

Development, it must be noted, is not always synonymous with growth; it often indicates degeneration or decay. The history of the human body is an illustration of this fact. The development of the doctrine of Messianic prophecy was an historical development. Hence it must not be supposed that each succeeding statement of a prophetic character was a strict advance upon each preceding statement, because many of the earlier Messianic conceptions were almost as full and complete as were many of the later ones. Indeed, some of the former were more full and complete than some of the latter were. Though prophecy, like history, is a progressive movement toward a definite end, its course is sometimes marked by deviations and even by retrogressions. While the movement is continuous, it is often indirect. At one time it advances; at another time it diverges; at another time it recedes. In the case of Messianic prophecy, the development was in harmony with God's method of education in providence and with his method of discipline in grace. The progress was a movement toward an ideal moral end, namely, the accomplishment or realization of the divine purpose. By a continuous spiritual activity this end was gradually realized from age to age.

In the historical development of Messianic prophecy, there are two significant features, each of which is connected with the idea of the divine kingdom, that claim attention in this connection. The first significant feature has reference to the growth of the idea respecting universality in religion. Originally Judaism was a national religion, and Jehovah was the national God of the Israelites. Previous to the prophetic period proper, though as early, it would seem from Exodus xix. 5, as the time of Moses, the idea was conceived that Jehovah was the God of all the earth, or that the whole earth was his possession. Gradually, too, the notion gained ground that the divine kingdom should extend throughout the world until all nations should be included in it, and the one living and true God should become the Lord of all mankind.

Narrow national exclusiveness, which necessarily belonged to the religion of Israel at first, afterwards developed into world-wide interest and sympathy. While the prophecies concerning