THE CENTURY BIBLE HANDBOOKS

The Religion of Israel

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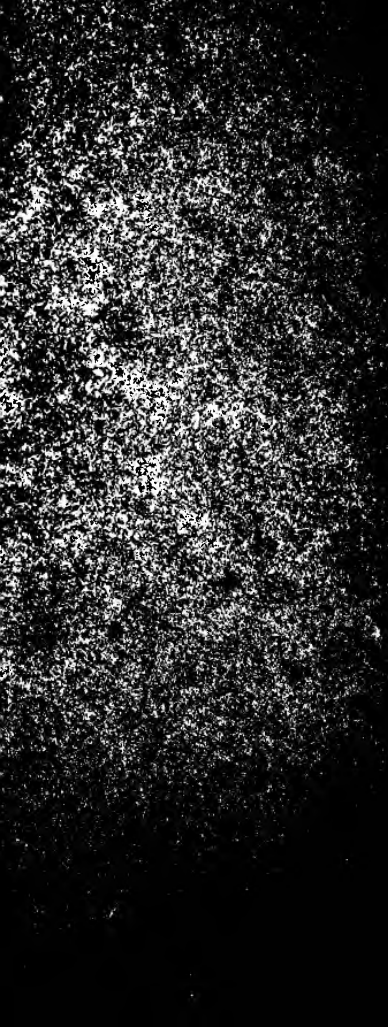

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NOTE

This work is not a Theology of the Old Testament, but a History of the Religion of Israel. It is concerned with the development of the religion as a whole, not with the growth of individual doctrines. For two omissions the limits of space are responsible. It was necessary to leave out a sketch of Semitic religion, and to refrain from giving any but the slightest account of the religious institutions of Israel.

A. S. P.

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THE RELIGION OF ISRAEL

CHAPTER I

THE RISE OF THE RELIGION

In the strict sense of the term, the religion of Israel came into existence with Moses. But no religion can make an entirely new beginning. Every religion must link itself on to the past, taking up into itself older customs and beliefs. Some of these may be assimilated without difficulty. But others will be directly contrary to its genius. Such, however, is the conservatism of the religious instinct that practices belonging to a lower type of religion will survive long after the religion out of which they sprang has given place to a higher. These incompatible elements may long exist side by side, though logic at last inevitably accomplishes its work, and the inharmonious survival must be either transformed or eliminated. When, therefore, the Hebrews, under the leadership of Moses, entered on a new stage of religious

development they did not make a complete breach with the past. It was in the name, not of a new God, but of the God of their fathers, that Moses lit the flame of hope in the crushed and desponding slaves who toiled in the brickfields of Egypt. And behind what we call the patriarchal period there lay a long history which left its mark permanently on the religion of Israel. The Hebrews belonged to that racial group which we are in the habit of calling the Semitic peoples. And when they emerged into a distinct nationality, they still retained much of the common stock of Semitic custom and belief. And this in its turn went back largely to a type essentially savage. Many of these savage elements persisted into the religion of Israel and Judaism, where they are found in connection with lofty spiritual conceptions, with which they are altogether out of harmony. They can be explained only as relics of an extremely ancient way of looking at things, the almost indestructible survivals of primitive religion. It must of course be recognised that the higher religion of Israel did not consciously tolerate heathen elements, but elements which in their origin were heathen survived and received a spiritual interpretation. It is, unfortunately, impossible in our space to sketch the Semitic background to the Hebrew religion. It made itself felt especially in the ceremonial institutions, such as sacrifice, circumcision, and the laws of unclean-

ness. We must pass on at once to the religion of Israel in the strict sense.

The very difficult historical problems raised in connection with the residence of the Hebrews in Egypt and the Exodus must here be completely passed by, and their religious significance alone be taken into account. The truth of the story that they were slaves in Egypt is confirmed by the consideration that no people would invent the fiction that it had descended from a horde of bondsmen. It is natural that many should have attributed to the stay of the Hebrews in Egypt much in the religion of Israel. It is, however, antecedently improbable that the mass of the people should have derived anything in this way from the Egyptians, with whose religion they would not be brought much in contact. It is otherwise with Moses, who, if we can accept the romantic story of his early life, would be familiar with the doctrines and rites of the religion of Egypt. But conscious borrowing in his case is very unlikely. Religion inspired the movement which freed Israel from the yoke of Egypt, and therefore from the outset the religion of Israel was antagonistic to the religion of Egypt; it is accordingly much more likely that Egyptian elements were deliberately rejected by Moses. This does not preclude the possibility of unconscious indebtedness, but the best Old Testament scholars agree

with competent Egyptologists, that an examination of the religion of Israel reveals no traces of Egyptian influence worth speaking of. The worship of the golden calf should not be so interpreted. The Egyptians worshipped living animals, and Aaron's words, "This is thy God, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," would be very inappropriate if spoken of an Egyptian deity.

It is from Moses that the religion of Israel may be said to have derived its origin. On this all the four main sources from which the Pentateuch has been compiled are agreed. The two great convictions which he stamped into the consciousness of his people were these: Yahweh is the God of Israel; Israel is the people of Yahweh. With these great truths he inspired these downtrodden and despairing slaves with a new hope and with a sense of national unity. He knit by the power of religion the loose and disorganised elements into a firmly consolidated people, conscious of itself and dimly conscious of its destiny. They were one people for they had one God, who had chosen them to be peculiarly His own. This new conception of their dignity as the people of Yahweh led them to expect and strive for a position worthy of their high destiny. Moses is the supreme figure in the history of Israel and its religion, for he created the national consciousness

and linked it inseparably with a great religious idea capable of immense enrichment. This conviction of its election by Yahweh remained throughout the national history permanent and indestructible. The indissoluble union of the national with the religious consciousness was at once the strength and the weakness of the religion. It was its strength, for the religion gained in intensity because the national was taken into the religious, while the identification of religion and patriotism caused the nation and the religion to share in the aggrandisement of each other, and bound in mutual help two of the strongest passions of human nature. But while religion consecrated and helped forward the unification and development of the nation, and these in their turn raised the prestige of the religion, this proved ultimately the fatal weakness of the latter. For when the time came for the advance from a national to a universal religion, the racial element proved too strong for it to be made. It is none the less true that the religion could have reached its high development only through union with the national idea, and for this reason Moses is pre-eminent because he made it possible.

But this union of nation and religion by no means explains why the religion of Israel became what we know it in history to have been. It was common enough for a people to have its own God. The problem is to ex-

plain why the religion of the peoples allied to Israel, such as Moab and Edom, never rose above a quite elementary stage, while the religion of Israel reached the development we find reflected in the loftiest parts of the Old Testament. We need not deny that in Israel a higher receptivity was to be found, which justified its selection as the vehicle of revelation. But it may be doubted whether this was at all considerable. Are we, then, to find our answer in the superiority of the national God of Israel, or, to speak according to our modern habit, in the higher conception of God? The religion of Israel was the religion of Yahweh, and naturally the question arises whether the name gives us a clue to the explanation. The antiquity of the name Yahweh is just now a matter of keen controversy. It is thought by some that the name was known to the Kenites, and there are several points which suggest this. Still there are difficulties in the way of this suggestion which must not be overlooked. Some Assyriologists have asserted that the name was well known a long time before Moses in Babylonia and Assyria. At present the evidence must be regarded as indecisive, though it is by no means improbable that it was at one time more widely diffused than it came to be later.

The question as to the meaning of the word Yahweh is very difficult. In the first place we have to remember

the possibility, and perhaps the probability, that if the name was very ancient, and centuries or thousands of years earlier than the time of Moses, its meaning may be altogether lost. It is a question whether we should explain it from Hebrew at all. It may have originated in a language in which it would bear an altogether different meaning from what it would bear in Hebrew. But even if we derived it from Hebrew, we have still numerous possibilities. In form the word is a third person singular, but it is uncertain whether it belongs to the *kal* or the *hiphil* conjugation, that is to say, whether it expresses the simple idea of the verb, or whether it is a causative. For example, if we connect it with the verb meaning *to be*, we are still uncertain whether it means "he who *is*," or "he who *causes to be*." It is, however, by no means certain that the name was derived from the verb that means *to be* at all. It may be connected with a verb which means "to fall." And here there are two possible suggestions. The thought may be of Yahweh as a storm-God who casts down rain and lightning, snow and hail, upon the earth. This would be in harmony with much that we find in the Old Testament. In the revelation at Sinai we read that on the morning of the third day "there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud," and a little later we

read, "And Mount Sinai was altogether on smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." When Yahweh makes a covenant with Abraham we read, "And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a flaming torch that passed between these pieces." In the Song of Deborah we learn how when Yahweh came from His Edomite home He was accompanied by storm and earthquake. In the 18th Psalm the poet describes how Yahweh came forth to deliver him. The passage is too long to quote, but earthquake, fire and smoke, the wind and darkness, the thick clouds that were dispersed at the brightness of His presence, hailstones and coals of fire and the fiery shafts of His lightning, are the accompaniments of the theophany. Similarly, in the song of Habakkuk we read how the appearance of Yahweh is accompanied by the pestilence and the earthquake, the lightning and the tempest. So it is characteristic that when Yahweh answers Job it is out of the roaring of the storm. When Elijah goes to seek Him at His ancient seat of Horeb we are not surprised to be told of the mighty wind that rent the mountains and broke the rocks, of the earthquake and the fire, for it was Yahweh's manner thus to manifest His presence. What is perhaps

more surprising is that the narrator should insist that Yahweh was not in any of these elemental phenomena, they were but the harbingers of His coming. It was in the still small voice that He was revealed, or, to take the literal rendering, "the sound of a gentle whisper." He is represented as dwelling in the radiant light, shrouded in thick darkness and hurling the lightning to its mark. He rides swiftly upon the thunder-cloud and flies upon the wings of the wind. When He comes forth to discomfit His enemies He takes His war-bow in His hand and the lightning flashes are His fiery arrows, but when the judgment has been executed He lays aside His bow and sets it in the clouds, so that the rainbow is the token that He is reconciled to man. Now all this evidence forcibly suggests that the Israelites thought of Yahweh as manifesting Himself especially in storm, so that the interpretation of Yahweh as meaning one who casts down the rain and snow, the hail and the lightning, to the earth, finds no little support from the Old Testament representations. Yet we must beware of describing Him as a storm-God, since, as Robertson Smith has pointed out, the Semites did not regard their deities as presiding over separate departments of Nature. Others, however, who also translate "He who causes to fall," think that the meaning is "overthrower" or "destroyer." The thought is, then, that Yahweh overthrows cities or

armies. No doubt this suggestion finds a measure of support in some Old Testament passages, but it does not grow out of them so naturally as the former. Others, again, think that the word is connected with a verb meaning "to breathe" or "to blow." The thought would in that case be that He is a wind-God, who might manifest Himself not only in the tempest, but in the gentle rustling of trees, so that the sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees would suggest that He had passed on to battle before His people. This, however, is closely connected in essential meaning with the conception of Yahweh as a storm-God.

If we connect the meaning with the verb "to be" we have still several possible interpretations. We may take it as a causative, hence some have found in it the meaning, "He who causes to be," that is, the Creator. The verb, however, does not mean "to be" so much as "to become" or "to come to pass," so that if we adopt this view we should more probably explain the name to mean "He who brings His purpose to pass," or "He who accomplishes what He has promised." It is, however, more probable, perhaps, that we should not treat it as a causative, since in the words translated "I am, that I am," and similarly in the phrase, "I am hath sent me unto you," we have our oldest explanation of the meaning of the term. Of course this does not

necessarily prove that such was the original meaning of the term. It would be by no means unexampled in the religion of Israel for an older term to be taken up and a newer and a fuller meaning given to it. All that is intended is that this was the meaning given to the name in the religion of revelation. But we are by no means at the end of our quest when we have decided to adopt this significance, for the meaning of the word translated "I am" is itself quite uncertain. To us the most natural suggestion of "I am" is the self-existent one. But the Hebrew religion was not a religion of abstract speculation. It did not concern itself with metaphysics, and such an idea as the self-existent one would have been very foreign to its mode of thought. It is more probable that we should lay the emphasis on moral than on metaphysical character. Moreover, the use of the imperfect tense makes it probable that in accordance with the general Hebrew idiom we should represent the Hebrew by the English future, and instead of "I am, that I am," translate "I will be what I will be." The phrase then contains a great religious truth. Yahweh does not define what He will be, since no human language is capable of expressing all that He will prove to be to His people. This is much more likely than any metaphysical truth to have been revealed to Israel, the strength of whose genius lay on the religious rather than on the

speculative side. Accordingly we may conclude that the sense which the word bore in Hebrew religion is best interpreted for us in Exodus iii. 13–15, where God reveals Himself as Yahweh and declares that His name is "I will be what I will be." If so we ought to translate Yahweh not "He is," but "He will be." The word is therefore incomplete and needs something to be supplied, but it is in the very incompleteness that the religious suggestiveness largely resides. For it sets the man who utters it thinking what Yahweh will be. He may have gone into battle with the name of his God on his lips meaning, "He will be with us." And indeed in all the difficulties of life there would come to him the great assurance, He will be all that I need, whatever He has promised to be to His people and more than all He has been able to promise.

From this survey it is clear that we cannot build with any confidence on the meaning of the name Yahweh. We should probably accept the view that the moral character attributed to Yahweh from the earliest period was the differentiating element which made possible the subsequent high development. The presence of this ethical element in the religion as founded by Moses is disputed by some, and cannot be strictly proved. But it is at least highly probable. It is thus that we best can account for the ethical monotheism of the prophets:

it must have had its roots in the earliest history of the religion. And this is confirmed by the fact that the prophets themselves are conscious that they are not innovators; their conception of Yahweh agrees with that held by Israel from the first. To prove the ethical nature of Yahweh, scholars have often pointed to His close association with the administration of justice. Budde has recently challenged this view. He argues that while morality may create law, law cannot create morality. Further, Yahweh's function in this matter is not moral but intellectual. He is called in, not to express His will that the criminal should be punished, for that is well understood. It is rather His duty, as one who possesses Divine knowledge, to indicate by the oracle who the criminal is. And similar oracles were given in other religions, which yet did not become ethical religions. Accordingly Budde, while asserting the ethical character of the primitive religion of Israel, refuses to explain it by the ethical conception formed of Yahweh. He argues at length for the view, previously put forward by Stade, that Yahweh was originally the God of the Kenites, among whom Moses lived with Jethro the priest. Inspired with the conviction that Yahweh would rescue Israel from Egypt, Moses induced his people to accept Him as their God. They did so, and the Exodus was successfully accomplished. Then at Sinai Israel entered

into covenant relations with its new Deity. Thus Israel and the Kenites both worshipped the same Deity. But the relation to Yahweh was altogether different in the two cases. Yahweh was to the Kenites simply what Chemosh was to Moab. The relationship between them was purely natural. But in the case of Israel it was otherwise. The God of another people and not their own had delivered them, and they had freely chosen this God to be theirs. They were bound to Him by the closest ties of gratitude. Thus there was an ethical element present in the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, such as was to be found in the case of no other people and its God, and in this relationship Budde finds the secret of the ethical character of the religion of Israel. His view, however, is open to criticism. It is by no means certain that Yahweh was a new God to the Hebrews in the time of Moses. It is true that both the Pentateuchal documents commonly designated by the symbols E and P represent the name of Yahweh as unknown to their ancestors. But P is so late that its evidence can hardly be taken into account, and against E we can set the document known as J, which represents the name as in use from the earliest period and as constantly employed by the patriarchs. Further, while E represents the *name* Yahweh as unknown, it regards Yahweh Himself as the God of the patriarchs, though

known to them as Elohim. And it may be questioned whether Moses would have been more successful in appealing to the Hebrews in the name of a hitherto unknown God than in telling them that the God of their fathers had taken pity on their distress. That Sinai was thought to be Yahweh's home is clear enough from many passages, and that the Kenites were His worshippers is by no means improbable. It is possible, however, that He may have been worshipped by several tribes in that neighbourhood, and that the ancestors of the Hebrews who were delivered from Egypt may have been among them. But whatever be the ultimate verdict on these disputable points of Budde's theory, it is at any rate clear that the relation the Hebrews sustained to Yahweh was believed to rest on a free choice on His part met with free acceptance on their own. He was their God not by nature but by covenant. And the Exodus assured them at once of His might and His good will, and united them to Him by the strongest bonds of gratitude. And when we inquire as to the truth of this belief, we are safest even on the ground of history if we share the conviction of Moses that we have to do with a direct revelation made to him by God Himself. Thus we have a cause adequate to the great tasks it accomplished, the creation of a national consciousness, the deliverance from Egypt, and the birth of the religion

of Israel. It was thus a real choice of Israel by God to be the vehicle of His revelation.

How Yahweh was conceived in the earliest period of Israel's religion we have little knowledge. The greatness of His power had been proved by the deliverance from Egypt, and this had equally manifested His favour towards Israel. And since this relationship was for Yahweh not a necessity of nature but an act of choice, it must have led to a deeper consideration of His character, and a more anxious desire to do His will. And this all the more, because stress seems to have been laid on the sterner side of His character. He dwelt on Sinai, and manifested Himself especially in the thunderstorm. Although we should not speak of Him as a storm-God, elemental phenomena are the usual accompaniments of a theophany in the Old Testament. Further, He is quick to resent and punish any violation of His holiness; thus, the men of Beth-shemesh are smitten for lack of reverence towards the ark, and Uzzah for incautiously touching it. His action seems at times to be regarded as unaccountable. No reason is given why His wrath should be kindled against Israel when He incited David to number the people. And in I. Sam. xxvi. 19, David seems to think that Saul's persecution of him may be due to Yahweh's similarly unmotived prompting of Saul against him. It was natural

that Yahweh should delight in war. War was looked upon as a sacred function, and warriors as consecrated to the service of Yahweh. He bids His people go forth to battle, puts their enemies to flight before them, often pronounces the ban or decree of extermination upon them. So much are Israel's wars His wars, that we even read of the Book of the Wars of Yahweh. It was a fortunate thing for the religion of Israel that no goddess was conceived to stand by His side, for thus occasion would have been given, as in so many other cults, for the inrush of degrading immorality.

While Yahweh was originally thought of as resident on His own mountain, He was not believed to be confined to it. He smote the Egyptians with plagues and led forth the Hebrews, and afterwards fought for them in Palestine, which soon came to be regarded as His own proper home. Still, the other view long survived; we meet with it in the song of Deborah, and even Elijah in his despondency goes to Horeb to find Him. Not only was Yahweh conceived as possessing a local habitation, but corresponding to this an external form. In one very anthropomorphic passage we read that Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up the mountain and beheld God and did eat and drink (Exod. xxiv. 9–11). Even in Exod. xxxiii. 20–23, where it is said that no man can see God's face

and live, Yahweh covers Moses with His hand while He passes by him, and then removing His hand permits him to see His back. How old the conception is that Yahweh dwells in heaven is disputed. Some consider it to be quite late, but it is found in passages that there seems to be no reason for regarding as late. Of course, we have no literary attestation for it so early as the time of Moses, and it may be a later development. It is, however, convenient to speak of it here. The reference in Deborah's song to the stars from heaven fighting against Sisera (Judges v. 20) should not, perhaps, be pressed. But the references to Yahweh's coming down to see the city and tower (Gen. xi. 5), to His raining brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah from heaven (Gen. xix. 24), to the ladder which reached from earth to heaven, with Yahweh standing at its head (Gen. xxviii. 12), to Yahweh's descent on the summit of Mount Sinai (Exod. xix. 11, 20, xxxiv. 5), all testify that this belief was held in Israel at a quite early period. At a comparatively early period, also, we have Micaiah's vision of Yahweh sitting on His throne with the host of heaven standing by Him (I. Kings xxii. 19). Gunkel, who adduces these and other passages, says that the neighbouring peoples had this belief, and the Canaanites certainly long before the Israelites; it would be strange, therefore, if it was not known to ancient Israel, though

it is true it became a prominent article of belief only in the later period.

