one head at the top [1:1], which is entirely proper for one book. Part II without Part I would be like a torso without a head. Part II is thoroughly "Isaianic" in thought, language and purpose: The salvation promised in both parts is the same and is preached to penitent sinners, be they Jew or Gentile.³³

The book itself mentions but one author. And this is corroborated by the Lord Jesus and the New Testament writers who quote from Isaiah in 66 specific instances, ascribing their citations to the one, well-known prophet Isaiah in 21 cases.

There is no difference in substance, even though certain matters receive greater emphasis and clarity in the second part. One example will suffice to show this. It is the fact that the same unconditional gospel is proclaimed in both parts:

Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (1:18)
Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins; thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities! I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. (43:24,25)

³² *Isaiah II*, p 32.

³³ From the author's class notes.

As both parts proclaim the free grace of God because of the substitutionary sacrifice of the Servant of the Lord, so they also present prophetic glimpses into the consummation of the plan of redemption through Christ Jesus. The first part contains joyful Messianic prophecies and the second part abounds in these in great detail. Isaiah's "report" of the victorious passion of the Servant of the Lord reads like history penned by an eyewitness rather than prophecy! The prophecy concerning Christ's exaltation describes the three stages, as we confess them in the Apostles' Creed:

See, My Servant will act wisely: he will be *raised* and *lifted up* and *highly exalted*, just as there were many who were appalled at him. (52:13,14—NIV).

The forward-looking mission thoughts which we found in the first part, are more prominent in the second part:

And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's House shall be established in the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills; and *all nations shall flow unto it*.

And many people shall go and say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he shall teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths! For *out of Zion shall go forth* the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (2:2,3)

In the second part we find the mission theme more frequently, more fully expanded and more heavily emphasized:

Arise! shine! for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!—And *the Gentiles shall come to thy Light*, and kings to the brightness of thy rising! (60:1,3)

The literary form of the second part is definitely more carefully organized. The poetic perfection of the second part is apparent. Our division of the second part places chapter 53, the pivotal 'report' of the victory of the suffering Savior, into the exact center, as Pieper points out:

This is perhaps not an accident—for the Servant of the Lord, who rises to supreme glory through His substitutionary sacrifice for a guilt not His own, but ours, is the actual and main subject of the entire book. Everything that precedes is introductory to this chapter and its central figure; everything that follows is an unfolding and development.³⁴

Pieper's outline of this second part of Isaiah is by far the most satisfying and apposite which has come to our notice. His short captions also summarize the salient thoughts of the text. By their very brevity, however, they seem to slight a very important feature of the prophecy, namely, its missiological thrust.

If one reads Isaiah Part II through without interruption, one soon becomes aware of being swept along on recurrent waves of missiological emphasis. Our study will endeavor to demonstrate this. It is difficult to understand why this mission thrust of these chapters has been questioned. But there are still those who speak of a 'universal' concern in Isaiah and the Old Testament which they carefully try to distinguish from any *missionary* concern and activity. They say that the missionary thoughts in the Old Testament are only 'centripetal,' that is, the Gentiles of their own volition come to the Light in Israel. They also claim that there is no evidence of any 'centrifugal,' mission activity, that is, a being sent or a going out with the light. Such a position is held by R. Martin-Achard, author of *Israel et les Nations*, as quoted by Johannes Blauw:

³⁴ *Isaiah II*, p 30.

The message of Deutero-Isaiah is not missionary in the ordinary sense of the word; his preaching does not issue in proselytism.—The *raison d’etre* of the chosen people is to exist; its presence gives testimony to the divinity of Yahweh, its life proclaims to all that God is for it and the world. The mission of Israel exists in reflecting the glory of God by accepting His gifts along with His judgments; by beholding the whole singular fortune of the chosen people one discovers heaven and earth and their Maker.—The fortune of the world ultimately hangs upon the existence of Israel in the midst of the nations; living by Yahweh, the chosen people lives for mankind. *That* is the missionary perspective which becomes visible in the declarations of Deutero-Isaiah.³⁵

That this is a gross distortion of the text of Isaiah and the priestly-prophetic office and calling of Israel is apparent to every Bible student. To state that Israel had the divine mission merely to exist and to receive God’s gifts is grossly to disregard what God himself revealed to Israel as his mission:

This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my glory (Is 43:21)

One may not infer from the fact that Israel failed miserably to “declare God’s glory among the heathen and his wonders among all people” (Ps 96:3), that God did not expect or direct them to do so. The question which must be asked and answered is whether he called his chosen servant Israel to share the “hope of Israel” with the world. For the affirmative answer to this question we will find ample evidence in this second part of Isaiah, as we shall now discover.

Chapter 40

Without any preliminaries the Holy Spirit inspires the prophet to announce the great theme of this second part of Isaiah, properly called *The Book of Comfort*:

Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God! speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, and that she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins! (40:1)

This is the opening strophe of a grand hymn, a most precious Word of our God that should be sung to music, as it has been in Handel’s great oratorio, *The Messiah*. It is the theme that will ever be in the hearts and on the lips of truly evangelical preachers. It will be remembered by the saints in heaven, by that “great multitude which no man can number of all nations and kindreds and tongues and people, standing before the throne with palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice: Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing!” (Re 5 and 7).

Isaiah hastens to state that this is not only for God’s chosen people Israel, but for all the elect of God in the whole world,

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and *all flesh shall see it together*, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it! (40:5)

Having thus said, the Lord sounds the mission theme almost immediately in order that all sinners may hear it and live. The means for transmitting this free grace and gift of life is nothing that human flesh can produce or invent, because everything that it produces is like the grass that withers and its most admirable inventions and discoveries are like the flower that quickly fades away. To convey and generate life that never

³⁵ *Blauw*, p 32-33.

ends in death and decay God invites and exhorts the dying world to hear his Word, for it alone shall endure forever. This life-giving Word Zion is exhorted to publish as God's servant and herald to all the world:

O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain!
 O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength!
 Lift it up, be not afraid, say unto the cities of Judah: Behold your God! (40:9)

Dr. Martin Luther has this to say on this passage: "God calls Zion, that is, the whole Church of believers, a preacher of the Gospel [the Good Tidings], for all who are called to preach are *eu-angelists*, heralds of the Good News."³⁶

August Pieper provides the sound exegesis for the same text:

The genitive relationship expressed by the two constructs: מְבַשֶּׂרֶת צִיּוֹן and מְבַשֶּׂרֶת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם is that of apposition, as is usually the case with proper nouns, and designates Zion-Jerusalem as a preacher, a herald.—The LXX already has εὐαγγελιζόμενος Σιών, Ἱερουσαλήμ. It is not a onetime act, [King James version: O Zion, that bringest good tidings], but an uninterruptedly continuing exercise and therefore a customary, a natural, a professional activity. [G.K. Gr. 116a, p 355f]. It is really a noun. Luther's *Predigerin* is the only correct translation.

Zion, the Church, God's congregation, is a preacher by birth, by calling and profession, called and endowed by God to be a herald of salvation [43:21; 51:16; 54:13; 59:21; 1 Peter 2:9], to preach the Gospel, that great message of the comfort of God, whose chief exponent in the Old Testament is the prophet Isaiah.

This message is placed at the very head of Book II and is then carried out in varied form throughout the rest of the book. It is the proclamation of this message of joy that makes Zion-Jerusalem the 'servant of the Lord' who carries out God's gracious will toward the whole world, 43:21; 35:4ff. Preaching the Gospel is the one specific mission of the Church, Mark 16, Matthew 28.³⁷

In Scriptural support of both Luther's and Pieper's exegesis let us keep in mind that Isaiah is *one* book and that for this reason the exhortation at the very beginning of the book (1:2) applies to every part, but especially to the proclamation of the Gospel:

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken! (1:20)

The Holy Spirit closes this first chapter with a powerful Word of encouragement to Zion-Jerusalem not to shrink back from carrying out his assignment, but to proclaim his Word with confidence because he will be with her. To overcome her weakness and fear he points his people to his almighty creation, especially to the starry host, every one of whose countless number he knows by name and guides in its intricately planned course; then why should Israel say, "My way is hidden from the Lord?" The lovely song we learned as children comes forcibly to mind:

*Weisst Du wie viel Sternlein stehen
 an dem blauen Himmelszelt?
 Weisst du wie viel Wolken gehen
 weit hinueber alle Welt?
 Gott der Herr hat sie gezaehlet,*

³⁶ LW XXV, 255.

³⁷ *Isaiah II*, p 102.

*dass Ihm auch nicht Eines fehlet
an der ganzen grossen Zahl!*

This is the introduction to Isaiah II and the prologue for the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus, which we cherish in our era as spiritual heirs of God's chosen people,

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age! (Mt 28:18–20)

Chapter 41

The same theme, encouragement to trust in the Lord's promise and power to help, is carried into this chapter to strengthen God's chosen people, his servant and herald, to fulfill his mission. The same tender words which characterize chapter 40, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd," are repeated to give Israel complete reassurance:

But you, O Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham, my friend,
I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you.
I said, 'You are my servant'; I have chosen you and have not rejected you.
So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (8–10—NIV)

Note that the "fear not" is repeated three times: "So do not fear—do not fear—do not be afraid" (41:10,13,14—NIV).

