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THE STRUCTURE
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PREFACE.

THE design of the following pages is to set before ordinary English readers, in a concise and popular form, some of those facts concerning the composition of the Old Testament, a knowledge of which is indispensable to an intelligent appreciation of its contents, but of which the majority of such persons are more or less ignorant. An attempt has been made, in fact, to exhibit in an interesting manner what may be called the *Natural History* of the Old Testament. The lengthy and elaborate discussion of many of the points touched upon would therefore have been out of place ; but as great care has been taken to avoid overstatement, and to place the argument in such a light as to make it independent of everything which may

not be regarded as reasonably certain, it is hoped that the inferences suggested rather than enforced may be thought reasonable too, and may tend to show the essential difference in kind which distinguishes the elder volume of Revelation from all similar productions. The following chapters were originally intended for oral delivery as lectures, but the occasion for so delivering them accidentally fell through; and this circumstance may account for traces here and there of a greater directness of address than is usual in writings of the essay kind.

London, January, 1873.

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THE STRUCTURE
OF THE
OLD TESTAMENT.

CHAPTER I.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

THE unity and organic structure of the Old Testament are features of its composition which many of those who are very familiar with it do not immediately perceive. Some, indeed, have so long been accustomed to regard the earlier volume of the Bible, or in fact the whole Bible, as one book, that they are practically unconscious of its highly composite nature, while the impulse lately given to critical methods of studying it has served to reveal so much of its composite structure that others have virtually forgotten its true and essential unity.

Introductory.

2 *The Structure of the Old Testament.*

And yet this unity is the more remarkable as arising out of and subsisting under its organic structure. It has been thought therefore that a popular statement of some of the facts connected with these important features of the Old Testament may not be uninteresting or unprofitable in days like our own, when the permanent obligation and undying significance of the elder volume of revelation are liable to be forgotten, and the tendency is to magnify the importance of moral teaching to the neglect or depreciation of spiritual life and truth.

Meaning of
'organic
structure.'

What then do we mean by organic structure? and what is it that constitutes an organic whole? The word 'organic' is a derivative from 'organ,' or ὄργανον, which is the Greek for 'an instrument,' or as used with reference to the body, 'an instrument' or 'organ' of sense, and therefore 'a member' of the body. Thus my hand is an organ, or instrument, or member of my body. It is the instrument by which I handle objects, by which I touch and feel, or possess myself of anything; but it is an organ of my body with special reference to its being a member of my body. It is one

instrument out of many, having its peculiar functions, just as the other members of my body have theirs. The organic structure of my body, then, will be the structure of my body with reference to its organs, and their relation to one another.

But the use of a phrase like this implies the idea of unity. There can be no organic structure if there is no relation between the parts. It is the fact of their interdependence that enables us to speak of organic structure. We can speak with a certain boldness of speech of the organic structure of a house, but not of the organic structure of a town or collection of houses ; of the organic structure of a ship, not of a fleet or collection of ships. Thus to speak of the organic structure of the Old Testament implies that the Old Testament is a whole, compounded or made up of parts or organs—an organic whole—just as my body is a whole, made up of the various organs or instruments of various functions. But when I say that the word organ is equivalent to the term member, I do not say that the word organ means a member. It is literally nothing more than a 'tool' or 'implement;' that is to

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say, it indicates the means by which we supplement our original powers. A saw is that by which I enable my hand to cut wood or any other substance. An eye is that by which my brain is enabled to see. A saw cannot cut without a hand to move it, an eye cannot see without a brain to receive its sensations; and so no organ fulfils its purpose unless there is a force to put it in operation, it ceases practically to be an organ; it implies, according to its efficiency, a power or a will.

Implies purpose in formation.

It implies also, in its very constitution and nature, a purpose, an intention, a design; for there surely can be no question but that every human organ, or tool, or instrument, implies a design as the final cause of its existence. Any tool implies an endeavour to meet a want; it is a means to an end, which end was distinctly contemplated in devising the means. If therefore we are right in our application of the word organ to other things besides human or material tools, we import into our contemplation of these things, in spite of ourselves, the idea of design. As far as the word organ is at all appropriate, we attribute design, though it may be unconsciously or unintentionally.

The very use of the phrase organic structure, then, seems to point us necessarily to mutual relation in the parts, with more or less of unity; to a distinct purpose, for which each part is peculiarly adapted; to design or intention in the adaptation which is thus discernible, which is an evidence of unity of purpose, and results in unity of action; to the power and the exercise of choice in the selection of the means; and therefore, lastly, to a Person evincing this power of selecting the best means, to a Person choosing, and a Person designing. Possibly we may be wrong in speaking of organic structure as applied to the Old Testament; but if we do speak of it, we can scarcely use the words in any proper or accurate sense, and not imply something of all this in using them.

Let us inquire, then, in the first place, what are the tokens or evidences of organic structure, properly so called, in the books of the Old Testament, and in order to ascertain this we must bear in mind some of the special characteristics of it. In the Old Testament, then, we have a national

6 *The Structure of the Old Testament.*

The Old Testament the work of many authors.

literature; not one book but many, a whole library or collection of books. There are fragments from the works, or the whole works, as the case may be, of certainly not less than twenty or five and twenty writers. There may not improbably be many more, but there manifestly cannot be less. For there are sixteen prophets to begin with, whose writings cannot be confounded with one another. There are writings attributed to Moses, to David, and to Solomon, besides all the historical writings. Now, with every allowance for uncertainty of authorship, and for mistaken authorship, it is plain that this number must be increased rather than diminished. In fact, the wider scope we give to speculation about the authorship of various books, the higher this number is likely to rise.

Period of time covered by it.

With regard, however, to the period of time covered by this Hebrew literature, there is perhaps more uncertainty; but, accepting the ordinary dates, which may be open to modification, though not to any large extent, we have in the Old Testament a literature extending over a period of at least a thousand years. The criticism which would bring down the

authorship of the Pentateuch to a later date than the one commonly received would compensate in some degree for doing so by ascribing the book of Daniel to the age of Antiochus, and assigning some of the Psalms to the era of the Maccabees. Thus the total extent would not be very greatly lessened ; but in point of fact I believe it is impossible not to assign the Pentateuch, at least in part, to the age of the Exodus ; and some portions of it are probably much older still, so that we cannot be far wrong in spreading the literature of the Old Testament over a period of at least a thousand years.

Here, however, a difficulty confronts us, which I can only allude to now, and must not stay to discuss, and this is the difficulty of language. Little change of language. In so long a space of time we should naturally expect to find a great difference in language. Think of the difference in language between the English of modern London, and that tongue that was spoken here—for we cannot call it English—in the time of Alfred the Great, who came to the throne a thousand years ago. We should most of us have had great difficulty in under-

standing a speech from the throne then. And in fact the language of Chaucer, which is somewhere midway between these two extremes, and rather nearer to our own time than to that of Alfred, is not commonly intelligible now. But it is not too much to say that the language of Moses and the language of Malachi are identical. The one writer would have had no difficulty in understanding the other. There are indeed slight indications of change in the language of the two ; but it is after all the same language. The difference between Chaucer and Shakespeare is far greater than that between Moses and Malachi. The differences that do exist correspond to dialectical variations rather than differences of age ; and it is a fact which we may endeavour to account for in various ways, that the language of the Old Testament does not present those marked differences of age that we should expect to find in compositions separated by long periods of time, and which are met with in the literature of other languages. The system of inflection, for example, is virtually the same ; and if, on the other hand, the vocabulary is found to differ, this is only what

we should naturally expect on account of the very circumscribed limits of the Hebrew literature. The Hebrew Bible does not contain probably a tenth part of the vocabulary of the language as it was spoken at any one period, and several books are so short and so various in their subject-matter, that it could hardly be otherwise than that many words should be used by one writer, which would not be found in another. Almost every book of the Old Testament has certain words peculiar to itself, and in some cases, such as Job and Canticles, for example, the number of these is very large indeed.

With regard, however, to this matter of language, some allowance must be made, probably, for the unchangeableness which in a great degree characterises Eastern nations, and certainly far more than it does those of modern Europe. The Arab of the present day has no difficulty in understanding the Kuran, and yet we are now in the 1289th year of the Hejra, or Flight of Muhammed. He speaks virtually the same language as that of the Prophet, the chief difference consisting in a systematic omission of the final

Unchange-
able charac-
ter of Eastern
nations.

vowel, which in the Kuran is retained. Now, here we have a difference in age at least as great as, if not greater than, that which separates between the earliest and the latest productions of the Old Testament. And it would be very difficult, not to say absolutely impossible, to find a parallel case in any spoken language of modern Europe.

The Old Testament written in two languages.

Another remarkable feature in the literature of the Old Testament is the fact that it is composed in two cognate but totally distinct languages. By far the greater portion of it is written in Hebrew; but certain parts of Ezra (iv. 8—vi. 18, and vii. 12—26), one verse of Jeremiah (x. 11), and certain parts of Daniel (ii. 4*b*—vii.) are in Chaldee, which is presumed to have been the language acquired and spoken by the Jews during the captivity, and which after their return gradually superseded the ancient Biblical Hebrew. This language approximates more nearly to that used on the Assyrian monuments, which are Semitic, and not Persian or Scythic; to the language of the Targums, or the Chaldee paraphrases of certain portions of the Scriptures; to the Syriac of the oldest translation

of the New Testament; and to, it may be assigned, those few Semitic words which are found in the Greek of the New Testament. On the other hand, the pure Biblical Hebrew is more nearly represented by the language of the Phœnician inscriptions, and, above all, by that of the famous Moabite stone.

The difference between these two languages is far greater than the difference before spoken of between any two books of various ages, for example, Genesis and Malachi: it is a difference of grammar, and not merely of vocabulary. There are indeed, in several books, certain peculiarities of form, which are termed Chaldaisms, but these are for the most part trifling variations, consisting frequently of nothing more than a change of letter, and, however they are to be accounted for, are not sufficient to indicate the gradual approximation of the one dialect to the other. The difference between Hebrew and Chaldee is analogous to that between French and Italian, rather than to that between any two dialects of either language, or of our own. We have evidence from Scripture itself that a person speaking in Chaldee would not have

Their difference.

been understood by an ordinary Jew, and the reverse from the request made by Eliakim and Joah and Shebna unto Rabshakeh, which is recorded in Isaiah xxxvi. 11, and 2 Kings xviii. 26 ; cf. 2 Chron. xxxii. 18.

Similar instances.

It is to be observed that the occurrence of these two languages in the Old Testament is the more remarkable from the fact of its appearance in particular books. It is not due to any arbitrary insertion of such books in the canon, but is a feature that is peculiar to the books themselves. A somewhat similar, but much more modern instance is to be found in the *Gulistan* or *Rose-garden* of the Persian poet Sadi, a great portion of which is in Arabic, and in the plays of the Hindu dramatists, in which the gods and heroes speak in Sanskrit, but the women and inferior characters reply in Prakrit, a lower type of language, approximating more nearly to the modern vernaculars.

The Semitic family.

There is one other point which deserves to be borne in mind in connection with this subject, and that is the family of languages to which the dialects of the Old Testament belong. This is what is called the Semitic

family, comprising, for the most part, the languages spoken by the descendants of Shem. These are chiefly the Hebrew, the Arabic, the Syriac, the Chaldee, and the Ethiopic. Besides the Arabic and Ethiopic, another modern representative of this family exists in the Maltese. The Semitic languages are totally distinct in structure and formation, as well as vocabulary, from the Aryan or Indo-Germanic family, to which Greek, the language of the New Testament, and Latin and Gothic, the parents of our own, all belong.

In dealing, then, with the Old Testament, we are dealing with by far the oldest and the most important literature of a family of languages having absolutely nothing in common with the great majority of the languages of modern Europe or their progenitors. But, as one of the features of the Semitic family is the extreme simplicity in the construction of sentences which characterises them, a copiousness of forms springing from the same root being combined with great inflexibility in the articulation of clauses, we may perhaps see in this fact a special qualification in the Hebrew, which, among the Semitic languages, eminently

Their simplicity.

possesses it, for being the vehicle of writings destined, far more than any others, to be rendered into the various languages of mankind. For this is a feature which has influenced in a high degree even the language of the New Testament, which naturally possesses the exactly opposite characteristic of extreme flexibility of sentences.

Such, then, is the material, as regards language, out of which the Old Testament is formed, and such are some of the more prominent features of its formation as regards age and authors.

The pedigree
of the Old
Testament.

Let us now proceed to ascertain something about what we may term the pedigree of this same Old Testament. A picture which has a pedigree is incomparably more valuable than a picture which has none, whatever its intrinsic merit may be ; and though the literary merits of this book may be very great, its value will be far greater if we can satisfactorily ascertain its history. Now there is, and can be, no manner of doubt that every page of the Old Testament was in existence before the first book of the New was written ; that is to say, in the first century after Christ. On that evi-

dence, it can have been of no recent growth. But besides this, Josephus speaks of the sacred books of his nation as being 'twenty-two,' which corresponds with the Jewish division of them, according to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet ; and of these he says, 'five belong to Moses,' 'thirteen books' contain the history of the nation 'from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia,' comprising Joshua ; Judges and Ruth counted as one book ; Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, each regarded as one book ; Ezra and Nehemiah ; Esther, Job, the four greater prophets, and the twelve minor prophets reckoned as one book ; and 'the remaining four books,' Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles, 'contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life.' There may be some difference as to the way in which this number is to be made up, but no reasonable doubt as to the books comprised in it.

Of these twenty-two books, Josephus says that 'during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them ; but it

Testimony of
Josephus,
c. Ap. 1. 8.

becomes natural to all Jews, immediately from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them. For it is no new thing,' he continues, 'for our captives, many of them in number, and frequently in time, to be seen to endure racks and deaths of all kinds upon the theatres, that they may not be obliged to say one word against our laws, and the records that contain them; whereas there are none at all among the Greeks who would undergo the least harm on that account, no, not in case all the writings that are among them were to be destroyed; for they take them to be such discourses as are framed agreeably to the inclinations of those that write them,' etc. It cannot fail to strike any one that this last statement is singularly parallel to that in the Second Epistle of St. Peter i. 21, 'For the prophecy came not in the old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.'

It is evident, therefore, that the testimony of the New Testament is confirmed by the partly independent testimony of the great

Jewish historian, and the same may be said of Philo, who everywhere speaks of and regards the Old Testament as a whole. It is also evident, from the same passage of Josephus, that he considered the collection to have been closed in the time of Artaxerxes Longimanus; for he distinctly says, 'It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time' (*Contra Apion*, i. 8). It is hardly possible to overestimate the importance of this testimony.