We are, however, on secure ground when we connect with Moses the ark of Yahweh. It is possible, but by no means certain, that this was older than the time of Moses. It is highly probable that the earliest documents of the Hexateuch contained a narrative of its construction, though if so this has been displaced by the account of P. It was a portable box of acacia wood, perhaps without the golden plating or cherubim ascribed to it in P. It was the most sacred object in ancient Israel, for it was identified in the closest way with Yahweh Himself, who was supposed to be actually present in it. Thus in Num. x. 35, 36, we read that when the ark set forward Moses said, "Rise up, Yahweh, and let Thine enemies be scattered," and when it rested he said, "Return, Yahweh, to the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel." The whole story of the fortunes of the ark in the Books of Samuel reflects the same conception. It is taken to the field of battle, and inspires the Israelites with confidence of victory, while the Philistines are dismayed at the thought that God had come into the camp, and fight with the courage of desperation. When the Philistines have captured the ark it works them nothing but mischief. When the men of Beth-Shemesh are smitten they say, "Who can stand before Yahweh, this holy God? and to

whom shall He go up from us?" clearly regarding Yahweh Himself as present in the ark. On a later occasion Yahweh is said to have broken forth upon Uzzah, where also there is the idea of Yahweh's energy as resident in the ark. So David's dancing before the ark is spoken of as a dancing before Yahweh. In the same way the wonder-working power of the ark at the crossing of the Jordan and the capture of Jericho is to be explained. What, then, constituted the peculiar sanctity of the ark, and its identification with Yahweh? A box has ordinarily no importance in itself; its importance consists in what it contains. The explanation that the sanctity of the ark consisted in the fact that it contained the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were written is unsatisfactory. For this does not explain the universal belief of the ancient Hebrews that the ark was a dwelling-place of Yahweh Himself. Many scholars believe that the ark contained one or two sacred stones, perhaps meteoric in origin, in which Yahweh's presence was supposed to be manifested. Such a survival of fetishism would be parallel to Mohammed's incorporation in his religion of the Black Stone of the Kaaba. This would be in harmony with the importance attached to sacred stones in Semitic religion and in the religion of the Hebrews; it would account for the identification of the ark with Yahweh, and for the substitution of the

theory that the stones were the tables of the Law, when the original gross conception could no longer be harmonised with more refined religious sentiment. On the other hand it lies open to the objection that it is difficult to think of Moses as countenancing such a superstition, and placing it in the centre of the religion. Moreover, while the evidence for the view that the stones were the tables of the Law is late (Deut. x. 1–5), it may possibly rest on the older sources. The later history of the ark is quite obscure. The prophets ignore it as a rule, and Jer. iii. 16 speaks of the time when it shall no more be mentioned or remembered. It may have disappeared before the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar, perhaps captured in some invasion, or fallen to pieces through age. It is not mentioned among the Temple spoils carried to Babylon, and was not in the Second Temple. A difficulty is raised by the double conception that Yahweh dwelt in Sinai and that He resided in the ark. It was solved by the statement that while Yahweh Himself would not, in consequence of the sin of Israel, go with them, He promised that His Angel or His Presence, not quite to be identified with Yahweh, but yet not readily distinguishable from Him, should go with them, and, following this, we have the instruction to Moses to make the ark, the intention, no doubt, being thus to secure the fulfilment of Yahweh's promise. The

Tent of Meeting pitched outside the camp, of which Joshua was the keeper, was apparently the home of the ark, to which Moses went to consult Yahweh.

This brings us to the question whether we are justified in ascribing the Decalogue in Exod. xx. to Moses. We have another version in Deut. v. characterised by important differences. These make it unlikely that the present form in either of these chapters can be due to Moses. But they may be reasonably accounted for by the supposition of subsequent expansion of originally very brief commandments. That they were brief is suggested by the title, "The Ten Words," which is given to them. A much more serious difficulty is created by the apparent existence of another Decalogue in Exod. xxxiv. 17–26 (now expanded into twelve commandments) quite different from that in Exod. xx. Yet apart from the prohibition of images in general, not merely of molten images, the latter is not less primitive than the former. In Exod. xxxiv. 27, 28, we read, "And Yahweh said unto Moses, Write thou these words, for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he was there with Yahweh forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten words." The natural sense of this passage is that Moses wrote on the tables of stone ten com-

mandments which had just been given him. When we examine what immediately precedes we can without difficulty disengage twelve commandments; accordingly if a Decalogue originally stood here it has been expanded by the insertion of two additional commandments. The original collection has been plausibly restored as follows:—

1. Thou shalt worship no other God.
2. Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.
3. The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep.
4. Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest.
5. Thou shalt observe the feast of weeks;
6. And the feast of ingathering at the year's end.
7. Thou shalt not offer the blood of any sacrifice with unleavened bread.
8. The sacrifice of the Passover shall not be left until the morning.
9. The first of the firstfruits of thy ground shalt thou bring unto the house of Yahweh thy God.
10. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk.

This Decalogue is assigned by scholars to J; the Decalogue in Exod. xx. is assigned to E. The majority of critics regard J as the older document, and on that ground, as well as on account of its less advanced theo-

logical and ethical character, they consider J's Decalogue to be the earlier. But even in it we have regulations which are suited only to a settled people practising agriculture. The prohibition of molten images is not necessarily to be taken as the prohibition of images altogether, so that there is less difficulty in recognising the Mosaic origin of this commandment than that of the more general prohibition of images in E's Decalogue. The possibility, however, may be left open that originally J possessed the same version of the Decalogue as E, and that the editor, when he combined the two documents, struck this out as unnecessary repetition, inserting the ritual precepts of Exod. xxxiv. 17–26 in its place.

Apart from the prohibition of images, there is less in E's Decalogue in its brief primitive form to conflict with Mosaic origin than in the Decalogue assigned to J. It does not necessarily involve so advanced an ethical standpoint as to force us to derive it from the teaching of the prophets. We are apt under the conditions through which we approach its precepts to read more into it than it conveyed to those who first received it. Its commandments and prohibitions were all directed against trespass on the rights of God or one's neighbour. But we may recognise the Providence of God in that the Decalogue, while designed to guide men at a comparatively low level, yet was so formulated that later

generations found it an adequate compendium of their religious and moral duties. Yet is it more needful for us to be reminded that we must not overrate its value. The place it has held in the presentation of Christianity by the Church cannot be reconciled with the New Testament attitude to the Law. And even within the Old Testament itself it is surpassed by much in the later writers.

None of the Codes of Law in the Pentateuch can be attributed to Moses. This is clear from the fact that even the earliest presupposes a people settled in Palestine and engaged in agriculture. But we need not doubt that some of the laws embodied in these Codes date from his time. Moses is associated in Hebrew tradition with the giving of the Law, and the position he held as judge involved the formulating of elementary principles of justice between man and man, such as we find in the oldest legislation. The acceptance of Yahweh as the national God would also necessitate some simple regulation as to the proper modes to be adopted in worshipping Him. In both of these respects Moses drew on the traditional customs of the Semitic peoples. We find many elements in Hebrew ritual derived from the common Semitic body of ceremonial, and many of the regulations prescribed even in the latest document must be very old. And similarly with civil law. Recently there has been dis-

covered the Code of Hammurabi, King of Babylon (date ? B.C. 1900). This exhibits striking similarities with the Book of the Covenant, though it contemplates a much more advanced and complex civilisation. The relations between the two are not clear, and hasty and far-reaching theories on this subject are to be deprecated. One thing is clear, that Babylonian and Hebrew Codes alike incorporate elements of immemorial antiquity.

CHAPTER II

THE SETTLEMENT IN CANAAN AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE RELIGION

THAT the Hebrews did not first become worshippers of Yahweh after they entered Palestine is proved not simply by the fact that they made good their foothold in the land under the inspiring conviction that they fought under His banner, but especially by the fact that the religion of Yahweh was a wilderness religion, and that the settlement in Canaan constituted an ordeal for it of the most critical kind. It had the most important consequences for nation and religion alike. It is the imperishable glory of Moses that he created the nation and based its national on its religious consciousness. The unity of Israel was guaranteed by the conviction that it had been called by Yahweh to be a people peculiarly His own. The national unity and the religious consciousness were alike affected by the settlement in Canaan. Were the common impression correct, that the Hebrews poured into Canaan as a mighty undivided host and swept the inhabitants away

by their irresistible force, the history of nation and religion alike would have been very different from what they actually were. But the impression derived from the Book of Joshua must be rectified by the old and valuable narrative preserved in the first chapter of Judges and related passages in the Book of Joshua itself, and by numerous other passages in the early historical sources. Whatever may have been done by united effort in defeating the Canaanites, it is clear that most was left to the action of individual tribes. And they were by no means always successful. For a long time they could gain little firm foothold in the plains; it was in the mountainous districts that they were best able to establish themselves. And here they fell apparently into three isolated groups. In the south there was Judah with the remnant of Simeon, in the centre the Rachel tribes, and in the north Issachar, Zebulun, Naphtali, and Asher. At an early period Dan, unable to maintain its position in the south, came for the most part north and captured Laish. Reuben and Gad remained on the east of the Jordan. In this way the settlement in Canaan profoundly affected the political life of Israel. The national unity, which Moses had created, gave way under the stress of the new conditions. The song of Deborah, which is one of the oldest, perhaps the oldest poem in the Old Testament,

and of the utmost historical value, though obscure in details and corrupt in text, celebrates the sole instance known to us of united action on the part of several tribes. Yet various tribes are reproached for holding aloof, although they are reckoned as belonging to Israel. But Judah is not even mentioned, as if it were not part of Israel. It is quite clear from these facts that the nation was in danger of complete disintegration. And since nation and religion were inseparably united the break-up of the nation would have meant the probable disappearance of the religion. Strictly speaking, there was no Hebrew nation during this period, but only a loose agglomeration of tribes. Nevertheless these tribes had the memories of Egyptian oppression and their wonderful deliverance by Yahweh to keep alive their devotion to Him, and through it their sense of brotherhood. The song of Deborah itself reveals with what intensity the flame lit by Moses glowed in the poet's heart, and its passionate expression of patriotism and religion shows that both still survived in Israel, in spite of all the forces which conspired to suppress them. The sense of unity, however, never came to adequate expression, and normally it fell far short of what was realised for one splendid triumph over Sisera and his host.

While the religion was thus threatened from the

political side, it was exposed directly to a much more serious danger. Far from extirpating the Canaanites, the Hebrews had to settle down with them, and they did not always have the upper hand. Through alliance and intermarriage the two peoples began to amalgamate. Quite apart from this, the Hebrews had taken one of the most momentous steps in their history. From being a pastoral they became largely an agricultural people. It was from the Canaanites that they had to learn how to till the soil and secure bountiful harvests. The cultivation of the olive and the vine, in particular, demands advanced knowledge and a settled civilisation. Lore of this kind implied to the ancients much more than it would to us. Fertility was regarded as the gift of the local Baalim, or divine powers which haunted each fruitful district, and they had from time immemorial been worshipped with rites designed to win from them their blessing on the crops. It was natural, then, that when they learnt the art of agriculture the Hebrews should learn and practise the religious rites on which its success depended. This worship might be directed to the Baalim, or it might be offered to Yahweh Himself. In the first instance it is probable that the Baalim were its recipients. So the Book of Judges tells us. It is true that the cycle of apostasy, oppression, repentance, and deliverance found by the editor in the

history really presents us with a selection of facts fitted into a systematic plan rather than with a complete history. His aim was to edify his reader, and he chose those incidents which served to point his moral. But when this is fully allowed for, we may recognise that worship of the Baalim was present in Israel. This is confirmed by Hosea, who speaks of the people as attributing to them the gift of the corn and wine and oil. And in the period when Yahweh was regarded as a wilderness deity, living on Sinai, it was not probable that the gift of the fruits of the earth would be ascribed to Him, especially while Palestine remained largely in possession of the Canaanites. Their tenure of the more fertile districts favoured the worship of the Baalim. It was full of danger. The cult of the powers of fertility shows a constant tendency to slide into repulsive immorality. It is notorious that with the Canaanites it did so. It can hardly have failed to be disastrous to Israel in the same way, but the ethical character of its own religion must have protected it from the worst excesses. In course of time, however, Yahweh came to be regarded as the lord of Palestine. It thus became easy for the rites connected with agriculture to be directed to Him, and all the more so since He was Himself spoken of as a Baal or lord, a usage in itself quite innocent, but leading to the assimilation

of Him to the Canaanite Baalim. When, however, Yahweh was worshipped as the giver of fertility the peril was very great that His worship should be contaminated by the impurity of the rites, and the whole conception of His character degraded. It is, therefore, not surprising that some rejected the whole agricultural life as incompatible with loyalty to Yahweh, and the pure practice of His religion. The Nazirites have been thought by some scholars to represent this type of strict Yahweh worshippers. It is, however, far from clear that this can be made out. We cannot identify the later Naziritism of the Priestly Code, which contemplated simply a temporary vow, with the lifelong Naziritism exemplified in the cases of Samson and Samuel. The temporary Nazirite was defiled by touch of a dead body, but Samson was constantly brought into contact with them, while Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before Yahweh. Each, it is true, kept the hair uncut while he remained a Nazirite. But the temporary Nazirite did not cut it, because it was dedicated to Yahweh and was to be offered to Him as a sacrifice at the termination of the vow. The lifelong Nazirite in the nature of the case could never make this sacrifice to Yahweh, and the preservation of the hair seems not to have been due to the dedication of it to Yahweh, but to the feeling that the loss of it robbed a man of

an integral part of his personality. This is especially clear in the case of Samson. His strength resides in the hair; it may not be cut on pain of his becoming weak. The treatment of the hair rests, then, on different principles in the two cases, and both for the dedication to the Deity culminating in a sacrifice of the hair, and for the preservation of it as a part of the person which cannot be taken away without serious loss, we have analogies among many peoples. It is probable that the similarity in the treatment of the hair led to the transference of the name from the early permanent to the post-exilic temporary vow. This distinction between the two types is important for its bearing on the question whether the early Nazirites repudiated the agricultural life. This view is supported by the prohibition of wine, wine being pre-eminently the gift of the Baalim. But the taboo on the vine with all its products is imposed on the temporary Nazirites. We are far from certain that it was so with the permanent Nazirites. It is true that Amos ii. 12, "Ye gave the Nazirites wine to drink," naturally suggests that wine was forbidden to them, though the next clause, "and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophesy not," compared with Isaiah xxviii. 7, might favour the interpretation, You gave the Nazirites wine to make them incapable of fulfilling their sacred functions. It seems, however, probable that in the

time of Amos wine was forbidden to the Nazirites. The prohibition of strong drink and unclean food, and any food that came from the vine, to Samson's mother seems to carry it back to his time, though the command to the mother is not necessarily binding on the son. But in any case it is difficult to think of Samson as himself abstaining from wine at the drinking feast he gave on the occasion of his wedding. We cannot, then, safely regard the Nazirites as representatives of the belief that the agricultural life involved disloyalty to Yahweh, and as expressing their protest in a refusal to drink wine. It is probable, however, that this position was actually taken by the Rechabites. In Jer. xxxv. the Rechabites refuse to drink wine because their ancestor, Jonadab the son of Rechab, had bidden them drink no wine, build no houses, sow no seed, plant no vineyards nor possess them, but dwell in tents. It is clear from this that they renounced agriculture and a settled life altogether, and lived as nomads. Jonadab is known to us as a hearty sympathiser with the atrocities committed by Jehu under cover of zeal for Yahweh. We may, therefore, see in him a fanatical devotee of Yahweh, who rejected the agricultural life as involving unfaithfulness to Him. It is clear that while this attitude was in a measure justified by the popular religion, it meant the purchase of religious purity with

a very heavy price. For it implied nothing short of a renunciation of civilisation with all its blessings. The people generally took over the culture and civilisation of the Canaanites, without intentional unfaithfulness to Yahweh, even when they worshipped the local Baalim side by side with their national God. Hosea condemned the whole view that the Baalim were the givers of the corn and wine and oil, and ascribed all these blessings to Yahweh. In this way he threw the sanctions of the pure and lofty prophetic religion over civilisation, and thus performed a service of inestimable value. Yet he was so conscious of the perils which the agricultural life brought to religion, that he looked for Israel's reform to come through return to the desert, and only after she has in this way returned to Yahweh does He restore to her the corn and wine and oil.

Three agricultural feasts are prescribed in the earliest legislation. It is highly probable that these were adopted from the Canaanites into the religion of Yahweh. The first was the feast of unleavened bread, when the corn was first cut in the spring and the first-fruits were offered. Seven weeks later, at the end of harvest, the second feast was celebrated, the harvest festival, or feast of weeks. In the autumn there was the feast of tabernacles, or the feast of ingathering at the year's end. While in the earliest legislation all three stand on the

same level, the historical books mention the last only, and speak of it as "the feast" or "the feast of Yahweh," and probably it was the most important of the three.

There was no sanctuary with an exclusive legitimacy in the sense that all other sanctuaries were an infringement of its monopoly. No doubt the home of the ark enjoyed great prestige, but the places of worship were innumerable. The sanctuaries at the Bamoth or high places would usually be rude and primitive structures, but there were others, such as those at Bethel or Beersheba, of more than local repute, which attracted worshippers from other places in large numbers. The sanctity of the high places dated in many instances from Canaanite times; the earlier documents of Genesis connect it frequently with revelations of God to the patriarchs.

There were, no doubt, priests at the larger shrines. While it may be taken for granted that nothing was known till long after of any exclusion from the priestly office of all members of the tribe of Levi save the descendants of Aaron, it is not clear what was the precise relation of the Levites to the priesthood. Apparently Simeon and Levi were nearly exterminated in consequence of a treacherous attack on Shechem (Gen. xxxiv., xlix. 5–7). Owing, perhaps, to the fact that Moses had been a Levite, the scattered, wandering

members of the tribe naturally turned to the priesthood for a living. In the family and clan of Moses the priestly tradition as to the service of Yahweh would be preserved, and a Levite would be preferred by those in search of a priest. The narrative in Judges xvii., xviii. is most instructive on this point. Micah, an Ephraimite, made his son priest of a private sanctuary he had established, and therefore the priesthood was not confined to the Levites. Later, however, a Levite wandering from Bethlehem to find a situation is engaged by Micah as his priest, and Micah is sure that Yahweh will do him good because he has a Levite for a priest. From this it is clear that while a non-Levite might become a priest, a Levite was greatly preferred. This Levite was the grandson of Moses, and having stolen Micah's images he accompanied the Danites to Laish, and there founded the sanctuary and priesthood of Dan. It is likely that other members of the tribe similarly became priests, and even such priests as were not of the tribe of Levi would probably in course of time style themselves Levites.

The duties of the priests were varied and important. They had the care of the ritual observances and sacrifices, since they knew the correct way in which Yahweh should be worshipped. They were also constantly consulted by those who wished to know the Divine will, or to ascertain if an enterprise would have a successful

issue. In giving oracles of this kind they often used mechanical means, such as the lot. One of their most important functions was that of pronouncing judgment. Although Budde is correct in regarding this as part of the previously named duty of giving oracles, yet it was not the mere declaration of the criminal's identity that constituted the whole of their work. Malachi sketches a lofty ideal of the priests' duty (ii. 1–9), and though he is a post-exilic writer the fact that Hosea confirms this (iv. 1–10), in his denunciation of their unfaithfulness to the ideal, warrants us in regarding it as recognised by priest and people alike. It was their function to declare that knowledge for lack of which the people were perishing. This knowledge, as we see from Hosea, was ethical in character. And this function deepened the ethical character of the religion and emphasised the morality of Israel's God. In so doing it quickened the movement towards universalism. Other religions were tribal or national, their rites known exclusively to the initiated, the men of the tribe. They bound men into a close corporation, made them sectarian and exclusive, and thus worked against universalism. But moral principles work in the opposite direction. They are not the property of a nation or a clan, but express the common duties of man to man, and are universal in their obligation. A religion which incor-

porates them into itself and gives them its sanction is, even in spite of itself, leavened inevitably though perhaps slowly with universalism. If there are different gods of varying character, it is natural to infer that there are different standards of right and wrong. But when it was recognised that the distinction of right and wrong was an absolute distinction, independent of time or place or people, a new conception would arise. If right conduct was of universal validity and obligation, and if moral law was the expression of the Divine will, then monotheism followed. For in that case one standard of morality implied one God.

Early Hebrew sacrifice was essentially a clan-feast, in which the worshippers had festive communion with each other and their God. Only such animals as were used for food were sacrificed. The idea of a meal dominates the ritual. The part of the victim given to God is cooked, just as that eaten by the worshippers. The usual accompaniments of a meal are added—bread, wine, oil, and salt. It was a popular notion that wine cheered gods as well as men. Drunkenness was not unknown, and even so late as Deuteronomy the standing expression for a sacrifice is "to eat and drink before Yahweh." The offerings were in the later ritual spoken of as the bread of God. In the table of shewbread we have a survival of the custom of spreading a table for the Deity.

First-fruits and other vegetable offerings were of the nature of tribute to God for the use of the fertile soil. Human sacrifice was apparently not unknown. We should probably interpret the story of Jephthah's daughter in this sense, and the story of the sacrifice of Isaac seems to attest the feeling that such a sacrifice was not regarded as out of the question. It was probably, however, quite rare in the early period. It became more frequent at a later time, in the gloomier state of feeling caused by the break-up of the smaller states in conflict with Assyria and Babylonia.