Lest we overlook them in our study, we must also take careful note here of the titles of endearment with which the Lord addresses his people, since they appear here for the first time, namely, "my servant—my chosen one," (v 8). The Hebrew is עֶבְדִי בְחַרְתִּיךָ. My old *Gesenius* has this to say about these words:

עֶבֶד=slave, menial, servant, a designation of subservience, respect, and obedience toward a superior. Frequently it has the connotation that one designated as עֶבֶד feels not only a sense of reverence but, especially in the relationship toward God, that he has been given a specific assignment to carry out for the Lord. Thus, for example, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, is called עֶבֶד, a servant or instrument to carry out God's special mission (Jr 25:9; 27:6; 43:10). In most cases, however, the servant of God is thought of as one who, under the assignment and service of the Lord, speaks the Word of God and carries out His work. The title *servant of God* is found most frequently in Isaiah 40–66.

בְּחַרְתִּיךָ from בָּחַר—to select, choose, elect, prefer.

Davidson's *lexicon* agrees with these definitions of Gesenius. The latter states that in our passage (41:8, 9) with the suffix ךְ it means "you whom I have selected, chosen, for my purpose."

The Jews placed undue emphasis on the last meaning of בְּחַר in the sense of “whom I prefer,” “my favorite.” Imperceptibly, the true original meaning of עֶבְדִּי as “my servant” was forgotten. Instead of thinking of themselves as *servants* whom the Lord had graciously selected to perform a service for him, they thought of themselves only as God’s favorites and looked down on all other peoples who were not chosen.

While it is indeed true that God in his love and grace did speak of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, because of his election, in terms of tender endearment, calling them “the apple of God’s eye” (Dt 32:10) and “Hephzibah” (Is 62:4), and heaped other tender words of love upon them, such as “you are precious in my eyes, you are honored, and I love you,” (Is 43:4), this was not the only purpose for which he had chosen Israel “from the ends of the earth or called him from its farthest corners,” (v 9). This is clear from God’s own statement as to the purpose which he had in mind in choosing and blessing Israel, as “the people I formed for myself, that they may proclaim my praise,” (43:21 cf 1 Pe 2:9).

This is brought out by August Pieper in his exegesis:

The names Israel, Jacob, and Abraham’s seed are here, as elsewhere, terms of endearment and honor, through which at the very outset He wishes to give assurance of His love and faithfulness to His covenant. The appositions and attributive adjuncts express characteristics of the substantives. *Israel* is the spiritualized Jacob who prevailed over God and man (Gen. 32:28); he is עֶבְדִּי, My servant, the servant of the Lord who has a spiritual mission to carry out on earth in God’s name, namely, the same mission that the servant of the Lord κατ’ ἐξοχήν actually carries out (chapter 42): *to bring the Gospel to the Gentile world*, cf. 43:10,21.³⁸

Pieper adds, referring especially to the title ‘seed of Abraham, my friend’, “The people knew very well what this name meant, but they degraded it into something fleshly. Mt 3:9; Jn 8:33; Rom 11:1,2; 2 Cor 11:22; Gal 3:29.”

Chapter 42

In the previous chapter God called Israel עֶבְדִּי בְּחַרְתִּיךָ, “my servant, whom I have chosen.” With other words and titles of endearment he encouraged his people to carry out his mission with confidence. In the opening words of this chapter the Holy Spirit now introduces a special person, which is indicated by the “Behold!” He bears the same title as Israel, but he is the unique and perfect servant of the Lord, the servant κατ’ ἐξοχήν:

Behold! My Servant whom I uphold,
My Chosen One in whom I delight!

It is evident that this is not the servant who is told in 41:14, “Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you, declares the Lord.” The identity of this new servant is fully explained by Pieper with an assenting reference to Delitzsch [p 177]:

Once before, in 41:8f, the servant of the Lord was mentioned as עֶבְדִּי, My servant. In that passage faithful Israel was meant.—In chapter 42 the servant of the Lord is presented in twofold form: in the first strophe [1–9] he appears as a servant who victoriously carries out the gracious will of the Lord for the enlightenment of the Gentiles and as the Mediator of the covenant with His people Israel. In the third strophe [18–25] he appears as the servant of the Lord who is so

³⁸ *Isaiah II*, p 149.

blind and hardened that no revelation of the Lord, however abundant, is sufficient to open his eyes. Nor does chastisement cause him to understand.

Those are three distinct forms of the same person, who in succeeding chapters will appear again and again with the same distinctive characteristics, often designated as servant, still more often without that express designation.

The *first* form in which he appears is clearly that of *faithful* Israel, as in 43:1–7; 44:1,21,26; 45:4; 48:20 and elsewhere. The *third* is *reprobate* Israel, as in 43:8; 48:12 and other passages. The *second* appears again in 49:3,5; 50:4,10; 52:3ff; 53:11; 55:4; 61:1ff. Who is this? Already the Aramaic *Targum* translates the opening words of this chapter 42 as “Behold My Servant, the Messiah!” The LXX adds “Jacob” to the first clause and “Israel” to the second. In this and other passages the *New Testament* recognizes *the Christ*.” [Our emphasis for clarity.]³⁹

That which singles out this true servant of the Lord, the Messiah, is his compassion for the weak, sinful and helpless and his faithful obedience and perseverance in carrying out the mission assigned to him by God, as it is recorded in the words which follow:

Upon Him have I laid My Spirit, *He shall bring forth justice to the Gentiles.*

He shall not cry nor lift up nor cause His voice to be heard in the street.

A bruised reed will he not break, a smoldering wick not quench.

Truly, he shall bring forth the Right!

He shall neither flicker nor break *till He has established the Right in the earth and the isles trust in His Word!*” (42:1b–4 Pieper-Kowalke translation).

It is obvious that the “Behold!” at the beginning of this chapter is to call attention to something very important concerning this servant of the Lord. This is still further emphasized by the thrice repeated statement of his mission: “He shall bring forth, he shall establish Justice and the Right for the Gentiles, even for those on the distant isles.”

The Hebrew verb יוֹצִיא means more than “he will bring,” as the NIV translates it. יוֹצִיא has a deeper meaning: “He will bring out, he will found, he will originate, he will beget.” And יָשַׁם is rendered correctly with “He has established, he has made sure.” The servant is the Lord’s Messenger, his Herald; but he is far more; he is the originator of the justification, the righteousness, which God for his sake declares as his righteous verdict over the entire sin-cursed world. This is set forth unequivocally in chapter 53, especially in verses 6 and 10. By his perfect obedience and vicarious suffering in the place of sinners, he removes both the guilt and the penalty for all sin and, in divine justice, God places His *imprimatur* upon his servant’s atoning sacrifice.

Of the outcome and result of his sacrifice Isaiah writes in 52:13, as though he were sitting at the elbow of Saint Paul, when by the Spirit he wrote Philippians 2:6–11:

Just as there were many who were appalled at him—See, my servant will act wisely; he will be *raised* and *lifted up* and *highly exalted!* (Is 52:14,13—NIV)

Pieper has these comments to this passage:

That the word מִשְׁפָּט is used here in its objective sense of *right*, of that which is the consequence of an act of judgment, or as the content of a judicial pronouncement, is evidenced by its predicates יוֹצִיא and יָשַׁם and by its synonym תּוֹרָתוֹ [vv 3,4]. Matthew’s use of κρίσις in quoting

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p 176.

this passage need not perplex us, since his is a literal translation, having the same *objective* meaning.

This **טִפְּחָן**, this right or justice, is the *righteousness* of the New Testament, of the covenant with Abraham, of the Gospel of grace in Christ, which Jeremiah describes in 31:31–34, in contrast to the Law of Sinai.

The Gospel is here called **טִפְּחָן**, a judicial pronouncement, a judge’s verdict, a right or judgment, since it does proceed from a real and actual judicial proceeding: The world, found guilty according to the justice of the Law, is condemned to death before the tribunal of God; also standing before the same tribunal is the innocent servant of the Lord. To the former God does not impute its sin; the latter he makes to be sin for us, thus reconciling the world unto Himself [2 Cor 5:19–21; Isa 53]. That is the judgment of God, the right or justice which, according to the covenant with Abraham, is to be the norm in the Kingdom of God.

To bring forth this judgment also to the Gentiles, to non-Israelites, is the mission of the servant of the Lord.⁴⁰

Of special interest for us in our study of the mission mandate in Isaiah is what is revealed in these four verses as the office and mission of the servant of the Lord *κατ’ ἐξοχήν*, namely, his establishment of God’s **טִפְּחָן**, or justification of all the world of sinners. The redemption of all the world from the power, the guilt, and the penalty of sin is complete and nothing remains to be done in God’s perfect plan of salvation.

The whole world now needs only to be informed of this great *fait accompli*. And this, too, has been provided by the servant of the Lord! This is made clear in Pieper’s translation: “He shall neither flicker nor break till He has established the Right in the earth and the isles trust in his Word!” (42:4).

St. Matthew translates the passage by the Spirit in the same sense: “In His Name the nations will put their hope.” (Mt 12:21—NIV).

Pieper adds this explanation, “Judgment is established *de facto* upon the earth when the isles, that is, the heathen nations, with an enduring trust place their hope in the Lord’s **תּוֹרָה**, which is His instruction, His Word.”⁴¹

The question as to whether Israel also had this mandate in the Old Testament to bring the gospel hope to the nations, the **גּוֹיִם**, should not be raised at all. Of course, Israel had the mandate to praise God from the high mountain and to lift up her voice with strength to praise and herald his saving name! The soul which is released from the death house, even without an express mandate, is like Peter and John who exclaimed in the very face of persecution, “We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard!” (Ac 4:20—NIV).