The next link in the chain of evidence is supplied by the apocryphal writings, which exist in the version of the Seventy, but are not found in the Hebrew. For, independently of the references to the Old Testament in various parts, we can arrive approximately at a particular date from 'The Prologue of the Wisdom of Jesus the son of Sirach.' The translator of this book mentions having come into Egypt when he was thirty-eight, and when Ptolemy Euergetes was king. Now it is said that this statement is ambiguous, from

The testimony of
Ecclesiasticus.

the fact of two Ptolemies having borne the name of Euergetes, Ptolemy III., and Ptolemy VII., also called Physcon: but surely there is nothing to the point here, because a writer who wished to specify a certain king would not have used a title that was itself open to ambiguity. At the time, therefore, when this author wrote there had plainly not been two, but only one Euergetes, and he was Ptolemy III., whose reign lasted from B.C. 247 to B.C. 222. The reign of the second Euergetes was about a century later, from B.C. 145 to B.C. 116. That the earlier of these two kings is meant is clear also from the internal evidence of the book. In chapter L. there is an elaborate description of the high-priest, Simon the son of Onias, which must have been written by one who had seen him officiate in the Temple. Strange to say, here again ambiguity is alleged from the fact of there having been two high-priests of this name, who were both sons of Onias, and who also lived at an interval of about a century. As, however, the first of these was known by the name of Simon the Just, and was universally esteemed by his nation, which the second

was not, it seems highly improbable that the writer should have spoken of the second, if there could have been any chance of the first being mistaken for him, as there clearly would have been on the supposition of the later date being the right one. Had there at the time when this auther wrote been a second Simon the son of Onias, he would surely have distinguished him in some other way. The fact that he has not done so certainly points to the inference that there had as yet been but one. Now, the first Simon lived from about B.C. 370 to B.C. 290, the second from B.C. 217 to B.C. 195. Supposing, then, that the author of Ecclesiasticus was the younger contemporary of the first Simon, and that he wrote, as he clearly did, after his death, or about 280 B.C., this might well allow of the visit of his grandson to Egypt, at the age of thirty-eight, occurring in the time of Ptolemy III., about B.C. 230, after an interval of say fifty years; and so the reign of Euergetes I. would fit in with the supposition of the high-priest who is meant being the first Simon.

It appears, then, from the prologue of the translator, that the threefold division of the

Jewish Scriptures into 'the Law, the Prophets, and the other books,' was familiar to his grandfather, that is to say, at the commencement of the third century before Christ, and that in his own time they had been translated into Greek, 'because,' he says, 'they have no small difference when they are spoken in their own language.'

Now, though it is not absolutely certain, from this prologue, that the canon of the Old Testament was complete at the time referred to, yet I think the most natural inference from the language used clearly leads us to suppose it was; and if so, we have evidence to the existence of the Old Testament as a whole at least 300 years before Christ.

If, however, on the other hand, we take the second Euergetes and the second Simon, or the second Euergetes and the first Simon, which perhaps may appear to some more probable still, to be those meant* by the translator in his preface, this evidence will only carry us to about 200 years before Christ; but on any

It cannot be
later than
200 B.C.

* See art. *Ecclesiasticus*, in Dict. of Bible, by Dr. Westcott, and in Kitto, by Dr. Ginsburg, also Dr. Pusey on Daniel, 297—304.

supposition it must be allowed to carry us so far.

And then at this time we have clear proof that a composition so highly esteemed as the Wisdom of the Son of Sirach did not even lay claim to equality with the received writings of the Old Testament; for the translator speaks of them as holding a place altogether distinct from the work of his grandfather.

The next link in the literary pedigree of the Old Testament is the Septuagint. Testimony of the Septuagint. Considerable obscurity hangs over the origin of this version, but it, in all probability, came into existence in the time of the first or second Ptolemy, perhaps about 280 B.C. If this was the case, it is quite probable, on either of the two latter suppositions just mentioned, that the writer of Ecclesiasticus had seen the Septuagint: on the former one it is perhaps barely possible, and this is indeed the strongest argument for the later date of that work. Still, at all events, the existence of the Septuagint in the early part of the third century B.C. is proof positive of the existence of those books of which it was a version. Thus everything points us conclusively to the

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Everything
points to
300 B. C.

existence of the Old Testament in some form or other three hundred years before Christ, and the testimony of Josephus may reasonably be accepted in proof that this form was virtually the same as it was in his time.

.It is no part of my present purpose to inquire into the right of particular books to their place in the Old Testament. That question would be more properly discussed in treating of the canon. My object now is rather to deal with the book generally as a whole. And, taking it as such, and assuming that what Josephus says is correct, as we have no reason to doubt, we know with positive certainty that it was in existence three centuries before Christ, in substantially the same form as we have it now ; for we must remember that it is not even alleged by any one that any existing book of the Old Testament was added later than the middle of the second century before Christ ; and had any book been added as late as that, Josephus could not have said what he did.

Which im-
plies a still
earlier exist-
ence.

From the existence of the Septuagint, therefore, from the reference in the preface to Ecclesiasticus, and from the testimony of

Josephus, we can trace backwards the pedigree of the Old Testament for a period of three hundred years from the birth of Christ. It is equally certain that at that time it must have acquired a considerable amount of celebrity to have been translated at Alexandria, more especially as the strong antipathy of the Greeks to the Jews would have prejudiced them against the Jewish literature, while for the use of the Jews themselves, who were living there, such a translation was not wanted. The fact, therefore, of this Greek version existing when it did is itself an evidence of a certain prior antiquity in the book; and whether the version was that of a part only, or the whole, for the Law would naturally be translated first, it matters little, because it would have been an absolute impossibility that any books that were translated afterwards should have originated in the interval, or, supposing them to have originated, should have acquired sufficient celebrity to be translated. For it must be borne in mind that though the Septuagint contains books which are not in the Hebrew, there are no books in the Hebrew which the Septuagint does not contain.

24 *The Structure of the Old Testament.*

Its variety of
topics.

Having thus so far traced the pedigree of the Old Testament to a period scarcely more than a hundred years after its latest book, let us commence our analysis of its structure and contents. The first thing which strikes us about it, regarding it for the moment as a single book, is the multiplicity of its topics and the variety of its contents. This is, of course, less remarkable when we remember that though conventionally regarded as one book, it is really, as I have said, a national literature; and almost every species of writing finds its representative in the Old Testament. There are legal documents, sacrificial prescriptions, and ritual ordinances; there are family records and genealogical tables; there are complete historical monuments of the nation from its very infancy till the time when it ceased to have the distinct individual existence of the past. These monuments, though indeed much more meagre than we could desire, are none the less complete, inasmuch as they form, as it were by accident, a connected whole. The gaps which exist appear to be left almost by design. For example, we have few details given us of the

wanderings, next to none of the captivity, but in either case this was not so much because an historian was lacking, as because, apparently from his point of view, the materials were deficient in interest. To us the record of these would have been most precious ; nor can we conceive any period of the national history when it would not have been so to the nation ; but, as a matter of fact, those who were directly interested in it, Moses, Daniel, and the rest, have passed it by in silence. Then, in addition to the history, we have poetry of every kind, elegiac, pastoral, warlike, devotional ; poetry which, in the range of its subjects, and in the scope of its object, need fear comparison with none in any language, and, indeed, in this last respect is incomparably superior to all other poetry. Then there are ethical treatises, collections of moral maxims for the guidance of conduct, and speculations as to the destiny of man, and attempts at the solution of the mystery of his being, which have even now lost none of their interest ; added to which there is in the Hebrew literature a cosmogony which alone, of all the cosmogonies of the ancient world, has

at the present time, in the midst of the light and discoveries of modern science, any sort of claim to come into competition with it. There is no other which any one would even dream of attempting to reconcile with or oppose to the present condition of scientific knowledge, no other which is entitled to the smallest consideration as embodying any truth, whether physical or otherwise.

Variety of
character
among its
writers.

A similar variety is to be perceived also in the several writers whose works are comprised in the Old Testament. They are of all classes and occupations. There is the king, the priest, the warrior, the sage, the chorister in the temple, the cupbearer in the palace, the chamberlain in the court, and the herdsman in the field; and if we cannot add to the list, it is only because the scanty information we possess about certain individuals does not enable us to do so. Doubtless, in every literature there is an equal diversity of occupation manifest among the authors, but in the Old Testament writers it does not appear that literary merit was the chief cause of their works being included in the collection, and it is not easy to discover on what principle they

were chosen. We find from 1 Macc. i. 56, 57, that in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes the books of the law were sought out and burnt, and that any one with whom 'any book of the testament,' meaning probably the entire collection, was found, was put to death. Persecution, therefore, must have had the effect of separating the common from the holy. No one would have been willing to die for any book which at the time could be shown to be not of the number of the sacred books, and it is clear that the distinction must then have been sufficiently marked to be easily recognised both by the persecutors and the persecuted. Here the fact of a distinction existing is evident, but how had it arisen? This is a question that we cannot answer, but one or two points connected with it appear to be certain.

For instance, it cannot have been of very recent date. Men do not abruptly throw in a broad separation like this, which is not one of degree, but of kind, between writings in their possession. The reputation of sanctity is one of prescription. It is inherited, and not established suddenly. The books which were then

The reverence for them not of recent growth.

reckoned holy must have been received and handed down as holy. Had they been of recent origin, they would have been known as such, and men would not have died for them ; had they been of recent origin, they could only have been regarded as holy because of the great celebrity of their existing writers, or because they were successfully imposed upon the people as works of higher antiquity. In this latter case we cannot conceive that any persons would have been found willing to die for the maintenance of a forgery, or for belief in a book with which on this supposition they had only just become acquainted. If the works were not genuine, they would have been left alone. The seal of blood would not have been affixed to them. While in the former case we have evidence from this same first book of the Maccabees that the race of writers was extinct who would have been capable of producing works of valid claims to sanctity. The author speaks of the time since which a prophet had not been seen in Israel (ix. 27 ; cf. iv. 46, xiv. 41). His own experience was acquainted with no one who could have added to the number of the sacred books. The halo of the past

had already glorified these books, and distinguished them from all others ; but in what the actual elements of distinction consisted it is not easy to determine. We can transport ourselves in imagination to the time when the various books of the Old Testament were, so to say, held in solution in the society and literature of the Jews ; but we have no instruments or lenses which will enable us to watch the process of precipitation.

How far it was the work of individual will, or the effect of circumstances, or the result of the two combined, we cannot tell. That individual will had something to do with it may be inferred from the fact that we are indebted for a portion of the book of Proverbs to 'the men of Hezekiah,' who copied it out or transcribed it from some other collection. That the effect of circumstances operated likewise appears to be shown from the neglect of order which is apparent in many books of the Old Testament, and also from the fact that the books of other writers are frequently quoted by way of authority or reference, which it may be presumed were, in the judgment of the writer quoting them,

The collection partly the work of individual will.

Prov. xxv. 1.

Partly of circumstances.

Other books quoted.

of equal value with his own, and yet his book has been preserved, and theirs have not. Whether the book of Jasher, for instance, was held by the author of Joshua and 2 Samuel of equal value with his own book or not, it is plain that he thought its authority sufficient to establish his own veracity. It is plain that he expected his readers to be familiar with it, that he anticipated also that it would survive, and yet, notwithstanding all this, it is hopelessly lost.

The question, then, naturally arises, Was this book of Jasher, and were the other books similarly mentioned by the sacred writers, ever included in the same category with the existing sacred books? Now, though this is a question which we cannot decisively answer, yet we may affirm that there is no evidence of any book ever included in that category being lost from it. However the distinction, which is one in kind, originated, it cannot be regarded merely as a matter of chance what writings were comprised in, or excluded from, that category. The subject is one about which we know very little; but, at the same time, when the canon was closed, there is no reason to

believe that it was co-extensive with the whole existing literature of the nation.

The closing of the canon was in all probability an act of selection, and not merely one of gathering together everything that could be found. The language of the second book of Maccabees ii. 14, where the writer speaks of the work of Nehemiah and of Judas Maccabæus, in founding a library, can scarcely be interpreted of the books of the Old Testament alone. 'The writings and commentaries of Neemias' seem to mean very much more than either the book bearing his name, or any collection he may have been instrumental in forming with a view to the settlement of the canon. And if so, we have here proof positive of the existence at that time of a more extensive literature than the present Old Testament.

Indeed, we cannot separate the question of a difference in kind between the books comprised in or excluded from the canon, from another question no less difficult to answer, which must engage us hereafter; and that is the method by which the prophet's mission was recognised. We have already seen that the author of the first book of Maccabees deplored

The canon probably the work of selection.

The standard difficult to define.

the cessation of the race of prophets. He had himself known no prophet. He must have had, then, a definite notion of what a prophet was. He may even have been acquainted with the work of which Ecclesiasticus is the translation; and if so, he must have been able to distinguish between the race of the prophets and Jesus the son of Sirach. Now in what respects did Jesus the son of Sirach, or Simon the high-priest, for example, whom *he* greatly extolled, differ from, or fall short of, the race of the prophets? Clearly, not in the point of literary merit or of personal excellence. The literary merit of the son of Sirach is greater than that of Obadiah or of Haggai. The personal excellence of Simon the high-priest was probably not less than that of Malachi; and yet these were recognised as prophets, and the others not. Now we are bound to attempt some answer to the question, How was this? And the only possible answer can be, that there was some outward feature in the prophet's credentials, which was recognisable by the people, as well as by himself. This is a fact that is observable everywhere throughout the history of the prophetic mission.

Not one of
literary
merit.

Persecuted and rejected as the prophets very often were, they always seem to have been known as prophets. It is not likely that this was in consequence merely of their own assertion to that effect. There must have been some outward and indubitable mark by which they were recognised, and their personal claims confirmed. They stood out as markedly distinct from other men as they could well be. There were those who made a profession of counterfeiting their claims ; but while this fact points us to the inference that there was a reality to counterfeit, it does not appear that there was ever much difficulty in distinguishing between the false prophets and the true. Certain it is, that the works of no prophet in his day acknowledged as false succeeded in finding a place in the canon. There must have been many writings of acknowledged prophets which for some reason or other were not admitted, but none of those that were admitted can have been otherwise. Whatever their credentials were, they must have been manifest to those who had to decide upon them, if such decision was ever the work of any individual mind ; and if it was the result merely of external cir-

The prophet's credentials manifest.

cumstances, they must have been none the less unmistakable to the community at large. After estimating as accurately as we can all the human circumstances in the life of the prophets, and the natural causes of their writing, there still remains a very appreciable element which it is difficult to define, and concerning which it is by no means easy to decide how far it has or has not any representative in our own times and circumstances. When the existing results are in such strong contrast to what we are otherwise familiar with, it is impossible to say that the causes operating were simply human or purely natural. We decide contrary to the evidence if we say there was not something more than human, and other than natural.