CHAPTER III

FROM SAMUEL TO ELISHA

THE disintegration of the nation, which has already been described, made it impossible for the Hebrews successfully to resist the Philistines. It was their abject failure here that stung them at last into action. And as we should expect, we find religion and patriotism going hand in hand. For it is at this juncture that the prophets emerge into the clear light of history, and the monarchy is established, while Saul forms a significant link between the two elements. These prophets, who resembled the dancing dervishes of a later day, were probably zealous devotees of Yahweh, and incited the people to serve Him more faithfully. They may, as Budde thinks, have reflected on the double fact that Israel was under the Philistine yoke, and that the fortunes of the ark had proved that Yahweh was mightier than the Philistines, and have reached the conclusion that their evil plight was due not to the weakness but the anger of their God. If this conclusion were true, then the remedy lay in fuller devotion to Him. And

this naturally had its political aspect. The zeal of the prophets for Yahweh was expressed in this, that they kindled in the breasts of their countrymen the flame of patriotism and revolt. They were patriots in so far as the feeling had taken possession of them that Israel ought to be free. They had felt the bitterness of the foreign yoke, and had set themselves to stimulate resistance and prepare for a revolt. And this patriotism could not be other than religious, for it is especially true of Israel that the religious and the national were inseparably associated. The programme of the early prophets probably expressed two convictions, that Israel should be free, and that more zeal should be shown in the worship of Yahweh. Apparently the older seers attached themselves to the prophets. They would bring the light of cooler reason, and would catch the glow of enthusiasm and the patriotic interest in the fortunes of Israel, rather than in the more personal and professional subjects that had hitherto engaged their attention.

The prophets impressed their countrymen by their abnormal physical and psychical conditions. Thus they were stimulated by music, and their ecstasy suggested to many that they were mad. Their enthusiasm was contagious, as we see from the story of Saul and the messengers whom he sent to capture David. Whether prophecy was borrowed from the Canaanites we cannot

say. We do not know of Canaanite prophets. Those who confronted Elijah on Carmel were Phœnicians.

The character of prophecy will become clear as we proceed. We shall watch its transformation as it emerged from the lower type which meets us in the time of Saul till it reaches the wonderful heights attained by an Amos or a Jeremiah. Here it will be enough to mention a few salient points. The prophets were preachers who delivered the message of God to the nation. It was their aim to regenerate social conditions, and bring them into harmony with God's will. This involved an attitude to both internal and foreign politics. They spoke to their own age, and so far as they dealt with the future it was with a future which sprang directly out of the present. With what lay behind their own age they concerned themselves but little. They were sensitive to events which were soon to happen, because they had hearkened in the council of God. They were poets, and must be read as such. We may be betrayed into many misunderstandings if we insist on a too prosaic literalism.

The establishment of the monarchy was a great advance. It gave to the disorganised and isolated tribes a rallying-point and centre of unity. Saul, who at the beginning of his career became a prophet, was a zealous devotee of Yahweh, as several incidents show, and he

was also the patriot who snapped the Philistine yoke. His prestige was much increased by his successful campaigns, in which he was greatly indebted to David's military genius. His jealousy of David, magnified no doubt by the insanity to which in his later years he fell a victim, cost him his ablest general, and he died, disastrously defeated by the Philistines. A division of the kingdom now took place. Judah, which had been loosely attached to Israel, made David king, while Ishbaal held his father's position east of Jordan. Both kingdoms were probably under Philistine suzerainty. David at last secured undivided sovereignty, regained the independence of Israel, and began a series of successful campaigns, which won for him a large and powerful kingdom. It was an epoch-making event when he captured Jerusalem, made it his capital, and installed the ark there, as we can see when we remember what Jerusalem has been in the religious history of the world. Although David kept teraphim in his house, and his religious ideas were so crude that he regarded expulsion from the inheritance of Yahweh as tantamount to a command to go and serve other gods (I. Sam. xxvi. 19), he was unquestionably an ardent worshipper of Yahweh, whose prestige had been so increased by his victories. Solomon had no inclination to war, and his foreign policy is open to effective criticism. The tendency to disruption,

which had been present in David's reign, grew stronger under Solomon, and was held in check only while he lived. He governed Israel in the interests of Judah and Jerusalem. He exacted forced labour from the other tribes to make his capital splendid, to build his palace and his temple. Revolt thus became inevitable, if no change toward an equitable policy were introduced and the undue favouritism to Judah did not cease. As Rehoboam declared his intention of increasing the burdens of the other tribes, the northern kingdom was established. It soon gained preponderating power, and became much the stronger and more splendid of the two. Jeroboam imitated the example of Solomon, by trying to rival the splendour of the royal temple at Jerusalem. Though Yahweh was worshipped under the form of a bull, there was in this no conscious apostasy. We know very little about the history of the prophets during the period from David to Ahab. We may suppose that the companies of prophets continued to exist, and the fact that Amos is master of a technical religious vocabulary suggests that in the meantime the work of the prophets had continued, so that when Amos appeared he found the prophetic speech ready formed for his use.

They emerge into prominence again during the dynasty of Omri. The political situation changed with

his accession in a way that disastrously affected the religion. He strengthened the northern kingdom by an alliance with Tyre, while his son Ahab married Jezebel, the daughter of the Tyrian king. In this way the worship of Melkart, the Baal of Tyre, was introduced into Israel, for political alliance often carried with it in antiquity the mutual adoption by each party of the worships of the other. But this was in radical antagonism to the fundamental character of the genuine religion of Israel. It was not a question here of the worship of family deities, which might easily exist alongside of the worship of Yahweh without any sense that it trenched on His exclusive domain; but it was the question of admitting a foreign deity to stand by the side of Israel's God. And although it was not the intention that Melkart should be a rival to Yahweh, but rather that the two deities should stand in friendship side by side, it was felt by many that this was an intolerable innovation. In his despondency, when he thought himself to be the only true worshipper of Yahweh, Elijah was told that seven thousand had not bowed the knee to the Baal. But it was in Elijah that their dumb protest found articulate expression. He clearly recognised that the true formula was not Yahweh and Melkart, but Yahweh or Melkart; his ruling conviction was that the two were mutually exclusive; the people must choose between

them, for Yahweh would tolerate no companion or rival. But while Elijah was the defender of the sole right of Yahweh to be the God of Israel, he denounced with equal passion the judicial murder of Naboth. In him we see religion and morality inextricably blended. Whether he had formulated a belief that Yahweh was the only God we do not know. Nor is the question of importance. For what the crisis demanded was not a speculative belief. It was that, whether other gods existed or no, Israel was Yahweh's people, and should serve Him alone. But this service was not completely rendered in acts of worship; it included as essential elements the fulfilment of the common duties of man to man, especially justice and the avoidance of oppression.

But Elijah was not the only true prophet of that time, though incomparably the greatest. Just before the battle in which Ahab fell, we find him consulting four hundred prophets, who, one and all, prophesy success. Jehoshaphat is struck with their suspicious unanimity, and asks if there is no other prophet. Ahab admits that there is Micaiah, but he hates him because he always prophesies evil. The messenger who fetches him counsels him to speak as the others have spoken, but he replies that he will speak what Yahweh says to him. When he comes to the king he sarcastically bids him go, for he will prosper. Then, on the king's adjura-

tion that he shall speak the truth, he tells him that Yahweh has put a lying spirit in the mouth of the prophets, to lure Ahab to his ruin. Here we have the first instance of a phenomenon that in later times became of great importance, the distinction between the false prophets and the true. The false are the courtier prophets, who speak smooth things, which will flatter the prejudices of their hearers, or secure gain for themselves. Over against them stand the true prophets, of whom Micaiah is the type, who speak the word of Yahweh without regard to its pleasant sound. Unfortunately it seems to have been the case during the pre-exilic period that the false prophets were in a majority, often in an overwhelming majority. Probably it was the members of the prophetic guilds—the official prophets, so to speak—who had settled down to repeat such things as would please their hearers. They stood in the official prophetic succession. But the future rested with those who belonged to no official order, and could claim no human sanction for their message, but, conscious of their own immediate call and inspiration, spoke with undaunted boldness the truths which God Himself had revealed to them in the experience of their hearts. Yet we must not be unjust to those whom we must call false prophets. It is not likely that they were to any great extent conscious impostors. In some cases, no doubt,

they were blinded by self-interest, in others by a mistaken patriotism, or by a religious conservatism that led them to cling to doctrines or rites, which the higher religion of their time had left behind.

The labours of Elijah achieved but little during his lifetime: the accomplishment of his ideals he left as a legacy to his successors. At the bidding of Elisha, Jehu overthrew the dynasty of Ahab, and extirpated the worship of Melkart. The revolution which placed him on the throne meant, from a religious point of view, the exclusion of a foreign cult from Israel. Henceforth it was burned into the consciousness of the nation that Yahweh was a jealous God, who would brook no divided allegiance. Whether beyond this there was any improvement may be questioned. The new dynasty was for a long time less powerful than that which it had supplanted. The political fortunes of Israel grew darker and darker. Jehu and his earlier successors fared much more disastrously than Ahab in the Syrian wars, and speedily lost, and far more than lost, the ground which he had gained. The desperate extremities to which Israel was reduced may have chastened its conduct and purified its belief. When it seemed as if all hope was lost, deliverance came through Assyria. The great empire had exhausted the strength of Syria. Joash and Jeroboam II. were able to turn the tide against her.

They regained what she had wrested from Israel and added new territory to the northern kingdom. Assyria sank into a condition of lethargy, so that no trouble was felt from her during the long period in which Israel consolidated her conquests and reached a pitch of prosperity such as she had not enjoyed since the reign of Solomon. The national life expanded, and wealth enormously increased. Externally all seemed well. Syria, the old rival of Israel, was at last humbled. Assyria, the dreaded military empire, had come into but fleeting contact with Israel, and its inactivity quickly caused the terror of it to be forgotten by a people which had risen so rapidly to the zenith of its power. Yet a clear-sighted observer could hardly fail to recognise that, after no long interval, Assyria would resume her march of conquest, and Israel would have to fight or submit. And beneath the surface the internal condition of Israel was far from satisfactory. The best strength of the nation had been drained from it in the long struggle with Syria. The sturdy, virtuous peasants who lived and laboured on the small homesteads they had inherited from their ancestors had largely disappeared. Wealth increased, but was accumulated in comparatively few hands. The poor grew still poorer; what little they possessed was often filched from them, and the law-courts gave them no redress against oppression and injustice. The wealth

wrung from these hapless victims was lavished in riotous living, so that the economic progress of the country was retarded by unproductive expenditure, while luxury sapped the character of the ruling classes. And this was all the more hateful that ruthless oppression and shameless vice were combined with fervent and punctilious performance of religious ceremonies. The dark picture will come before us in fuller detail as we proceed to study the early canonical prophets, and observe how it excited the scorching indignation of Amos and the heart-breaking sorrow of Hosea, and filled them with the foreboding of swift judgment at Yahweh's hands.

CHAPTER IV

AMOS AND HOSEA

Two of our canonical prophets, Amos and Hosea, worked in the northern kingdom, though Amos was a native of Judah. The earlier prophets had for the most part been content to utter the spoken word, and leave it to chance whether it was recorded or not. But from Amos onwards we have a succession of writing prophets, who not only spoke the prophetic word, but enshrined it in a permanent form. We do not know what led them to supplement oral by written prophecy, whether to show the truth of their predictions by leaving them in a form which enabled them to be tested by the event, or whether the opposition they excited led them to commit to writing what they were forbidden to speak.

Amos was a native of Tekoa, a little town six miles south of Bethlehem, on the edge of the wilderness. He was a shepherd and a dresser of sycomore trees, the fruit of which was coarse, and was used only by the poorest people. He was not a member of one of the prophetic guilds. He had come from Judah under

direct Divine impulse to announce the impending destruction of the northern kingdom. His utterances at the royal sanctuary of Bethel created such a sensation that Amaziah the priest complained to Jeroboam II. that his prophecies were treasonable, and bade the prophet himself return to Judah. The date of Amos is uncertain, but probably it was about 760 B.C.

He came to a society morally rotten and more than ripe for judgment. Material prosperity had sapped the integrity of the nation. Life had become for the rich very luxurious, and with the contempt of a hardy countryman for the self-indulgent dwellers in palaces, Amos tells of the summer and winter houses sumptuously furnished with silk and ivory, of the idle songs sung to the sound of the harp, of the musical instruments invented by the revellers. He describes their banquets, for which the choicest foods were prepared, at which, instead of sitting, they had adopted the fashion of reclining; their drunkenness, so abandoned that they drank their wine out of bowls rather than out of cups; the costly ointments with which they were anointed. In these revels the proud ladies of Samaria, as well as their husbands, shared. But there are graver sins than these, which do not merely excite the prophet's scornful disgust, but kindle his flaming indignation. These were the terrible social wrongs inflicted on the poor by the

rich. Nathan's parable of the ewe lamb reflects only too truly the constant relations between rich and poor in the East, and social wrongs are continually referred to by the prophets. Luxury was costly, and much of the cost of providing it was wrung from the poor. Amos describes how the rich store up violence and robbery in their palaces, oppress the poor and crush the needy, sell the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes. While the rich rob and oppress the poor, the merchants cheat them with false weights and measures. Another constant feature in Oriental society meets us in Amos, as in many other prophets. It was very difficult for the poor to secure from the judges redress against their oppressors. Justice was perverted by bribery, and the needy were turned aside from their right.

Their flagrant crimes did not prevent them from being very religious. They were punctilious in bringing their tithes, they were lavish of burnt offerings, meal offerings, and peace offerings. A splendid worship went on, with costly sacrifices and feasts and music. It was the worship of Yahweh, not of other gods, and was regarded as the certain means of securing His favour. Yet this worship was stained by revolting vice, introduced from the foulest paganism into the religion of Israel.

As the Book of Amos is at present arranged, the prophet begins with prophecies against the nations. Of

the six non-Israelite peoples on whom judgment is denounced, five are condemned for cruelty. The sixth was Moab, whose sin was that it burned the bones of the King of Edom into lime. This would be regarded as an outrage on the sanctity of the dead, but it was also a carrying of vengeance and hatred to an illegitimate point, and this brings it within the same class as the others. Outrage on our common humanity would cover all the cases mentioned. It might seem that little significance should be attached to the condemnation of such sins in the heathen, since they could not be blamed for idolatry, never having received the revelation of Yahweh. But this would be a mistaken view, since Israel, Yahweh's people, is condemned for just the same kind of sins, though Israel's sin is against its own people, while that of the rest is sin against other nations. Probably the condemnation of luxury and drunkenness is aimed less at these sins in themselves than at the oppression which they entail. The prophet's indignation is stirred above all by cruelty and inhumanity; his blood boils at tyranny and atrocities.

This implies a specific conception of the character of Yahweh, which stood in the sharpest contrast to that held by the Israelites generally. There was no controversy as to the fundamental truth that Yahweh was Israel's God and that Israel was Yahweh's people. Elijah had

stamped this truth too deeply into the popular consciousness for Amos to need to convince his hearers of it. The question between them was rather how this relationship should be conceived, and what was its bearing on practical conduct. If Yahweh stood so little above the tribal gods of surrounding peoples, if He was so identified with His worshippers in character and fortunes that His destiny was linked with theirs, then He could not look on their sins with any degree of severity, except when they indicated disrespect or disloyalty to Himself or the people, and He could never for His own sake contemplate the destruction of Israel. The popular view might not have been expressed so crudely as this, but practically it amounted to this. Though Yahweh had chosen Israel, having the power to choose any people, yet the fact that He had chosen Israel, and not another, seemed to mean that Israel was His favourite, and would be treated with the utmost indulgence. The nation could count on His help and protection, if it performed its religious duties, and that quite irrespective of the justice of its cause. Amos also held that Yahweh had elected Israel. But He might have chosen any other nation, for all were subservient to His will. With a far-reaching glance over the peoples and a wide knowledge of their past, the prophet asserts that they, too, as well as Israel, have been within the sphere of Yahweh's working, and are instruments

for the accomplishment of His plans. If He brought Israel from Egypt, He also brought the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir. His choice of Israel had not, therefore, been due to any necessity, but was His own free act. This choice implied no favouritism on Yahweh's part towards Israel, but rather a higher standard and a severer retribution. From the familiar premises the prophet draws a new and startling conclusion: "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities."

All this presupposes a view of Yahweh's character. He is above all things a moral God, and what specially rouses His anger is cruelty or oppression of the weak by the strong. The utmost zeal in the ritual service weighed as nothing against the flagrant injustice of the upper classes. Hence the prophet speaks of the sacrifices with bitter sarcasm and with passionate hate. "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them, neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment roll down as waters, and righteousness as an ever-flowing stream." So sacrifices and feasts and sacred music availed nothing to win His favour, as,

indeed, they might have known from hunger and drought, mildew and pestilence. But now a more terrible judgment is in store for them. The people talked with eager expectation of the Day of Yahweh, when they expected Him to crush the enemies of Israel, and place her in a splendid and unassailable position. Amos also looks forward to the Day of Yahweh. But it will be a day of darkness and not light. It will come as an unwelcome surprise, a crushing judgment rather than a crowning victory.

But Yahweh is not simply the righteous God of Israel. He is the God of Nature and the God of History. He has guided the destinies of other nations in the past; and Assyria is the instrument of judgment in His hand. The rain, the blight and the palmerworm, famine and pestilence, are all at His disposal. Even if with several scholars we regard as later insertions the three passages in which Yahweh is definitely affirmed to be the Creator (iv. 13, v. 8, 9, ix. 5, 6), it is not because they are out of harmony with the prophet's conception of His relation to the world. The formal statement of monotheism may be wanting in the utterances of Amos; the thing itself is there.

Such, then, is Yahweh's nature and character, a moral God with all forces under His control. It is not doubtful to Amos how He will deal with a nation like Israel.

They may still seek Yahweh and live. But this is not the seeking of Him in the sanctuaries or offering abundance of sacrifices. They seek Yahweh by seeking good and hating evil. And this is closely connected with establishing judgment. To seek good is to seek justice for the wronged and the oppressed. To seek Yahweh is to bring their conduct into harmony with His character.

But the prophet is under no illusions as to the response of Israel to his warning, or the fate that is to come upon it. Again and again he predicts death and captivity. Whether he regarded the overthrow of Israel as final and complete is a question which depends for its solution on the acceptance or rejection of ix. 8–15. As the text stands, the issue of the judgment will be that all the sinners will be exterminated, but a righteous remnant will survive to form a new Israel. The nation will pass through a long process of sifting, till all the chaff is gone; yet not the smallest grain will be lost. The new Israel will be set in its own land, the tabernacle of David will again be raised, and the surrounding nations become tributary. All nature will be marvellously fruitful, the nation will rebuild the waste cities and live in peaceful and perpetual possession of its land. It is probable, however, for the reasons first given by Wellhausen, that we should regard ix. 8–15 as substituted for the original

conclusion of the book. This luscious description stands in so sharp a contrast to the prophet's declaration of irretrievable ruin, that we can hardly suppose that he would have broken the force of his warning in this way. It is, moreover, pitched on too low a note for the austere and strenuous Amos. He seems to have expected a judgment, which would leave not even a remnant beyond the range of its execution.

When Amos uttered his sentence of doom on the northern kingdom, he left the minister of God's judgment unnamed. But while Israel had never seemed so secure, the certainty that on a people so depraved destruction must swiftly come, made him sensitive to signs of change, which passed unheeded by all save himself. He turned towards Assyria, and as he listened he heard the giant stir in his slumber, and he knew that his waking was near. It came when Tiglath Pileser, one of the ablest of Assyrian kings, ascended the throne in 745 B.C. Soon after, the long and glorious reign of Jeroboam II. came to an end. When his strong hand was removed, the forces of disorder broke loose, and the kingdom rapidly fell into a state of anarchy. Six kings followed him on the throne of Israel, and four of these were murdered. In less than a quarter of a century Samaria was captured (722 B.C.), the northern kingdom was destroyed, and the people were carried into captivity.

Henceforth the northern tribes lose all significance for universal history.

Before the catastrophe, however, another prophet laboured in the northern kingdom. Hosea, unlike Amos, himself belonged to it, and speaks of it with far less detachment than his predecessor. While Amos seems to have prophesied only during the reign of Jeroboam II., Hosea's ministry fell partly in his reign, partly in the troubled period which followed his death. Since he makes no allusion to the coalition of Syria and Ephraim against Judah, it is probable that none of his prophecies are later than 735 B.C.

His characteristic teaching was the creation of his own experience. His wife Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, proved unfaithful to him and at last left him. When she had fallen into misery through desertion by her lovers, and was to be sold as a slave, he bought her back and took her home. Keeping her from her old evil associations, he hoped at last to bring her to penitence, and on her reform to restore the old relations. In this tragedy which had blighted his life, he found his message; for in his own relations to his faithless wife he saw a reflection of the relation of Yahweh to faithless Israel.