This response to God’s unfathomable love in Christ we choose to call mission “work.” It is not work at all in the ordinary sense of the word; it is not even an optional, or special, activity for the redeemed. Nor is it taking something that is ours and giving it to the heathen. It is simply turning over to those who have not learned of their redemption that which is *rightfully* theirs, decreed to them by the Father’s **טִפְּחָן** on the firm basis of the perfect satisfaction rendered by the Son in his willing obedience and innocent expiation for the sins of the world.

It has been argued that, because these four verses (1–4) are a part of the first of the four so-called “Songs of the Servant of the Lord,” and refer to the mission of the servant of the Lord who is still to come, any mission mandate for Israel that is drawn from them is out of place; Israel was not expected or directed by the Lord to carry on a mission to win the heathen. This, it is said, is the task of the New Testament church.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 179–180.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p 182.

How does such reasoning square with the joyous response to the Lord's presentation of his faithful servant and the exhortation which Isaiah now addresses to believing Israel to break forth in a jubilant song of praise?

Sing unto the Lord a new song, His praise to the ends of the earth!
 Those who go down to the sea, and that which fills it, the isles and those who inhabit them;
 let the desert shout aloud and its cities, the shepherds' villages that Kedar inhabits;
 those who dwell among the rocks, let them shout, from the mountaintops let them shout for joy!
 Let them give honor to the Lord and proclaim His glory, upon the islands proclaim his praise!
 (10–12)

How can one possibly deny that this is a direct invitation to the heathen to join Israel in singing the praise of God for his salvation; a most moving mission mandate? The fact that the majority of Jews were insensitive to these tender entreaties of their gracious God to include the Gentiles surely is derogatory only of obdurate Israel.

But still more evidence for the fact that God expected Israel to speak out as his herald to all the world is found in his censure of their failure to heed his exhortation to act as his herald and messenger to the nations:

Hear, you deaf, and you blind, look up and see!
 Who is still blind, if not My servant, and deaf, *like My herald whom I send*;
 who is blind like My trusted one, and so blind as the Lord's servant!
 Having seen much—yet nothing have you kept! With opened ears—and yet nothing understood!
 It pleased the Lord for the sake of His righteousness: He made His *instruction* great; He made it
 glorious. (Pieper-Kowalke Translation of 18–21).

Pieper expounds these words for better understanding:

This messenger, this servant, who is sent out to deliver a message, is stone-deaf, hears and perceives nothing at all of what the Lord imparts to him as His message to the Gentiles [21].—
 To this servant, chosen from all the nations of the world, God had revealed His inmost heart and entrusted His revelation concerning Himself and the rest of the world, *and had called him to preach His Word to the Gentiles*; עֲבָדָה refers to his office as preacher, מְשַׁלֵּם to the trust reposed in him. Since Israel is the trusted messenger and servant of the Lord in a special sense, his blindness is such an anomaly that the Lord again and again shows His displeasure.⁴²

This great chapter closes with the Lord asking his backsliding people whether it was not their refusal to walk in his ways and their disobedience in not carrying out his instructions to herald his salvation that moved him to deliver them into warfare, plunder and exile. He laments the fact that his people did not take even this heavy chastisement to heart and repent.

Chapter 43

The Lord makes another effort in this chapter to move Israel to repent and carry out his mission; this is the purpose of his tender words of reassurance in the opening verses and throughout the next six chapters. That purpose of the Lord in calling Israel as his servant is stated in unmistakably clear words:

The people whom I have formed for Myself shall recount My praise!" (21) (Pieper-Kowalke Tr.)

⁴² *Ibid.*, p 202.

After he reminds his people once more of his faithful guidance in days of old, delivering them from Egypt and their other enemies, he states that all this was done because “I have loved thee,” and because he had chosen them for his saving mission to the world, “Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen” (10,12).

Here the golden thread of God’s loving concern for his people and for the heathen stands out brightly against the warp of his control and guidance of history so that his plan of salvation for all the world may surely be carried out. As sacred history records, even the approaching Exile in Babylon was turned to eternal good for the heathen who were brought to faith by his believing, faithful remnant, such as Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, as we have already shown. The end purpose and goal of all his dealings with Israel and all mankind is his gracious plan to rescue sinners from everlasting death. The motivation is always his grace, his love for the unworthy and undeserving; that is amply clear in this chapter and restated at the end:

Yet you have not called upon me, O Jacob, you have not wearied yourselves for me, O Israel. I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions *for My own sake* [because I keep the covenant made with your father Abraham!], and remembers your sins no more! (22,25)

Chapter 44

Once more God speaks tenderly to Israel, foreseeing the suffering of the Exile, and encourages him to trust and obey him, promising that he will bless him with many spiritual children despite the tribulation which is coming:

But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen.
This is what the Lord says—he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you:
Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen....
I will pour out my spirit on your offspring, and blessing upon your seed.
They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams.
One will say, ‘I belong to the Lord’; another will call himself by the name of Jacob;
still another will write on his hand: ‘The Lord’s,’ and will take the name Israel” (1–5—NIV).

Pieper explains,

In the Exile Israel is spiritually widowed, expelled from her husband’s house, rejected, barren, bearing no children, 54:1; cf. 49:1–4ff. She produces no spiritual offspring. The believers were constantly diminishing in number. Many of the exiles were entering into mixed marriages with idol worshippers and were falling away from the revealed religion; the younger generation who were living as captives in strange surroundings could not easily be enthused for the faith of their fathers. The upright ones, *the Jeshurun*, therefore had reason to fear that God’s faithful people might perish from the earth during the Exile. Against this fear the following promise [3–5] is directed, a promise that is already latent in the names and appellations used in verses 1 and 2.⁴³

There is an unresolved question whether the offspring promised in verse 5 are all Jewish children who are brought back to the faith of Israel or whether they are also heathen converts who were gained by the upright Jews in Babylon. No doubt, in the light of the promise in passages like chapter 60, they are both.

The important consideration is this that the fears and misgivings of the faithful Jews that there will be no spiritual progeny are unfounded. God will provide the harvest, wherever the seed of his word is faithfully sown. The Holy Spirit will work the miracle of germination, growth and reaping! This God has promised: Isaiah 54:1–

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p 238.

4; 55:10,11f. The Lord asks only as a gracious condescension to his children that they show forth his praise in their witness and leave the harvest to him, because his promises stand firm.

Chapter 45

As we proceed in our study, we find repeated references to and a loving concern for the salvation of the heathen. This preoccupation with the heathen is not only in contempt of their worship and trust in idols, as in the previous chapter (9–20), but most frequently, as in this chapter, the prophet’s inspired solicitude for their conversion. The climax of this concern is reached in a direct invitation to all the world:

Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is no other!
By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked:
Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.
They will say of me: “In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength.” (45:22–24—NIV)

Even Israel’s bitterest enemies will yield, the Lord promises, to his Word and Spirit:

This is what the Lord says:
“The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and those tall Sabeans—
they will come over to you and will be yours;
they will trudge behind you, coming over to you in chains.
They will bow down before you, saying,
‘Surely God is with you, and there is no other; there is no other god!’”
Truly you are a God who hides himself, O God and Savior of Israel! (14,15—NIV).

From the confession of the true God Jehovah and the rejection of the idols which follows it is clear that this is not the record of a military conquest. It is, rather, the prelude to the great Epiphany song of rejoicing of those who, with Israel, rejoice over the light that has risen upon her in the promised Redeemer and has sent its saving beams over all the earth.

Although the Savior-God of Israel is a God who hides himself from those who follow human reason to escape God’s wrath, he becomes light and life for all those whom the Spirit illumines with faith in the Word.

Then he becomes מוֹשִׁיעַ, Savior. (v 15). Pieper has this apt comment:

This is indeed the very confession of all Gentiles who are converted to Christ—our gods are idols, Salvation is of the Jews; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Him alone we acknowledge to be the true, living, eternal, almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the only true Savior! This is the supreme glory of the Jews: only with you was God, nowhere else. We are all indebted to Israel for the true God and Savior!⁴⁴

Chapters 46–48

These last three chapters of the first third of *Isaiah II* treat of the fall of Babylon as God’s deserved punishment for her harassment of God’s people, but the climax of this preachment is God’s judgment against the faithless house of Israel. The Lord’s wrath is fierce against Israel because they have forsaken him for the impotent idols of the heathen neighbors.

The Lord says that he would utterly reject and destroy the house of Jacob, but “for my name’s sake I check my wrath, for the sake of my honor, for your good, I restrain myself, so as not to cut you off! (48:9).

In a last effort to bring his people to repent, he instructs the prophet to warn them that he will chastise them, “as one refines silver in the fire” (v 10).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p 280.

But miracle of miracles, it is not the last Word of the Lord. Here one learns to understand what it means when he revealed himself to Israel through Moses as “The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Ex 34:6,7). The closing words of this section are once more an earnest, loving entreaty of the Lord to his chosen people:

Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel:

“I am the Lord, your God, who teaches you what is good, and leads you in ways by which you should walk.

Oh, if you will listen to My Word, then your peace will be like a stream and your Salvation like the waves of the sea.

and your seed will be like the sand, and the offspring of your body like grains of the sand, and his name will not be cut off nor destroyed before Me.” (48:17–19 Pieper–Kowalke Translation)

This first section of nine chapters closes with the sad refrain which is repeated also at the end of the next section, 57:21: “But there is no peace, saith the Lord, for the wicked.”

Chapter 49

Our study now brings us to the very heart of the book, to the central section of nine chapters, 49–57, which Pieper has captioned *The Redemption from the Guilt of Sin*. The focus and climax of this section, as of the entire prophetic revelation, chapter 53, is called the “Good Tidings” which Israel is charged by the Lord to bring, first, to the “cities of Judah,” but also to all the world.