Reference to
certain books
as authoritative.

Another feature which appears to be deserving of notice is the way in which, in many books of the Old Testament, other writings are referred to as though they already occupied a position of standard authority. We have in the Old Testament itself traces of the same kind of deference paid to certain portions of it as has now become the traditional inheritance of the whole. This is notably the case every-

where with reference to the Law. The last chapter of the latest prophet closes with the admonition, 'Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments ;' and in all the later books this is conspicuously the case. The Law of Moses is regarded as a divine legacy at once inviolate and inviolable. It is certain that at that period those who wrote in such a way could have been conscious of no substantial alteration in books which for long ages had been so esteemed. Especially
the law.

The same may be said, however, not only of the Law. For instance, in Daniel ix. 2, we have an allusion to certain books, which must have been those of the Prophets, and special mention is made of Jeremiah as an authority that was final. Again, Zechariah, in i. 4, vii. 7, 12, speaks of the Law and the *former prophets*, making use of a phrase which is traditionally the technical one among the Jews to denote the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. It is not possible to affirm that Zechariah used the phrase in this sense, and he probably did not ; but it is certain from the way in which he speaks that he assigned a very high And the
prophets.

position to the writers spoken of, not, indeed, on account of their literary excellence, but because they had uttered 'words which the Lord of hosts had sent in his spirit.' It is clear, then, that at the time of Daniel and Zechariah the books alluded to had acquired an established reputation, and were recognised as of Divine authority; and it is impossible to conceive how this could have been the case if there had not been some marked features in the circumstances of their origin and history which served to differentiate them from those of other and ordinary writers. For example, the way in which they are here spoken of is in strong contrast to the mere allusions to the book of Jasher before mentioned, and those to the chronicles of the kings of Israel and Judah, which are quoted in confirmation of veracity, but are not appealed to for their Divine authority. Once more, there are traces in Isaiah of the existence in his time of a 'book of the Lord,' which was to be studied for its authoritative teaching,* which

Historical evidence of this authority.

From Isaiah.

* Isaiah xxxiv. 16: 'Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her

in a future day* should be understood even better than it was then, which waited therefore for the fulness of its meaning, which was consequently prophetic in its character. And a like reference is made again to the same book in a previous verse.† It may be a matter of question whether the prophet in either case is speaking of his own book, as he certainly does in xxx. 8, and probably in viii. 1, but there is no doubt as to the character he assigns to it, whether it be his own or the book of the Law. There is here an indication of consciousness, on the part of the writer, of a work being then in process of formation, if not in a condition of completeness, to which men might appeal as to an ultimate authority, on account of its being somehow endowed with

mate : for my mouth it hath commanded, and his Spirit it hath gathered them.'

* Ibid. xxix. 18 : 'And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.'

† Ibid. xxix. 11 : 'And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed (lit. *the sealed book*), which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee : and he saith, I cannot ; for it is sealed : and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee : and he saith, I am not learned.'

In all these cases *the book* is clearly the same.

the Divine sanction. To go one step higher : in many of the Psalms, notoriously so in the hundred and nineteenth, but also very strikingly in the nineteenth, which is entitled 'a Psalm of David,' we have strange references to the 'law of the Lord' as an undefiled law, which must undoubtedly in some cases be made to a written code of precepts, to which the greatest deference was due. I think, on the whole, it is impossible to deny this ; and if so, the only code that can have been meant was that of Moses, for there is no trace of any other, and it is impossible that this can have supplanted any other.

Early nucleus of a sacred literature.

It would be easy, but it is not needful, to push this inquiry further. We have sufficient evidence drawn from the Old Testament itself to show that from the earliest times there was a nucleus of the national literature which claimed to be, and was regarded as, of Divine authority. This literature was the truest symbolic expression and representative of the national existence, although in many respects it bore a striking contrast to the national character.

It must be our endeavour to analyse to a

certain extent the monuments of this literature with a view to discovering and drawing out its essential unity. And to this end it will be convenient to adopt the method already in some degree followed, of pursuing our investigations upwards. Commencing with the latest monuments, we shall be the better able to estimate those which precede them. The study of the later records will tend to throw light upon the earlier ones, and our progress will be the less uncertain.

Method of inquiry.

Now the existing literature of the Old Testament may be arranged conveniently round four principal characters, each of whom may be fitly taken as representing a special department of writing. Speaking somewhat generally, the several books of the Old Testament are historical, prophetic, poetical, or legal. Four classes of composition are readily distinguishable, and to one or other of these classes every single book may with more or less propriety be assigned. And from the fact that Ezra is traditionally reputed to have been, if not the author of the books of Chronicles, at least a principal agent in the arrangement of the canon, he may very properly be

Four distinct elements in the Old Testament.

And four representative names or eras. Ezra.

taken as representing the historical element. In the same manner, as the greatest of the prophets who committed their works to writing, namely Isaiah, was a contemporary of Hezekiah, and played a very prominent part in his times, the era of Hezekiah may very justly be said to represent the era of prophecy, if it is understood that prophecy was by no means confined to that period, but began long before, and terminated long afterwards. Still, as that was the time of its noblest development, we may well say, for the purposes of division, that the era of Hezekiah was the special era of prophecy, and his name may be used as the symbol of that era. Again, the right of 'the sweet Psalmist of Israel' to represent the national poetry and the poetic element of Scripture will at once be obvious and undisputed; and, lastly, Moses will no less obviously stand to represent the Law, and any examination of the literary monuments of Israel will naturally terminate in him. He is the corner-stone of the national literature, as he is the most prominent figure in the national history. The four names, therefore, of Ezra, Hezekiah,

Hezekiah.

David.

Moses.

David, and Moses, may severally be taken as very fairly representative of the four chief elements of Old Testament literature, its history, prophecy, poetry, and law. Under this division and in this order I purpose to examine them with a view to forming some idea of their natural method of growth, and to ascertaining how far it is right to consider the volume containing them as essentially one.

CHAPTER II.

THE HISTORIC ELEMENT.

Bulk of the
historic por-
tions.

THE historical portions of the Old Testament occupy in bulk very nearly one half of the entire volume, if, indeed, it is not the larger half. Not only are the books of Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah, Chronicles, Kings, Samuel, Ruth, Judges, and Joshua almost exclusively historical, but considerable portions of the prophetic writings, and still more of the books which are technically called the Law, are historical likewise. It is impossible, therefore, to regard these various historical writings as the production of any single author. The whole body of the history is the result of continual accretions. They must have begun at a time anterior to the Exodus, and they did not cease till nearly a hundred years after the

Captivity. The history, therefore, of the Old Testament embraces a period far more than co-extensive with its entire area. And unless we accept Moses, Joshua, Ezra, and Nehemiah as severally responsible for the books with which their names are associated, we are wholly ignorant of the persons to whom we are indebted for these records. Indeed, with the exception of Nehemiah, there is no one of the books which bears the name of its author. In the book of Ezra, the first person is sometimes used, as it is in Nehemiah, which might lead us to a presumption that so much, at any rate, was by him, but all the rest are entirely anonymous, and in many cases we have not even a clue to ascertaining who was their author. It must be admitted that this is a very remarkable feature characteristic of these books. There is probably no other nation possessed of a literature that is dependent in a similar way for its history upon anonymous writers.

Their
anonymous
character.

In the examination, then, of this history, we must turn, in the first place, to Nehemiah, its latest contributor. Nehemiah states that he was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. This

The book of
Nehemiah.

was Longimanus, the son and successor of Xerxes, and the time when Nehemiah's narrative commences was the twentieth year of his reign, or about 445 B.C. It purports to give an account of his labours in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, and of sundry reforms in morals and worship which he was the means of carrying out. It has been questioned whether the eighth, ninth, and tenth chapters of this book were written by Nehemiah, because in them the writer has discontinued the use of the first person, and has adopted the third instead; but there is no reasonable doubt that these chapters are of about the same date, and that they give an authentic narrative of the incidents they describe. In one of these chapters, the ninth, we have a prayer that was recited by the Levites on the occasion of a solemn fast at the close of the feast of tabernacles, when a covenant was entered into by the leaders of the people to obey the Law of Moses. The first name affixed to this covenant, which was intimately connected with the prayer aforesaid, was that of Nehemiah. We may reasonably assume, therefore, that he had some hand in the com-

position of the prayer. And from this prayer we see that the *history* of the Pentateuch was at that time familiar to the people. They were apparently even more familiar with it than with much of their subsequent and more recent history. It is evident that the history recorded in the books of Moses must have been continually in their hands. There is remarkable evidence in the prayer of even a verbal acquaintance with it. The mention of the fact that the foot of the Israelites did not swell in the wanderings, and the word expressing it, are both peculiar to this prayer and to Deuteronomy, ch. viii. 4. It is highly improbable, not to say morally impossible, that there is no allusion here to the passage in Deuteronomy. But, in that case, it is certain that, in the time of Nehemiah, Deuteronomy was accepted as an authoritative record of the wanderings in the wilderness. There is evidence also that the authors of the prayer recognised in the troubles that had befallen their nation a fulfilment of the threatenings which had been pronounced against them in the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy (cf., *e.g.*, Neh. ix. 35—37, with Deut. xxviii. 33, 47,

Familiar
with earlier
history.

48, 51); and consequently they must have regarded that book as containing, not only true history, but also a veritable declaration on the part of God, which familiar and painful events had ratified; and it matters very little whether this portion of Nehemiah was written by him or by Ezra, or by any one else. The only matter of importance is that it should be credible as history, and there is not a shadow of suspicion attaching to it on this ground. There is every reason to believe that this prayer was spoken by the Levites, as it is said to have been, and under the circumstances alleged, and that it was attested in the manner described. We may rightly claim it, therefore, as documentary evidence of about the middle of the fifth century before Christ to the way in which the history of the Pentateuch was then regarded, and especially the book of Deuteronomy. It may be perfectly true that the age of Nehemiah was not a critical age (though of that we have not much evidence one way or the other), but it is absolutely impossible, for example, that the book of Deuteronomy could have been a forgery of the last two hundred years, and the

Value of this
fact.

chiefs and leaders of the nation not have known it. If, as a matter of fact, it was not entitled to the position it held, it would not have been quoted as history, nor regarded as a Divine oracle that had been fulfilled. At all events, at this time the book of Deuteronomy had obtained its position as an integral portion of the Pentateuch. The history embodied in the Pentateuch was familiar to the bulk of the people, and that Pentateuch itself was accepted as of Divine authority, and as substantially the work of Moses.

And with respect to this belief it must be borne in mind that it was national, and of great antiquity. It was not a belief peculiar to one section of the people, as, for instance, the Levitical or the priestly class, but it was shared by the people as a body. Their national unity and their national existence centred in their peculiar estimate of the Law of Moses. And the belief, from its very nature, was one that could not but have been of great antiquity. In all the past there was no name at all to be compared with that of Moses. There was no character that occupied anything like the same position or had the

Moses the
greatest
name in the
past.

* same hold upon the national mind. Elijah, Solomon, and David had all been great, prominent, and brilliant actors in the national history, but no one of them commanded the same reverential regard as Moses.

His unique position.

Moses was virtually the father of the nation. He was the author of its emancipation from Egypt, and to him was owing its very existence as a nation. The consciousness of this fact is so clear at every period of the history, and on every page of the literature, that it is worthy of the utmost deference, and cannot lightly be set aside. You must sweep away the whole of the existing literature before you can successfully establish any opposite theory. And as the national reverence for Moses was unrivalled, so was his work regarded with unusual jealousy. It was possible for the whole nation, or the greater part of it, to disobey his precepts, it was not possible for them to acknowledge another as co-ordinate in authority with him. The recognition of Moses excluded the recognition of others on the same platform with him. And thus the very idea of supplementing his Law by the later additions of some one else was radically opposed to the national estimate

of the office which Moses held. The authority of Moses was everywhere supreme, and it was not possible for any other writer to usurp his authority with the people. But however this may have been, it is certain from the evidence of the book of Nehemiah that this unique position of Moses and the Law of Moses, understood by that term the Pentateuch, was clearly established and defined in the minds of the people in the middle of the fifth century before Christ.

There is evidence, moreover, in this same prayer, of the existence of, and acquaintance with, the books of Joshua and Judges (ver. 24, 27), because of the identity of the language used in speaking of the events therein recorded. The phrase, 'Thou gavest them saviours who saved them out of the hand of their enemies,' is too marked, when taken in connexion with Judges ii. 18, iii. 9, not to indicate an acquaintance with that book. The existence also and the mission of the prophets as a distinct class, is recognised in this prayer, as likewise the general history of the kings. It has already been observed, however, that the allusions to the later history of the nation are here much less

Nehemiah's
knowledge
of other
books.

prominent than those to the books of Moses. We may not, however, infer from this fact that the later historical books were unknown, because the books of Kings must have been in existence at this time, if not those of Chronicles, but only that the position which all the later writings held in the minds of the people was inferior to that held by the books of Moses. These books were in fact the source from which the others flowed, the foundation upon which they rested, and without which they could not have existed.

Language
becoming
antiquated.

There is, moreover, incidental evidence that at this time the language of the Pentateuch was becoming in some degree obsolete, as it is said of the Levites, that 'they read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.' It is indeed possible that this may refer merely to the expository work of preaching and exhortation; but it has also been thought to show that the common people, through their residence in Babylon and other causes, had lost the purity of their original language, and that it was no longer clearly intelligible to them. In this case, there would

obviously be a certain proof of antiquity in the book which needed to be so explained ; it was at any rate not of very recent origin, and we must go back earlier to trace its origin.

It may be observed, however, in passing, that it is quite inconceivable that a national reaction, such as that described in Nehemiah, should have taken place in favour of a book which did not rest on a foundation that was wholly unquestionable as far as the persons interested in it were concerned. Here was a whole nation, by its heads and representatives, in the fifth century before Christ, paying as much deference and allegiance to a book as ever has been paid publicly by the English nation to the Bible. The fact is undeniable, and it is not the earliest instance of a similar fact.

Deference
to the records
national.