Several have regarded the whole account of his marriage and the unfaithfulness of his wife as an alle-

gory. It is true that his three children bore symbolical names. But so also did the children of Isaiah, who were not merely allegories, since one of them accompanied his father to his memorable interview with Ahaz. It was quite natural for a prophet to express his leading doctrines in symbolical names given to his children. What seems to be fatal to the allegorical interpretation is that no symbolical meaning can with any plausibility be attached to the names of the wife or her father. It is further urged that God cannot have directed Hosea to marry a woman of immoral life. But there is no need to suppose she was such when he married her, for this is not the only example in which a prophet does something at Yahweh's command, as he tells us, and yet it is only later that he recognises that there has been any Divine impulse at all (*cf.* Jer. xxxii. 8). It is also necessary to assume the wife's purity at the time of marriage, since otherwise she would not have represented Israel in her early purity, when Yahweh won her for His bride. Wellhausen, followed by Nowack, argues that Hosea may not have recognised his wife's unfaithfulness so early as the birth of his first-born. Since he gave this son a symbolic name we may infer that he had already become a prophet, so that if Wellhausen is correct it would not be his wife's misconduct that caused him to become a prophet. This is, in fact, very likely, but it does nothing

to diminish the importance of her unfaithfulness for the origin of his characteristic teaching. It may, indeed, be plausibly argued that this teaching only slowly emerged into consciousness, and was not fully wrought out till he saved his wife from slavery and brought her back to his home. What is of vital importance is not what first made him a prophet, but what it was that made him the prophet of Yahweh's inexhaustible love. He may have begun as a prophet of judgment, but, if so, his only significance during this period lay in the fact that he continued the work of Amos. What gives him his unique position in the development of the religion of Israel is that he preached Yahweh's unfailing love for Israel and therefore its inevitable reformation. And it was his own experience which gave him this insight into the love of God.

The prophecy is peculiarly difficult from the broken and disjointed style. The deep sorrow of the prophet for his wife's sin and for Israel's, for his own pain and for God's, makes his language at times almost incoherent, and it is all the more obscure on account of its conciseness and fulness of meaning. The text has also suffered much corruption in the process of transmission, and several passages are supposed to be later additions.

The saying that Amos is the prophet of morality but Hosea is the prophet of religion is not strictly accurate,

but it indicates the real distinction between them. To Amos God is righteous, and conduct is the nation's supreme concern; to Hosea God is love, and everything depends on Israel's relation to Him. The individual finds no place in either Amos or Hosea, but only the nation. Thus it is Israel, and not the individual Israelite, who is the object of Yahweh's love. The relationship is expressed under two metaphors, which mean the same thing essentially, but state it from different points of view. One was familiar before his time. Yahweh was Israel's Father. When he was a child He had loved him and called His son out of Egypt. He had tended him with affectionate care, but the Father's tender love had been repaid with ingratitude and unfilial disobedience. The other metaphor, while suggested by the custom of regarding a god as the husband of his land, was really given to the prophet in his own experience. The popular conception opened the way for false and degrading ideas, which are associated generally with nature worship, where the god is regarded as the giver of fertility to the land. Such a religion is naturally deeply stained with immorality. The prophet purifies the conception by lifting it from the physical into the moral domain. Marriage is an ethical relationship; when the ethical element is absent there can be no true marriage. He had learned from his own bitter

sorrow what marriage was, and it was the depth of his insight into the true nature of marriage, which he had gained in this tragic way, that qualified him to interpret aright God's marriage to Israel. As he pondered on his own lot, he saw that what controlled his attitude to his wife was a love which would not give the offender up, but with untiring patience and persistence laboured and suffered that she might be won back to purity. But as he had loved Gomer, so Yahweh had loved Israel. And since Yahweh was God and not man, it followed that the noble and generous qualities present in the prophet were present in Yahweh in an incomparably higher degree. Thus he rose to the great thought, "If my love still survives this wound; if, however often trampled on, it still springs up anew; how much more must Yahweh's love be lavished on sinful Israel, uncrushed by the grossest ingratitude, accepting no defeat, but moving patiently to its goal, shrinking from no punishment of the offender that may serve His end, till she is restored to her early purity and meets the love of Yahweh with whole-hearted loyalty?" So while Amos strikes the keynote of his prophecy in the words: "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities," the keynote of Hosea is struck in the words, "How can I give thee up, Ephraim?"

But while the love of Yahweh is Hosea's fundamental doctrine, this love was not conceived as a weak tenderness for Israel's sin. Just as the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood involves a more stringent ethical ideal than the doctrine of the Divine Sovereignty, so the love of Yahweh demands a higher ethical standard than His righteousness. For righteousness is concerned especially for conduct, hence Amos bends his energies to secure a well-regulated State, in which oppression and cruelty have ceased and impartial justice is done. But love seeks for its object the highest good, and since Yahweh is Himself the Holy One of Israel, He cannot be satisfied till the people that He loves is pure. His love is penetrated by an ethical spirit, and its manifestations are controlled by the imperious claims of morality. It is not simply an outwardly correct conduct that He requires, but a heart wholly at one with His own. And just because there is no severity like the severity of love, the demand of Hosea is more searching and penetrating than that of Amos. The latter sees the mischief before his eyes, but he does not seek into its cause. Hosea probes below the surface, and finds the spring of all the evil in the false relation in which Israel stands to Yahweh. She had broken the conditions of the marriage covenant, and the priests especially were to blame that the people perished from lack of knowledge Want of true morality

arose out of a want of true religion. Hence Hosea does not, like Amos, urge the people to change their conduct so much as to return to Yahweh, when right conduct would follow of itself. The people probably regarded themselves as zealous worshippers of Yahweh. But this worship was so contaminated by heathen elements, that Hosea could see nothing in it but worship of the Baalim. In other words, he did not recognise their Yahweh as the true Yahweh at all; though they named him Yahweh, he was no better than a Baal.

His own experience may have made him more keenly sensitive to the evils of his time. As he looked around he saw that his own was no isolated case. The whole land was full of open and flagrant sin. There was nought but swearing and breaking faith, and killing and stealing and committing adultery (iv. 2). And beneath this open manifestation lay a complete absence of truth and mercy and the knowledge of God.

While Amos saw no way of mending the condition of things save by extermination of Israel, this solution of the problem was impossible to Hosea. Though he was even more sensitive to the sin of Israel, the love of Yahweh assured him of her ultimate amendment. But between the terrible present and the happy future lies the period of chastisement. The settled agricultural life in Canaan had led to the intrusion of elements into

the religion of Israel borrowed from the Canaanites. Israel must therefore be wrenched away from the soil, that a complete breach with all these abuses might be secured. Then in the desert, where agriculture could not be practised, she would return to Yahweh, who would speak to her heart as in the old desert life after the Exodus, and she would make answer as in the days of her youth, when Yahweh brought her out of Egypt. He would heal all her backslidings and she would be freely forgiven and loved. Then Yahweh would once more betroth her unto Him in loyal love, and bring her back to her own land. And in it the soil would again be tilled, and she would know that it was Yahweh and not the Baalim who gave her the corn and the wine and the oil. Thus Hosea disengaged the life of civilisation from the perils which threatened the religion, and succeeded in making an alliance between civilisation and the religion of Israel.

CHAPTER V

ISAIAH AND MICAH

WITH the fall of Samaria the task of preserving the higher religion of Israel was entrusted to the southern kingdom. We know but little of the history of its religion during the period from Rehoboam to Uzziah. In one respect Judah fared more favourably than the sister-kingdom. It enjoyed greater political stability, for the permanence of the Davidic dynasty largely secured it against the shock of constant revolution and civil war. Life seems to have been simpler and more frugal. It was also tamer, without the stir and colour which lent it a richer interest in the north. Of its religious quality much the same thing may probably be said. It was the northern kingdom which produced Elijah, Elisha, and Hosea. It is true that the two former were called to their work by a crisis which had no counterpart in Judah, for Athaliah's reign was a mere episode, and the worship of Melkart remained an excrescence, foreign to the religious temper of the people. Israel seems to have been more hospitable to this

worship, but even here it is easy to exaggerate. What proves most conclusively where the centre of gravity really lay is that Amos, though he belonged to Judah, was sent not to his own countrymen but to Israel. Yet it was not the destruction of Samaria which was responsible for the rise of a great prophet in Judah. For when Samaria fell, nearly half of Isaiah's prophetic career had run its course. And while it was largely true that the tides of life ran more swiftly in the north, yet during the half century which preceded the call of Isaiah a similar expansion of wealth had been experienced, with the social evils which came in its train. It was to the conditions thus created that the ministry of Isaiah and Micah was addressed.

The starting-point for the interpretation of Isaiah is the vision in which, about 740 B.C., his call and his message came to him. Standing at the Temple threshold he passes into an ecstasy, in which he has a vision of Yahweh exalted in majesty. His greatness is proclaimed by the attitude of the attendant seraphim, who do not venture to look upon Him and shroud themselves from His gaze, while they are alert to do His will. His holiness is proclaimed by their unceasing cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is Yahweh of hosts." At this cry the foundations quiver beneath Isaiah's feet, and the Temple is filled with the smoke of Yahweh's wrath that an unclean man

should have dared to cross the threshold of His house. Isaiah is crushed by the sense of his own uncleanness as he gazes on the holy God, and of the uncleanness of those in whose midst he dwells. Then the humbled and penitent man is touched by the living coal, and his lips are thus fitted to join in Yahweh's praise. At last he is fit to hear God's voice and receive His call. So he offers himself for the mission of which as yet he knows nothing, and is bidden preach to the people, with the assurance at the outset that the message will but harden them in their evil ways, and that his mission will prove a failure.

In this vision Isaiah's most characteristic doctrines are revealed. Yahweh's majesty fills him with a sense of the insignificance of earthly things, even the greatest. Because he has seen Yahweh high and lifted up, he knows that there is to be a Day of Yahweh on all that is high and lifted up on earth. All human magnificence will be abased when Yahweh rises to judge the world. He has realised the holiness of Yahweh, and in the light of it has understood as never before the uncleanness of Yahweh's people. But a holy God cannot permanently tolerate an unclean people. And since the prophet is convinced beforehand that the people will not accept his message, the only solution is a judgment in which the sinful will be destroyed. Assyria is the instrument

in Yahweh's hands to effect this cleansing. Whether his characteristic doctrine of the remnant was expressed in his vision is not clear. If with the Septuagint we omit the words, "So the holy seed is the stock thereof," the chapter leaves us with a picture of unrelieved desolation. Yet the doctrine must have been formulated so early in his ministry that it is simplest to refer its origin to his vision. For he gave his son, who cannot have been born long after, the name Shear-Yashub, which means that a remnant will return to Yahweh, and expresses a foreboding of terrible judgment, lightened by the belief that a very small remnant would escape. Even if not directly given in his vision, the doctrine of the remnant may have arisen out of reflection on it. As he had turned to Yahweh and realised the forgiveness of his sin, so others like-minded with himself might also turn and live. Moreover, in spite of the example set by Amos, it was intrinsically more probable that he should adopt this view than that he should look for the complete extermination of Israel. The election of Israel meant that the nation had a place in the Divine plan, which would be thwarted if its existence came to an end. Or if it was not ultimately thwarted, since Yahweh might choose another people to serve His purpose, yet this would cast a reflection on His wisdom in choosing a nation that proved unequal to His demand. Moreover,

since it was in the temple of Jerusalem that Isaiah had seen Yahweh, he felt that because Zion was Yahweh's throne it could not be destroyed. And the indestructibility of Zion may have seemed to imply the indestructibility of Israel.

The present condition of His people he views in the light of Yahweh's holiness, *i.e.* not simply of His righteousness or His love, but His character taken in its completeness. The sins of Judah are similar to those of Israel, except that the former seems to have been less tainted with sins of impurity. Isaiah denounces in the strongest terms the oppression of the poor and defenceless by the rich and powerful, the shameless perversion of judgment and the corruption of the government, the adding of house to house and field to field, the riotous living of the men and luxury of the women. He attacks their superstition and idolatry, their resort to soothsayers and necromancers. Their whole attitude to Yahweh is full of sin. They do not repay the care He has lavished upon them, but are rebellious and ungrateful. Their worship is full of formality, their service of Yahweh with sacrifices most assiduous, but they have no care for justice or morality. Some have sunk to such a depth that they make themselves the slaves of sin, and impiously defy Yahweh to do His worst. Their treatment of the prophets is part of their treatment of the God who has

sent them. They forbid them to speak right things, and beg them to prophesy lies. They scornfully mock their message, and profanely imitate Isaiah's mannerisms and the repetition of his words. The politicians seek to conceal from him their negotiations for an alliance with Egypt (a striking proof of his political influence), and their conduct is tantamount to an attempt to conceal them from Yahweh. They are haughty and conceited, and victims of such infatuation that in presence of the greatest danger they preserve an attitude of carelessness, as though all must come right in the end, and believe they have secured immunity from death. There was also great perversion of moral distinction, a calling of good evil and evil good. And sin had reached well-nigh the lowest depth in its utter shamelessness.

Although the prophet does not believe that the problem presented by the sin of Judah will be solved in any other way than by the extermination of the sinful, he yet urgently counsels reformation. They might wash and be clean, cease to do evil, learn to do well, and uphold the cause of justice. They might walk in the light of Yahweh, and turn to Him from whom they had so deeply revolted. But since few would do this, judgment was inevitable. And the instrument of judgment the prophet saw in Assyria. This brings us to a consideration of Isaiah's foreign policy.

The question of Judah's relation to Assyria rose quite early in Isaiah's ministry. To repel the coalition of Syria and Ephraim against Judah about 735 B.C., which was probably intended to force her into an alliance against Assyria, Ahaz in a panic proposed to call in the aid of Assyria. This meant the subjection of the petty State to the great Empire, and the tribute exacted would press most heavily upon the poor, already ground down by the wealthy. Thus internal reform, Judah's sorest necessity, would become more difficult. Whereas Amos and Hosea held aloof, so far as we know, from politics, Isaiah played a prominent part as a statesman. He consistently advised Judah to remain quiet and avoid entanglement with great empires. So small a State should renounce the ambition to shine in the politics of the world, or she would be caught into a current too strong for her, and lose all power of independent action. When the king, under the pretext of piety, refused the sign offered him by the prophet for his choice, Isaiah sought to shame his unbelief by the faith of the mother who would express in the name Immanuel, which she would give to her child, the confidence that God was with His people. But it was in vain that he dissuaded Ahaz by this example from calling in Assyria, and assured him that Syria and Ephraim were too insignificant to harm him, and would soon be

brought to nought. Assyria suppressed the coalition, as her own interests would speedily have forced her to do, but Ahaz bought relief with the independence of his country. Judah soon began to fret under the Assyrian yoke, and formed plans of revolt with the smaller nationalities of Palestine or with Babylon. These were sedulously fostered by Egypt, which used these smaller nations to weaken for its own ends the power of Assyria. A strong party in Judah favoured an Egyptian alliance and a spirited foreign policy. Isaiah, in the presence of this infatuation, stood firm to his policy of acquiescence in things as they were. Now that his advice had been disregarded he condemned all attempts to extricate the nation from its connection with Assyria. They could only make matters worse. The keynote of his whole policy is struck in the words: "Returning and resting shall ye be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength." No human power could stay Assyria's onward march; only when the task assigned it by Yahweh was complete could it be overthrown. Judah must wait patiently, confident that Zion could not be destroyed, and that at the right moment Yahweh would break Assyria's power. We can easily see how the policy of Isaiah grew out of his vision. Yahweh's majesty had filled him with a sense of His might and glory and the utter emptiness of all human greatness.

Even Assyria could not overawe him after that. But when Assyria had entered into the politics of Judah, his certainty that it was the rod of Yahweh's anger made him counsel submission and steadily discourage the policy of an Egyptian alliance. Nevertheless, when, after the death of Sargon, the movement for revolt could no longer be held in check, and the madness of Judah's politicians was demonstrated by terrible disaster, his conviction that Zion would not be destroyed and that a remnant would survive assured him even in the darkest hour that Assyria would be broken on Yahweh's mountain.

The doctrine of the happy future that was to follow does not spring directly out of his vision. Yet it followed from Yahweh's dwelling on Zion and the survival of a holy remnant. When the sin of Judah had been removed, Yahweh's reign over it could not be other than full of blessedness. Unhappily much uncertainty hangs over any detailed presentation of the prophet's views on account of the critical problems raised about many of the eschatological passages. It may be regarded as settled that the following sections are not by Isaiah: chaps. xii., xiii. 1–xiv. 23, xxi. 1–10, xxiv.–xxvii., xxxiv., xxxv., xl.–lxvi. But to this list a good deal more may be added with considerable probability, including ii. 2–4, iv. 2–6, xi. 10–16, xix. 18–25, xxxiii.,

possibly also xxxii. This position is conservative compared with that held by critics like Duhm, Hackmann, Cheyne, Volz, and Marti, though Duhm regards chap. ii. 2–4 as by Isaiah, and with reference to several other questions adopts a less radical view. Especially is this the case with the most important of all the problems concerned, that of the authenticity of the two Messianic passages, chaps. ix. 1–7 and xi. 1–8. The arguments urged against Isaiah's authorship are not at all conclusive, and there are serious objections to placing them in the post-exilic period. It was natural for Isaiah, with the Davidic monarchy before him, to anticipate its perpetuation in the era of blessedness that he expected soon to open, when the sinful had been slain by Assyria, and Assyria in her turn had been destroyed. Moreover, if the passages had been written in the later period we should have expected prominence to be given to the restoration to Palestine of the Jews from the Dispersion, but this is quite absent from them. Accordingly it is best to regard them as by Isaiah. He speaks in lofty language of this king, whom for convenience we may call the Messiah, though Isaiah does not use the term. He springs from the stock of Jesse, and bears a wonderful name. He passes through battles and victory to a reign of peace and righteousness. The spirit of Yahweh will rest upon him and equip him with all the qualities

necessary for right government. He will defend the meek and slay the wicked.

Little need be added on Micah, who was Isaiah's contemporary, and, as we learn from Jer. xxvi. 18, prophesied in the reign of Hezekiah. The northern kingdom had not fallen when he began his work, and he predicts its utter overthrow. For the most part he is concerned with Judah, his native country. He was a man of the people like Amos, and, like him, looked at the oppression of the poor by the governing classes from the point of view of the class oppressed. The sins of which he accuses them are those attacked by Isaiah, but he is more definite in his description and more scathing in his denunciation. He had no belief in the indestructibility of Zion, but predicts that it shall be ploughed as a field and the temple laid in ruins. We learn from the Book of Jeremiah that this had a salutary effect upon Judah. Like Isaiah, he gives a very unflattering account of the prophets of his time, and asserts his own inspiration to declare his message of judgment. Whether he added to this a message of consolation is very uncertain. There is at present a strong tendency among scholars to restrict Micah's own work to the first three chapters of the book that bears his name.

The close of the eighth century proved extremely critical. The restive politicians of Judah made a vain

attempt to win back from Assyria the freedom which Ahaz had bartered for the relief she had afforded from Syria and Ephraim. In 701 Sennacherib invaded Judah. He inflicted irreparable damage on the country, took away more than two hundred thousand captives to Assyria, and exacted an enormous indemnity. Not content with this, he demanded the surrender of Jerusalem, which alone of the cities of Judah remained uncaptured, and purposed to carry the inhabitants into exile. The faith of Isaiah that Jerusalem could not be taken received a splendid vindication. Judah thus gained a respite which saved her religion for the world. The overthrow of Samaria and the captivity of northern Israel meant the disappearance of its religion, so far as can be seen, and had Judah gone into captivity in 701, the religion of Israel would have become altogether extinct. As yet the higher religion had barely taken root; it could not have survived the terrible ordeal of transplantation. The religion was so inextricably united with the nation that to have been plucked up by the roots with it would have involved, as it did for the northern tribes, the destruction of nation and religion alike. It was largely due to Isaiah that when, rather more than a century later, Jerusalem was captured and destroyed and the people were carried into captivity, the religion survived the shock. He seems to have entrusted

his teaching to a band of disciples, who worked for the realisation of his ideals. Even in his lifetime it bore fruit in the reformation of Hezekiah. This was but the forerunner of a far greater achievement, which was of truly epoch-making significance for the development of the religion.

CHAPTER VI

THE DEUTERONOMIC REFORMATION

It may seem at first sight surprising that the vindication of Isaiah by the fulfilment of his predictions should have been followed by the reaction under Manasseh, during which the old abuses crept back and new cults were imported from abroad. We must, however, remember that matters were in the most deplorable condition. Jerusalem, it is true, remained standing and the Temple was untouched. But the population was terribly reduced by the loss of more than two hundred thousand captives, and the wealth of the country was depleted by payment of an enormous indemnity. The Assyrian yoke remained fixed as firmly as ever. To a people thus exhausted and despondent the gods of the oppressor seemed mightier than their own. It was therefore not unnatural that foreign cults made their way into Judah in a manner hitherto unexampled. Manasseh, who came to the throne quite young and reigned for about half a century, actively fostered this new movement, and seems to have instituted a violent and relentless persecution,

in which many who held fast to the exclusive worship of Yahweh suffered martyrdom. The adoration of the heavenly bodies, and especially of the Queen of Heaven, received great prominence, and the hideous custom of child-sacrifice attained dimensions never before reached in Israel. We need not assume that the worship of Yahweh was suppressed. These practices were regarded as compatible with an adherence to the national Deity. The so-called sacrifices to Moloch were probably really offered to Yahweh under the title of Melek or King.