At the very opening of this chapter 49 the servant of the Lord, the Messiah of 42:1, formally and officially addresses his message to “the entire world of the Gentiles” to reveal that God called him “from birth” and instructed him as his servant with his Word to “lead Jacob back to Him, to gather Israel together to him,” and also to be “the Light of the Gentiles and to be the Lord’s Salvation unto the ends of the earth,” (Pieper–Kowalke Translation).⁴⁵

The fact that the servant of the Lord here, through the prophet Isaiah, addresses the Gentiles directly is important for our study. God makes use of a human writer whom he inspires to use human words and concepts in a language which was understood in that day, because his message is meant for that day and age. This is too easily overlooked by those who see in its revelation a description of their New Testament church and its worldwide missionary activity! Although we are not informed as to just how this is to be done, the message, like any message of such life and death importance, is for publication and transmission to those to whom it is addressed. After all, Isaiah like Israel is called to be the Lord’s servant, specifically his herald (cf. 42:19).

How can one overlook these facts? How can one deny that the revelation of the redemption won by the servant of the Lord for all sinners and the concomitant revelation that he is called also to “be a Light to the Gentiles” were intended for the non-Jews of that day, just because “these passages (49:6 and others) in Isaiah which speak of the Gentiles as receiving the Gospel occur in parts of the book which are purely Messianic or which describe the New Testament church to Old Testament believers in prophetic language?” Is it logical to conclude that the latter excludes the former; that predicting the missionary activity in the New Testament justifies the denial of a similar activity in the days before Christ? The matter is settled once and for all by the inescapable fact that God called Israel into his service as a herald of the good tidings to all the world, (43:21 and other passages).

This first strophe reaches its climax with the Lord’s assurance that his Servant will be a Light also to the Gentiles (v 6). This word of assurance is the Lord’s response to the discouragement, expressed by the Servant, according to his human nature, over the callous indifference and disobedience of the servant of the Lord, Israel,

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p 351.

to both God's entreaties and chastisements. Implicit in the servant's lament is his, that is, God's disappointment that his chosen people, whom he had called out of the midst of the heathen nations, refused to show forth his glory in his Word which he had so freely revealed to them.

Pieper explains how this Servant of the Lord, the Savior Son of God himself, could have become discouraged:

We must not forget that He who is meant here, the Christ, is undertaking His mission to save sinners as a weak and humble human being. "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."—Yes, in His days on earth as a weak human being, with no confidence in Himself, vividly conscious of His own weakness and infirmity, and yet with a trust in His God, unshakable, however violently assailed, Jesus "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears" Heb. 5:7. All this is conveyed in this passage by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶

Upon this, the servant's supplication, follows the high point in the Lord's reassuring Word:

He says, "It is too little that You should be a Servant to Me to bring back the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will also make You the Light of the Gentiles, to be My Salvation unto the ends of the earth!" (6—Kowalke translation)

This progression from witnessing to Zion to heralding the good tidings to the Gentiles is characteristic of many passages of Old Testament Scripture; it was a familiar part of the sacred literature and liturgy of the Jewish congregation and did not come as an innovation when Isaiah presented it. The people knew very well what the Lord expected them to do: "Sing unto the Lord; bless his name; show forth his salvation from day to day! Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people!" (Ps 96:2,3).

In view of this, how can serious exegetes and commentators still assert, "It was not Israel's task to share the Messianic hope with all the other nations on earth"?

Again we turn to Pieper for his comments on this text:

The high point of the message of verse 6 lies in the second half. The Servant is to accomplish more than just the deliverance of Israel. The Lord made Him to be Light to the Gentiles to bring His Salvation to the ends of the earth.

This is that mighty prophecy, already contained in Noah's blessing, in the promise to Abraham, and which was confirmed to David and Solomon, repeated and expanded by nearly every prophet, but especially by Isaiah, that the Gentiles should be received into the Kingdom of God. This prophecy is the basis of the mission command of the risen Savior who gave His gospel to us of the Gentile world.

אור, light, is in this passage parallel to יְשׁוּעָתִי. יְשׁוּעָתִי is an abstract term designating a person, a more emphatic equivalent of "My Savior."—But the context [v 2] and parallel passages [42:1,2 and especially 7] clearly indicate that our passage, in particular, refers to Salvation through spiritual enlightenment by means of the Servant's preaching of the Word, the Gospel, which of course, presupposes repentance [cf. Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:18 etc.].

Christ, the Servant of the Lord, chosen from eternity and called from His mother's womb [Acts 2:22,23,36], is the Savior, not only of the Jews but also of the Gentiles—that is the substance of this strophe.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p 355.

⁴⁷ *Isaiah II*, pp 358,360,361.

God has but one plan of salvation: the saints of old died in faith in the Christ of prophecy and the saints of the new age die in faith in the Christ of history. All are brought to this saving faith by the Holy Spirit through the same Word: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God—From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tm 3:15,16).

The well-known mission passage from Romans 10 records some astonishing facts concerning the Old Testament, since the proof texts which the Holy Spirit moves St. Paul to adduce are all from the Old Testament, back to the days of Moses:

Did they not hear?—Of course they did. Their voice has gone out into all the earth; their words to the ends of the world [Quoting Ps 19:4].

Again I ask, did Israel not understand?—First Moses says, “I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding,” [Quoting Dt 32:21].

And Isaiah boldly says, “I was found by those who did not seek Me; I revealed Myself to those who did not ask for me.” [Notice the past tense—Is 65:1].

But concerning Israel he [Isaiah] says, “All day long I held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people,” [Quoting Is 65:2]—(Ro 10:18–21—NIV).

By quoting these Old Testament texts in answer to his questions as to whether the heathen have heard the gospel, St. Paul by the Holy Spirit records the fact that the saving gospel was indeed proclaimed to the heathen and that at least some of them came to faith. Isaiah’s prophecy in 49:6 that the mission of the servant of the Lord, the Messiah, is to be a Light to the Gentiles cannot, therefore, be construed to show that it was not Israel’s mission to share the hope in Christ with the Gentiles. We find that it is both misleading and untenable to say that it was not Israel’s task to share the Messianic hope with all other nations; that this is the activity of the New Testament church; and that the church could not proclaim the gospel of Christ until the Old Testament church had produced the Messiah.

We ask, what was the “report” of Isaiah 53, if it was not the gospel? Why was this “report” released and published 700 years before the chronological event of Calvary, and described as finished, if not to awaken faith in the Savior of the world? Why did the Holy Spirit both exhort the chosen people to publish it and the heathen people to listen (49:1), if this gospel revelation was not intended for them?

This remarkable chapter 49 continues, verses 14–23, with still more evidence of the Lord’s concern and plan to bring the heathen into the communion of believers. Isaiah’s portrayal of Zion as the forsaken mother who yearns for spiritual children is so tenderly sketched that Pieper is moved to superlatives in describing it:

This section is emotionally one of the most moving parts of Isaiah.—Every word is fraught with fervent compassion.—In all of secular literature, even in the Scriptures, there is not to be found another description of the fervent love of God for His children to match this one! Oh, if we could only taste even a drop from this measureless sea of God’s burning love!⁴⁸

Please, be sure to read these pages in their entirety! Rather than describe the section further, we will quote it:

But Zion says, “The Lord has forsaken me and my Lord has forgotten me!”

Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne?

⁴⁸ *Isaiah II*, p 370,373.

Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands; your walls are ever before Me! Your children hasten back, and those who laid you waste depart from you. Lift up your eyes and look around; all these are coming to you in throngs! “As I live” says the Lord, “you will wear them all as adornments; you will put them on like a bride. Though you were ruined and made desolate and your land laid waste; now you will be too small for your people; and those who devoured you will be far away! The children of your barrenness shall yet say in your ears, ‘This place is too small for us, give us more space to live in.’”

Then you will say in your heart, ‘Who bore me these? I was childless and barren, rejected and deserted on the way; but these—where have they come from?’”

This is what the Lord God says: “See, I will beckon *to the Gentiles*, I will lift up My banner to the people; they will bring your sons in their arms, and carry your daughters at their shoulders. Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. They will bow down before you with their faces to the ground; they will lick the dust at your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord; those who hope in me will not be disappointed.” (49:14–23—Composite Translation)

Is it at all surprising that this section is introduced with this exhortation?—

Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted! (v 13).

Whether this tender word of reassurance predicts the return of the Jews to their homeland after the Exile in Babylon or from some other Diaspora is not the most important consideration; what is of greater importance is the coming of the believing Gentiles with God’s chosen people. This momentous result of sharing the gospel hope with all peoples is portrayed to the Israel of Isaiah’s day to open their hearts to the divinely inspired vision of the church as a house of prayer for all people (cf. Is 56:6,7).

This entire chapter is thus preoccupied from beginning to end with the concern of the servant of the Lord for the advent of the heathen to his salvation, as it is indicated in the very first verse: “Hearken to Me, O isles, and listen, ye distant nations!”

