

died being old and full of days." Such a series of parallels which might be still further extended can scarcely be the result of mere accident. It seems to point unmistakably to some period in the history of the Hebrew people when this problem of the righteous sufferer was a matter of general consideration, when leading representatives of three out of four of the great literary classes, the *cha'chamin*, the singers, and the prophets, each left a remarkable presentation of the subject couched in terms either borrowed from a common mode of expression prevailing at the time, or which one borrowed from the other. Such an extended result could only arise from a common historic background in which the problem of suffering was forced upon the attention of the literary mind of the age. All the indications point to the conclusion that this age was the age of the exile. The book of Job is now placed at this date by the great majority of competent critics. The evidence in favor of this date for the second part of Isaiah is so overwhelming that only one here and there among well-informed students is to be found clinging to the old theory. But few now prefer Jewish tradition to the common-sense interpretation of the book itself, which does everything but state in direct terms that it was being written at that date, and gives in no single passage the slightest warrant for the assumption that it was written in the age of Hezekiah.

The answer to our first question, then, is clearly this, that the historic background of our passage is to be found in the age of the captivity, when the chosen people passed through affliction which only found its parallel in the bondage of Egypt. After the discussion of the problem of such affliction by the wisest thought of the day, the true prophetic faith finds its answer to the great question in the present passage, and in such language as that of the twenty-second Psalm. Founding our passage, then, in the historical circumstances of the captive and suffering people in Babylon, the question is presented, Who is or was the servant here described? The term, "my servant," or, "the servant of Jehovah," is used throughout the Old Testament as a title of honor in the singular number, and is thus distinguished from the same term in the plural as applied to all the Israelites