The successors of Isaiah were thus driven from public life to work in secret, and prepare for a great reform when the time was ripe. It is perhaps from the reign of Manasseh that one of the greatest among the prophetic utterances has come to us. In reply to the question with what costly offering, with what sacrifice, even of his dearest, man could win the favour of God, the word is spoken: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth Yahweh require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Here with unclouded insight, and with a simplicity of expression which matches the grandeur of the thought, we find the essence of the prophetic teaching. Vain are all material offerings, the blood of victims or rivers of oil. Vain, too, the surrender of the first-born that the soul's guilt might be purged away. Yahweh asked

nothing for Himself, save a reverent humility of spirit, and conformity with His character. But justice to the wronged, mercy to the helpless and oppressed, duties so flagrantly forgotten, those were His requirements, and for failure to fulfil them no extravagance of ritual could atone.

It is perhaps also to this period that we should assign the composition of the book which subsequently gave the impulse to Josiah's Reformation. Many scholars believe that it was deliberately composed during the reign of Josiah with a view to bringing about the Reformation. We cannot very well understand, if this was the case, why, with so well-disposed a king on the throne, and in view of the uncertainties of life, the Reformers should have permitted so long a period to elapse that they did not produce their book till the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign (621 B.C.). Moreover, the fact that where the interests of the priests at Jerusalem were touched the Law-book failed to secure obedience, seems to make it unlikely that its discovery was planned with their connivance. It is more likely that the book was older, and that its discovery was genuine. If so, the reign of Manasseh is the most probable date for its composition. It is by no means clear precisely what it contained. It can hardly be questioned, in view of the close parallelism between its injunctions

and the reform carried through by Josiah, that it is to be sought in the Book of Deuteronomy. Roughly speaking, the original book may be taken to have embraced Deut. v.–xxvi., xxviii., though here and there these chapters contain subsequent expansions.

The destruction of the great sanctuaries in the northern kingdom left the Temple at Jerusalem without a rival. The fact that the capital alone had been spared when the other cities of Judah had been destroyed, that after taking these cities Sennacherib had been prevented from capturing Jerusalem just when it seemed within his grasp, vindicated the true inspiration of Isaiah, enhanced the prestige of the city, and fixed the indestructibility of Zion and its Temple as an axiom in the mind of the people. And since the time of David, Jerusalem had always had a pre-eminence in its possession of the ark. The conditions were thus favourable for the abolition of the high places or local sanctuaries, and the centralisation of worship at the Temple, thus gaining for it an exclusive legitimacy. This was the leading reform contemplated by the unknown author to whom we owe the book. He was the heir of the great prophets of the eighth century, but he shows a concern for the externals of religion in a degree quite foreign to them. In him the priest and the prophet have met, and the author sets in the forefront of his programme a reform of the cultus.

Yet it would do him an injustice to miss the deeper moral and spiritual elements in his work. Whole-hearted love of God and devotion to Him is made the spring of all action. This is to control the life of society and the home, as well as the relation of man to God and the performance of the strictly religious duties. Love of others is made secondary only to the love of God. A lofty moral standard is throughout maintained, and the humanitarian temper of the Law is one of its most striking features. The author's theory of retribution, of the invariable connection between righteousness and temporal prosperity, had its value, but created serious difficulties when events showed it to be inadequate to explain the facts of life, and led to such a protest as we find in the Book of Job. And even the reform of the cultus was for the author but a means to an end. The abolition of the local sanctuaries purified the worship of Yahweh, for the high places were the seat of many abuses. It strengthened monotheism, for one place of worship involved as its correlate one God. It is true that at the high places it was Yahweh who was worshipped. But the inevitable result at that stage of development was that the unity of Yahweh should be dissolved by His differentiation into a large number of local Yahwehs. The author emphatically asserts that Yahweh is one. And he insists equally that Yahweh

alone is to be worshipped; idolatry is repeatedly forbidden, and the severest punishment for it is enjoined.

The injunctions of the Law were carried out in a drastic Reformation (621 B.C.). Josiah accepted them as the command of God, and in a convocation convened by him the nation assented to them. Idolatry was suppressed with a ruthless hand, and the local sanctuaries were abolished. It might seem, in view of the subsequent return under Jehoiakim of the evils removed by his father, that the Reformers had effected nothing. It would not be easy, however, to over-estimate the importance of their work for the later history of the religion. They supplied the point of view from which later writers judged the nation's past. The restriction of the cultus to one sanctuary made possible the ritual programme of Ezekiel and the Priestly Code. It also fostered the more spiritual forms of religion, which at a later time were characteristic of the synagogue. If sacrifice and tithe and first-fruits could be offered only in Jerusalem, then the religion in every-day life assumed a far less materialistic character.

In another way the acceptance of the Deuteronomic Law marked the beginning of a movement of quite immeasurable importance. Here the origin of the canonisation of the Hebrew sacred writings is to be found. For the first time Judah became what it has

always been since—a people of a Book. A written code was henceforth the law of the people's life and the standard by which its conduct was judged. The completed Law was at a later period the Canon of the Jewish Church. Later still the prophetic writings were admitted to stand by its side, though on a lower level. And as a third stage other sacred writings were similarly regarded as Scripture, and thus the Canon of the Old Testament came into existence. Certain doubtful books received canonical rank later than the time of Christ, but in the main the Canon was fixed before His time. For good, and, it must be added, also for evil, with the acceptance of Deuteronomy Judah became a people of the Law.

CHAPTER VII

JEREMIAH AND HIS AGE

EVEN before the discovery of Deuteronomy the voice of prophecy, repressed so long by Manasseh, had again been heard in Judah. The approaching overthrow of Nineveh was heralded by Nahum in splendid, impassioned eloquence. As we read it we are tempted to recoil from its burning words as if they were inspired by no nobler feeling than the victim's bitter hatred of the oppressor and exultation over his downfall. But Nahum is not the mere mouthpiece of a vindictive patriotism. He speaks rather in the name of outraged humanity, cowed and tormented by the brutal cruelty of Assyria. Of Judah's sin he says nothing, and this distinguishes him from the great pre-exilic prophets. But he is one with them in his assurance that sin must bring its stern, though it may be slow, retribution, and that God's hottest anger is poured forth on tyranny and cruelty.

About twenty years before the destruction of Nineveh vast hordes of Scythians poured from their home over

large parts of Western Asia. They inflicted terrible damage wherever they went. As the news of their approach reached Judah, two men saw in them the instruments of Yahweh's judgment. Zephaniah depicts the sin of Judah in familiar colours; we read once more of the flagrant idolatry, including star-worship, of child-sacrifice, of scoffing denial of God's government, of the infatuated obstinacy which blinded men to the warnings of the past, of the scandalous miscarriage of justice, of violence, deceit, and oppression. He also proclaims the coming of the Day of Yahweh, though he describes it with much more elaboration than his predecessors. The Day of Wrath is set forth with poetical license and in a highly effective way. From its devastation only a remnant, the meek and righteous, will escape.

The other was Jeremiah, the greatest and the most tragic figure among the prophets of the Old Testament. He was called to the work of his life in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign (627 B.C.), five years before the discovery of the Deuteronomic Law-book. In that experience he learnt that he was a child of destiny, chosen even before his birth to be God's spokesman. The mission was forced upon him against his own inclination. For he was timid and self-distrustful, shrinking from publicity, dreading the hatred that would be aroused by his words, and dubious of his ability to deliver aright

the prophetic message. But God would take no refusal, nor suffer His long-cherished plan to be thwarted by the scruples of His servant. Two visions accompanied his call. By the rod of the almond tree, which is the first to wake out of the sleep of winter, he learnt that the apparent torpor did not imply that Yahweh's word would fail of its fulfilment. It was a lesson for the present; the rigour of winter will soon give place to the spring. But it was also designed to steady him for disappointments in after days, when he had to see his predictions again and again fail of their anticipated fulfilment. Against the shock to his own faith and the incredulity of the people he could brace himself anew by the memory of this vision, and discipline his impatience with the assurance that in spite of all inexplicable delay God was still watching over His word to perform it. By the second vision, that of the seething caldron, he learnt that judgment was to come on Judah from the north. It was natural that he should connect this with the Scythians. The hordes of savage horsemen drew nearer and nearer, a new, uncanny terror, filling the minds of men with dread. They came down the coast of Palestine, and on to the border of Egypt, leaving Judah almost untouched. Then they returned, once more making no attack on Judah. The sense of a great deliverance may have predisposed the people to accept the Reformation which

followed soon after. It may, however, have served also to discredit Jeremiah, whose predictions of disaster now seemed to be falsified. We do not know what attitude Jeremiah adopted towards the Reformation. For the king he had a warm regard, and the striking affinity between Deuteronomy and his prophecies points to a close relation between Jeremiah and the Law-book. It has been supposed by many that he took part in a mission to the cities of Judah in order to advocate the principles of the Reformation (*cf.* Jer. xi. 1–8). He may have hoped that it would avert the doom he had been sent to announce. But the illusion, if it ever possessed him, did not last. He saw the real rottenness of society and its religion, and knew that the reform was of the most superficial character. This became clear when the untimely death of Josiah in 609 B.C. released the forces of reaction. The time for Assyria's downfall was now very near, and already the question had become urgent to what power her empire should fall. Josiah, unwilling to exchange for subjection to Egypt the practical freedom he enjoyed through the weakness of the dying empire, opposed the King of Egypt's march against Assyria, and was slain at Megiddo. This seemed a direct negation of the fundamental principle on which Deuteronomy had based its appeal for obedience. Like the earlier prophets, it had set before the people life and

death, prosperity as the reward of righteousness, adversity as the penalty of sin. Since through the acceptance of the Law Judah had become a righteous people, her long sorrow must be over, the era of blessedness at last begun. The years which followed confirmed this hope. Then suddenly the bright illusion was shattered. The champion of the Reform died in battle before he reached his prime. His son Jehoahaz, after a brief reign of three months, was taken to die a captive in Egypt. His worthless brother Jehoiakim was set on the throne. The miseries into which the unhappy land was plunged more and more deeply by Egypt and then by Babylon, were aggravated by the extravagance, the ostentation, and the tyranny of the king. It is little wonder that a deep resentment was felt against the Reformers, whose promises had been so belied by the event. Even in the reign of Josiah it is probable that there was a strong under-current of dissatisfaction with the suppression of the local sanctuaries. Those who were bound to them by ties of long familiarity, and whose forefathers had worshipped at them through many generations, must in many instances have regarded as impiety their ruthless abolition. With Jehoiakim on the throne the smouldering discontent broke into a blaze. The old religious and moral abuses came back, and the work of Josiah seemed to be undone. Yet the Temple had in no way lost its unique pre-eminence.

The faith of Isaiah that Zion could not be overthrown had been firmly wrought into the popular belief. The Temple had become a national fetish: since Yahweh dwelt in it, Judah's safety was assured.

Thus Jeremiah, with the plain facts before him, saw that the Reformation had brought no radical change. The people were utterly unconscious that their conduct was out of harmony with God's requirements. Jeremiah was thus confronted with the same situation as Amos. He had to minister to a nation assured of its own good standing with its God, and incredulous of any prediction of judgment. His contradiction of this false confidence was so sharp and uncompromising that it nearly cost him his life. He bade the people not trust in lying words that could not profit: "The Temple of Yahweh are these." Let them go to Shiloh, where Yahweh placed His name at the first, and as they pondered the fate that befell it, remember that as Yahweh did to Shiloh so also, unless they amended their ways, would He do to Jerusalem. He did not expect, indeed, that they would listen to his voice. For many years before the blow actually fell, it was a prophetic certainty to him that the extreme penalty would be inflicted. This brought him into collision with the official representatives of religion, both priests and prophets. Thus he says: "A wonderful and horrible thing is come to pass in the

land; the prophets prophesy falsely and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (v. 30, 31). He condemns the priests and prophets for healing too lightly the hurt of the people, saying Peace, when there was no peace. He charges the prophets with claiming falsely to speak in the name of Yahweh. They prophesy lies in the name of God, the deceits of their own hearts. Against the popular optimism of these prophets Jeremiah set the fact that the older prophets had spoken of war and calamity, and therefore he stood in the accredited prophetic succession since he also predicted disaster. A prophet who prophesied of peace could be accepted as a true prophet only when his predictions were verified. It was the prophets who in the reign of Zedekiah incited the resistance to Babylon, strong in the illusion that Zion could not be destroyed. And earlier in his reign, after the best of the nation had gone into exile with the king at their head, they were not shaken in their beliefs, but confidently asserted that the exiles would soon return. One prophet predicted that the Temple vessels would be brought back to Jerusalem within two years. Jeremiah remained firm to his convictions. He was, in fact, so certain that the capture of Jerusalem could not be averted that he said even if the Chaldean army was so smitten that only

wounded men were left in it, they should rise up and take the city. When the Egyptians compelled the Babylonian army to raise the siege, and the Jews hailed this as the final departure of the enemy and a vindication of their belief that Zion could not be overthrown, he warned them against their confidence, and counselled them to yield. He was thus placed in the extremely painful position of giving advice which, though it was the wholesome truth, seemed unpatriotic and disloyal. He was not merely looked upon as a traitor to his country, but when attempting to retire from the city to his native town he was arrested as a deserter and cast into prison. Subsequently, on advising desertion to the Chaldeans, he was thrown into a dungeon to perish, but was rescued by friends.

It would not be wise in the space at our disposal to set forth the teaching of Jeremiah in detail. It is not in this, save in one important exception, that his significance resides. He was himself a greater contribution to the religion of Israel. His personality counted for more than his words. The exception to which reference has been made was his doctrine of the New Covenant, and this is to be explained out of his experience. Although Jeremiah knew the evil heart of his people too well to expect that they would obey his appeals for repentance, and therefore did not waver in his conviction that judg-

ment was inevitable, he did not think that punishment was God's last word to Israel. The exiles will be restored—not Judah only, but Israel—and the two peoples will again become one. The Old Covenant made with the Hebrews at the Exodus will be replaced by a New Covenant between Israel and God. He will put His law in their inward parts and write it in their heart; they shall be His people and He will be their God. One will no longer need to teach another the knowledge of Yahweh, since all will know Him from the least to the greatest. He will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more (xxxi. 31–34).

This prophecy has been denied to Jeremiah by several eminent scholars. The question is too complex to be discussed in this place, and the present writer must refer his readers, for a statement of the grounds on which he attributes it to Jeremiah, to what he has written elsewhere. It may at least be said that such a prophecy is in harmony alike with the situation and with the prophet's undoubted utterances. It is not even certain that the Old Covenant had already been annulled by the destruction of Jerusalem. That destruction had been a certainty to Jeremiah many years before it happened, and it is altogether probable that he had for long reflected on the future relations between Yahweh and Israel. The doctrine of the New Covenant is in

perfect harmony with Jeremiah's teaching, and, as will appear later, can be explained from his own experience. There is much besides in Jeremiah that points in the same direction and that makes its individual character probable. Especially is this true of his language about the heart. He describes it as deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; he says of Yahweh that He tries the reins and the heart, and in his own case says, "Thou triest mine heart towards thee." In tacit contrast to external circumcision (iv. 4, ix. 36) he places the circumcision of the heart, which is significant when we remember that the former was the mark of the Old Covenant. The most important passage in this connection is xxiv. 7, "I will give them an heart to know me, that I am Yahweh, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart." This seems to express essentially what the New Covenant passage expresses more definitely.

Thus, while he had much in common with his predecessors, and especially with Hosea, he made a decisive advance beyond them. He effected a change of immeasurable importance in the very conception of religion itself. The Old Covenant with Israel had been a matter of external law, in which obedience on the part of the nation was rewarded by certain promised blessings. The New Covenant, it is true, is made with Israel, not

with the individual. But the essential feature of it is the law written on the heart of each individual. Religion thus comes to consist, not in conformity to an external Code, but in obedience to the God-given promptings of the heart. It becomes personal and individual, a matter between the soul and God. Thus, ritual and ceremony are seen to be intrinsically unnecessary. While religion remains a matter for the community, it must find expression in external forms. But these do not guarantee the genuinely religious character of the community that practises them, since a national recognition and service of God is compatible with comparatively widespread religious indifference or actual impiety. When a nation is religious in the mass, the piety of the units who compose it cannot be guaranteed. Where the nation is all important, individuals may be safely neglected. But when the individual gets full recognition, the ideal is attained only when each single individual has become religious. Thus a national religion can become national in the fullest sense only through becoming individualist. This is what Jeremiah really predicts; for while the Covenant is made with Israel, it is of such a nature that the individual Israelite knows Yahweh for himself, through the revelation given in his heart. The State is thus no longer necessary for the preservation of the religion, so that its overthrow, and

the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, did not mean to Jeremiah, as to so many of his countrymen, the death of the religion. By thus disengaging religion from its hitherto inseparable connection with the State, he provided a new basis for religion, and enabled it, as personal, to attain a purity and worth formerly unknown. And the principles he enunciated essentially transformed religion into a universal and not a local or national thing. A man needs only to be a man, in order to have personal fellowship with God. Thus Jeremiah transcended the religion of Israel, and rose into the religion of humanity. And so Christianity found no fitter expression for itself than that it was the religion of the New Covenant. Jeremiah's doctrine was an anticipation of the Gospel, which taught the supreme worth of the individual, and the nature of religion as a cleansing of the heart and the writing on it of an inward law.

It was through his own experience that he rose to this great conception of the inwardness of religion. He was a man of most sensitive and affectionate disposition and deep emotional nature, which was moved to intense sorrow at the sins and sufferings of his people. But he rose above his weakness when this was demanded by faithfulness to his office. His utterances are as pointed and severe as those of his predecessors, and he so far overcame his timidity as again and again to risk his life

in the fulfilment of his mission. He is of peculiar importance for the true appreciation of the Divine element in prophecy. No other prophet depicts so vividly the struggle between the weakness of human nature and the overpowering consciousness of a Divine message. He longs for peace, but is driven on against his will, and forced by the irresistible compulsion of Yahweh's word to utter it, at whatever cost to himself.

His vocation brought him into the sharpest conflict with his people, who received his warnings of disaster with derision, and denounced him as a traitor to his country. To his sensitive nature such scorn and misunderstanding of his message were an intolerable burden. For that message was dictated not by fanatical but by the purest and most clear-sighted devotion to his country. Isolated and misunderstood, to whom could he go but to God? To Him he unburdens his soul, often in language of bitter reproach. His work was not of his own choosing; it was God who had doomed him to it, and would grant him no discharge. Yet though the cry is wrung from him that God has enticed him, and forced on him a task beneath which he staggers, it is to God that he reveals his cause, to God who is his strength and stronghold, his refuge in the day of trouble. It is his great consolation that God knows all that he suffers for His sake. And though he

speaks so passionately of the shame and scorn which the delivery of God's message brings him, cursing the day of his birth to a life of such sorrow, yet the message itself inspires him with very different feelings. "Thy words," he says, "were found, and I did eat them; and thy words were unto me a joy, and the rejoicing of mine heart" (xv. 16). Thus his life came to be a long and intimate intercourse with God. It touched all the levels of emotion, from the gloomiest depression to exulting joy. His whole heart, with its strength and weakness, its love and its hate, the dark foreboding and the soaring aspiration, he lays bare to God. He would hide from the great Searcher of hearts no secret winding of the maze within his breast. And thus he came to understand the true nature of religion as no one before him had understood it. Hitherto, the individual's relation to God was mediated through the nation. But Jeremiah came to understand that his own experience gave a truer and deeper interpretation of religion. It was just in this familiar fellowship with God that the essence of religion was to be found. Thus he rose to the great thought of the New Covenant, in which he enshrined his religious ideal. It was the religion of the heart, the personal knowledge of God by all, each for himself, and the divinely implanted inward impulse as the spring of all obedience to God's will.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EXILE

THE failure of the Reformation demonstrated that a sharper and deeper surgery was needed to cut the evil from the vitals of the nation. A new and more tragic ordeal awaited it. For fanatical attachment to the Temple and scrupulous performance of its ritual was not enough. Temple and ritual alike must go; captivity alone could secure an effective breach with the guilty past. And at last captivity had become possible without the destruction of the religion. For the religion had now become sufficiently spiritual to bear the terrible shock of transplantation. And for its future development it was inevitable that it should be torn from its native soil. While the nation remained in Palestine the old local associations were so strong that abuse could not be altogether cut away. And though at first restriction to one land may be the strength of a religion, since its very narrowness lends it power, and its energies would be dissipated if the area of its influence were extended, yet at length it changes to a weakness. The

religion becomes provincial and contracted, and universalism has no chance of asserting itself. The infatuated opponents of Jeremiah could point to Isaiah's doctrine of the inviolability of Zion and the overthrow of Sennacherib's army as proof that Jerusalem was still impregnable and that they were Isaiah's true successors. But, obstinate in loyalty to the past, they had no discernment for the complete change of the conditions, and could not read the signs of the times.

The blow was precipitated by their own reckless turbulence and shameless violation of their solemn oath. Already in 597 the flower of the people had gone into captivity to Babylon with Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, his successor, had sworn to be loyal to the Babylonians, who set him on the throne. Rebellion brought on the final catastrophe, and the illusions which the people had so fondly entertained were shattered by the destruction of Temple and city, and the captivity of the nation in 586. Many reverted to idolatry (*cf.* Jer. xliv.), for, they argued, our disaster proves that Yahweh cannot or will not help us, so we are not bound to Him any more; all things were well with us while we worshipped other gods, and to them we will once more give our allegiance. But, others argued, punishment is for our sin in forsaking Yahweh; it can be remitted only if we return to Him with whole-hearted devotion. Whether few or many,

these had the future in their hands. In them spiritual religion had grown independent of time and place; they had risen above the local and provincial, and had attained the universal.