Pieper arrives at the same conclusion:

The prophet’s vision now sweeps past and beyond Babylon out into the whole wide world. [p. 346]—The two designations “isles and distant nations” comprise the entire world of the gentiles.—The speaker summons all of heathendom to listen to Him and to pay close attention to what He has to say. His message to them is that He is divinely called and that His mission is from God also to them.—His eternal election, realized within the bounds of time, and His appointment to this office is what the Servant of the Lord here impresses upon the gentiles.—His office is first of all an office of the mouth; He is the Lord’s messenger, prophet, preacher, apostle. He is to proclaim the Lord’s Word to the nations. *Just as the Lord at one time put His Word into the mouth of Israel, that is, revealed it to them and commanded them to proclaim it (51:16; 59:21; 43:21; Deut. 30:14; Rom. 10:8ff), so He has now placed it in the mouth of this special Servant, who is the right and proper Israel, in order that he proclaim it to the nations (verse 3) [Emphasis added].*⁴⁹

Just *how* the message of salvation was transmitted to the heathen in Isaiah’s day is not revealed; *that* it would be transmitted promptly is evident from the Lord’s expressed concern about the inclusion

⁴⁹ *Isaiah II*, pp 351–353.

of the Gentiles. Since the Gentiles had no other access to the gospel than through the preached and written Word (Ro 10:17), this Word must have come to them in one way or another. History records that it was faithfully copied by scribes during Old Testament times, that it was present, read and reverently preserved in the synagogues of the many Jewish settlements in every country of the ancient world. To produce reliably accurate copies of the sacred text required endless hours of painstaking labor by the scribes, like the priest Ezra, who also functioned as teachers of the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms.

Through the tireless effort of these scribes the Word of God was carefully preserved from mutilation and error and became known also to non-Jewish scholars in the far corners of the earth. While the epic poetry of Homer was being written in far-off Greece to celebrate the exploits of mortal heroes, the Holy Spirit moved prophets like Isaiah to record his inspired Word of Life to announce salvation from sin and death to the world of sinners. To a greater extent than we today may know or imagine the Old Testament mission mandate was carried out by the means of the distribution of these faithful copies of the original manuscripts by the Jewish scribes to Jews in all the world.

It would be unpardonable to assert that this would not be done until after Christ had come, although God had already revealed to his saints like Isaiah that the Gentiles were included in his great universal plan of salvation! Far rather, the very completeness of God's revelation of the life and death, of the mission and blessed fruit of the Redeemer's work of redemption, irrefutably proves the Lord's loving concern and activity in bringing his Word of Life to all sinners. Then as now there is but one way of salvation: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever!" (He 13:8). And Scripture says, "These [the ancients enumerated] all died *in the faith* [the one saving faith]!" (He 11:13).

Chapters 50 and 51

In preparation for the climax, the "report" of Isaiah concerning the redemption through the Servant of the Lord, these chapters rebuke Israel for bringing on its own rejection and chastisement, but they also reassure God's chosen people of his will to help and his power to save through the obedience and suffering of his willing Servant (50:4–9).

In two strong appeals the Lord invites Israel to place their trust in him, for he will remain faithful to his covenant made with their fathers (51).

With longsuffering patience the Lord reiterates that his מְשֻׁפָּט, his declaration that he will account all to be righteous for the sake of his Servant, will go out also to the Gentiles from Zion:

Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation:

The law [תּוֹרָה = God's Word] will go out from me; my justice [מְשֻׁפָּט = righteousness] will become a light to the nations.

My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way [Christ's work of redemption], and my arm will bring justice to the nations.

The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my arm! (51:4,5—NIV).

What now follows in the next two chapters is not alone for the chosen people but for all the world to hear and to cherish as God's "right arm" of salvation for all mankind.

Chapters 52 and 53

The earth-shaking event which is now to be "reported" by the prophet is appropriately introduced by the Lord himself:

Awake, awake, O Zion, Clothe thyself with strength.

Put on your garments of splendor, O Jerusalem, the holy city.

The uncircumcised and defiled will not enter you again.

Shake off your dust; rise up, sit enthroned! O Jerusalem.
Free yourself from the chains on your neck, O captive daughter of Zion;
For this is what the Lord says. (52:1,3—NIV)

The prophet himself is moved and thrilled at the sight and sound of what the Lord is about to reveal to him and to announce “what the angels desired to see!” (1 Pe 1:12). This is more than the return of the people from captivity in Babylon; this is the spiritual return to the faithful, loving God of all those who are captive under sin and the fear of death and damnation through the redemption wrought by the Lord’s servant! The rapture of the prophet knows no bounds, he is moved to sing about the vision which is given to him by God’s Spirit:

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news,
who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!”
Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy.—
The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God! (52:7,8,10—NIV).

We now approach the great denouement of Isaiah’s prophecy, as he announced it at the beginning of this Second Part: “The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together (40:5).”

What is this glory of the Lord, the **כְּבוֹד יְהוָה**? One could turn to Ezekiel 1:25–28, to the Prologue of the Gospel of John, or to other great words of Scripture for the answer. Pieper describes it as *Die Gnadenheiligkeit Gottes—die heilige Gnade des Herrn* which Kowalke translates “the gracious Holiness of God, or the holy Grace of the Lord.” We turn to the Word of our Lord Jesus when he spoke of the glory which is his in his vicarious atonement in answer to the Greeks who came to see him: “The hour is come that the Son of Man should be *glorified*....Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit....And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death He should die” (John 12:23,24,32,33).

This is the glory, the holy grace of our God in action. In this connection Jesus identifies himself with Isaiah’s description of the glory of the Lord that was revealed to all flesh in his work of redemption: “These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him” (Jn 12:41).

However, lest the thought still persist that the suffering which our innocent Lord endured should be the theme of our commiseration and lamentation, especially on the day when we gather in our blackdraped churches to commemorate his death, let us turn to Isaiah and read how the Holy Spirit inspired him to introduce his “report” of the Lord’s suffering to place it into its God-pleasing setting:

See, My Servant will prevail:
He will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted! (52:13)

The day of our Lord’s death is not “the saddest day in history,” as someone has written; it is the *Good Friday*, the day of the world’s emancipation! Our observance should be solemn, but it should bear in mind Jesus’ rebuke to the weeping women who lamented him, “Weep *not for me!*” The church organ should not set the mood with doleful dirges to suit a funereal *Tenebrae*. Our dying Savior himself set the mood with his shout of triumph **Τετέλεσται!**

St. Paul stated the theme in his closing words to the Galatians, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!” (Ga 6:14). St. Philip spoke to the eunuch of the Lord’s Passion (Is 53) as “the good news about Jesus!” (Ac 8:35—NIV). Isaiah exults, as he thinks of sharing the good tidings of the Lord’s dying victory with the Gentiles:

The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations;
all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God (52:10—NIV).

The contemplation of Christ’s victory on the cross causes Isaiah again to break into song by the Spirit, as he did at the beginning of this part of the book (40:9), as he will in the first words of chapter 54, and as he does now:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings,
that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation;
that saith unto Zion: “Thy God *reigneth!*” (52:7)

Our assignment restricts our study to the important matter of the dissemination of the good tidings among the heathen nations. The fact that Isaiah is inspired to write in the past tense in presenting his “report” as an accomplished fact refutes the argument, made by some, that Israel could not proclaim the gospel until the Messiah had come. “By his stripes *we are healed!*”

We must also point out that Isaiah’s “report” on the atonement through the substitutionary obedience and sacrifice of Christ includes an unrestricted pardon *for all sinners*. God’s chosen people were specifically mentioned, “For the transgression of my people was he stricken,” (v 8). The “all we” and “of us all,” however, in verse 6 includes more than Israel; it is to be understood in the sense of John’s description of Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away *the sin of the world*” (Jn 1:29).

This is the correct rendition of the text in verses 11 and 12—

Through knowledge of him shall My Servant, the Savior, pronounce salvation to *many*, for He Himself bears their guilt.—Therefore I will give Him *many* as His portion, and the powerful will he divide as His spoil—because He gave His life into death and was numbered with the transgressors, and had taken upon Himself the sin of *the many*, yes, became the Intercessor for the transgressors” (53:11,12—Pieper-Kowalke Translation; italics added).

Concerning the words רַבִּים and הַרְבֵּים in these verses Pieper has this to contribute:

In the next clause the seed are called הַרְבֵּים, the many, that is, the great multitude that God apportioned to Him for His faithful labor in His office as Servant, a multitude gathered from among His own people and from the gentiles. To these the exalted Servant shall through His knowledge pronounce יִצְדִיק, salvation, justification.—The meaning of the clause is that the Servant pronounces to *the many* that justification, or salvation, which through His perfect obedience [50:4–9; 53:4–9] He acquired by the suffering of body and soul, as the portion assigned to Him by the Lord.—We maintain that the רַבִּים in this verse are the same רַבִּים as in verse 11.⁵⁰

The unity of Scripture makes it clear *that the many*, הַרְבֵּים, of Isaiah are the same as the οἱ πολλοί of the New Testament passages which teach the universal, objective justification of all sinners because of the merit of Christ. For example—

⁵⁰ *Isaiah II*, p 452, 455 (italics added).

But the gift is not like the trespass. For if *the many* died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to *the many*.

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for *all men*, so the result of the one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for *all men*. For just as through the disobedience of the one man *the many* were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man *the many* will be made righteous” (Ro 5:15,18,19—NIV; Cf. 2 Cor 5:14,15,19; Jn 1:29; 1 Jn 2:2; 1 Tm 2:6).

In this passage “the many” and “all men” are freely interchanged as synonymous. This is also the meaning of “the many” in Isaiah’s words, “Through the knowledge of Him [the Savior] shall My Servant, the Savior, pronounce salvation to many for He Himself bears their guilt,—for He had taken upon Himself the sin of the many [that is, of all]” (53:12 Pieper-Kowalke Translation).