But we go one step back, to the time of Ezra, and here we find another feature of the Jewish national life. As before, whatever criticism may have done or not done with the authorship of Ezra, it has not really affected its history. That history, in its main features, is unassailed and unassailable. And one of the most prominent features of it is the work

Book of
Ezra.

The second
Temple

which first occupied the Jewish nation after the promulgation of the edict of Cyrus. This was the building of the Temple at Jerusalem. As a matter of fact, the foundation of the Temple was laid at Jerusalem in the second half of the sixth century before Christ, or about 535. Now this known fact of history proves two other facts—that there had been a Temple there before, and that it had been destroyed. We know also for a certainty, both from the statement in the book of Ezra (iii. 12, 13), and also from the independent reference to the same, or a similar circumstance, in the prophet Haggai (ii. 3), that persons were present at the foundation of this second Temple who had seen the first Temple. The mention of this circumstance in the book of Ezra, occurring as it does in a highly prosaic work, is one of the most natural and touching descriptive stories to be found in any of the historical books of the Old Testament.

Evidence of
a former one.

In B.C. 535, then, there were those present who had returned from Babylon, and who remembered the former Temple before its destruction. This again carries us back for a period of years before the time of Ezra, or the history recorded by him. We are told, how-

ever, in this very book, that it was Nebuchadnezzar who had taken away the sacred vessels of the Temple which were restored by Cyrus. As there is independent testimony to this fact, there is no reason to doubt it. We are told, moreover, both in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple, and laid the wall of the city and its palaces desolate. Here, then, we have, about 588 B.C., the cause for the restoration which took place about 535 B.C., or fifty-three years afterwards. It is quite conceivable, then, that many who witnessed the foundation of the second Temple had been familiar also with the former one.

But there is surely something remarkable in the fact that a people situated as the Jews were at Babylon, should turn all their thoughts and energies, not to the rebuilding of their homesteads, but to the restoration of their Temple. What was the meaning of this? and what did it imply? It meant certainly that in some way or other the Temple was the centre of their national existence, and the symbol of their polity. Whatever delays, there may have been in building it, and how-

Why was
the second
Temple built?

ever much they may have required the prophetic stimulus which we find in Haggai and Zechariah, certain it is that the rebuilding of the Temple was the prominent idea in the national mind, and regarded by the people as a national necessity. But to understand how this was, we must go further back in the records of their history. The Temple itself was a great fact in their history, but it was a witness likewise to many other facts. For example, it is certainly not without its bearing upon that other question of the age and authority of the Mosaic law. A national Temple, like that at Jerusalem, implies a history, and implies a ritual, and from the peculiar position which it occupied, it implies identification in some way with the national existence. There must be a reason in the past for this intimate connexion between the nation and the centre of its national worship. We must inquire as we go on what this was.

The seventy
years.

But before doing so, there is another point which must be mentioned. We saw that the period of fifty-three years had elapsed between the destruction of the first Temple and the foundation of the second. But the open-

ing of the book of Ezra has an allusion to 'the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah,' which requires to be examined. The passages alluded to are Jer. xxv. 12, xxix. 10, in which the prophet mentions the term of seventy years as the duration of the captivity at Babylon. The date given to the former of these predictions is the fourth year of Jehoiakim, or the first of Nebuchadnezzar, which was about 606 B.C. From this date to that of the edict of Cyrus is a period of seventy years. But though Jehoiakim seems to have been tributary to Nebuchadnezzar, he died in Jerusalem, and only a part of the vessels of the Temple were taken in his reign to Babylon. It was not till the reign of his successor that the actual deportation of the king and the people took place, in 599 B.C. About that time Jeremiah wrote his letter to the captives in Babylon (ch. xxix.), and renewed to them his former promise of release at the expiration of seventy years. As therefore there was an interval of at least some years between the two predictions, there may be some doubt from what time they are to be reckoned. But as the prophet takes no notice of this

interval we can only suppose that he intends to reiterate his former statement, or it may be that he was himself ignorant, and left the obscurity of the Lord's message to clear itself by time. At all events, we can but mark the complete period of seventy years between the edict of Cyrus and the carrying away of the vessels of the first Temple, another indication of the intimate connexion between the national existence and the Temple worship. The first blow to the integrity of the Temple and its furniture was at least one point from which the seventy years were reckoned. There were other points of departure, that, for example, under Jehoiakim, and that under Zedekiah, just as there were other points of return, and this circumstance has led some to deny altogether the seventy years' captivity as a fanciful and not an accurate computation; but it does not admit of any denial that such a captivity is found predicted in the writings of Jeremiah, and that it is appealed to by Ezra, or the author of the book that bears his name.

And the one point I wish to observe here is, that the writer of that book considered the

return under Cyrus to be a fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy, though the discrepancy, such as it is, must have been as apparent to him as it is to us. He may have been wrong in his opinion ; but the fact that he so regarded it is beyond all controversy. It is evident, therefore, from the testimony of the book of Ezra, which in this respect at least there is no reason to doubt, that the writings of Jeremiah had been the consolation of the people during their captivity, that their hopes of return had been kept alive by them, and that when Cyrus published his edict they thankfully hailed it as a realisation of their hopes and a fulfilment of his prophecies. We have thus, by the way, documentary evidence of a considerable date to the existence of the writings of Jeremiah during the captivity, and that for a sufficient period for them to have been regarded as prophetic. It is in the highest degree improbable that the nation would have paid any regard to these writings, or built any hope upon them, if their genuineness and authenticity had not been sufficiently well established. This alone is a presumption in their favour which the

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study of the writings themselves will tend abundantly to confirm.

The earlier Temple, its furniture, etc.

The main feature of the book of Ezra, understanding thereby the restoration of the Temple, presents us with an historic fact of a given date, which may serve us as a fresh starting point to trace the history backwards. We have, then, several accounts of the completion of the captivity, and of the destruction of the first Temple; that in 2 Chronicles, and that in 2 Kings and in Jeremiah. With the exception of minor and verbal differences, the two last are for the most part identical, and from the occurrence of the narrative among the writings of Jeremiah it may seem not improbable that we are indebted to him for the latter chapters of Kings. Jer. lii., 28—30, are not in Kings; and 2 Kings xxv. 22—26, are abridged from Jer. xl. 5—41. But from all these books we have the clear and uniform testimony to the existence of a temple in Jerusalem at that time, which was regarded with peculiar reverence and affection as the centre of national worship, and was known to have been standing for several hundred years. With respect to this temple there is no reason

to believe that it had undergone any important changes either in structure or in ritual since its foundation. We do indeed hear* of idolatrous worship being carried on for a time in it, and of altars being reared therein, and the like; but these were palpable innovations, and did not permanently interfere with or destroy the original order of things. Indeed, we should not know of them but for their being innovations. On the other hand, we do know a good deal of the furniture of this temple—of the vessels that were taken from it, and consequently the kind of service performed in it; for example, that it was eminently and laboriously sacrificial in its character. Another material fact is also recorded incidentally, that Ahaz removed the huge laver that was called the brazen sea from off the oxen that supported it, and put it upon a pavement of stone instead. But if this was a fact, as there is no reason to doubt, then its original state had been otherwise,—in short, what it was described as being at the time of Solomon's dedication of the Temple. If the

* 2 Kings xxi. 4, etc.

condition of the brazen sea, after the time of Ahaz, was such as it is described to have been during his reign, namely, that it was supported on a basement of stone, then it is certain that no historian would have described it as being otherwise at a former period, unless his readers were familiar with the change. In other words, if its condition in the time of Ahaz had been its original condition, then a writer in that age, or after it, who was forging untrue records of Solomon's reign, which he wished to be accepted as genuine, would have made its original condition agree with what it was known to be then. It would be equally gratuitous to invent the story of the alteration by Ahaz, to account for the difference between the supposed state of the brazen sea in the time of Solomon and its actual state in that of Ahaz, or to invent the story of its being made by Solomon, so that its original form might be supposed to be different from that which all men could then see it to be. If the story about Ahaz is true, then we have in it an additional confirmation of the story about Solomon; on the other hand, if the story

about Ahaz is false, the story about Solomon is still not proved to be so, but may very well stand or fall on its own merits. It would be in the highest degree rash and entirely gratuitous to affirm that the story about Solomon, and that about Ahaz, are both false, either on the ground of internal probability, or on any other; and this being so, the tendency of the one story is to establish and confirm the other.

Thus we see that there is this very marked feature that characterises these historical records: that taking them at any one point, and on any subject of ordinary narrative in which they are not likely to have erred, the later record stands upon and presupposes the former one, and in such a way that it is only on the assumption of entire fabrication from beginning to end, which cannot be advanced, and still less for one moment entertained, that we can reject their testimony. If we find that the brass of the vessels in the Temple was broken up by the Chaldees, and carried to Babylon, then we find that such brazen vessels had existed in the reigns of former kings, that they had undergone alteration, and that they had originally been cast

The historical writings are independent,

And corroborated by monuments.

for their various purposes by Solomon, the builder of the Temple. If, on the other hand, we read the various details of Solomon's work, we find these details subsequently, but incidentally, corroborated by the narrative of vicissitudes which happened to particular vessels of the Temple, of which we should have known nothing, but for the previous record. The circumstantial account of the spoliation and destruction of the Temple by the Chaldees, which no Jewish writer surely would have invented, carries us at once back to the time when the Temple was built, and necessarily implies many of the circumstances of its erection. The evidence of the destruction of the Temple by the Chaldees may be said to reach even to the time of our Lord, because the Temple then existing was substantially the same as that reared by Zerubabel, which itself would have no existence and no *raison d'être* if the earlier edifice had not been destroyed. But given the existence of the earlier edifice, when and by whom was it erected? We are in total ignorance if we are not permitted to reply, By Solomon. And thus it is that at the time of Zedekiah, the

latest king of Judah, we have so to say *monumental* evidence of the work and character of Solomon's reign, just as the modern Englishman has in the Abbey and Hall of Westminster visible and substantial evidence of the work of the earliest Norman kings of England, only that whereas in this case the interval is one of nearly 800 years, in the other it was little more than 400.

But then, moreover, given the existence of Solomon's Temple, as we know it to have existed, and given the main circumstances of its erection by him, which there is not the slightest reason to doubt, we arrive at other inferences no less legitimate and valid. For example, we have minute accounts of the dimensions of the Temple, which, from the very fact of their being minute, it is not possible to question. It exceeds the capacity of the wildest imagination to conceive a writer deliberately setting himself down to fabricate such details as those of the dimensions of the Temple. But if they are not fabrications, then they are of substantial value as authentic measurements. It is actually possible from them to restore the Temple of Solomon, and

The Temple
points to the
Tabernacle,

not only so, but the very existence of the first Temple proves also the existence of a yet earlier erection of a different kind. For example, we know from the 132nd Psalm, and other sources, that in the time of David the centre of national worship was not the Temple, but the Tabernacle, and that the Temple was designed by Solomon to supersede the Tabernacle. Yet more, we know also that the dimensions of the Temple were precisely double those of the Tabernacle, and so thoroughly is this the case, that, in the words of the most competent authority,* we are 'able to check the one by the other, at this distance of time, with perfect certainty.'

Which is
only known
from
Exodus.

If therefore we know, as we do know, the dimensions of the Temple, we know not only that there was a previous structure, upon the model of which it was built, but likewise the dimensions of that structure. Now these dimensions are found only in the book of Exodus, and therefore it follows as a matter of certainty, that supposing the foundation of Solomon's Temple to have been almost a

* Mr. Fergusson, Dict. of Bible, vol. iii. 1455 b.

thousand years before the present era, This particular book, or at any rate this part of it which gives the dimensions of the Tabernacle, must have been in existence then. For we cannot doubt that the Tabernacle was erected according to the designs of Exodus, which likewise served for the basis of the construction of the Temple. If, on the other hand, any one chooses to suppose that the directions in Exodus were framed after the pattern of the existing Tabernacle, that Tabernacle itself being framed after no known pattern whatsoever, still it cannot even then be imagined that these directions were later than Solomon's Temple, because, with the existence of that edifice, the interest in the details of the other and previous one had passed away. No one, after the record of the Temple dimensions had been written, or after they existed in fact, would have taken the trouble to fabricate a narrative so minute as that in Exodus, for the purpose of giving the dimensions of an earlier edifice, which was supposed to be half the size of the existing Temple, but was after all purely imaginary.

There is then this remarkable feature charac-

terising the Jewish historical records, that side by side with them we have the existence of a material building established to us by irrefragable evidence, which carries us back to a thousand years before Christ, and by its mere existence at that time presupposes another and an earlier structure, which could not have existed but for certain circumstances in the national history that must have been in the main such as they describe.

Value of the
dry details in
Exodus, etc.

Considerable light is thrown hereby upon what many persons regard as the unprofitable and dry details of Scripture. It requires no little patience to wade through the details given in Exodus for the building of the Tabernacle. They are wearisome in the extreme. But their very dryness is an evidence of their reality. They cannot have been invented, except by the rigid requirements of historic occurrence. No one would take the trouble to forge the minutes of a committee. The attempt to do so would involve the necessary and the double hypothesis of collusion, and the prospect of personal advantage, either of which, in the case before us, is absolutely inconceivable and impossible. And

thus it is that such details as these, taken in connexion with the facts that rest upon them, are of real evidential value and significance. Some of the most salient points in the national history are evidenced and illustrated by the independent witness of national monuments whose existence is indisputable.