The condition of the captives in Babylonia seems to have been more prosperous than we might have anticipated. They were not debarred from acquiring property, and apparently they were allowed certain rights of self-government, no doubt of a very limited character. That they had achieved considerable worldly success is clear from the fact that so few comparatively availed themselves of the opportunity to return. Nevertheless the passionate hatred of Babylon that animates many utterances of prophet or poet, attests strongly how galling was the yoke they were made to bear, and how hard the service they were forced to render. And there is clear evidence of the despondent and even hopeless temper which had come upon them. Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones is meant to rebut their despairing cry: "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off." And the Second Isaiah similarly rebukes them: "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed away from my God?" Conscious of their own innocence, they attributed their suffering to the sins of earlier generations. "The fathers have

eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge."

But painful though their experience was, it brought to the religion of Israel an immeasurable gain. The Reformation of Josiah had soon proved a failure; the worship of the high places had been in many instances restored. The old associations had proved too fascinating; the people had succumbed to them and defied the Law. Exile tore them away, and snapped the ties that bound them to their ancient sanctuaries. When a new generation returned, it was Zion alone that commanded its allegiance. Moreover, their removal from Palestine to Babylonia meant that the Jews now found themselves in an unclean land. In such a land the sacrificial system of Israel could not be practised. Here again it was through exile that the purification of the ritual became possible, since those who returned from exile had no long familiarity with older practices to hinder them from accepting the reformed ceremonial. But the fact that sacrifice and first-fruits could no longer be offered did not mean that the Jews abandoned the service of Yahweh till they returned to His land. That service was forced into other channels. If there were no sacred places for them in Babylonia, sacred times could be observed everywhere. The Sabbath thus received an altogether new prominence. It became a

distinctive feature of the religion in a way hitherto unknown, that prepared the way for the fanatical rigidity with which the latter Jews observed it. And the more spiritual forms of religion could exist in every land—prayer and praise and the utterance or exposition of the Word. We are probably thus to account for the rise of the synagogue worship on the Sabbath day, which filled so large a place in and exercised so profound an influence on the religious life of post-exilic Judaism throughout the world. The voice of prophecy was not wholly dumb. But the prophets as a class had been discredited by the destruction of Jerusalem, which had branded them as liars and proved their easy optimism a shallow delusion. Prophets of Ezekiel's type were few. It was natural that, in the Sabbath gatherings, the Jews should read their own sacred writings, the prophets, historians, and Codes of Law so far as they had been compiled. Thus the ministry of the Word came to hold a very important place in meetings for worship. The transition from a ceremonial to a purely spiritual type of religion was made easier by the fact that the captivity was not accomplished at one stroke. Eleven years elapsed between the captivity of Jehoiachin and the destruction of Jerusalem. Those who went into exile first almost all expected their absence from Jerusalem to be but temporary: encouraged by their prophets, they refused to

credit the predictions of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. This had one advantage, that they were gradually trained during those eleven years in the practice of a non-localised, non-ceremonial religion, so that when the final blow fell, the situation that arose had lost its paralysing novelty. Had there not been this interval, in which they unconsciously became accustomed to a new order of things, they might have found it difficult to retain their faith in their ancestral religion. But since they found it possible to do so, it was necessary to take precautions to secure their racial identity from being impaired. They no longer existed as a nation; it was all the more essential that they should remain Jews, and not suffer the fate of others, who were quickly merged in the population among which they were planted. Hence came the striking development of those features which marked the Jew off from other peoples, such as the Sabbath, circumcision, and the laws of uncleanness. Another result of the exile was that the attention of the Jews was concentrated much more on their religious customs and literature. The politics that had so long absorbed their attention now lost all their meaning, and patriotism was diverted in another direction. The priests collected and committed to writing statements as to the ritual usages to which they had been accustomed, while others brought together and edited historical

narratives or the oracles of older prophets. The prophetic voice was not completely silent, though from the time of Ezekiel till shortly before the destruction of Babylon we know of very little if any activity of the prophets. All the more zeal was shown in preserving and meditating on the written Word.

CHAPTER IX

EZEKIEL

EZEKIEL was carried into captivity with Jehoiachin in 597, and received his call to the prophetic ministry in 592. Several years had yet to run before Jerusalem was destroyed, but he predicted her fate with unfaltering conviction. In this he followed Jeremiah, but the work of the elder prophet was all but done when the blow actually fell. It was therefore the lot of Ezekiel to provide for the new conditions, and secure the continued existence of the religion of Israel when the State with which it had been indissolubly connected was no more. Standing at the crisis of his nation's fortunes, he was forced to read the lesson of the past and forecast the future as well as fulfil a duty to the present. And his attitude in each respect is controlled by his conception of God. His whole teaching is dominated by his sense of the holiness and glory of God, and it is from this standpoint that he interprets history and predicts the future.

He represents Yahweh as a self-regarding Deity, seeking His own glory in all His acts, rigorously just in all

His ways. It is in the light of this doctrine that he draws his great indictment against Israel. It was this which impelled him to give a reasoned justification of God's government, that His glory might be seen in all its untarnished brightness. His holy Name had been compromised before the world by three things. First, the sin of Israel cast its polluting shadow on the God who dwelt in her midst. Yahweh vindicated His honour by the punishment of exile. Secondly, the exile seemed to the world to involve Yahweh in the dishonour of His people, and prove that He could not save them. To vindicate Himself from this the restoration of Israel was necessary. Thirdly, the exultation of the nations at the overthrow of Jerusalem seemed to strike at the glory of the God who had dwelt there. To remove the stain from His honour God would punish the nations that had thus insulted His people and city.

At the very outset of his ministry he was warned again and again that the Israelites were a rebellious house. But this had been their character from the origin of the nation. While other prophets spoke of the early righteousness of Israel or of Jerusalem, Ezekiel emphatically denied it. Even before they were rescued from Egypt they were idolatrous, and after they had, in spite of this, been delivered, they were guilty of repeated rebellion in the wilderness. Still they were spared and brought into

the fruitful land of Canaan; but no sooner had they entered it, than they adopted all the heathen sanctuaries and idolatrous customs of the Canaanites. Their history had been one unbroken series of acts of unfaithfulness. Jerusalem, found by Yahweh deserted and uncared for, moved Him to pity by her forlorn condition. He clothed her magnificently, put His majesty upon her, and her renown became great among the nations. But she rewarded Him by forsaking Him for Egypt, Assyria, and Chaldea, perverting to base uses the gifts He had lavished upon her. She had been far worse than Sodom and Samaria. Her father was an Amorite and her mother a Hittite, and of her the proverb was true, "Like mother, like daughter," for she had been a true daughter of the Hittite. Idolatry and child-sacrifice, profanation of the Temple and defilement of the holy things, perversion of justice, oppression, murder and impurity, are among the dark sins which characterise the people. They are worse than the heathen, stubborn in their sin and unashamed. And Yahweh has forborne to smite, lest His own honour should be dimmed in the world's sight by the destruction of His people. But now His wrath, long pent up, will break loose, and He will neither spare nor pity. Thus His glory will be satisfied and He will be comforted, tormented no longer by the distraction between His anger with Israel and His pity for His holy Name.

But just as zeal for His own glory leads Yahweh to punish the nation which has intolerably darkened His fair fame, so a similar concern will lead Him to restore it from exile, lest He lie under the imputation of weakness. He meets the despair of the people with the vision of the valley of dry bones. Just as these bones, from which all the juice of life has been drained, yet reunite into skeletons and are clothed with flesh, and then as the wind breathes on them return to life, so Yahweh will put His life-giving spirit into the dead nation, and it shall live again and be restored to its own land. Judah and Ephraim will be reunited and dwell in the land for ever. Thus the nations will understand that Israel's exile was due to her own sin, not to Yahweh's inability to deliver her. Then when Israel is dwelling in her land in peace and prosperity, with no visible defence, Yahweh will wipe out the insults which the heathen have heaped upon Him and His people, by enticing Gog to attack the defenceless people. He comes with an innumerable horde, but God utterly destroys them with pestilence, fire, and tempest.

Israel's restoration and safety rest on her new relation to God. Penitence on her part is met by grace and forgiveness on His own. In almost New Testament language the prophet describes how Yahweh will cleanse His people from all their filthiness and idols. He will

give them a new heart and implant a new spirit within them, taking away the stony heart and giving them a heart of flesh. And for this regenerate community in the New Jerusalem the prophet sketches an elaborate organisation. Yet even this is for God's sake rather than Israel's. He dwells in the midst of His people, and the most rigorous precautions are taken to guard His holiness from all that would profane it. He is most elaborately insulated from contact with the heathen world; while the priests and Levites stand between Him and the Jewish laity.

In yet another way Ezekiel's doctrine of God led to important results. The people complained that they suffered for the sins of their fathers, and that the ways of Yahweh were therefore unfair. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." This reflection on God's equity was a challenge which Ezekiel could not ignore. He emphatically denied that guilt or merit could be transferred from one to another. His doctrine as he states and restates it is as follows. In the first place, retribution and reward are given strictly to the individual himself, and not in the least degree to another. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wicked-

ness of the wicked shall be upon him" (xviii. 20). Secondly, at any moment the wicked may turn from his wickedness or the righteous fall away from his righteousness. The human will is free. Thirdly, a man's fate is determined not by his past but by his state at the moment in which judgment finds him. If he has lived in wickedness, but has turned from his sin, he shall live, and his evil-doing shall not be remembered against him. On the other hand, if a righteous man fall into sin, and judgment overtakes him in it, none of his former good deeds shall be remembered in his favour, but he shall die in his iniquity. This is due to an intensification of his individualism. Not only does he separate each individual sharply from all others, and insist on his suffering for his own sin or preservation by his own righteousness, he sharply distinguishes the moments of a man's life. He is judged not by his past, which is left wholly out of account, but by his state at the moment when the judgment comes. This judgment is not to be identified with death. On the contrary, it is the judgment which is coming on the nation, in which the wicked will be slain, whereas the righteous will survive to share in the time of blessedness. Life and death are of course conceived as physical.

The denial of solidarity and assertion of individual responsibility carried with it a new duty for the prophet.

He is not simply, like his predecessors, God's spokesman to the nation. He has a message to the individual, warning the righteous to remain in his righteousness lest he be cut off in his sin, and warning the wicked to the end that he may turn and live. Thus the prophet becomes a pastor, with the salvation of individual souls as his special concern; and on his faithful fulfilment of his task hangs the destiny of those entrusted to his care. Thus with the break-up of the Jewish State, the individual, who had been previously merged in the mass, receives a recognition of his independent worth. Jeremiah finds the essence of religion in personal fellowship with God, while Ezekiel lays the stress rather on individual responsibility.

But while Jeremiah's doctrine was too high for any but a very few, and therefore found a home chiefly among Psalmists before it was realised in Christianity, Ezekiel powerfully influenced the immediate future, so mnch so that he may be called the father of Judaism. Its legalism, ceremonialism, and rigid dogmatism are all in him. So, too, is the conception of God's remoteness, which led in later Judaism to an elaborate doctrine of angelic intermediaries between God and the world. His sketch of the ritual service in the reformed and restored community constituted the bridge between Deuteronomy and the Priestly Code. He combined

with his individualism a recognition of the fact that religion is also a matter for the community. Thus the religion of Israel was organised and preserved from destruction; and to Ezekiel more than to any man was due the creation of the community which sheltered spiritual religion till it was strong enough to stand alone, and enabled it to survive the disintegrating influence of Greek thought and life.

CHAPTER X

THE SECOND ISAIAH

THE Book of Habakkuk presents a very difficult critical problem. Usually it is supposed to belong for the most part to the reign of Jehoiakim. The present writer, however, prefers to regard the first two chapters (with the exception of i. 5–11) as written in the exile. The author's theme is the difficulty of reconciling the suffering of righteous Israel and the triumph of the idolatrous oppressor with the righteousness of God. That a nation so cruel and haughty, so brutal and selfish, should be permitted to glut its appetite for blood and treasure filled him with amazement and indignation; and all the more when its victim was the righteous people of God. He gains no explanation of the moral mystery. But as he waits on his prophetic watch-tower for the Divine answer, he receives the assurance that sure though slow-footed retribution will overtake the oppressor, while righteous Judah will live through its loyal adhesion to its God. It was a moral necessity, if He was righteous who sat on the throne of the universe, that ruin should

await the impious and treacherous tyrant. His pride was the precursor of his fall; his methods of conquest bore within them the seeds of his destruction. Therefore let the afflicted people wait patiently, for in their faith and patience they should win their lives. Faith and patience might alike be sorely strained by delay, but they must rise victorious over the temptation to despair. Thus the prophet receives no answer to his difficulty. But he attains peace, since he rises into the atmosphere of unclouded trust, and leaves his unravelled perplexities in the hands of a righteous God.

When Habakkuk proclaimed his confidence in the overthrow of the Babylonian empire, it was not because, as he scanned the heavens from his watch-tower, he descried any cloud on the political horizon that heralded the coming storm. But ere long the exiles heard the tidings of the conquests achieved by Cyrus. The news brought them no comfort in their despondency, for how could they expect that he would destroy the mighty dominion that had crushed all hope out of their breast? But some saw in him the predestined deliverer, who would fulfil the earlier prophecies of retribution on the oppressor and redemption of the oppressed. The chief of these was the great prophet, who is usually known as the Second Isaiah. It is probable that we should attribute to him Isa. xl.–lv., including the four poems

commonly described as the Servant of Yahweh passages (Isa. xlii. 1–4, xlix. 1–6, l. 4–9, lii. 13–liii. 12), though many scholars prefer to regard these poems as the work of another author.

It was his design to comfort and uplift his people, who despaired of the future and were dismayed by the might of Babylon and the magnificence of its gods. He does so by his lofty declarations of Yahweh's omnipotence and His government in nature and history, by his scornful exposure of the senselessness of idolatry, by the meaning he gives to Israel's suffering, and his description of the part she is to play in God's great design. No prophet has emphasised so strongly the greatness of Yahweh. He is the everlasting God, the First and the Last, and the Incomparable. He is the strong Creator who called into being the starry heavens and the remotest regions of earth, and rules them with unchallenged sway. He is unsearchable in wisdom; no one has been His counsellor and instructor. The truth, thus vividly set forth, that Yahweh is the only true God, and that the heathen gods are nothing, finds its proof in history. He is the ruler of the life of nature, who has ordained the course of history and shapes all its forces to His own ends. And this claim is proved by His power to predict the future, exemplified in the prediction of the rise of Cyrus, and in the new predictions which will

soon be verified by their fulfilment. For only He who rules the world can know what the world's future is to be. And in the prophetic word which He inspires, there works an inherent energy, so that it cannot return to Him void, but must accomplish His will and prosper in the task on which He sends it. So all the might of Babylon and the splendour of its gods dwindle to nothing compared with the strength and glory of Yahweh, who counts the nations as the small dust of the balance, as less than nothing and vanity.

The Yahweh of this prophet is a sweeter and more gracious Deity than the self-centred Yahweh of Ezekiel. He is not, indeed, without stern elements in His character. But what chiefly engages the prophet's thought is the gentleness and graciousness of Yahweh. He has, it is true, poured on Israel the fury of His anger. Indeed Israel has received at His hands double punishment for all her sin. But now He utters the word of comfort and promises speedy deliverance. He will Himself bring His people back from exile like a good shepherd, gently leading the weak and carrying the lambs in His bosom. Zion rises again from her humiliation and is clothed anew with beauty. He will save His people with an everlasting salvation, and have mercy on them with everlasting kindness. No weapon formed against them shall prosper, and those who have afflicted Israel shall drink

the cup of Yahweh's fury, while kings and queens shall lick the dust of her feet.

The deepest element in the prophet's message is the interpretation of Israel's suffering and the conception of Israel's mission. He does not, it is true, deny that the nation's sin is partly responsible for the death which has overtaken it. But he feels that the penalty has been far heavier than strict justice demanded. It is accordingly a problem for him how he shall explain the excess of punishment which Israel has received beyond its deserts. He solves the problem by his presentation of Israel as the Servant of Yahweh. God has chosen Israel in the distant past for this high position. To the other nations the elect people seemed but puny and contemptible, as they scornfully watched its lowly origin and its unattractive progress towards maturity. And when stripe after stripe fell upon it, and it was made hideous by disease, so that they shrank in disgust from it as from a leper, they attributed to its sin the long calamities which culminated in its death. But their judgment has gone wholly astray. The death of the nation is to be followed by its resurrection; Israel is to return from exile and be exalted in glory. Struck with amazement at so dramatic a change in its fortunes, the heathen will penitently confess that they have wronged the Servant by their misjudgment. His exaltation has proved that

he was not marked out by his exceptional suffering as an exceptional sinner. What meaning can they give to that suffering which seemed to speak so loudly of his sin? As they meditate on it, the contrast between what might have been expected and what has actually happened brings them to see that Israel, which was relatively innocent, has suffered, while they, who had forsaken the true God for idols, had escaped. What can be the meaning of this, save that Israel has borne the penalty which should have been inflicted on the heathen? The Servant of Yahweh is thus the vicarious sufferer for the sin of the nations. But this does not exhaust his significance. It is also his function to be Yahweh's missionary to the Gentiles, proclaiming to them the knowledge of the true God. Trained by God's own tuition, disciplined by pain and martyrdom loyally endured in faithfulness to his mission, he will perform his great task with the most tender respect for the faintest gleam of light he may find in those to whom he ministers. He will not speak to an audience wholly unprepared. The far lands are already waiting for his instruction.

No nation could adequately fulfil so stupendous a task as that which the prophet assigned to Israel. But the author truly divined the essential meaning of Israel in the world's history, disengaging it from the accidents

which were so inharmonious with it. It was only in a single personality that the essential meaning could win a clear and uncontaminated expression. And when He came who gathered into Himself all the significance of that people from which He sprang, He came as the Supreme Revealer of God to man, and bore upon Him the burden of the world's sin.

CHAPTER XI

THE BIRTH OF JUDAISM

In 536 Cyrus, into whose hands the Babylonian empire had fallen, fulfilled the predictions of the Second Isaiah and gave the Jews permission to return to Palestine. But the response to this permission fell far short of the prophet's glowing forecast. A fresh generation had sprung up, which knew Jerusalem only by name, and the power with which it appealed to their imagination, however great it may have been, was too faint to spur them to the worldly sacrifice involved in leaving Babylon, or snap the ties which bound them to the land of their birth. Yet those who remained behind exerted and were destined to exert a powerful influence on the Judaism of the future, for it was in Babylonia that the final codification of the Law seems to have taken place. On its return the feeble band that had come from Babylon found itself thwarted by the hostility of "the people of the land," whose offer to join in the rebuilding of the Temple it had repulsed. But the delay in building was not simply caused by external foes. The enthusiasm

which had brought them from Babylon was quickly chilled by the disenchanting realities of drought and wretched harvests and failure to prosper in anything to which they set their hand. They excused themselves from rebuilding the Temple on the ground that the effort was premature, and that all their energy was needed to make their own position secure. At last they were roused from their apathy by the reproach and appeal of two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. The former prophet (520 B.C.) meets the excuse of the people with the reply that it is their neglect to build the Temple which has brought about their miserable condition. They dwell in panelled houses, while Yahweh's house lies waste. When they began to build, and were despondent because the new Temple seemed mean in comparison with the old, he encouraged them by the assurance that Yahweh was with them and would soon shake the heavens and the earth and all nations, and then the desirable things of all nations would come, and Yahweh would fill the house with His glory. For the silver and the gold are His, and the latter glory of the Temple shall be greater than the former. Then, after this convulsion of kingdoms, Yahweh will take His servant Zerubbabel and make him as a signet, for He has chosen him. It is quite clear from these allusions that the prophet knew of or expected great political

disturbances, as a consequence of which he anticipated a glorious future for Zerubbabel. These disturbances had, in fact, begun the year before, when almost the whole of the Persian empire, though not Syria or Asia Minor, was in revolt. To Haggai this is the beginning of the end. The Messianic kingdom will soon come in, and apparently Zerubbabel is thought of as the Messiah. The revolts were, however, suppressed, and the subsequent history of Zerubbabel is unknown to us. It has been conjectured that he was put to death by the Persians for participation in a Messianic revolt, and some have seen in him the martyred Servant of Yahweh (Isa. lii. 13–liii. 12).

Zechariah, who is the author of the first eight chapters in the book which bears his name, shared the labours and expectations of Haggai. He represents a further stage in the movement of prophecy towards apocalyptic which had been initiated by Zephaniah and Ezekiel. His message is largely conveyed in visions, the symbolism of which is often obscure; angels receive a new prominence as intermediaries between God and the prophet, a witness to the growing sense of the transcendence of God; deliverance is expected to come not through a normal development of the existing situation, but through the sudden and decisive intervention of God. In his first vision he learns that the earth is at rest.

