There appears to be a serious conflict between nationalism and universalism in Isaiah xl-lv. There are passages which express the narrowest national self-interest and hatred for Israel’s enemies; and there are passages with an exalted vision of world-wide salvation for “the nations”. On the one hand there is the theme of a great reversal in Second Isaiah: The “worm Jacob” will become a threshing sledge against his enemies (xli 14 f.). The nations are to come to Israel in chains (xlv 14), lick the dust of Israel’s feet (xlix 23), and even eat their own flesh (xlix 26 1), while Yahweh speaks to Israel in the most affectionate, intimate terms (xliii 3 f., 14, 20 f.; xlv 1 f.; xlix 15 f.; liv 5-17; etc.) On the other hand the Servant is given as a “light to the nations” (xlii 6; xlix 6) and “the coastlands” wait for the Servant’s tórá (xlii 4) and hope for Yahweh’s salvation (li 4-6).

A wide variety of explanations have been proposed for this conflict, but thus far none has gained any widespread acceptance. They range from Torrey’s deleting nationalistic passages as interpolations 2) to Robert Davidson’s portrayal of the conflict as a paradox which is characteristic of the missionary outlook of the Old Testament: The nations see the exaltation of Israel and want the same condition for themselves 3). According to Lindbloom, Second Isaiah changed his mind during the course of his ministry 4). For Begrich, the eschatological tradition which Second Isaiah inherited was so thoroughly nationalistic that he was unable or unwilling to detach the nationalistic aspect from the tradition 5). Gelston has a similar explanation: “But we should hardly expect the prophet immediately to absorb all the

1) See also xlii 2, 11, 25; xliii 3 f.; xlv 16 f.; xlvii 1-15; xlviii 14; xlix 19; li 22 f.; liv 3.
implications of the revolutionary idea that the Gentiles are to find salvation in Yahweh" 1). BEWER finds the nationalistic passages "out of harmony" and "incredible", and suggests that Second Isaiah felt the need for such verses in order to inspire hope in his countrymen "at times when the higher truth found no response" 2). MUILENBURG does not attack the problem directly, but suggests that certain passages such as xlix 23 are to be taken metaphorically, not literally 3). E. J. HAMLIN proposes that the nations must first be humiliated like Israel, and only then will they be ready to be raised up from humiliation along with Israel, as his new sons and daughters 4). GOTTWALD finds several explanations, including "poetic exuberance" and the idea that the wicked nations will first be punished and then converted 5). LINDBLOM has an interesting comment on the problem: "I think the prophet himself saw the solution in the incomprehensibility for the human mind of the ways of God. God had possibilities of connecting the two prospects in one unity" 6). Such a statement only emphasizes the problem.

Second Isaiah's universalism is one of his most impressive features, and few would think to challenge it. But a growing minority of scholars have done just that, beginning instead with his nationalism and taking a hard look at the "missionary" passages to see if they can be understood on some other way. Norman SNAITH was the pioneer in efforts to find another translation for the crucial phrases. ʿOr gāyīm in xlii 6 and xlix 6 does not necessarily require the syntax of "a light to the nations"; so he offers the translation, "a light of Gentiles", meaning "a light [for Israel] throughout all the Gentile lands" 7). P. A. H. DE BOER takes a similar approach, proposing the

5) N. K. GOTTWALD, All the Kingdoms of the Earth, New York 1964, pp. 330 ff., 339 ff.
6) LINDBLOM, op. cit., p. 73.