But there are other respects in which the highly complex and composite records of the national history hang together and cohere in such a way as to establish and confirm the general and substantial veracity of the whole. We have seen that whenever the book of Nehemiah was written it is certain that the books of Moses were in existence. We may go back further, to the books of Kings, which probably The books of Kings. existed in their present form or substance before the termination of the captivity. Their silence with regard to the edict of Cyrus is a fair presumption that the author of them wrote before it was published. They may possibly have received touches from a later hand, as, *e.g.*, in 2 Kings xvii. 34, 41, etc., but there is no reasonable doubt of their existence in the main, as we have them now, in the middle of the sixth century before Christ. But from

these books of Kings there is not only evidence of the existence of the Tabernacle, which was superseded by the Temple, but there is continual implication of a positive and external Law, which the nation and its kings were ever violating. This Law is mentioned explicitly in 2 Kings xxiii. 24, 25, and is called the Law of Moses. Some critics have attempted to prove that the finding of the book of the Law here mentioned is the earliest indication of its existence, and that this incident does actually disguise its origin. But the theory is really too monstrous and visionary to be entertained. It is manifest that the writer of the Kings did not himself regard the discovery of Hilkiyah as the origin of the Law, because in 2 Kings xviii. 4, 6, 12, he traces the captivity of the ten tribes to their forgetfulness of the Law of Moses, and mentions the destruction by Hezekiah of the brazen serpent that Moses had made. It is impossible to suppose he invented or inserted the narrative of this incident to give credit to the newly discovered law of Moses, or to the copy of it which was afterwards found in the Temple. There was unquestionably a brazen serpent

Mention of
the brazen
serpent.

destroyed by Hezekiah, and, rightly or wrongly, this was believed to be identical with that made by Moses in the wilderness. I say rightly or wrongly, for it matters not. What is really important is the fact that towards the end of the eighth century before Christ there was in the national memory a clear recollection of the incident recorded only at Num. xxi. 6, and a supposed relic of it existing. And this there is no reason to doubt. But, of course, if the brazen serpent destroyed by Hezekiah was the one made by Moses, the historic truth of that part of the Pentateuchal history is established ; but even if it was not, the supposed incident is shown to have been so old in the national memory, that a vicious accretion of superstitious observances had gathered around it ; and yet, as far as we know, there was nothing to keep alive this memory but the record in Numbers, and the existence of this particular brazen serpent. A visitor, in going over the Tower, is shown the block on which Raleigh was beheaded. Its identity may be a matter of question, but of the fact that Raleigh was beheaded there can be no doubt. It is far

more likely that the block was invented to illustrate the story, than that the story was invented to account for the block. In this case we can, of course, test the veracity of the story, but in any similar case it is certain that the mere existence of the relic is an evidence of a certain antiquity for the legend, long prior to his who relates the connexion of the relic with the legend.

Conduct of
Amaziah.

We have, then, in the testimony of the books of Kings, evidence to the existence, at least in part, of the Mosaic history long before the age of Hezekiah. But even before this time, on the testimony of the same books, we find Amaziah, in the ninth century before Christ, acting in accordance with the written precept of Deut. xxiv. 16, in not slaying the children of those who had slain his father. Of course, it is possible, but it is wholly gratuitous and unreasonable, to affirm that this passage in Kings is inserted from Chronicles; but even then, admitting the date of Chronicles to be much later, we should still have to prove first that the writer was capable of inventing such an incident to show the antiquity of Deuteronomy, which he knew to

be modern, and, secondly, that in his age such means would have been adequate to the end.

There are, moreover, several indications in the books of Kings of verbal acquaintance on the part of the writer with the Law; *e.g.*, 2 Kings xvii. 8—15; comp. Lev. v. 15, 18, vii. 7; Num. xviii. 9; 1 Kings xxi. 10; comp. Exod. xxii. 28, and Lev. xxiv. 15, 16; 1 Kings xix. 10; comp. Num. xxv. 11, 13. The conduct of Elijah in 1 Kings xviii. 40, is in literal accordance with Deut. xiii. 5, and xviii. 20. The first establishment of the rival kingdom in Israel is marked with a feature that shows a still higher antiquity in the religious observances of the nation. We are told, 1 Kings xii. 32, that *Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah.* But, according to the Law, there was no feast in Judah on the fifteenth day of the eighth month; it was on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. It is evident, therefore, that Jeroboam wished to imitate the practice of Judah, and yet to differ from it, and this he did by placing the interval of a month between the already existing feast and that which he established.

Other instances.

Jeroboam's
feast.

Now there is not the slightest reason to doubt this statement about Jeroboam. He is very likely to have appointed such a feast ; but if he did, it was manifestly because even at that time the kingdom of Judah was in the habit of holding a feast either in the seventh or the eighth month. By looking farther back to the account of the dedication of the Temple by Solomon, 1 Kings viii. 2, we have incidental evidence that it was in the seventh, and not the eighth month. But if so, then the mere existence of the feast as a customary one, forty years before the time of Jeroboam, is a proof that it had an earlier origin. What its origin may have been we do not know, but, as a matter of fact, we find such an observance enjoined both in Lev. xxiii. 33 and in Num. xxix. 12. And, consequently, the conduct of Jeroboam and the practice of Solomon look very much like evidence that at a thousand years before Christ the Law was in existence which enjoined this observance, seeing that the terms of it were so scrupulously complied with. There is nothing more unimpeachable in the witness that they give than national customs : for they cannot be the growth of a

day. If there is evidence of a particular custom being in existence a thousand years before Christ, we may be sure that it required some time to grow into a custom. And in any case, if laws were discovered enjoining such a custom, it would be more natural to refer the custom to the laws, than the laws to the custom. Least of all would any one imagine, in a case like this before us, that the incident was invented for the purpose of giving the colour of antiquity to the recently invented laws. Such a supposition would be absolutely untenable.

We have, however, in the books of Kings, History of Joshua known. not only evidence of a framework of national observance existing in the ninth and tenth centuries before Christ, which was based upon the Law of Moses, and implied the existence of that Law, and is not to be explained without it, but also references to a period of the national history subsequent indeed to the time of Moses, but long anterior to that of the kings. For example, it is stated that in the time of Ahab an attempt was made to rebuild the city of Jericho, which was attended with results that had been predicted by

Joshua, 1 Kings xvi. 34 and Josh. vi. 26. Now, whatever the date of this statement is, it is certain that the book of Joshua must have been in existence when it was made; for it would be unintelligible without it. But the *fact*, if it actually occurred in the time of Ahab, as there is no reason to doubt, is hardly more intelligible on the supposition that the book of Joshua was not written till some time afterwards; for it is clear that the incident attracted attention on its occurrence as a remarkable illustration or fulfilment of an ancient prophecy. If the book was not known, the prophecy had been remembered long before, and apparently for a period of some five hundred years. It seems far more reasonable to suppose that the narrative of Joshua was written and known in the time of Ahab, than that both that narrative and the one in Kings were committed to writing afterwards, and that the one referred to the other, being a fabrication, in order to enhance its value or to give additional confirmation to its own assertions.

Which implies that in Numbers.

So likewise in 2 Kings x. 33, we find the two tribes and a half in actual possession of

the district which they are described as possessing in Joshua xxii., which itself presupposes the narrative in Numbers xxxii. It is altogether impossible that these various narratives can have been made to dove-tail into one another with such precision if they were subsequent compositions designed to do so. It is certain that towards the close of the kingdom of Israel the two tribes and a half were in possession of the lands which they had held from the time of Moses, the title-deeds of which were the records in Joshua and the book of Numbers.

Another remarkable feature of the books of Kings is that they are unintelligible without the record in Samuel. We know nothing of the origin of the monarchy, and still less of the extraordinary attachment of the people to the house of David, but for the narrative of the earlier events recorded in Samuel. And, what is more, the events themselves in Kings, supposing them to be historically true, presuppose a foundation of earlier events which must in some respects have resembled those that are recorded in Samuel. For some reason or other the throne is supposed every-

The history of Kings implies that in Samuel.

where to be vested in the family of David by a literal Divine right. Such a notion would not have taken the hold of the national mind which it evidently did take, had there not been some very marked and special circumstances attending the accession of David. These may have differed in some respects from those recorded in Samuel; but we shall find it difficult to modify them greatly, and yet leave a substratum sufficiently broad and large for the after history of the Kings.

Which again implies that in Judges as earlier.

But then, going back to the books of Samuel themselves, we have presupposed in them the main features of the history of the Judges. We have the principle of the Theocracy clearly defined, and thrown into sharper contrast from the strong national desire to have a king. But there is this feature also, that the prominent foes of Israel are no longer those who are commonly named in Judges, but another race who had, it appears, lately become powerful, namely, the Philistines, and who, in the book of Judges, are chiefly mentioned in connexion with Samson, who must have shortly preceded Samuel. Now this fact itself indicates a considerable lapse of time. The

Ammonites and the Midianites and the Moabites have, comparatively speaking, passed away, and given place to other foes who oppress Israel ; so that the history of Samuel, implying as it does a long duration for the Theocracy, requires to be supplemented by some such history as that recorded in Judges. That history is indeed fragmentary, and disappointing in many ways, yet it serves to fill up a blank which it would otherwise be hopeless to supply.

But then, once more, the history of the Judges presupposes that of Joshua. The Theocracy itself must have grown out of something. It may at one time have been exhibited in a more perfect form than we see it in Judges. It was then manifestly in its degeneracy and decadence. What its origin was we know not, and cannot divine, if we reject the origin as described in Joshua and the Pentateuch ; for, lastly, the narrative in Joshua is unintelligible, and its development impossible, without the previous history which the books of the Law enshrine. Whenever Joshua was written, the Pentateuch must have been in existence. There is scarcely a chapter which does not imply the previous existence of the

The history of Judges implies that of Joshua.

As that does of the books of Moses.

books of Moses, and afford independent testimony to the substantial framework of their historical narrative.

Cohesion of
the history.

Thus we see that in a most remarkable degree the historical element in the literature of the Jews is characterised by the principle of cohesion. It is not pretended that these several books, recording the national history for a period of some thousand years, had one author, but many. There was, no doubt, even more than one compiler ; but the actual authors of the records which the compilers worked up we cannot compute. There is evidence, however, from the records themselves, both that the office of annalist was one recognised under the monarchy, and that the chronicles of both kingdoms were diligently kept. That the histories we have were in substantial agreement with these chronicles is manifest from the fact that they are so constantly appealed to. This would not have been the case if they were in contradiction to them. But it is evident that the writer of the books of Kings, who was certainly not prejudiced in favour of the kingdom of Israel, was not unwilling to have his statements compared with

the chronicles of that kingdom. All this enhances the credibility of the history as it is recorded, which in fact we learn to appreciate also on internal grounds, and mainly for two reasons. There is no evidence of individual partiality on the part of the writers. The greatest characters are drawn without regard to the sympathies that may be presumed to be on their side. David's vices are recorded with the stern severity of truth. If the writer seems almost for a moment to be carried away with admiration for the greatness of Solomon, he is not slow to depict his disgraceful fall, and that in such terms that certain critics have rejected the story as altogether incredible. But the same impartiality is observable as regards the nation and the national honour that we see as regards the principal personages of it. The impression left on the reader's mind, after closing the books of Kings, is one certainly not favourable to the nation. Wonderful victories have at times been won, but they are attributed less to national prowess than to the Divine protection, and very often it is defeat, and not victory, that is recorded. While from a moral point of view, ingratitude, unfaith-

Its credi-
bility.

Its impar-
tiality.

fulness, apostacy, are the very serious charges continually advanced against the nation. On both these grounds there is a natural presumption in favour of the writer's credibility. In fact, this would probably never be questioned if it were not for another feature too prominent to escape observation, and this is the strong under-current of Divine interposition which everywhere runs through the whole narrative. The question of course is how this is to be dealt with. The ordinary historian and philosopher will at once set it aside. But it seems strange to do so hastily, when, as we have seen, there is so much on other grounds to dispose us to trust the narrative—more especially as this under-current of Divine interposition is ever associated with a claim to the possession of Divine knowledge. The writer professes to know how a man's conduct was estimated in the Divine judgment; he claims to know something of the Divine purposes, as well as to record instances of the Divine interposition. These things, however much they may affect his credibility in ordinary matters, must evidently stand or fall together. The question is whether his acknowledged general credibility throws more credit on his statements in

And super-
natural
claims.

How to esti-
mate them.

these matters, than his statements on these matters tend to bring discredit upon him in the others. And this is simply a question of preponderating evidence. The only thing to be said is that there are many features in the history as we accept and cannot but accept it, merely in its human aspect, that are certainly more consistent than inconsistent with the tenor of these remarkable statements. The history in its merely natural features is a unique and unparalleled phenomenon in literature. There is nothing which bears any, even a remote, analogy to it in the whole literature of mankind. The obscurity, the cohesion, the consistency which characterises its composition finds nowhere anything correspondent to it. And then the complexion and the form of the history itself, in its broadest and most obvious features, is such as to produce in us the conviction that it is marked with the impress of the Divine finger, and overshadowed by the Divine hand, as the incidents of no other history can pretend to be. Perhaps as we proceed to investigate some other portions of the national literature this is a conviction that will be deepened and confirmed rather than be shown to be groundless and unreasonable.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROPHETIC ELEMENT.

WE have now to consider an element in the composition of the Old Testament which in some respects is more distinctive and important than any other. And in proportion to the distinctness with which it can be discovered will be its importance. This is the prophetic element. But it must be understood that we do not start with preconceived notions as to the nature of this element, but shall rather endeavour to ascertain what it is, from a due consideration of the phenomena presented.

According to the arrangement of our English Bibles, sixteen books are regarded as prophetic, which may with certainty be ascribed to as many writers. But according

to the original arrangement, other books besides were called *the earlier prophets*, as, for example, the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. These books were so named with more reference, doubtless, to their supposed authors than to their subject-matter. The fact, therefore, of their name contributes nothing to the estimate we form of the words prophet and prophecy. The first time mention is made of the word *prophet* is when it is applied to Abraham, in Gen. xx. 7, where it is used by God in speaking to Abimelech about him. Its use there implies a degree of personal nearness to and influence with God, as though the person spoken of held an official relation which God sanctioned and authorised, if He did not appoint it. In fact, a moment's thought will show that any such relationship, if real, could not be one of man's acquirement. If Abraham was actually qualified to intercede on behalf of Abimelech, it could only be because God had appointed him to that end. A self-constituted intercessor would manifestly be of no avail. The earliest use, therefore, of the word *prophet* implies a reality of recognition

Its earliest
use.

and commission on the part of God. The person holding the office is God's recognised agent and minister for reinstating in physical and spiritual health and safety a person who had unwittingly incurred danger and the Divine displeasure. But the very use of the word prophet in this place implies an earlier existence of the thing meant by it; for otherwise it could not have been understood when used. And, in fact, the very same record of Genesis furnishes a much earlier instance of the exercise of a similar faculty, when as yet the word, as far as our evidence goes, had not been called into use. The curse pronounced by Noah on his younger son is a case in point. That was a clear instance of genuine prophetic utterance. The speaker was claiming to pronounce a denunciation and a blessing, which he was perfectly certain God would ratify, and the way in which it is recorded shows that the writer believed it was and would be ratified, and that he expected his readers so to regard it. Not merely as an outraged father did Noah pronounce his verdict on the conduct of his sons, but as a supernaturally endowed person he declared

beforehand their peculiar and characteristic future. And it matters very little whether we understand his words grammatically as precatives or futures. If they expressed nothing more than his hopeful wish, it is plain that the writer recorded them because he believed that events had strangely confirmed their truth, and had consequently invested them with prophetic significance, a significance which the words of a person standing in the position of Noah, as the sole head and representative of saved humanity and the new order of society, could not fail to have.