The angel of Yahweh appeals to God for Jerusalem. The connection between the report that all is at rest and the angel's appeal lies in the thought that for the Messianic time to come in, a great political upheaval is necessary. When the angel learns that all is peaceful, he urges his remonstrance against God's delay. Zechariah's message is therefore similar to that of Haggai. The stillness of the earth is but the calm before the storm; the tempest will soon burst, Yahweh will shake heaven and earth, and in the crash of empires Zion will come to its own. The second vision depicts the destruction of the hostile heathen world. The third vision answers the question, When will the walls of Jerusalem be built? with the assurance that the population will expand beyond the limits of a closely built town into a cluster of villages, and Jerusalem will need no walls, for Yahweh will be its protection. In the fourth vision, which is very obscure, the prophet addresses himself to the misgiving created by their miseries in the mind of the people, that they were the victims of God's settled hostility. The Satan, an angel who contests before God men's claim to righteousness, accuses Joshua the high-priest, in order to bring more punishment on the people. Yahweh rebukes him on the ground that He has Himself interposed to snatch Jerusalem from punishment, plucking it as a brand

from the burning, therefore the appeal for still further punishment is contrary to His will. The sin of Joshua is then removed, he is clad in robes of righteousness, and access to Yahweh's presence is graciously promised to him. The fifth vision seems to mean that the revelation of Himself which Yahweh makes in the Temple is made possible through Zerubbabel and Joshua, the prince and the high-priest, since it is they who rebuild and maintain the sanctuary. Difficulties shall disappear before Zerubbabel; as he has begun so he shall complete the Temple. The sixth vision represents the curse upon sin under the figure of a flying roll, which goes over the land and entering the houses of sinners consumes them. The seventh vision describes the placing of a woman in an ephah, which is fastened down and carried to the land of Shinar. This woman is Wickedness; by her removal the land is freed from sin and its allurements. The eighth vision apparently indicates that Yahweh is about to execute judgment upon the nations, and thus prepare the way for the Messianic time. Following this we have a passage, which appears to have been tampered with, but in its original form represented Zerubbabel as crowned while Joshua was set at his side. Zerubbabel is thus again described as the Messianic king, and the counsel of peace between him and Joshua means that king and priest are to act

harmoniously together. On the rest of the prophecy it is not necessary to linger.

When the veil is again lifted we find that matters had not improved. The date of the book which bears the title Malachi is uncertain ; we may perhaps place it shortly before Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem in 458. The sixty years that separate the author from Haggai and Zechariah are a blank to us. But the intervening period had apparently been one of growing disillusion and cooling zeal. The sins against which the older prophets had prophesied still stain the nation's life—sorcery, adultery, perjury, oppression of the poor and defenceless. The priests show their contempt for Yahweh by the paltriness of their offerings ; their duties have become a tiresome routine. The people rob God in the matter of tithes and offerings. Divorce, and marriage with heathen women, were common. The pious had grown discouraged, since the wicked seemed to prosper and the righteous found it vain to serve God.

The prophet rebukes the base ingratitude which Israel displays towards Yahweh. He has loved Jacob and hated Esau, so that while He has doomed Edom to perpetual desolation, He has brought Israel back from exile. And a bright future lies before the righteous. For the Day of Yahweh is at hand, when like a refiner's fire Yahweh will purge away the dross. Then the difference will be

clearly seen between the good and the wicked. The prophet lays special stress on the priestly functions and Temple service, contrasting a glowing and rather idealised picture of Levi's past history with its present debasement. His attitude to the ritual is very unlike that of the older prophets, yet he has not lost the ethical note, even though it sounds more faintly in his message.

Very striking is his attitude to the heathen. In his language on Edom he echoes the hate expressed by many exilic or post-exilic writers, who never forgave or forgot the exultation of the Edomites over the destruction of Jerusalem. And he strongly condemns marriage with foreign wives. But on the other hand we owe to him the remarkable words in i. 11: "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name is great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense is offered unto my name and a pure offering: for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts." The reference is not to the future but to the present. The prophet can hardly mean that everywhere in heathendom there are already proselytes to the religion of Israel to be found. He means rather that the heathen worship Yahweh, and that their sacrifices are really offered to Him. So liberal an interpretation of heathenism is surprising, especially in a prophet of Malachi's predilections, but such seems to be the true meaning of the passage.

It is probable that the greater part of Isa. lvi.–lxvi. belongs to this period. It is on the whole unlikely that these chapters are all from the same hand. They have considerable affinity with Malachi, though they often reach a higher spiritual standpoint. Religious, social, and material conditions are alike unsatisfactory. The desolate cities still remain to be restored, the walls of Zion are still unbuilt.

The cause of their misery is not Yahweh's inability to hear, but their flagrant sins, which have separated Him from them, and which make their zealous religionism hateful in His eyes. There are even sterner denunciations of some who are addicted to certain forms of idolatry. Probably the reference is to the half-heathen Samaritans. They had met with refusal the gracious invitation of Yahweh to abandon their practices and enter the Jewish community. In no measured terms the prophet condemns their necromancy, their human sacrifice, their magical rites and gruesome sacrificial meals.

These chapters reveal a blend of the ethical and ceremonial such as we find in Ezekiel. The treatment of fasting is worthy of the older prophets. The fast which Yahweh approves is not mere abstinence from food, with the external signs of mourning. It is the care for the destitute and the breaking of fetters. And the prophet's vocation is described in beautiful language, made the

more sacred that Jesus chose the passage to describe His own mission. The Spirit of Yahweh rests upon Him because He has anointed Him to preach glad tidings to the poor, to bind up the broken-hearted, to announce release to the captives, to comfort the mourners, to proclaim the acceptable year of Yahweh and His Day of vengeance. Yahweh is the high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, whose Name is Holy. Yet while He dwells in the high and holy place He dwells also with him who is of a humble and contrite spirit. He looks to that man who is poor and of a contrite spirit and that trembles at His word.

Yet side by side with this strong ethical and religious interest there is a concern for the ceremonial side of the religion which is specially characteristic of Ezekiel and those who stood under his influence. Sabbath observance is coupled with abstinence from moral evil. To the Temple and its glory some of the loveliest sections in the prophecy are devoted. It is, however, not merely a place for sacrifice, but pre-eminently a house of prayer. And to it all nations are welcomed, drawn to it by the supernatural radiance which streams from it. Yet the nations serve as a foil to Israel; they adorn the Temple with their wealth, and act as menials to the Jews. Edom is the object of unrelenting hate. Yahweh tramples it in His fury till its blood dyes all His raiment red, and

marvels that the nations have left Him to tread the wine-press alone.

According to the usual chronology Ezra the priest and scribe came from Babylon to Jerusalem with a company of exiles in 458 B.C. His main achievement on this visit was to dissolve all marriages between Jews and foreign women. This was carried through with what seems to us great harshness and rigour, and it admirably expressed the spirit of Judaism. The land was felt to be impure, and any connection with the people of the land tainted the holy remnant. Some years later we find Nehemiah the governor fiercely assaulting Jews who had contracted mixed marriages. On his second visit, which, according to the generally accepted but contested date, fell in the year 444 B.C., Ezra was able with the help of Nehemiah to carry through one of the most momentous revolutions which the religion of Israel ever experienced. Deuteronomy had profoundly influenced Ezekiel, and Ezekiel's sketch of religious institutions for the restored community formed the basis of what is commonly called the Priestly Document (P). This is found in portions of Genesis, in large parts of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Joshua. It is marked by a peculiar vocabulary and structure of sentences, by a love for constant repetition and stereotyped formulæ, which betray the hand of the ecclesiastical lawyer. Such also

are his standpoint and the interests which absorb him. The matchless beauty of the older stories of the patriarchs make no appeal to him; he has no eye for the play of emotion, and understands neither love nor hate. Dry, precise, formal, he cares nothing for the romance which fires the blood or the moving spectacle of man's warfare with his fate. He begins with the story of creation, but soon retreats from this universal point of view, and narrows down the interest to the fortunes of the Hebrew patriarchs and people. The author has a clearly defined idea of progressive revelation, the stages of which are marked by the names of Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses. The chief interest is in the ceremonial side of the religion, for the due performance of which minute regulations are made. Anthropomorphism is carefully avoided, and the feeling for Yahweh's holiness is very pronounced. Much stress is laid on distinctively Jewish observances, such as the Sabbath and circumcision. The deepened sense of sin finds expression in the institution of two new types of sacrifice, the sin-offering and the guilt-offering. The peace-offering, which represented the primitive idea of sacrifice, that of a meal in which the Deity and his worshipper shared, sinks into comparative insignificance, while those sacrifices in which the whole victim is retained by God or part eaten by the priests, His representatives, become very important.

This was aided by the centralisation of the worship, which by detaching the sacrifices from their local associations, destroyed their communal character, and obliterated the social while emphasising the religious element. He has elaborate regulations as to uncleanness and purification. Naturally he did not invent much of this complex system. Large parts of it were of immemorial antiquity; indeed it is only in the light of savage parallels that many elements in it can be understood. In many respects the Priestly Law codified already existing custom. To some extent it carried to a logical conclusion the changes involved in the centralisation of the worship. At some points innovations were introduced. The combination of this document with the earlier sections of sacred history and law down to the death of Moses produced the Pentateuch, largely in its present form.

The chief work of Ezra was to introduce the completed Law and secure its acceptance by the people. Henceforth the Law becomes the dominant power in Jewish life; with its acceptance Judaism had its birth. Although the Priestly Code exalted and enriched the priesthood, and the central sanctuary now gained the exclusive position which Josiah had only temporarily won for it, yet the Law was greater than priesthood or Temple. Thus the scribe became even more important than the priest. The influence of the latter was concen-

trated in the Temple, while the former was supreme in the synagogue, which could be planted wherever there were Jews requiring a place of worship. And the scribe's function was not simply that of copying, but that of interpreting and making a hedge about the Law.

It would be unjust to represent this as a retrograde movement. We cannot, of course, rate the intrinsic religious value of the Law so high as that of the great prophets. But we can recognise the guiding of Providence in what seems at first the descent from the prophetic religion to legalism. The latter stands to the former somewhat as Ezekiel to Jeremiah. In both cases chronological sequence is no indication of relative worth. But apart from the firm structure erected by the Law, the higher religion of the prophets might never have maintained its existence in Israel; it would have perished for want of a shelter. "The Law came in beside" that it might discipline the people and prepare them for the final religion in which the prophetic religion received its complete fulfilment.

CHAPTER XII

THE WANING OF PROPHECY

It was inevitable that prophecy should dwindle away in the atmosphere of legalism, and in so far as it survived should undergo transformation. The will of Yahweh was made known in His Law; the water of life was stored in a reservoir, and did not burst like a leaping fountain from the inspired spirit. But even in this decadent period there was one who ranks with the greatest in the whole line of prophets.

This is the writer to whom we owe the Book of Jonah. The author takes up the message of the Second Isaiah, that Israel was called to be the revealer of the true God to the heathen. Yet he seems to be free from the narrowness which marred the otherwise noble and generous position of the great prophet of the Exile. He depicts the heathen in the most favourable light, and reserves all his pitiless satire for the savage bigotry of the Jews and their bitter hatred of the heathen. In an allegory, constructed with the highest art, and set

forth in the most concise and pregnant language, he sketches the attitude of Israel to the heathen in the guise of a story. Jonah the prophet is sent to Nineveh to proclaim God's judgment upon it. He disobeys the call and takes ship to Tarshish. He is a monotheist in theology, yet seeks to flee from the presence of Yahweh, localising his Deity and thus nullifying his monotheism. But Yahweh follows him with a tempest, and the sailors, who are most attractively represented, are at last compelled, in spite of their reluctance, to escape destruction by casting the rebellious prophet overboard. He is swallowed by a fish, and on his prayer is vomited on dry land. He takes up the task he has found it useless to evade, but long before he has proclaimed his message through the whole of Nineveh, the city is moved to contrition, and on its penitence is spared. Jonah is very angry that his hate of Nineveh has not been glutted by its destruction. It was his fear lest his lust for vengeance should be disappointed that had made him in the first instance unwilling to go to Nineveh. By creating and then destroying a gourd, which during its brief existence afforded the prophet a grateful shelter, God seeks to lead him from his own tenderness for the gourd, and resentment at its destruction, to some sympathy with His own tender care for Nineveh, with its teeming myriads

of souls, all dear to God. Jonah stands in this parable for Israel, the episode of the fish for Israel's exile and restoration. The final plea of Yahweh to Jonah corresponds to the Book of Jonah itself, hence the book stops where it does, since it is quite uncertain how Israel will respond to the appeal to rise above its exclusiveness, renounce its hate of the Gentiles, and carry the knowledge of the true God to these souls that sit in darkness but are longing for the light.

But this noble faith in the virtues of the heathen and their readiness to welcome the truth did little to check the growing alienation of the Jew from the Gentile, which was fostered by the sense of spiritual superiority and the resentment of a proud people against its political servitude. Edom was always the object of the deepest and most intimate hate. But the Jews were only too ready to turn for consolation from the wretchedness of their lot to lurid dreams of a triumphant Messiah ruling the nations with a rod of iron or shattering them like a potter's vessel. It is one of the dark limitations of the Old Testament that not a few of its later writers fed this unhallowed fire. The experiences of the Maccabæan struggle intensified the hatred of the Jews for the heathen, while its victories enhanced their already exuberant self-esteem. Both of these tendencies find expression in the

Book of Esther, a singularly unpleasing example of the vindictive bigotry and megalomania of the baser Judaism, though redeemed in some measure by the self-renouncing patriotism of the heroine.

The most important feature in the history of the later prophecy is its gradual transformation into apocalyptic. This feature has been touched upon more than once, and it is now necessary to refer to it rather more fully. For the most part the Jewish apocalypses strictly so called were not received into the Old Testament; the Book of Daniel is the only exception. But several of the later prophecies are more or less deeply tinged with an apocalyptic colouring. As prophecy became more literary it rested more and more on the study of older writings. The impulse to independent utterance was weakened; there was less original contribution, and more combination of the very varied forecasts of the future into a consistent eschatology. Not earlier prophecies alone, but ancient traditional lore about the beginning and the end of things, were embodied in these schemes. The stimulus which gave them birth was the need of a glorious future, to which faith might escape from the despair of the present. And for the realisation of such a future they had no hope but in God. He who had entrusted the world's government to the angel-princes of

the nations was tolerating their misrule and the oppression of His people till their predestined time had run out; then He would Himself overwhelm the angelic host of the high ones on high and the earthly kings whom they had used as the tools of their malice against Israel. Then, when their oppressors had been subdued and punished, the kingdom of the saints would be established. There is no hint in the politics of the time that any change is impending, but the seer can read the handwriting on the wall and proclaim that the hour of destiny has struck. For nothing is to lead up to it. "When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them." The future is cut loose from the present; not gradual development but sudden catastrophe effects the transition from one to the other. The literary form of apocalypse was singular. It was usual to select some ancient seer, such as Enoch or Baruch, to whom the vision of the future, often expressed in an obscure and bizarre symbolism, was unfolded. The history down to the writer's own time is given in the form of detailed prediction. The vision passes into generalities when it leaves the assumed for the actual future.

Several of the features which have been enumerated are, of course, absent from the post-exilic prophets, so that it would be a mistake to call them apocalyptists.

But the authors of Joel, Zech. ix.–xiv., Isaiah xxxiv., xxxv., and above all Isaiah xxiv.–xxvii. illustrate the drift towards apocalyptic which had already been discernible in Zephaniah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah i.–viii. It is not possible to deal with these prophecies in detail; such points as demand attention are best reserved.

The Book of Daniel may be dated about the year 165 B.C. It was written to encourage the Jews of Palestine in their resistance to the attempt of the Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes, to extirpate the Jewish religion. The author enforces his lesson of unflinching loyalty to God and unswerving obedience to His law by the example of Daniel and his companions. Their refusal to defile themselves with the ceremonially unclean food of the heathen king was rewarded by promotion. Daniel's three friends refuse to worship the golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar, and walk free and unharmed in the midst of the fiery furnace to which they were doomed for their disobedience. Daniel himself refuses to desist from prayer, and is untouched by the lions into whose den he is cast. The pride of Nebuchadnezzar is humbled by mania, the profanity of Belshazzar is visited with defeat and death. Thus history is shown to teach that God rewards the fidelity of His servants, while disaster awaits the godless

oppressor. The visions are similarly intended to steady the Jews under the terrible temptation to apostasy by the assurance that dominion will soon pass from the brutal powers of heathenism to the saints of the Most High.

CHAPTER XIII

SAGES AND PSALMISTS

WHEN we speak of Hebrew wisdom we must not think of it as concerned with the problems of metaphysics which absorb the attention of Western philosophers. It was concrete not abstract, practical not speculative. Its task was not to win an ordered and harmonious conception of the universe, but to teach men how they might direct their way aright. Even where it busied itself with problems, it was a practical interest which supplied the impulse. We have no reason to doubt that from the earliest times there were those who reflected on life and conduct, and embodied their observations in picturesque parable or terse aphorism. Many of the maxims in the Book of Proverbs may well be quite ancient, and not a few may have come from Solomon himself. But for reasons which must be sought rather in an introduction to the Old Testament, we must regard the Book of Proverbs, no less than those of Job and Ecclesiastes, as products of the post-exilic period. Judaism forms its

background, the battle with idolatry has ended, the burning questions of the prophetic period lie in the past. Indeed the description of the Divine Wisdom in the eighth chapter is of such a character that we can hardly refuse to assign it to a comparatively late post-exilic date. The main body of the book consists of maxims for the right conduct of life, written from the standpoint of the virtuous middle classes, and with a firm belief that morality and prosperity went hand in hand. The shrewd worldly wisdom, the prudential note, the value placed on success, perhaps bulk too largely in the common estimate of the book, and do injustice to its finer, nobler, and more generous qualities. And even the lower element has its place in any sober judgment of life. Society needs it for a stable basis, the commercial world has much to learn from the insistence on integrity, while many of the children of light would be all the better for some of that wisdom in which they are notoriously deficient.

The greatest example of Hebrew wisdom is the Book of Job, the date of which is perhaps about 400 B.C. Its theme is the suffering of the righteous, its problem the harmony of such suffering with the righteousness of God. Job suffers that the disinterested character of his virtue may be vindicated against the cynicism of the Satan.

He triumphantly emerges from the ordeal, but now a new question arises: How is Job, conscious of his innocence and ignorant of the reason for his calamities, to reconcile with the Divine righteousness the suffering which stamped him in men's eyes as a sinner? It seemed as if God had borne false witness against him before the world. And yet he had lived a long life, happy in the consciousness of God's goodness. It is the collision between the settled habit of piety based on the current theology and supported by personal experience, and the present evidence of God's implacable hostility, which lends its intense dramatic interest to the book. As the debate proceeds between him and the three friends who represent the orthodoxy of their time, the hero, stung by the calm insolence of their assumption that sin alone can account for such misfortune, wounded still more deeply by the arrows of the Almighty, feels his view of God's goodness and righteousness shattered against the invincible consciousness of his own innocence. His own unmerited suffering has taken the scales from his eyes, and everywhere he sees the evidence of an immoral or non-moral government of the world. It is not the world's agony, however, but his own which absorbs his attention. And here his mind oscillates between the two forces which are fighting for his soul. At times he sees

nothing but a calculated malevolence in God's earlier favour, designed to make his present trial more bitter. But gradually the memory of the past reasserts its influence, and he recognises in it a true expression of God's earlier attitude to him. But this in no way removes the conviction of God's present enmity. How, then, is he to adjust the two contradictory attitudes? His faith in God's essential friendliness triumphs. God's present hostility does not represent His permanent character. It is only a passing mood, from which God will revert to His earlier, better self. But when His old love for Job awakes again in His breast it will be too late. Job will have left the warm life of earth for that gloomy underworld whence none returned, and where man and God could no longer have fellowship with each other. But what if man might come back to earth? then God's regret for His passionate outburst might not be too late. Job is fascinated by the thought, but he steadily sets it aside. He has nothing to hope from God so far as any renewal of the old happy fellowship is concerned. God's repentance will come too late, and He will Himself have to suffer the loss of the communion He had prized in the past. But this matters less to Job than we might have anticipated, deeply though the pathos of the situation moves him. After all, life must end at

last; the happiest day must merge in the everlasting night. From such a fate even Job could in no case have escaped.

But there is another question, which troubles him still more, and that is the question of his reputation. The world, even his intimate friends, count him a grievous sinner, and God has set His approval upon their verdict. He knows that he is innocent, and the bitterest element in his suffering is that the honour he prizes more than life is so foully wronged. He can get no redress against God, for men assume that Omnipotence and Moral Perfection are convertible terms. His friends believe him guilty; posterity will not reverse his condemnation. Who, then, is left to stand up for him against God? Yet the one thing he cannot bear is that the stain should for ever remain on his reputation. So this intolerable craving for his vindication combines with his memory of God's goodness in the past. And thus he rises to his great thought that the God of the future will right him against the God of the present. His Vindicator lives though Job himself will die, and He will stand on Job's grave to proclaim his innocence. It will not mean for him a return to earth or any renewal of his ancient fellowship with God. But one supreme moment of happiness will be vouchsafed to him. He will be permitted to see God as He thus vindicates his honour.