These are the good tidings to be brought by God’s heralds, first to Zion (52:7), but also to the “many nations,” (52:15). Bringing the good news to others is represented not so much as a duty but as the jubilant expression of joy and praise to the Lord for his unspeakable gift. This becomes apparent as we proceed to chapter 54 and find that the words immediately following the “report” of the Lord’s suffering and death are happy exhortations to sing and to burst into loud happy exultation. Christian singers of every age have responded to this exhortation in contemplation of the redemption. Thus, for example, Isaac Watts:

Come, let us join our cheerful songs With angels round the throne;
Ten thousand thousand are their tongues, But all their joys are one:
“Worthy the Lamb that died,” they cry, “To be exalted thus.”
“Worthy the Lamb,” our lips reply, “For He was slain for us!” (344—*The Lutheran Hymnal*)

Chapter 54

In view of this it is not surprising that the Holy Spirit inspires Isaiah to write these words of exhortation to the happy redeemed:

Sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child;
burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor. (54:1 NIV)

The story of the greatest victory ever won has just been told and its spoils, peace and life with God for all, have just been assured to all who were hopelessly enslaved. Why should they not be inspired to break forth in songs of praise? Why should all the redeemed not sing this “new song” already here, since it will be their theme in glory to sing the old, old story of Jesus and His love?

And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing” (Re 5:11,12).

Isaiah continues to expand his vision of the rapture of the redeemed, which is not confined to the chosen people; he sees an apparently endless procession of converts streaming toward the spiritual Zion, the church. Therefore, he encourages the church to make room for the spiritual children approaching:

Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; spare not,
lengthen the cords and strengthen thy stakes!

For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. (54:2–3)

Pieper writes, “All of that is but a picture of the spiritual conquest of the gentile world by the New Testament Church through the preaching of the Gospel.”⁵¹ This is true, but these words were written over 700 years before, and for the benefit and conversion to God’s saving Word and service of people who lived in Isaiah’s day! The fact that they refused to heed them does not alter the fact that the Lord was still earnestly trying to win them to be his children and witnesses.

This is the very purpose of the tender words of entreaty which now follow, words without parallel in tenderness:

Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed, ...
 For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies I will gather thee....
 For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed,
 but my kindness shall not depart from thee,
 neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee....
 And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.
 (54:4–14)

The Lord is here pleading with his church, the believers of all times and places, also the time of Isaiah, as the next chapter will show.

Chapter 55

August Pieper places a fitting caption on the first strophe, verses one through five, “The invitation to all among the gentiles who are in need of salvation to partake of the sure mercies of David.” Here is a truly missionary outreach; all the world is urgently invited to come to the feast of God’s love:

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters!
 And you who have no money, come, buy and eat!
 Yes, come, buy without money and without cost, both wine and milk!—
 Incline your ears and come to Me! Listen, so that your soul may live;
 for I will establish an eternal covenant with you: the mercies of David, that have been made sure.
 Truly, I have set Him to be a witness to the people, a Prince and Commander of nations.
 Truly, a people that you did not know, You will call, and a people will run to You that knew You not,—
 because of the Lord Your God, and for the sake of the Holy One of Israel, because He glorifies You! (55:1–5—Pieper-Kowalke Translation).

The call to the world of sinners is most urgent:

Oh, seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near!
 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evildoer his designs,
 and turn to the Lord; He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He forgives abundantly!
 For My thoughts are not your thoughts and My ways are not your ways, says the Lord.
 As far as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways
 and My thoughts than your thoughts. (6–9—Pieper-Kowalke Translation).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p 464.

Pieper expounds this passage as a direct invitation to the Gentiles long before the promised Messiah had appeared:

*He [Christ] is our peace. Now He calls to everyone and everything on earth that is without peace to come to Him, and offers to them without cost, as a free gift, that which no person and no earthly power can convey. But long before He appeared in the flesh, the God of all grace, who had never desired the death of a sinner, called Jews and Gentiles to Him who was to come.*⁵²

The time was right, in fact, it was high time to heed God's Gospel call, while the Holy Spirit was still working through the Word to change the stubborn hearts and to turn them to the Lord. This divine assurance is also extended:

For as the rain and the snow fall down from heaven
and do not return thither without moistening the earth
and making it fruitful and productive, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater—
So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return to me fruitless,
without having done what pleases Me, and having accomplished what I directed it to do (10,11—
Pieper-Kowalke Translation).

God does not reveal his promises as idle gestures; this promise is given to all those who were invited so warmly to come and partake of God's forgiveness and life, also all the heathen in Isaiah's day to whose ears and hearts this invitation and promise were carried. For an example, think of the eunuch of Ethiopia who was brought to faith and baptism by reading the Word of Isaiah the prophet! And it was chapter 53!

And all this is spoken to Israel to encourage them to take the Lord at his Word and to go out to the heathen with the law and the gospel to gather in the promised harvest of souls:

Namely, [cf. Pieper, p 489] you will go out in joy and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills will burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.—
This will be for the Lord's renown, for an everlasting sign which will not be destroyed (12, 13
NIV).

Chapter 56

There may have been a lingering doubt even among the believing Jews about this most generous invitation to "everyone that thirsts to come and buy wine and milk freely, without money and price" in view of the commandments and inhibitions imposed upon them in the Mosaic Law. To overcome these misgivings this chapter explicitly states that the Gentiles are indeed to be included in the gospel promises; they are even assured of being welcome to join in the worship and mission of God's people:

Let not the son of a strange land, who turns to the Lord say, "The Lord will surely separate me
from His people,"
and let the eunuch not say, "Behold, I am a dry tree."
For thus does the Lord say
to the eunuchs, who keep My sabbaths, who choose what I delight in, and who hold fast My
covenant:

⁵² *Isaiah II*, p 481.

“In My house and with My walls I will make for them a memorial and a name better than that of sons and daughters.

I will give them everlasting honor that shall not be cut off.”

And the aliens who cleave to the Lord and serve Him,

who love His Name, to be His servants—

whosoever keeps the sabbath, not profaning it, and holds fast to My covenant,

them I will lead to My holy mountain, and will delight them in My house of prayer;

their offerings and sacrifices shall be welcome at My altar;

for My house is called a house of prayer for all peoples (56:3–5—Pieper-Kowalke Translation).

The explicit references to worship, sacrifices, sabbaths, offerings, memorial and covenant all indicate that this refers not merely to a promise of inclusion of the converted Gentiles in the New Testament Church, but already in the days of Old Testament Israel. This admission of the Gentiles, however, also implies instruction of them in the revealed Word to Israel; and that is what a missionary mandate is all about.

Chapter 57

Because all his entreaties and admonitions have not changed his obdurate people, the Lord now denounces them with unusual severity:

But you—come here, you sons of a sorceress, you offspring of adulterers and prostitutes!

Whom are you mocking? At whom do you sneer and stick out your tongue?

Are you not a brood of rebels, the offspring of liars? (57:3,4—NIV).

Instead of doing his bidding, the Lord continues, they have given their worship and service to filthy idolatry. Still, with longsuffering patience the Lord extends his promise of forgiveness to the contrite,

“I have seen his ways, but I will heal him,

I will guide him and restore comfort to him,

creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel.

Peace, peace, to those far and near,” says the Lord.

“And I will heal them.” (57:18,19—NIV)

Like the first part, 40–48, this second part closes with the same sad refrain, “But there is no peace, says the Lord, for the wicked” (48:22).

Chapters 58 and 59

This third, and final, part of the prophecy, 58–66, opens, like the first two parts, with a divine mandate, a clarion call to wayward Israel. In 40:1 it is a word of comfort and reassurance; in 49:1–6 it is the announcement that the servant of the Lord himself will carry away the sins of his people and carry out the Lord’s saving mission to the ends of the earth by publishing the good tidings also to the heathen.

The opening words of this part are a sharp rebuke to obdurate Israel for their hypocrisy and apostasy:

Shout it aloud, do not hold back.

Raise your voice like a trumpet!

Declare to my people their rebellion and to the house of Jacob their sins. (58:1—NIV)

Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save,

nor his ear too dull to hear.

But your iniquities have separated you from your God;

your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear (59:2—NIV).

Only a few words of hope and healing are offered to the believing remnant of the people:

He saw that there was no one, and he was appalled that there was no one to intercede;
so his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him.
He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head (59:16,17—
NIV).

But even in this brief passage of comfort for the faithful remnant, the Lord makes mention of his concern for the salvation of the Gentiles! Since Israel has proved unworthy and disobedient as the Lord's servant and herald, he will carry out the saving mission in the power of the Holy Spirit through his Word, so that the heathen may hear it and live:

And in the west shall the name of the Lord be revered, and His Glory at the rising of the sun;
for He shall come like a pent-up stream which the breath of the Lord drives on.
And he shall come to Zion as a Savior and to those in Jacob who turn back from rebellion, says
the Lord.
For I—this is My covenant with them, says the Lord: My Spirit which is upon you, and My
Words that I have put in your mouth, they shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth
of your seed, nor from the mouth of your seed's seed, says the Lord, from now on, even forever!
(59:19–21—Pieper-Kowalke Translation)

These few words are a foretaste and preamble of the glorious revelation which Isaiah is inspired to make in the next discourse. Despite his judgment over obdurate Israel, the Lord promises to remain faithful to his covenant with Abraham, and also to bring to pass what he pledged under oath to the patriarchs, namely, the conversion of the Gentiles, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed!"