The prophet, therefore, according to the Its meaning. earliest examples of the office, was a person who could claim for his enunciations a degree of authority higher than his own, and for the fulfilment of whose words mankind might safely look. Moreover the earliest recorded instance of the exercise of this office seems to indicate that there was a predictive element in its original conception, or at least such an element is characteristic of its earliest exercise.

After Abraham, the next conspicuous instance of the prophetic office being fulfilled is in the death-bed blessing of Jacob, The blessing of Jacob.

which was a more elaborate repetition of a similar incident in the lifetime of his father, Isaac. In both these cases the predictive element is inseparable from the discharge of the prophetic office. It is impossible to affirm that prediction was not intended to have any place in either of these recorded prophecies. Each was a solemn and authoritative declaration, in a broad and general way, of the manner in which the far-distant future should develop itself. Each was believed to be the recognised expression of the Divine will with regard to special individuals and their remote posterity. Neither is it possible to place these utterances of Jacob or his father on a level with any ordinary death-bed blessings. Solemn as such blessings always must be, I am not aware that literature, not to say history, presents us with any that can for a moment compare in solemnity with these. It is not that our imagination invests them with romantic or marvellous features: we have only to estimate fairly their actual phenomena, fairly to examine their substance and their nature, in order to perceive that there are characteristics altogether pe-

Its impor-
tance.

cular to these blessings, that there are assertions which were intended to be authoritative, and will bear closely pressing, which were regarded for long ages with unusual veneration, and have the stamp of a higher meaning than mere human aspiration or self-will. The memory, for example, of the blessing of Esau was present long after he had passed away, and the recollection of a promise such as that in Genesis xlix. 10, can be shown to have exercised considerable influence on the subsequent fortunes of the tribe of Judah, however that promise is interpreted.*

It may be said that we have no right to import into these various utterances any notion of their being predictive, because to do so is to beg the question we desire to prove. But there can be no doubt as to the light in which they were regarded by the people in whose possession they were, and whom they chiefly concerned ; and whether they were the genuine utterances of Isaac and Jacob, or whether they were the later utterances of

And predictive character.

* Judges i. 2.

others which were ascribed to them, it is manifest that in either case they were intended to pass for predictions, and to be regarded as authoritative, and consequently their ostensible character may so far help us to estimate the nature of that prophetic office, of the exercise of which they were samples.

The case of
Moses.

But however fairly we may discover the germ of the prophetic idea in the case of the patriarchs, it is not till the time of Moses that the conception is developed in all its fulness. Moses fulfilled and realised that conception in all its grandeur. The term *prophet* is applied to him, and the latter portions of his writings abound in passages which can only be regarded, whatever their date, as highly prophetic and in fact predictive. It is not possible to read certain portions of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, and not see that the actual condition of the Jewish people for more than two thousand years is there portrayed with singular fidelity. And yet the wildest criticism must be compelled to assign to these writings a far higher antiquity, when the national condition was very different. But here, again, the question

before us is virtually independent of the date of these writings, because if a person claims to exercise an office we can form a just idea of the office to which he lays claim from the manner in which he exercises it, whether or not his claim is just. If I personate the character of a king, I may convey a just impression of that character, although I have no true claim to royalty. And in like manner our estimate of the character of the prophet must be formed from the way in which that character is presented to us, whether or not the claims of the person presenting it are just.

Now in the case of Moses, the feature of the prophetic character which is most apparent is that of mediation or a Divine commission. This is even more conspicuous than the predictive feature. From first to last Moses claims to have a direct commission from God, and to be His minister or agent. He professes to speak with Him face to face, and to be the bearer of distinct, definite, and direct messages from Him, and to do and to be this in virtue of his office as a prophet. We observe that this fact is

His character of Mediator.

altogether independent of the truth or falsehood of his claims. He professed to be a prophet, was universally acknowledged as a prophet, and in consequence of being a prophet had immediate intercourse with God. His close intercourse with God constituted him a prophet, so that the notion of an actual Divine commission, a delegated Divine authority, is inseparably bound up with the idea of a prophet. The pretensions of those advancing such claims must be estimated as other pretensions are estimated, but such beyond all question they are.

The prophet's a two-fold function.

To the close of the Pentateuchal history, then, the two features in the prophet's character, which are clearly developed and illustrated, are—(1) a distinct Divine commission, which at times is associated with (2) a Divine foreknowledge of the future; and manifestly, if the second can be established, no reasonable doubt can be entertained about the first; still it is the first which is the wider and more general characteristic of the prophet; and where it is clearly found without the second, it is sufficient to establish his claim. There have been genuine prophets who have uttered

no predictions, and there are none whose writings are alone and exclusively predictive.

After the time of Moses, we arrive at another era in the development of prophecy, and one in which the predictive element is mainly subordinated to the element of a Divine authority. During the long period of the judges the office may be said to have slumbered, until the time that all Israel learnt that *Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord.* The field in which he first distinguished himself in that capacity was the comparatively narrow one of predicting the destruction of Eli's house. Taking this as a literal fact, that the child Samuel foretold to Eli the vengeance that awaited his sons, it is, on the very lowest assumption, a remarkable instance of juvenile sagacity and far sightedness. But taken for so much, in connexion with other circumstances that it is difficult altogether to set aside, we find the prophetic office first asserting itself in Samuel by an act of prediction which was not commonly repeated in his subsequent career. His office afterwards was chiefly manifested in a declaration of the will of God at certain crises

The historic development.

In Samuel.

of national history. He selected Saul, and anointed David, in obedience to the Divine command. He enjoined the expedition against Amalek, and rejected Saul upon his defective execution of it. All these acts were in the highest degree arbitrary, if they rested merely on his own will. Indeed, in that case, we should have to inquire how it was that a man in his position was able to exercise an influence so remarkable, and to act as he did. It cannot be ascribed to superstition on the part of the people, because the character of the history is opposed to such an assumption. The very actions of Samuel, as we alone know them, are such as to demand some explanation of their character; and the natural explanation of their resting on an authority which the nation could not but recognise is an adequate explanation of them, which no other is. But however this may be, there can be no question that the most essential characteristic of the office of prophet, as exercised by Samuel, was its claim to rest upon a Divine authority. He professed to stand in such a relation to God, that the actions he performed, and the commands he

issued in God's name, admitted of no dispute, and were binding alike upon king and people. How far this as a fact was so, we may leave undecided: it is certain that no estimate of his office can be a just one which leaves out of it the recognition of its assumed Divine authority.

The prophet, then, was a person who stood in a position of exceptional nearness to God, and was the human agent through whom, on special occasions, the Divine will was made known to man. And, from first to last, there is no instance in which the prophetic office may not be thus characterised. All claimed to speak *in the word of the Lord*, to one and all *the word of the Lord came*, sometimes coupled with predictive utterances, sometimes without them, but their message always rested on a foundation of *Thus saith the Lord*. It is manifest that in all such cases there would occur a liability to imposition. Even on the hypothesis of there being true prophets we may be sure there would be many false ones; but, on the other hand, the very fact of there being false prophets would prove the strength of the popular conviction that pro-

The prophet
near to God.

Discrimina-
tion of true
and false.

phesy was a reality. And as a matter of fact we do find that somehow or other there was in the nation a power of discriminating between the false prophets and the true. A very considerable portion of the prophet's work consisted in the establishment of his claim to be a prophet of the Lord, in opposition to those who advanced the claim without authority. It was so with Jeremiah. But in the case of Ezekiel the challenge is given in the name of the Lord to the nation, and in fact to the world at large: *And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them.* And subsequently the human agency is altogether eliminated, and the challenge of the prophet is, *Ye shall know that I am the Lord.* This, therefore, is tantamount to an assertion that prophecy is its own evidence, and carries with it its own credentials. If the prophetic office cannot establish its own claim, nothing we can do, and no argument we can propose, will establish it.

Their
writings.

But the fact is, that the very phenomena presented by prophecy in its existing remains and records are only to be accounted for on

the assumption of its reality. We have in the prophets of the Old Testament a series of writings to which there is nothing analogous elsewhere. These writings occupy a far higher level than any similar compositions of a didactic or a hortatory character. They certainly claim to do so, and in proportion as the claim is made good they do so. For no other writings with which I am acquainted make any pretensions to occupy the same level that these do. The Kuran is too palpably an imitation of the Old Testament prophets to enter into competition with them.

And these writings differ generically from all others in the actual claim advanced on the face of them to be and to contain a message from God. This is a characteristic not peculiar to one prophet, but common to all alike. It is this feature of cohesion and unity which warrants us in speaking of the prophetic element in the Old Testament, and in estimating it as a whole. For though each writer stands independently on his own responsibility and individuality, yet all are spontaneously and unconsciously working towards a common end. The moral elevation and spiritual im-

The claim advanced by them.

provement of the people is their object. Each endeavours to quicken and intensify the national sense of dependence upon God, and to recall the nation to the possession and enjoyment of life in God.

Their influence
unique.

There is no instance in all history of a sphere of influence* at all commensurate with that occupied by the Hebrew prophets in possessing the ear of the nation. Because whether or not their utterances were regarded, they could not be ignored. The only position of influence which bears any analogy to that of the prophets is the position now occupied by some of the more leading organs of popular opinion. The two may be compared with respect to the amount of attention excited; they can only be contrasted with respect to the amount of authority claimed and acknowledged. The utmost that any organ of popular

* Compare the words of a recent able and thoughtful writer: "History supplies us with no parallel to the influence which these men wielded. They were the leaders of opinion in a kingdom which was neither so large nor so populous as Yorkshire, at an epoch when their country was overshadowed by powerful empires, and was the highway of great contending armies."—*Paul of Tarsus*, by a Graduate, p. 127. (Macmillan, 1872.)

opinion can lay claim to now-a-days is the utterance of truth that will commend itself to the public at large ; but in addition to this element there was in the Hebrew prophets the distinct assertion of a Divine message, in virtue of which they principally claimed to be heard. Whatever moral truth they may have uttered was altogether subordinate to this Divine claim.

Now we may be quite certain that any such claim advanced in the present day would be met with derision, no matter what amount of moral truth might be associated therewith. But it was clearly not so in the case of these Hebrew prophets in their own day, neither is it so *with them* now-a-days. We have to ask ourselves, therefore, why is it that our respect for the truth they utter is not diminished, but rather enhanced by their assumption of Divine authority ? Is it only because we read them with a previous bias in their favour ? or is it also because, in spite of ourselves, there is something in their message which serves to substantiate their claim ? If this is not the case, then clearly the feelings with which we read the prophets of the Old Testament

Contrast
with the pre-
sent day.

ought to be those of disgust and contempt instead of reverence. But surely it is not too much to say that the words of a Joel or an Isaiah inspire a feeling of involuntary reverence, not only notwithstanding and independently of, but even in consequence of their high pretensions. And if so, is not this itself a proof that, whether their claims be true or false, they alone, of all writers, have been able to rise to the just level of their claims, and have not debased or falsified their pretensions by their message? Compare, for example, the feelings with which I fancy the majority of unbiassed persons will read, and cannot help reading, a speech of the Almighty in "Paradise Lost," and words attributed to the Lord of hosts by one of the Old Testament prophets. Is this difference a reality, or is it a matter of prejudice? Is it altogether a mistake, or is it because a promise given to Israel thousands of years ago has been fulfilled to us: *They shall know that there hath been a prophet among them?* The thing is patent, it has proved itself a reality; and difficult as it may be to define the functions of a prophet, or to understand how these func-

tions can have been imposed or executed, it is absolutely impossible for us, upon a survey of the phenomena presented, to deny the existence of prophecy, or of a race of prophets in Israel as a fact.

We may trace, moreover, a gradual growth in the development of prophecy, a rise, climax, and decline in it, as it comes to us in the Old Testament. For instance, great as was the character of Moses, and conspicuous as he stands out among the prophets, he is nevertheless as a prophet not by far so great as Isaiah. The special intellectual endowments with which the gift of prophecy was at times associated, and to which it bore some resemblance and affinity, reached their highest culmination in Isaiah, and the reign of Hezekiah may be justly regarded as the Augustan age of Hebrew prophecy. Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, and Hosea were probably more or less contemporary, and flourished about that period, if not actually in some portion of his reign, and perhaps we may say the same of Obadiah. While we can note no difference in the degree of their authority, we must yet allow that intellectually Isaiah stood

Prophecy
subject to
growth.

pre-eminent among them. The elevation of his genius and his marvellous eloquence mark him out as the very goodliest in all the goodly fellowship of the prophets. Whatever grace or dignity there may have been before, in Moses, Joel, or Hosea, was more than surpassed in him. The highest efforts of the Hebrew prophetic literature were achieved in him. In the time of his great successor, Jeremiah, we can scarcely fail to note a decline, corresponding to the political decline from Hezekiah to Jehoiakim. In Ezekiel this is marked more strongly still. With the exception of some magnificent chapters, there is but little poetic eloquence in Ezekiel. Imagination has subsided into plain matter of fact. In Daniel it is most of all so; and while in some respects he is inferior to none of the prophets, the contrast between him and Isaiah is perhaps greater than with any one else. In the writings of the three prophets who flourished after the return from captivity, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, we have the fitting close of a long and brilliant era of prophecy, and the last words of Malachi seem almost to be written under the consciousness that the

function of the prophet has been once for all discharged, unless, indeed, some future Elijah shall restore the order of the prophets, as the hairy man of Mount Carmel had restored the worship of the Lord, and inaugurate and proclaim anew the everlasting sovereignty of the true kingdom of God.

And this mention of Elijah leads us to make some reference to that other development of the prophetic office, which he most fitly represents. Though probably not the founder of the schools of the prophets, which seem to have existed in the days of Samuel, he was at any rate, in his time, their head. As far as we know, no written relic of his prophetic office has come down to us, nor of that of his successor, Elisha, and yet these two prophets were in their degree second to none in Israel. They were prophets of action, not of literature, and consequently their characters are more out of the field of our investigation, which is concerned mainly with the relics of prophecy contained in the Old Testament.

Its development of activity.

But in them also we discern a unity of principle common to the rest, since they

A similar claim advanced.