Yet though Job almost swoons with emotion as this conviction entrances him, it brings him no explanation of his calamities, nor does it ease in the slightest the pressure of the world's woe. Even after this splendid utterance he criticises God's government with unexampled boldness. He closes the debate with a pathetic description of his former greatness and his present misery, and then in one of the finest and loftiest chapters of the Old Testament he solemnly clears himself of such sin as might justify the change in his fortunes. Conscious of his rectitude, he would fain have God's indictment against him. Proudly he would wear it in God's very presence, lifted above the shame of it by the approval of his conscience.

And now God speaks to him from the roaring of the storm. He brings Job no word of comfort, nor does He seek to alleviate even by a hint the mystery of his suffering. He bruises him with scorn, brings home to him his weakness and his ignorance. He unrolls before him the vast panorama of nature, and presses on Job how inexplicable its wonders are. And thus he bids him look away from himself and consider the vast universe which God must govern. Can he who is ignorant of its simplest secrets be a competent critic of God's ways? If he will only take time to ponder the world's marvels

he will learn that man is not all, and that God's tender care is over all His creatures. Yet it is not this brilliant demonstration which changes Job's attitude. It is the vision of God Himself which leads him to loathe his words and repent in dust and ashes. In other words, Job finds rest in a mystical apprehension of God. He understands God's action no better now than before, but now he is sure of God Himself. It is imperative that the reason for his trial should not be explained to him; he must stay his soul on the vision of God, which has given him the certainty that all is well.

The same problem is the subject of three Psalms, Pss. xxxvii., xlix., lxxiii. The first of these proceeds on conventional lines, and need not detain us. The second probably asserts that a different destiny is reserved in the next world for the righteous and the wicked. The same conviction is expressed in Ps. lxxiii. But this Psalm also closes on a mystical note. In one of the most wonderful passages in Hebrew literature the Psalmist depicts the blessed communion he has with God: "Whom have I in heaven? and possessing thee, I delight in nought upon earth."

The writer of this Psalm tells us that his feet had well-nigh swerved when he considered the prosperity of the wicked. Another Jewish writer failed to keep his

footing. The author of Ecclesiastes, whose date we may most plausibly fix as about 200 B.C., was forced by his observation of life to pessimism. He remains, it is true, a Theist, but his Theism is not of the kind which fosters religion. God is the Almighty Ruler, in harmony with whose predestination the whole course of history moves in endless repetition. But deliberately he has humbled the pride of man by endowing him with the instinct for action, but refusing the understanding of the laws which would make that action fruitful. Thus, not only is progress made impossible by the destiny which condemns history for ever to repeat itself, but even a knowledge of the principles on which history moves is withheld from men. So what God sees as a perfect harmony appears to man as blind chance. Thus all effort is doomed to futility; life is vanity, and striving after wind. Wisdom and pleasure alike are vain, as may be proved by experiment, while observation brings home to us the universal reign of misery. Some slight alleviation is possible, though within very narrow limits. Man cannot escape from the disease which we call life except by death, and which is preferable is a question he answers in accordance with his mood. But while the pain and unutterable weariness of existence cannot be avoided, man may drug himself by a prudent enjoyment of such

pleasures as life has to offer. The grim skeleton, it is true, will always be present at the feast. Yet let man rejoice in his youth, remembering that his capacity for pleasure will fail with old age, and that in the gloomy underworld the days of darkness will be many. For the author sets aside altogether the higher doctrine of the future life.

The writer was better than he conceived his God to be. He cannot bear the spectacle of the world's pain, and he can find no remedy. It is almost strange that he remained a Theist. Better no God at all than a God who deliberately plans such an existence for man! But his Judaism so far triumphs as to preserve a bare Theism, though his pessimism empties it of all religious significance. In its original form the book naturally seemed too dangerous. Its ascription to Solomon guaranteed its orthodoxy, but its apparent deviation from the conventional standard made it necessary to neutralise appearances by orthodox interpolations. Thus the book has fortunately escaped the fate to which an understanding of its real tendencies would naturally have consigned it.

One of the most noteworthy creations of Judaism still remains to be mentioned. This is the Book of Psalms. It would be obviously impossible to give even a brief outline of the teaching enshrined in this book. Since,

however, it would largely cover the same ground as a general sketch of Jewish theology, its necessary exclusion is the less to be regretted. A short statement may therefore suffice.

While it is by no means improbable that some portions of the Psalter date from the pre-exilic period, the book as a whole must be treated as post-exilic. It is a monument of the piety of Judaism, of its hopes and its fears, its conflicts with the world and the strife within its own borders. More than anything else it disabuses us of the mistake that Judaism was an unspiritual religion, a mere routine of ritual observances mechanically performed. There is no literature which so completely expresses the whole range of religious emotion, and the fact that not Jews only but Christians have turned to it as an unfailing aid to devotion should have corrected a too ungenerous estimate of Jewish piety. It is true that the use of it has been too undiscriminating, since not a little expurgation is needed to fit it for Christian worship. The bitterness of language in which the writers permit themselves to speak of their enemies may no doubt be palliated by the provocation they received and the sense that the cause they represented was the cause of God. Moreover, in many cases the Psalmist speaks in the name of the community rather than in his own. Yet while all these

considerations should be borne in mind, and while there can be no healthy moral life without a capacity for righteous indignation, the imprecations of the Psalmists reveal a temper which no Christian can approve without disloyalty to the Gospel, but which is only too characteristic of much in the Old Testament.

The theology of the Psalter is popular rather than scholastic. The writers had been trained on the Law and the prophets. They are fired with enthusiasm for the Law, and count it the highest privilege to participate in the Temple worship. They bring the great thoughts of the prophets within reach of the humblest. They are not for the most part original thinkers; their theology is secondary. But they had an original religious experience of an intense kind, to which they gave a classical expression. They are also at an advantage as compared with the prophets in virtue of the timeless quality of their utterances. No doubt their language often becomes more vivid as we apprehend their historical conditions. But, broadly speaking, it depends but little for intelligibility on anything outside itself. In the main, and in what is most important, the Psalter has, while the prophets have not, been understood by later generations. Naturally where so many writers have been at work we find a rich variety of view, but the similarity is even more striking

than the diversity. Since the Psalter was only gradually compiled, and the three larger collections into which it may be analysed contain smaller collections, we cannot speak of any one motive as guiding the compilers in their choice of Psalms. The Psalter is not infrequently spoken of as the hymn-book of the Second Temple. The term is somewhat misleading to modern ears, and in the case of several Psalms it is questionable whether this object was contemplated in their inclusion. In any case the Psalter was a precious manual of religion for the people, guiding their thought and quickening their devotion. While for the most part warmly sympathetic with the ritual system, it was even more a great book of heart-religion. In its loftiest passages it transcends the legal and ritual, and utters the deep penitence of the soul for its sin, its thirst for the living God, the glad sense of blissful fellowship, and the communion so complete that not death itself can sever it.

CHAPTER XIV

THE THEOLOGY OF JUDAISM

So far we have traced the development of the religion from point to point, paying special attention to the contribution made by individual writers. It remains to give a brief connected account of the leading doctrines of Judaism. Where the material is so large and the statement so many-sided it is obvious that within our limits only a rough summary can be attempted, which shall aim at substantial accuracy without undue concern for qualifications.

In its doctrine of God, Judaism was strictly monotheistic. This inheritance from the prophets and the Law was held with passionate tenacity. It constituted the fundamental distinction between Judaism and other religions. Yet there were tendencies towards a recognition that the unity of God was complex rather than simple. The earlier conception of the Presence of Yahweh or the Angel of His Presence pointed the way, and later the doctrine of the Spirit and that of the

Wisdom of God moved in the same direction. It would, of course, be a mistake to treat these terms as expressing a distinction of Persons in the Godhead in the Christian sense, but they indicated a tendency to conceive the Unity as the home of distinction.

The conception of God was pure and lofty. Stress was laid less on His metaphysical than on His moral attributes. The former are not ignored, but in harmony with Hebrew genius they are expressed in a concrete rather than an abstract form. What is said implies a belief in the eternity, spirituality, omnipotence and omniscience of God. His omnipresence was less easy to grasp owing to the ingrained thought of God as dwelling in a particular part of the universe. The inevitable anthropomorphism of human thought made it very difficult to escape from spatial conditions, though formally the belief would have been accepted that God was bound by the limitation neither of space nor time. His moral character is summed up in the term holiness. This, as applied to God, means His separation from all the weakness and imperfections of His creatures, and thus stands for His Divinity in contrast to humanity. His absolute purity, inflexible justice, severity to sin, His fiery wrath against wrong, His faithfulness and truth, His righteousness, His loving-kindness and mercy,

His pity and his grace, are all recognised. Hints of His Fatherhood are not absent, but this doctrine is not fully formulated in the Old Testament.

Naturally God is identified with the Creator of the universe. We have no evidence for the belief in a creation out of nothing, though this may quite well have been what was really intended. The representation is coloured by the old Babylonian myth of the contest between Marduk the god of light and Tiamat the chaos-demon of darkness. From the priestly creation narrative (Gen. i. 1–ii. 4a) this has largely disappeared, but there are numerous allusions in the Old Testament to God's ancient victory over Rahab or Leviathan. In fact it is necessary to supplement the story of creation in the Priestly Document by other Old Testament references, especially in Job and the Psalms. The Jews conceived of the universe much as the Babylonians did. The earth on which we live was regarded as a circular plane, surrounded by an ocean. Beneath it lay the great deep, or the abyss of waters. This is not to be identified with the sea, but lies below sea and land alike. There are, however, openings in the bed of the sea which connect with this submarine abyss, and through which the sea is fed by a regulated supply. If these springs of the sea or fountains of the great deep are broken up, as at

the Deluge, then the water bursts up from the abyss and devastates the world. The sky was a solid circular vault, the rim of which rested on the ocean that flowed round the earth. Within it was the realm of light, beyond it there was the outer darkness. Across its earthward surface, so near to us that the birds brush by it in their flight, the heavenly bodies move in their appointed track. They are animate beings, each with its name, each coming forth at God's summons from its resting-place to its station in the sky. Above the firmament there is a heavenly ocean, corresponding in the upper world to the subterranean abyss in the lower. Originally they were one, but when God subdued Chaos He divided the waters into two portions, placing the solid dome of the firmament between them. There are windows or sluices in the sky, through which, when they are opened or unsealed, the heavy tropical rain descends. At the Deluge not only were the fountains of the abyss broken up but the windows of heaven were opened, and thus the waters, which had been separated at creation, were partially reunited. The lighter rains do not come from the heavenly ocean, but from the clouds, which, though they float in the air, are "the bottles of heaven," holding much water in their filmy envelope.

Raised high above the heavenly ocean is the hill of

Yahweh, where He is throned in light and holds His heavenly court. The angels are "the sons of God," by which is meant that they belong to the order of Elohim or heavenly beings. Like God Himself, they are composed of spirit. Yet they are susceptible to the perils of sensual pleasure, as the story in Gen. vi. 1–4 shows. To the angels God has entrusted the various nations, reserving Israel for His own peculiar possession, though in Daniel Israel also has its angel, Michael. At appointed seasons they appear before God to give an account of their administration. Of evil angels, in the later sense of the term, we learn nothing in the Old Testament. It is true that the angels of the nations are regarded as responsible for the woes of Israel. And thus God is in one place represented as pronouncing on them the sentence of death, in spite of the fact that as Elohim they would be naturally immortal. Usually, however, the angels are regarded as strictly subordinate to the will of God. This is true of the angel who bears the title of the Satan, and who must not be identified with the devil. It is his function to test the reality of men's apparent goodness, to act as counsel for the prosecution, and dispute their claim to righteousness before God's bar. This exclusive preoccupation with the evil side of human life has developed a cynical

disbelief in human goodness, and he stops at nothing to prove his own estimate right. Yet this is out of no antagonism to God, but rather that no one shall substantiate a false claim for lack of rigid scrutiny on his part. It should be added that we read of demoniacal creatures, such as the satyrs and other uncanny monsters, of Azazel, a wilderness demon to whom the sins of Israel are despatched on the Day of Atonement, and of Lilith, a night demon akin to the vampire. These, however, have their place rather in popular superstition than in strict theology.

Man was created by God in His own image. Originally this may have borne a literal anthropomorphic sense, but in the more elevated thought of Judaism it expressed rather man's spiritual and intellectual than his physical resemblance to God. He is appointed ruler of all the lower orders of creation. He is a little lower than the Elohim. Yet between the two orders of being there is a gulf fixed greater than the phrase would indicate. For the Elohim are spirit and man is but flesh. The term "flesh" is used not simply with reference to the physical material, but to man's weak and perishable nature. Strictly speaking the term is metaphysical rather than ethical, but the contrast to the Divine naturally gave it in some cases a moral colouring. The

supreme proof of man's fleshly nature lies in the fact of death. He is a frail mortal. However long his life may be, it comes to an end at last. The pale shade leaves the body and descends into Sheol, the gloomy underworld which lies in a cavernous region below the earth's surface. There all the vast multitudes of the dead are gathered, the small and great, the good and the evil. Just dimly conscious of life, apathetic, without the rich warmth and movement of the upper world, they drag out their weary interminable existence. Hence the supreme blessing earth had to give was long life, for here man might be happy and enjoy the beatitude of fellowship with God, but in Sheol no communion with Him was any longer possible. The later Judaism, however, advanced from this position along two lines. In the apocalyptic section, Isa. xxiv.–xxvii., which may be dated with most plausibility about the time of Alexander the Great, we first meet with a doctrine of individual resurrection. To re-people the depleted land it is said that God's life-giving dew shall descend from the realm of light and revive the pious dead. In Daniel the thought is carried still further, and a resurrection of faithful Israelites to honour and of apostates to everlasting contempt is predicted. But besides this return from Sheol to earth,

a few passages suggest another solution, that death should not interrupt the communion between the saint and his God. This view, however, it should be said, is doubted by several scholars, who find a different meaning in these passages. In Isa. xxv. 8 we have the remarkable anticipation, "He hath swallowed up death for ever."

The Old Testament recognises the universal sinfulness of man. For the most part it is concerned only with the practical aspects of the subject. Speculations as to the origin of sin are foreign to its temper. It is very questionable whether the doctrine of the Fall is to be found in it. This depends on the view we take of the story of the forbidden fruit in Gen. iii. Unhappily the problems raised by the narrative are too complex to admit of discussion in our space. Two things, however, must be borne in mind. The story has left very little mark on the Old Testament. Further, we must set aside not simply our own theological preconceptions, but also the interpretation placed on the narrative in the non-canonical Jewish literature and by Paul, whose own discussion is commonly misunderstood, and seek to understand it in its own light. It is possible that the strange story of the angel marriages, a fragment of which is now preserved in Gen. vi., may have been originally

intended to account for the entrance of sin into the world, but in its present connection it obviously has no such significance. According to a very anthropomorphic passage in the introduction to the story of the Flood, Yahweh was Himself disappointed with the corruption of the human heart, and repented that He had made man. Elsewhere He excuses the inveterate tendency to evil by the thought of man's frailty: "He remembered that they were but flesh."

Naturally the Old Testament is but little concerned with the sin of the heathen except where it affects Israel. That the Gentiles, who do not know Yahweh, should be sinners excites no surprise, save where they sink below their own moral standard. But what moves the amazement and indignation of the Hebrew writers is the sin of Israel. It is continually brought out in the history, is the constant theme of the great prophets and Psalmists, while the Law and the warnings of the sages are largely directed to its prevention. The nation's spiritual privileges, its intimate relation to God, only set in the darker light its ingratitude and disobedience, and lead to a stricter reckoning. Since Israel is the elect nation God will visit upon it all its iniquities.

The election of Israel was the foundation on which its religion rested. It was the rooted conviction of the

people, but its real significance was largely misapprehended. It was regarded as an end in itself, and as a token of Divine favouritism encouraging them to presume on God's indulgence. Against this practical inference the prophets vehemently protested. But some at least failed to rise above the thought that Israel was God's favourite people, to whose interests the course of history was to be made subservient. This was not a purely self-regarding attitude; the egoistic motive is blended with concern for Yahweh's interests, which were regarded as bound up with Israel's continued existence. The actual condition always presented a glaring contrast to what befitted the chosen people of God. Thus there arose the confident anticipation of a glorious future. It was natural that this should often be of a predominantly political character. Israel's enemies were to be subdued and the nation receive a world-wide dominion. From these military and imperial aspirations many of the prophets were not free, but they insisted that their fulfilment implied the moral reformation of Israel, a vital element which the mass of the people ignored. The social conditions of the era of blessedness were sketched in brilliant colours. All things that went to make life happy—peace, prosperity, long life, a numerous posterity, immunity from sickness and disaster, a Divine

protection which secured the people against all its enemies—were included in these dazzling pictures. There would be a great transformation of nature, the land would be marvellously fertile, and the beasts of prey would lose their fierceness. The ancient schism between Judah and Israel would be healed, and they would return to Palestine from the Exile and the Dispersion, and form again one nation under a Davidic king.

In many of these prophecies there is no explicit mention of this monarch, but in others he plays a leading part. For the sake of convenience we may adopt the custom of referring to him as the Messiah, though in the Old Testament the word does not occur in the technical sense. He is to be a king of Davidic descent, so signally endowed with the Divine Spirit that he shall be an ideal ruler and judge, slaying the wicked and exalting the righteous. The Messiah is designated the Son of God, but this term was not employed in the sense which it bears in Christian theology. Nor must we be misled by the English rendering, "Mighty God" in Isa. ix. 6, and find in the words an ascription of Divinity to the Messiah. He is a godlike hero, who must pass through battle to undisputed dominion, and can become the Prince of Peace only through a conflict in which he crushes the heathen nations which have not

been wise in time and submitted to him. Henceforth he will rule in perpetual peace on the throne of David in Zion, over a land no longer diminished or distressed by the invader. With all the military zeal which animates these Messianic aspirations, it must not be forgotten that peace is their goal, when the weapons of war shall be turned into the implements of agriculture, when the men of Israel shall dwell each under his own vine and fig-tree, when the nations shall learn war no more.

But while some consoled themselves for their miseries by depicting the doom of their oppressors, it would be unjust to forget those who struck a nobler note. They looked at the Gentiles with no vindictive hate, nor were they content with the spectacle of a heathen host swept out of existence that Yahweh might get Himself glory. The Second Isaiah, it is true, does not escape from a contracted nationalism which saw in Israel the favourite of God, though the author of the Book of Jonah rises clear above it. But in the description of Israel as the Servant of Yahweh, whose main significance in the world's history was to carry to the Gentiles the knowledge of the true God and to suffer for their sin, he rose to a height far loftier than that reached in Messianic prophecy. And others beside the author of the Book of Jonah followed in his steps. In Isa. ii. 2–4 we read

that the nations will throng to Zion to learn the Law of God, and submit to His arbitration. In Isa. xxv. 6, 7, we read of the feast prepared for all peoples and the removal of the veil which has hidden from them the face of God. And in Isa. xix. 19–25, Egypt and Assyria are represented as uniting with each other and with Israel in the common worship of Yahweh.

SELECTED LITERATURE

No thoroughly satisfactory treatment of the subject on an adequate scale exists in English. Much the best is that given in the article "Religion of Israel" by E. Kautzsch in the extra volume of Hastings' "Dictionary of the Bible." This may be supplemented by many articles in the course of the "Dictionary" itself. The "Encyclopædia Biblica" does not deal explicitly with Biblical Theology, and must on account of its radical standpoint and extremely speculative textual criticism be used with caution. But it contains many valuable articles on religious institutions, which with the corresponding articles in Hastings' "Dictionary" largely supply the lack of a Hebrew Archæology. The chief book on Old Testament Theology is by Schultz, but this is now rather antiquated. A. B. Davidson's contribution to the "International Theological Library" is rather a series of studies in individual doctrines than a Theology of the Old Testament. The "Hibbert Lectures" by C. G. Montefiore, "Old Testament Theology" by A. Duff, "Hebrew Religion" by W. E.

Addis, "The Religion of Israel" by Ottley, "The Religion of Israel to the Exile" by Budde and "The Religion of Israel after the Exile" by Cheyne, "The Religion of Israel among the Religions of the Nearer East" by Marti, all pursue the historical method followed in the present work. The writer may refer to his own "Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament" and his "Commentary on Job" for a fuller treatment of the later part of the period than the limits of space permitted in the present volume. As a companion to this work giving a topical discussion of individual doctrines he would recommend the little "Old Testament Theology" by C. F. Burney, or the rather larger "Theology of the Old Testament" by W. H. Bennett. Of special value is W. R. Smith's "Prophets of Israel."

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