Pieper's comments help to make this more clear:

This reverence or fear of the name of the Lord can, according to the passages referred to above, only be the true, believing childlike fear of God, not just a holy terror among the gentiles (19). Verse 19 treated of the conversion of the gentiles; this verse treats of the forgiveness of those in Israel who repent.—Only a part of Israel, the part beyond recovery of whom this chapter has treated to this point, is doomed to permanent hardening; as for the rest, Romans 11:31f. describes their happier lot (20). In verse 21 we have actually nothing different from what was said in 54:10 and elsewhere: God's covenant with Israel will never lapse.—But because of God's faithfulness to His covenant, this same judgment [over Israel] will serve as a blessing for many gentiles from the east and from the west, and by virtue of the covenant once made with Abraham, who have not been hardened beyond recovery.⁵³

Note that in Romans 11:31f. the Holy Spirit inspires St. Paul to write that, as the Gentiles received the gospel, when the Jews rejected it, so the Gentiles who have come to faith are given the opportunity and ability to witness to the Jews! God's Spirit, like a pent-up stream in its saving power, will crown also their gospel witness with success, as he promised in 55:10,11.

Because this is a prophetic portrayal of also the New Testament Church, it puts the question squarely before us believing Gentiles today: Are we ready and willing, on the strength of God's command and promise,

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p 565–568.

to undertake an earnest missionary program to witness to the Jews who, according to the flesh, brought us our wonderful Savior?

Some years ago I learned through a personal experience that the Lord still offers opportunities for such a witness, also on a person-to-person basis. Our Jewish butcher with whom I enjoyed reciting the beautiful Hebrew psalms and other texts—in those days we still had to memorize them—suddenly lost his only son. I went to him to bring him comfort by showing him and his wife the fulfillment of Psalm 23 in John 10. It opened a new dimension for them.

Another similar opening was given to us on the 21 days' passage to Capetown in 1949. Friendly contact with the passengers led to the request of two Jews that we preach to them on the two Sundays at sea. My sermon was based on John 17:17, in which Jesus pledged himself to fulfill the Old Testament, showing that only in this fulfillment does the Old Testament reach its goal. Weeks later we stopped at the home of one of these Jewish fur brokers. One evening, after more discussion, the husband went to their bookshelf, picked up a tiny German New Testament and told us that he read from it daily!

Chapter 60

“Arise! Shine!”—These thrilling imperatives are well known, because they are read regularly in our churches. Can we imagine ourselves back in spirit in a synagogue in the time of Isaiah, when these very words were read to the assembled Jewish congregation for the very first time? There is no doubt that these ancient believers were moved by the full force of this Hebrew order קִיְמוּ אֹרֶרִי—in modern vernacular: “Rise and shine!”

These words were intended to rouse the people out of their complacency, taking their own election for granted and passing over the plight of all those who had not seen the Light and had not learned that their sins are forgiven and that heaven has been opened for them by the victory of the Lord's servant. Jesus used the same metaphor when he told his own: “You are the light of the world!—Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven!” (Mt 5:14,16).

These imperatives are easily overlooked because of a misunderstanding of the meaning of the words, “over you the Lord has arisen, and his glory shines over you” (v 2). Actually, this clause is the enabling basis of the order, “Rise! Shine!”

The Jews were inclined to think that God's purpose in choosing them was served when they received and basked in his blessings, forgetting that God called them as his servants, his heralds and priests to transmit his blessing of salvation, his glory in the Messiah, to all the world. This attitude is shared by R. Martin-Achard, whom we quoted earlier, “First and foremost, the evangelization of the world is not a matter of words and of activity, but of presence: the presence of the people of God in the midst of humanity, the presence of God among his people.—The *raison d'être* of the chosen people was *to exist*.”⁵⁴

However, from beginning to end the Holy Scriptures present the bringing of sinners to repentance and faith as work, as *mission work*. St. Paul calls it labor in 1 Corinthians 4:9–13; 2 Corinthians 11:23–28; 1 Thessalonians 2:9 and others. Our Lord himself speaks of his soul-saving activity as work: “My father worketh hitherto and I work” (Jn 5:17). Speaking of his loving concern to preserve his own he employs the parables of the man who has lost one sheep, “and leaveth the ninety-nine, and goeth into the mountains and seeketh that which is gone astray,” (Mt 18:12), and of the woman who has lost one coin and “doth light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it” (Lk 15:8).

“To shine” in this context is not merely to glow prettily or to burnish one's own halo, but to carry a torch to bring God's Word, the light, as St. Peter calls it in 2 Peter 1:19, to shine into the night of sin and superstition, to dispel the “gross darkness which covers the nations of the earth.” In short, to bring sinners to repentance and faith back to the true God, the source of all light, that is the meaning of “Arise! Shine!”

⁵⁴ Blauw, p 34.

The church's mission is not centripetal, as Johannes Blauw describes it, as though the heathen see the light shining over Zion and come running to embrace salvation of their own volition.⁵⁵ The Gentiles who come to the "Light" which has appeared above Zion in our chapter cannot even see the Light of themselves, much less come to it, unless they are called by the Word and Spirit and enlightened with his gifts to believe and live! (Rm 10:17; 1 Cor 1:21; Jn 17:20; 2 Cor 4:6; 1 Cor 2:14 and others). There is no other way!

Isaiah is encouraged by the Holy Spirit to reveal to Israel the abundant harvest of Gentiles who will respond to the witness of God's Word. This is certainly a grand preview of the New Testament church; but one may not overlook the fact that the prophet is addressing the believers of his time and that he is inspired to mention by name the heathen peoples who were then living as coming to the "Light." Are we ready to dismiss these facts with the explanation that this is all figurative speech, that it has no relevance to the Jews then living?

Again we turn to Professor Pieper for his comments on the promise, "And the Gentiles will come to your Light—"

He [the prophet] sees not only the children of Israel but great multitudes of gentiles from all over the world coming in haste to the glory of Israel.—

Israel, the seed of Abraham, the friend of God, 41:8, is the bearer of that promise; and the Servant of the Lord, who is to spring out of the midst of Israel, the one seed of Abraham, will bring righteousness to the gentiles and establish it upon the earth (9:1,2; 42:1,4,6; 49:6,7).—

Gleaming in the radiance of her heavenly Lord, she [Zion] radiates light into the dark world with the result that the ancient promise to Abraham is fulfilled: the gentiles stream to her light.⁵⁶

There is no doubt whatever that the prophet pictures the gentiles who come to Zion as having been converted, 42:6; 45:14; 49:6; 52:10,15; 55:4f.; 59:19; 60:3ff.; 65:1; 66:19ff.. It is also clear that in our passage [v 9] he has made a distinction between converted gentiles and the children of Zion as those who are bearers and those being borne.—By far the greater mass of the multitude pictured as journeying to Zion consists of converted gentiles.⁵⁷

The encouragement to the Jews to include Gentiles in their thinking about the kingdom of God is carried a step farther with the disclosure that the converted heathen will join Israel to build the church. The "indigenous" church policy is unveiled: "Foreigners will rebuild your walls, and their kings will serve you" (v 10—NIV).

Israel is therefore exhorted to be receptive to the advent and admission of the Gentiles. This is prophesied especially of the Christian era, it is true. But it raises the question again as to why this divine announcement was made to the believing saints 700 years before Christ, if it was not irrelevant to Isaiah's contemporaries? Let us not forget that Isaiah had just revealed by the Spirit that the great atonement had been made *for all mankind* (53), that as a result many Gentiles would come streaming to Zion (54), that "*all* who are thirsty" are invited to come and partake of God's gift *freely*, and that they should hasten to "seek the Lord while he may be found" (55), that the Word of God "will accomplish what God desires and achieve the purpose for which he sent it" (55:11), and, finally, that the Holy Spirit inspired Isaiah to enumerate Gentiles who would respond to the Gospel call (60:6–9).

In the light of all this, are we to assume that the exhortation to admit the Gentiles was not meant for Isaiah's audience, but only for people who would live 700 years later?—

Your gates shall be open always by day and by night; they shall never again be closed, so that the wealth of the Gentiles may be brought to you! (v 11—Pieper-Kowalke).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Isaiah II*, p 575.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p 585.

To assert *that* these exhortations were not intended for the Jews and heathen who lived when they were inspired, written and published is tantamount to saying that what they heard and read in God's Word was not meant for them; in short, to relegate them to despair. But we have already found that the very opposite was the case; God was indeed concerned about returning his people to faith in himself and converting the heathen to the true faith. He proved this by revealing his saving will faithfully since the time of the Fall.

The Church, "the Zion of the Holy One of Israel," is now described in her perfected glory with the enrollment of the Gentiles and the employment of their many spiritual gifts. The chapter closes with a beautiful allegory of the perfect peace and bliss of the church in eternal, heavenly, holy communion with her God.

Chapter 61

To bring into fulfillment all that has been promised in chapter 60 the servant of the Lord, in Pieper's words, now "steps out before the world as the Lord's Herald and Preacher."

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
because the Lord anointed Me to proclaim good news to the heavy-laden,
sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom to the captives the opening of the
eyes to the prisoners,
to announce the Year of Grace of the Lord, and a Day of Vengeance of our God, (vv 1,2—
Pieper-Kowalke Translation).

Pieper makes this comment:

The reference is first of all to the children of Zion who are captives and prisoners in Babylon or among other gentile people; but just as **בְּשִׁיר**, the preaching of the Gospel, applies to all the afflicted on the earth, so also does the binding-up apply to all the broken-hearted; and the proclamation of freedom and the opening of eyes likewise applies to all who by sin are made spiritual captives of "the strong man armed." As in chapters 42 and 49, so here the mission of the Messiah, the Servant of the Lord, the Savior Jesus Christ, is being described. This is Matthew 11:28.⁵⁸

Although this refers to the mission of our Savior, he does not always carry out this mission himself, but through his called witnesses whom he sends and attends with his mighty presence (Is 43:10; Jn 15:27; Ac 1:8 and others). This he promised the prophets in the Old Testament and the apostles and his called witnesses in the New. This becomes clear from the words which follow,

And you shall be called priests of the Lord, ministers of our God shall you be named;
on the wealth of the nations shall you feast, and in their glory shall you revel, (v 6—Pieper-
Kowalke Translation).