The prophets
res' sted.

claimed to act in the name of the Lord, as the others claimed to write or speak. And in them also there was another feature conspicuous, which was likewise common to all, namely, the opposition which they uniformly encountered. Though the prophet's mission does not seem to have been often questioned, it was almost always resisted. Occasionally his advice was sought by kings and persons in authority, as in the case of Isaiah and Jeremiah; but much more frequently his influence was opposed, and his calls rejected. Doubtless, with many of the prophets, martyrdom was the reward of their faithfulness. They were required many times to seal their testimony with their blood. If tradition is accepted, Isaiah may have died a cruel death. Jeremiah's we know was a life of persecution. The loud wail of suffering, of rejection, and contempt is more or less common to all the prophets. However honourable may have been the office, it was not always attended with honour. There was a great deal of risk and of personal danger combined with the profession. This, which is an undeniable fact, is not without its weight as a test of

reality. There can be no question that the prophets were sincere. Even allowing the possibility of their being mistaken, they did not act with collusion. Jeremiah did not attempt to enhance the reputation of Isaiah. No one played into the other's hands. Corroboration there was, but no collusion. One prophet bore his testimony to the message of the other, but only because he had earnestly accepted it himself. Nay, more, he bowed down before it, and appealed to it as an undeniable word of the Lord ; but the way he did this bore no resemblance to an effort to impose on others by joining in a successful fraud.

We see, then, that the prophets as an order were penetrated with a sense of responsibility to a Divine commission. They professedly spoke and acted in obedience to its commands. There is no one of the sixteen prophetic books which does not bear witness to the truth of this assertion. It is quite different with other books which are not prophetic. There is no such claim advanced in the Proverbs of Solomon, in Ecclesiastes, in the Lamentations of Jeremiah, or in the historical

They were charged with a Divine commission.

Which was
personal and
individual.

books. This claim is peculiar to the writings of the prophets, and to the Law of Moses, who was himself a prophet. Each writer, moreover, rests upon his own individual consciousness of a mission. It is ever, *The word of the Lord came unto ME*. So far, then, we are dealing, not with an isolated phenomenon, but with a series or collection of phenomena, each of which is to that extent a confirmation of the authority on which the others spoke. Sometimes the mysterious commission, however conveyed, was complied with most reluctantly. This is especially manifest in the case of Jeremiah and of Jonah. What was that sense of a Divine commission, from the intolerable burden of which Jonah fled to Tarshish, in obedience to which he afterwards went to Nineveh? Did his conduct indicate its reality or its unreality? What was that word of the Lord which was in the heart of Jeremiah *as a burning fire shut up in his bones, so that he was weary with forbearing, and could not stay?** Was this a self-deception, or was it an impulse for which it was as impossible to account as

* Jer. xx. 9.

it was difficult to resist it? If he was unwilling to yield to it, and only did so at his own cost and peril, are we to say that there was nothing in it but hallucination and falsehood? Certainly we must pause before we do so.

For be it observed also, that very frequently the advent of the Divine commission was accompanied with some special and arbitrary command, which was itself not understood till it was interpreted by the message afterwards conveyed. Unless we read backwards the record of these transactions, we cannot but see that it was so. Note for example, the account in Jer. xiii. First the prophet is bidden to take a linen girdle, and put it on his loins, and not put it in water, evidently not knowing of what that action is intended to be significant, but yet performing a definite action in obedience to a specific command which must have been, therefore, clearly perceptible and real. Some time afterwards he is bidden to take this girdle to the river Euphrates, and hide it in a hole in the rock, and it was not till a third time, *after many days*, that the word of the Lord came unto

And accompanied with special features.

Instances.

him, and conveyed the particular message which was to be delivered to the house of Judah. It is plain, therefore, that the spiritual message and the command to wear the girdle rest on exactly the same footing, and that the prophet was conscious of the one, and acted on it, long before he received the other. But no man in his senses could mistake about a command to wear a linen girdle, as to whether it was a caprice of his own mind or an injunction which he was bound to obey. The very fact of its being so commonplace in itself, so insignificant, and yet withal so peremptory, serves to throw some light upon the manner in which the Divine communications were vouchsafed, which was evidently in a way that left no room for doubt or hesitancy, but was plainly distinguishable from the ordinary operations of the mind. The same thing may be observed in its degree with respect to the earthen bottle and the message associated therewith in ch. xix., and the conduct of Isaiah, as dictated to him in chs. viii. and xx. It is so also notably with the visions of Zechariah. A definite and distinct spectacle is presented to him inwardly

or outwardly, which we know not, and it is not till after he has clearly apprehended and described it that its meaning is communicated to him.

From the due observation of all these phenomena we are surely warranted in inferring that the prophetic message was conveyed in a manner distinct in itself, which could not be confounded with the ordinary teachings of nature or the normal workings of the human mind. It was not every one who was capable of receiving it, nor were the prophets themselves recipients of it at all times. In some cases, as with Hosea, the prophetic mission lasted for a period of sixty or seventy years; in others, as with Haggai, for something less than four months. But during those four months the prophet must have been conscious of an influence operating on him which was altogether exceptional in his life, but which was sufficiently manifest to others as well as himself, and was not without its effect upon the highest personages of his time and country.

The message conveyed in a special and exceptional manner.

And we are surely justified in pointing to the influence which the prophets had, whether

The power of the message.

in the way of compliance or of opposition, upon their nation and its rulers, in proof of a certain power in their mission which it was impossible to deny. A set of infatuated and fanatical visionaries would not have met with the kind of treatment they met with, nor have left behind them the mark they left. They were manifestly so far above the men of their own time in moral authority, as we see from the attitude of kings and princes towards them, that there is no power in the present day, or in modern times, at all analogous to theirs. The early influence, for example, of Voltaire with Frederic the Great, to take a case of strong contrast, was nothing compared with the influence of Jeremiah with Josiah, or even indirectly with Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, to say nothing of its diverse origin. What is the influence of Goethe upon modern Germany compared with the influence which it is evident Amos exercised upon the kingdom of Israel? The difference is vast in degree, not to mention that the influence is totally distinct in kind. This is a fact, at once patent and undeniable, to which full weight must be allowed in seeking to esti-

mate the prophetic element in the Old Testament.

Again, it is not unfrequently asserted that the morality of the prophets is higher than that of the Law. That it exhibits a progression in the development of spiritual truth we need not deny, and most assuredly the general moral elevation of the prophetic writings is not only consistent with their claim to a Divine authority, but would also present a serious impediment to the notion that the authors were acting on principles which they knew to be false, or were not acting on principles which they knew were true. One thing at least is certain, that from the high moral elevation at which the prophets one and all wrote, both king and prophet alike fade into absolute insignificance before that majestic and eternal Being, the truth and justice of whose government they uniformly from first to last proclaim. The prophets, as a class, existed solely for the purpose of bringing back the nation to a loftier standard of justice, truth, and right. They are all at one in this, and the essential unanimity of their teaching is no trivial confirmation of the unity of their origin.

The morality of the prophets.

Their appeal
to the Law.

Nor is this all, for in two respects the value of the prophetic writings is very great on very different grounds. For example, the prophets, as a body, virtually base their teaching upon the recorded monuments of an earlier revelation. While acting in the consciousness and on the authority of an independent message, and so supplementing the Law of Moses, they never attempt to supersede it. Isaiah's appeal is *to the Law and to the testimony*, while he asserts that *if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*.* Jeremiah is so imbued with the spirit and tone of Deuteronomy, that some rash critics have supposed he wrote it. Hosea, Joel, and Amos imply † and enforce the spiritual authority of the Mosaic dispensation, while the prophetic office is closed with the injunction of Malachi, *Remember ye the law of Moses my servant*.‡ The prophets, as a body, feel that the Law is the written standard of the revealed will of God, in obedience to which the life of the nation consists.

* Isa. viii. 20.

† Hos. v. 10, xii. 9; Joel ii. 13; Amos v. 21—26; viii. 5.

‡ Mal. iv. 4.

But secondly, the prophetic writings are of great value as regards the independent testimony they bear to the national history.[†] This testimony is never at variance with, and it frequently illustrates, what we learn by the ordinary historical records. The calves of Bethel and Dan are assured to us as facts by the prophets of Israel, Hosea and Amos.* The divided kingdom cannot be questioned, when we read the denunciation by Amos of the *house of Jeroboam*, which itself is independent confirmation of the promise to Jehu, that his children of the fourth but not the fifth generation should sit upon his throne.† We cannot doubt of the captivity, when we find the prophets so rich in allusions to it; and as some of those allusions were unquestionably prior to it, and by no means vague, we cannot reasonably deny to the prophets the

Their bearing on the history.

* Hos. iv. 15, v. 8, viii. 5, 6; Amos vii. 13, viii. 14.

† Cf. Amos vii. 9, 11. The prophet's words were distorted by Amaziah, so that they became untrue. See Dict. of Bible, art. *Jeroboam II.*, where the Dean of Westminster says, misapprehending this distinction, 'The prediction of Amos was not fulfilled as regarded the king himself. He was buried with his ancestors in state, 2 Kings xiv. 29'!! For the family of Jehu, see 2 Kings x. 30, 35; xiii. 9; xiv. 16, 29.

Their relation to the heathen.

faculty of prediction.* But before enlarging upon this latter point, there is one other equally characteristic of the Old Testament prophets which we must by no means disregard, and that is their relation to the heathen. They come before us distinctly as having a message to other nations besides their own. There is scarcely any contemporary nation of importance to whom they have not a special burden or prophecy to deliver,† and in delivering these burdens, they throw down their challenge in a more peculiar manner to futurity. It is hardly probable that in those days the message of any prophet would have a very wide circulation among the foreign people whom it might more immediately concern. What Isaiah proclaimed against Egypt would be known, comparatively speaking, to few Egyptians, and believed by still fewer. His burden was a treasure committed in trust to posterity to be tried and tested by

* Amos v. 27; Mic. iii. 12; Hos. viii. 14, xi. 11, xiii. 16; Ezek. i. 1.

† Isa. xliii.—xxliii.; Jer. xlvi.—li.; Ezek. xxv.—xxxii., xxxv., xxxviii., xxxix.; Amos i.—ii. 3. See also especially the Dean of Canterbury's striking Bampton Lecture on the prophet Jonah.

long ages of observation and study. But the burden was a fact, and it shewed at least this, that in the prophet's belief his message and mission had a far wider area than his own nation, and that its worth must be determined far more by future than by contemporary time. Moreover, the one feature characteristic of all these prophecies against the heathen, was that the God of Israel was their ruler and judge. It was the Lord of hosts who was to do His wonders among them, to overthrow and to destroy them, and, in many cases, eventually to be acknowledged among them.*

There is, in short, in the phenomena of prophecy, as we see them, a consciousness of universality which is startling and unaccountable, when we bear in mind that the nation in whom this gift of prophecy was developed was by its very constitution, and yet more by its temperament, the most exclusive of all nations. The writings of the prophets bear undeniable evidence that they considered themselves commissioned, not to a

Their message universal as well as national.

* Ezek. xxxvii. 28; xxxviii. 23; Isa. xix. 19, 21, 22; xiv. 25; xiii. 11; Jer. xlvi. 10; xlviii. 35; xlix. 35; li. 44, 47, 64, etc.

nation, but to the world at large.* Take for example the case of the prophet Jeremiah, whose position in the politics of his time and nation was more prominent and conspicuous than that of any other, and who so far therefore was strictly a national prophet, and yet, what are the terms in which he receives his first commission? *Before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. See I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.* On the very lowest interpretation, it is impossible to accept these words as other than the confession of a very strong and deep conviction in the prophet's mind, that his message concerned many more besides Judah and Israel, and was addressed in fact to the world at large. It speaks out in no ambiguous terms his consciousness of its universality. And this is a phenomenon peculiar to the Old Testament prophets, which demands of all reasonable minds a rational explanation, but

Jer. i. 5, 10.

* Ezek. xxxix. 7, 21, 23, 27; Jer. xvi. 19; li. 15, etc.

for which none so rational can be given as that it was not less real in fact, than it was in idea. But if the prophet's commission was a reality in fact, then his function is hereby established, and he was nothing less than he professed to be; namely, the prophet of the Lord. He bore a supernatural commission, which was communicated in a supernatural manner, the existing features of which declare it to have been supernatural, inasmuch as they transcend the experience and the limits of nature. Lastly, with regard to the predictive power of prophecy; the prophets claimed to have possessed this power. We see they did by the very form of their writings. It is difficult to say what meaning could have been attached to those early passages in Hosea which are applied by St. Paul to the ingathering of the Gentiles, either in the prophet's own time, or for many ages subsequently. And yet they must have had a meaning, they contained a definite assertion, they gave a distinct announcement of the Divine action in the future, and certainly they do on any grounds receive a very remarkable illustration in the subsequent development of those events,

Their commission supernatural.

Their predictive power.

to which the Epistle to the Romans is itself a sufficient and a standing witness. The fact that the most enlightened nations of the world do now worship the God whom Hosea proclaimed some eight centuries before Christ, and whom he said they should worship, calling Him their God, is at least in striking harmony with the notion which would recognise in him a prophet who was Divinely illuminated and commissioned to predict this fact. The prediction itself is sufficiently patent, but the correspondence of the fact therewith is no less plain. Nor can the utterance of any such prediction be referred to chance, if we find the prophets themselves laying claim to the predictive faculty. And there are many indications that they did so. The prophet Isaiah distinctly challenges the gods of the heathen to *shew us what shall happen*, implying not only that such a thing was beyond their power, but that the Lord had asserted Himself in doing it. Speaking in the name of the Lord, he says, *Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.* He mentions it as a recognised fact, that the Lord *confirmeth*

the word of His servant, and performeth the Isa. xlii. 9.
counsel of His messengers. In conformity, therefore, with such assertions, we might reasonably expect to meet with instances in the prophets that could successfully challenge to themselves the right to be considered as *bonâ fide* predictions. Certainly, the unparalleled sublimity of the latter chapters of Isaiah, and the calm confidence with which they claim to be the immediate utterance of the Most High, might well wrest from us the admission of their containing also intentional predictions, if that would by any means enhance their claim to a more than human origin. But it is to be feared that if we shut our eyes to the patent evidences of this, nothing else will convince us of it.

