

the representation gives the picture of a deliverer, at another time of a restorer, at another time of a teacher, at another time of a ruler, each picture being illustrative of the temporal condition of the nation in the manner indicated. If the people were in bondage, they needed a deliverer; if in affliction, a restorer; if in ignorance, a teacher; if in oppression, a righteous ruler. By these means, the prophets comforted and encouraged the people, revived their spirits, animated their hopes, and strengthened their hearts.

The various representations of the different prophets, it must be pointed out, were not so many detached parts of a single picture capable of being combined into a harmonious whole, but rather separate and independent pictures. To assume that the various delineations of the ideal Messiah were conceived by the prophets themselves as meeting in a single individual is to overlook the important purpose, as well as the incompatible nature, of their representations. The prophets never thought of making such a combination, nor could such a combination be harmoniously made. Each particular prophet had a special purpose, and the character of the ideal that he presented corresponds in general, as has been shown, to the historical circumstances of his time. Although to the minds of the prophets these ideal representations did not imply the appearance of a real person in whom they all combined, yet, as will be indicated in another part of this discussion, they may be conceived as spiritually realized or embodied in the New Testament Messiah.

In a brief discussion like the present one, it is impossible to trace completely the history of the Messianic hope throughout all the Old Testament times, much less to follow it carefully through all the ages that intervened between the completion of the Hebrew canon and the advent of the historic Christ. Enough, however, has been said to illustrate the historic progress and development of the Messianic idea in the Scripture, as well as the gradual growth and modification of the Messianic doctrine in the Church. During the "four centuries of silence," as the interval from Malachi to Christ has been significantly called, this hope, now flaming, now flickering, was kept alive, through teachers and interpreters, by psalms and prophecies, in