These are the very words which the Lord used to describe the mission of his people in the world, to minister to him by being mediators and heralds of his Word to the world. The concern for the spiritual welfare of the Gentiles pervades the inspired words of the prophet; one of the rewards promised to Israel "instead of your sins" is mentioned:

And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the nations;
whoever shall see them, will recognize them, that they are a seed that the Lord has blessed (v 9—
Pieper-Kowalke Translation).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p 603.

Chapter 62

Professor Pieper becomes enthusiastic in his eloquent exposition of what is now to be revealed,

Chapter 62 is the climax of this triad, 61–63. The prophet’s heart bursts forth in an expression of joyous enthusiasm over the realization of the supreme promise of revelation which he now views in the spirit: the redeemed congregation as the Lord’s masterpiece, as the bride and wedded wife of the Lord. Because of the overflowing fullness of his heart his mouth overflows in speech of matchless power.—Hardly anywhere are the iambic-anapestic cadence of solemn Hebrew speech and the melodious effect of the vowel sounds of the language so strikingly manifest as in this passage.⁵⁹

These are the golden words concerning the church to which reference is made above:

For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent,
and in behalf of Jerusalem I will not rest
until her Salvation goes forth like a bright light, and her deliverance like a torch that flares up,
and until the nations see your Salvation, and all the kings see your Glory! (1,2—Pieper-Kowalke
Translation; italics added).

What is the reason for all this jubilation and the Lord’s reason for calling Zion His *הַפִּזְיוֹן*? She is His “Delight” because the nations see her salvation when she performs her mission as the Lord’s servant and herald to the Gentiles! This becomes still more apparent in the next strophe, and the rejoicing rises to a still higher pitch over the vision of the believing Gentiles actually leaving their city gates and coming to spiritual Zion, the church, when God’s children, the saints, come rejoicing, bringing in the sheaves:

Go forth, go forth through the gates, level the way for the people;
Raise up, raise up the highway, clear it of stones;
lift up a banner for the people! (v 10 Pieper-Kowalke Translation).

Pieper writes: “The gates are those of the cities of the Gentiles, and they are to go forth through these toward the gates of Zion; for the purpose is to summon the Diaspora of Zion in all the world to return to the mother city, whose glorification is now complete.”⁶⁰

Note: The Gentiles who now permit the children of Zion to leave through their gates are the converted Gentiles who were mentioned previously in chapter 60.⁶¹

Chapters 63 and 64

In a very dramatic portrayal the hero who has made the release from captivity of Zion’s children by their bitterest enemy possible is shown returning from the battle which he fought and won alone to effect the release. He is the same hero and champion of souls whose suffering, death and victory have been so vividly “reported” by Isaiah in chapter 52 and 53, the servant of the Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ.

A grand *Te Deum* follows the account of the hero who comes from Edom with bloodstained garments; it is the song of praise for the Lord’s deliverance and a prayer for the Lord’s continuing longsuffering forgiveness and guidance.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p 615, 616.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p 623.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p 575.

But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are clay, You are our Potter, we are all of us the work of Your hand.

O Lord, do not be angry without measure, and do not remember our guilt forever; behold, consider, we beseech You, that we are all Your people! (64:8,9—Pieper-Kowalke Translation).

Chapters 65 and 66

In these final chapters the Lord inspires Isaiah to record his response to the prayer of his faithful remnant in Israel who have repented of their sins and cling to His promise in faith. But note carefully that the very first words of this answer of the Lord again reveal his loving concern for the Gentiles:

I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me;
I was found by those who did not seek me.
To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, “Here am I, here am I!” (65:1—NIV).

Referring to the modern, unbelieving critics, Pieper has this to say about this opening verse:

Paul has been faulted for understanding verse 1 as being spoken of the gentiles, and verse 2 as in contrast to them. But Paul and the translators of the LXX, who certainly knew Hebrew and whose way of thinking was Hebrew, were right, and the modern interpreters are wrong.—In accordance with Deuteronomy 32:21, Paul is entirely consistent with this truth when he makes the application of it to the acceptance of the gentiles and contrasts Israel as a people that had received grace according to the same divine principle [of *free* grace], but had treated it with contempt and had in consequence been rejected.⁶²

The prophet now sees the glorious new order of things, looking far beyond even the great advent of the heathen, to the “new heaven and earth” where peace and perfection will reign forever. Expanding on this grand theme, the Lord says, “Hear the Word of the Lord, you who tremble at his Word!” (66:5—NIV)

Then follows the vision of the Gospel going to the Gentiles, bringing many children to spiritual Zion:

Be glad with Jerusalem, rejoice over her, all you who love her,
exult loudly with her, all you who mourned for her
...For thus says the Lord:
Behold, I—I direct peace to her like a river, and the glory of the heathen like a torrent,
and you shall drink, you shall be carried on the hip, and shall be fondled on the knees... (10,12).
It shall come to pass that I will gather together all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see My glory!
And I will do a wonderful thing among them; and such of them as escape will I send to the nations: to Tarshish, Phul and Lud, the archers, to Tubal, Javan, and the distant isles, who had never heard My name and have never perceived My glory— and to the nations they shall proclaim My glory. And out of all nations they shall bring your brethren for an offering to the Lord—on horses, chariots, litters, mules, and camels to Jerusalem, to My holy mountain, says the Lord, even as the children of Israel bring the sacrifice in clean vessels to the house of the Lord; and of them will I make some to be priests and Levites, says the Lord! (66:10–21—Pieper-Kowalke Translation).

⁶² *Ibid.*, p 661–662.

With the announcement in v. 15, “Behold, the Lord will come in fire” and “the Lord will judge with fire” Isaiah prophesies the mighty ministry of the Word, wielded by the servant of the Lord, but also by those who proclaim the Word in his name and his authority. Jesus speaks of the fulfillment of this in Luke 12:49. Jeremiah 5:14, Hebrews 1:7, and other passages also describe the Word of God in the mouth of his witnesses as fire. This is the power of the Holy Spirit working in the Word, both to purge and also to destroy, of which Jesus spoke in John 16:7–14.

This is the fire which the Lord has kindled in the world. It began right after the Fall and continued throughout the rest of time. It was active during the period of preparation for the coming of Christ and will continue until all the elect of God have been brought to faith by the same Word and Spirit. Although it only prophesied the cross of Christ in Isaiah’s day, the Word still already then pronounced judgment over all men at that time; rejecting the Word, obdurate Israel brought the Lord’s judgment upon themselves; believing the Word, the small believing remnant in Israel as well as the great multitude of converted Gentiles were purged of their sin and given everlasting life with God.

Of this latter “wonderful” thing, the seemingly endless procession of spiritual children from every nation and tongue (v 18), the above words prophesy. Miracle of miracles! Zion’s former enemies not only come to worship and to bring acceptable sacrifices and offerings to Zion’s God, but the Lord promises, “He will take some of them (the Gentiles!) to be priests and Levites” to win other Gentiles, and also to witness to the Jews in the dispersion!

These Gentiles, here again enumerated by name, as in chapter 60, were people who were known to be living in the days of Isaiah. In part they may be mentioned as prototypes of the heathen who will be reached by Christian missionaries in the New Testament. But these had meaning and relevance to the Jew before the time of Christ! Among them must be the people who are referred to by St. Paul when he wrote shortly after the ascension of the Lord and the Great Commission: “Did they not hear? Of course they did; their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world,” (Ro 10:18—NIV).

Did God, then, indeed expect and direct His people in Old Testament times and in the prophecy of Isaiah to proclaim the Gospel to the other nations? Let us see. What are the facts?

First, Holy Scripture teaches, as we have shown, that “God wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tm 2:4). This he recorded also in the days of the Old Testament: “God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live” (Ez 33:11).

Then, Holy Scripture teaches that he from the beginning provided all men with two powerful witnesses of his existence, his power, his wisdom, his goodness and his displeasure with sin, as we have demonstrated:

- the natural knowledge of God from the evidence in his creation and providence, (Ac 14:7; Ro 1:20);
- the conscience of all men, which is well aware of God’s holy will through the Law written in men’s hearts (Ro 2:14,15).

Holy Scripture also teaches what God’s purpose is in providing all men with these two witnesses of himself, as it is written: “God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him” (Ac 17:27—NIV).

Finally, Scripture also teaches that there is only one way of salvation, only one Savior (Ac 4:12). This is true of all times, also of the Old Testament days of Isaiah: “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God; and there is no other!” (Is 45:22).

But being blind (Eph 4:18), dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1) and enemies of God (Ro 8:7), sinners could not and cannot find their way to this only Savior of themselves (1 Cor 2:14). So, in his grace, God himself provided the means by which sinners could come to repentance and faith in their Savior, that is, by hearing and believing his Word through the power of his Holy Spirit (Ro 10:17). This truth Isaiah was also inspired to proclaim to the people, Jews and Gentiles, in his day: “So is my Word that goes out from my mouth; it will achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Is 55:11).

In the words of his second last chapter Isaiah thus writes by inspiration of the Holy Spirit that this has been done, also to the Gentiles, in his day:

I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me;

I was found by those who did not seek me.

To a nation that did not call on my name I said, “Here am I; here am I!” (Is 65:1—NIV)

The evidence is in. We believe that through the Word the Holy Spirit has answered our question about a mission mandate in the Old Testament in the affirmative.