

Primarily, they were religious prophets; only secondarily were they ethical teachers. By this we do not mean to detract even to the slightest degree from the importance of their ethical teaching. We insist, however, that their insistence upon right conduct was religious in its origin, and at root was never anything else than religious The standard by which they judged was not an ethical code. Their standard was what they themselves knew of the very nature of God Himself."⁵⁴

For our part, we would prefer to use the term "theological" for his "religious." The clearest expression of this is Joel's call to repentance:

Yet even now, declares the Lord, 'Return to me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping and mourning; And rend your heart and not your garments.' Now return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in loving-kindness, and relenting of evil (Joel 2:12, 13).

Joel's description of Yahweh is taken from Exod 34:6, 7 which also includes the phrase, "Who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin." Jonah echoes this same idea, but as a complaint against God, precisely because he knew the Lord would grant repentance to the Ninevites based on the very nature of God (Jonah 4:2) as he had known and experienced.⁵⁵ These passages make it exceedingly clear that God's call to repentance is genuine. We would also note that when a message of judgment is pronounced, a call to repentance is implied if not explicit. This is the nature of God as understood by the prophets.

This theological concern is also found in the covenant lawsuit. For example, in Isa 1:10, within a covenant lawsuit context, *tôrâ* is used in parallel with *dabar*. The prophet acknowledges that sacrifices, assemblies and prayers, etc., are being observed, possibly according to the letter of the law, but certainly not according to the spirit of the *tôrâ* or *dabar* of Yahweh. He calls Judah to repentance and to covenant renewal. Although he includes the specifications, his basic charge is that they have rebelled (*patsa'*) against Yahweh their creator and redeemer. In short, they have broken the covenant. What is of significance here is that the *dabar* and *tôrâ* of Yahweh is the prophetic explication which follows as well as the call to repentance. Indeed, Isaiah's covenant lawsuit is very *a propos* as an introduction to the whole book because all the prophetic themes which follow are introduced in the first chapter.⁵⁶ Hence, "authoritative instruction" of God through his prophet would be a most suitable parallel to the gracious word of the Lord.

That the prophets refer to a corpus known as the *tôrâ* of Moses goes without saying. These are in contexts in which priests, rulers, and/or people have disobeyed the Lord⁵⁷ or in which they are commended for keeping it in their hearts or encouraged to return to it.⁵⁸ Isaiah 24:5 clearly makes "laws and statutes" parallel with the "covenant" which has been broken. The attitude of the prophets is positive towards *tôrâ* as a corpus, condemning the materialistic, legalistic, half-hearted lip-service obedience given to it by a back-slidden people. Even in these cases, the prophets are pointing not so much to specific laws broken as to the covenant relationship which has been broken.

Finally, the prophets use *tôrâ* in eschatological contexts. In such passages as Isa 2:3 the *tôrâ* will proceed out of Zion; in 42:4 "the coastlands shall wait for His *tôrâ*,"⁵⁹ and in 51:4 " *tôrâ* will go forth from