As an instance, however, that the faculty The instance of Hananiah. of clear and definite prediction was exercised by the prophets in the discharge of their ordinary functions, we may take the episode of Hananiah's death, in the history of Jeremiah. It is not possible to deal fairly with that episode, and not recognise a real prediction in it. After Jeremiah had declared that the remnant of the sacred vessels in the house of

the Lord should be carried to Babylon, Haniah, the son of Azur, who is called *the prophet*, as though he exercised a real Divine commission, declared in the most solemn manner that within two years all the vessels should be brought again to Jerusalem, together with the king Jehoiachin and all the captives, and in witness of it he broke the yoke from off the neck of Jeremiah, which that prophet had been commanded to make. Whereupon we are told *the prophet Jeremiah went his way*, and some time afterwards was bidden to make yokes of iron instead of wood, and to go with a message to Hananiah, to the effect that, since he had spoken a lie in the name of the Lord, he should die the same year ; and the narrative continues to inform us that he died *the same year, in the seventh month*, that is, about two months afterwards. Now it is scarcely possible to call in question this narrative, from the publicity that must have been given to it within the lifetime of multitudes who could attest its truth, or who would have been able to impugn it if false. The prophet's honour and veracity were staked upon it, and we doubtless have in it a simple narrative of a

very striking incident that was witnessed by many prominent and unimpeachable witnesses. But in the narrative there is a definite prediction, and the record of its exact fulfilment, and this prediction was uttered in the exercise of the same faculty by which the prophet's office was commonly discharged. It is described in the usual terms: *The word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah the prophet.* We have in it, therefore, an instance of the way in which the prophet's mind became the subject of Divine communication, and this time it was a communication entirely beyond the confines of human knowledge, implying a supernatural access to the secrets of the Divine mind. It is impossible, therefore, to accept this narrative literally, and not see in it an index to the general character of those communications, of which it does not profess to be an exceptional manifestation. In the majority of cases it may be that we are not competent judges how far the subject-matter of the communication made was or was not, strictly speaking, supernatural, but in this case there is no room for doubt, and we may rightly infer from the subject-matter of the communi-

The prophet's not a guess.

cation, that the method of making the communication was itself Divine ; that is to say, the prophet's judgment of Hananiah was not a fortuitously successful guess, but the utterance of a Divine decision of which he was the appointed agent.

Other instances.

Nor is this an isolated instance. We might point also to the prophecy of Ezekiel,* that Zedekiah should be brought to Babylon, but should not see it, though he should die there. This prophecy was manifestly uttered before the event, both from a comparison of dates in the book itself, and also from the fact that otherwise the publication of it would have been fatal to the reputation of the prophet.† But his own words were abundantly confirmed, and his nation *knew that there had been a prophet among them*. In like manner we find that the day of the commencement of the siege of Jerusalem was supernaturally revealed to Ezekiel‡ when in captivity by the river

* Ezek. xii. 13.

† See also the famous prophecy of Isaiah, ch. xxxvii., to which the same remark applies ; cf. Isa. xxxix., Jer. xxxii., Ezek. xxiv. 16, etc.

‡ Ezek. xxiv. 1, 2 ; cf. 2 Kings xxv. 1.

Chebar, which shows us the Spirit of prophecy making known events far distant in space, as we ordinarily conceive of Him revealing those far distant in time. So that on the whole it would seem we may safely affirm that the impression left on the mind of an unbiassed observer, in view of the existing phenomena of the Old Testament Scriptures, is that the presence of a supernaturally prophetic element in them is a patent fact.

CHAPTER IV.

THE POETIC ELEMENT.

WHATEVER objection may exist in some minds to recognising a really supernatural prophetic element in the ancient Hebrew Scriptures, almost all persons will readily admit that there is to be found in them a vast and deep mine of genuine poetry. It is this poetical element that we must now consider.

There is in some respects a natural affinity between these two elements of poetry and prophecy as they exist in the Old Testament, inasmuch as a large portion of the prophecy is expressed poetically, and not a little of the poetry is prophetic; but, as we have seen, poetry is by no means the exclusive, or even the ordinary, medium of communication for prophecy; and since prophecy differs in kind, and not only in degree, from the spontaneous

operations of the intellect, poetry, which is the natural endowment of genius, may be regarded separately as distinct from it.

There is, however, almost as much difficulty in defining poetry as prophecy. Each appeals to a special faculty for recognition. Poetry speaks in vain to the matter-of-fact or prosaic man, and prophecy can alone be appreciated—if we decline to say perceived—by the spiritual faculty, whose organ is faith. For even the exact correspondence of prophecy and its fulfilment must fail to bring home conviction to the mind which refuses to be convinced. However startling the phenomena may be, there is always some way of avoiding the legitimate and moral weight of their influence. And with poetry it is neither easy to define its limits nor to compel the appreciation of its spirit. Those who have no poetic sense cannot discern poetry any more than those who are colour-blind can perceive the difference between red and green. It has been the fashion, for example, with some persons of late years, to speak of the first chapter of Genesis as poetical. To regard it as such has appeared to offer a wider and

more convenient latitude of interpretation than to take it for what it most undoubtedly is, plain and simple prose.

Old Testament poetry culminates in David.

To enter, however, on the task of defining poetry is scarcely within the limits of our subject, but only to note the characteristics of Old Testament poetry, and observe its functions. As the Hebrew prophecy gathers chiefly round the age of Hezekiah, not as being himself a prophet, but as representing the period of its highest development, so does the poetry of Scripture, though scattered over every portion of it, suggest one representative name, which is that of David. Recent criticism has indeed attempted to deprive him of much of his traditional glory by denying him the authorship of many of the psalms ascribed to him, but without success, because without adequate reason or sufficient evidence; and in the absence of more conclusive proof to the contrary, we may still take it for granted that he was the author, if not of the chief portion of the psalms, at least of a much larger portion than any one else.

The era of the poetry.

The book of Psalms, however, which from its very nature may be regarded as wholly

poetical, is itself an anthology or poetical collection representing many ages. Believing, as we may with more probability than not, that the nineteenth psalm is the work of Moses, we have in this book compositions extending from the age of the Exodus at least to the era of the second Temple, if not, as some have conjectured without corroborative evidence, to the age of the Maccabees. Here alone is a period probably of at least a thousand years.

The Psalter in Hebrew is divided into five books, perhaps to make it uniform in this respect with the Pentateuch, or for some other reason of which we are ignorant, which end respectively with the 41st, the 72nd, the 89th, the 106th, and the 150th psalms. Each of these psalms ends with a doxology, or ascription of praise: the first three with the words *Amen and Amen*, the fourth with *Amen, Hallelujah*, and the last with *Hallelujah* only, as though praise unceasing were to form the occupation of the world of praise.

It is impossible not to observe that there is a certain principle or plan observed in the traditional arrangement of the psalms, though

Division of
the Psalms

A plan in
their order

it may not be very definite or very closely followed: for example, the first psalm is clearly a kind of introduction to the whole book, and the last psalms swell louder and louder the notes of praise, as though they were intended to be the fitting conclusion to a series of hymns and prayers which had so often been fraught with sorrow. Some also have traced with greater or less success and probability, a connecting line of thought between many consecutive psalms;* but we need not enter into this, as it is not the Psalter itself which is the subject of our inquiry, but the poetry of which it forms a portion.

Other treasuries of poetry.

But although some of the earliest and latest poetical compositions of the Hebrew literature are to be found in the book of Psalms, there are many other specimens to be taken into account which exist elsewhere. Various isolated fragments are to be found in Genesis; as, for instance, the address of Lamech to his wives, the curse and blessing of Noah, the blessing of Jacob and Esau, Jacob's dying

* More especially has this been done in a very interesting manner by Dr. Kay, in his excellent book upon the Psalms.

and prophetic benediction of his children. All these are clearly poetic. In Exodus we have the song of Moses and Miriam. In Numbers sundry quotations from ancient songs, and the splendid prophecies of Balaam. In Deuteronomy the song and blessing of Moses. In the historical books we have occasional brief quotations which appear to be poetical, together with the song of Deborah and Barak, David's lamentation over Saul and Jonathan, David's last words, and a duplicate version of the eighteenth psalm. These are most of them obviously poetical, from their circumstances and subject-matter no less than from their form. But besides Poetical
prose. this body of poetry and song there is in the Old Testament a large amount of highly elevated and sublime writing which, if not actually poetic, is a lofty kind of modulated and poetic or oratorical prose. Such are the twenty-sixth chapter of Leviticus and a large portion of Deuteronomy. The same may be said of much of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and of the minor Prophets generally. There are also the early chapters of the Proverbs of Solomon, which appeal to the imagination as poetical, if

they are not in form poetry. Then there is the Song of Songs, the book of Job, and the prophet Isaiah, which may be said to complete the body of Old Testament poetry.

Diversity of
subject-
matter.

And in this catalogue there is perhaps as large a variety of subject-matter as may be found in any literature. There are love-songs and war-songs and elegies. There is responsive argumentative poetry in Job, which some have called dramatic, while the history of that book is itself an epic, with a beginning, middle, and end. There is classic poetry, devotional poetry, didactic poetry. At least, there is all this diversity of subject-matter, although indeed the poetry of the Old Testament does not lend itself readily to those divisions with which we are more familiar in the classical languages, but requires to be viewed in its own character, and judged on its own merits.

The poetry
not metrical.

The poetry of the Hebrews is not metrical, and rhyme is, properly speaking, not known to it, but it is chiefly characterised by a system of parallelism, of which Noah's curse or Isaac's blessing furnishes a sufficiently intelligible example to any one. Sometimes the parallelism is very simple, at others it is more elab-

borately constructed ; but the feature that is most characteristic about the Hebrew poetry is the readiness with which the impression of its poetic form is communicated to another language. Write out a few lines of Homer or Virgil, of Pindar or Horace, in English, and they will be scarcely distinguishable from simple prose. A hyperbolical expression, or an ornamental epithet is perhaps the most striking and characteristic feature that will remain. But the sublimity of Isaiah it is not possible to disguise. Read the first, the fourteenth, or the forty-first chapter in our English Bible, and you have a noble specimen of poetic oratorical eloquence of which none can fail to be conscious. Take a prose translation of any poet, and one feels at once what loss and detriment the writer has suffered, how greatly he has been indebted to melody or to rhythm ; but read the Hebrew poetry where perhaps it shows to least advantage, in the Greek of the Septuagint, and its essential features are still recognisable, its peculiar beauty still perceptible.

The German language possesses a very admirable translation of Shakespeare in the

Its chief
character-
istic.

Schlegel and
Tieck's
Shakespeare.

version of Schlegel and Tieck, which is probably one of the best specimens of translated poetry to be found anywhere ; but, faithful and excellent as this may be, it is itself a triumph of successful rendering, which can rarely be repeated, and it owes much to the skill and genius of the translators who have cast in a poetic form the poetry of Shakespeare ; but write out the best portions of the same poetry in literal prose, and what will they not suffer ? Now with the Hebrew poets it is quite otherwise ; they owe nothing to the accidents of any poetic form. The most exact verbal rendering of their language brings us nearest to the spirit of their poetry. And thus there are no poetic compositions in any language which are so entirely independent of the original language in which they are written as those of the Old Testament.

Instance
from Isaiah.

And if we inquire into the causes of this, it may serve to reveal to us some of the peculiar characteristics of Old Testament poetry. Take for example the opening verses of Isaiah : *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth : for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they*

have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib : but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.

In these two verses, which in our ordinary printed Bibles occupy barely more than as many lines, it is scarcely possible to make more than a few verbal alterations, and these would not perceptibly alter the thought of the poet, which is transparently clear. And yet in these few lines how many splendid images are gathered together! First, there is the apostrophe addressed to heaven and earth, which is as majestic as it is brief; but this apostrophe, brief as it is, (and in Hebrew it is included in four words,) is relieved by a change in the use of the verbs, which is capable of being represented probably in any language, *Hear, and give ear*. In the original, however, this contrast is still further heightened by the one verb being in the masculine plural, and the other in the feminine singular, in consequence of the number and gender of the nouns *heavens* and *earth*. The sublimity of the prophet's thought, however, is entirely independent of any such accident of language, and is readily communicable

Analysis
of it.

by any medium of speech. But secondly, the only adequate reason for the use of any such bold apostrophe is at once supplied by the dignity of the Speaker on the occasion of its being employed : *For the Lord hath spoken.* When the Creator of heaven and earth speaks, it must be right and needful for them to hearken. Thirdly, the invocation addressed to heaven and earth is an appeal for sympathy. The Creator appeals as the parent of ungrateful children, the sustainer of a lot as hard as any that the sons of men are called to endure. He calls upon them to witness the wrongs He has endured : *My children have rebelled against me.* Fourthly, the conduct of Israel is thrown into yet stronger relief by comparing it with the instinct of the brute creation. Even the ox and the ass know the way to their fodder, and come at their master's call, *but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.*

Fertility of
thought and
clearness of
expression.

We may truly say that in these few brief words there are comprised as many images, and there are as many thoughts suggested, as can well be gathered together in as few lines, and yet they are easy of apprehension

and simple in expression. Whatever may be their original form, whatever may distinguish them from prose in their native language, they owe none of their essential and intrinsic merits to that ; their central meaning is as distinct and clear as the pebbles in a mountain stream.

But there is this great advantage that the sacred poetry is found to possess above all others, that its subject-matter is always commensurate with its highest efforts, and worthy of its noblest eloquence. Milton was influenced by considerations of this nature in selecting the subject for his great poem. The siege of Troy or the wanderings of Ulysses might have been of absorbing interest to those who were emerging from the mythical age. The foundation of Rome by Æneas would command the attention of those who were its citizens and members of an empire whose sway was universal; but no modern poet could hope to kindle a fire out of the ashes of these extinct themes and interests, and therefore Milton, with the predilections of a sincere believer, selected a subject of human and of universal interest. And in like manner, if the Hebrew poets had lent themselves to the

Union of
noble sub-
jects and
noble
language.

glorification of themselves or their sovereigns and warriors, it is possible that they might have produced poetry of the first order, but it would have been of merely local and national interest. But their subject was other than the disasters of the house of Œdipus or the praise of love or wine. It was for the most part the prolonged remonstrance of God with the rebellions of Israel, an elegy over their backslidings, the prayer for speedy deliverance, or the thanksgiving for timely succour. Thus the poetry of Israel was in the truest and deepest sense human, and in the widest sense of universal interest.

Of human
and universal
interest.

As long as the career of mortal man is what it is in life, chequered by trial, danger, and bereavement; as long as the human heart is what it is, full of want and sin, and ever liable to sorrow, so long will the Psalms of David find their echo there, and not fail of earnest and anxious readers. The songs of Horace or Anacreon will please for a while, and will please an educated many or few, as the case may be; but the time will come when these will lose their sweetness for even their greatest admirers, and there must always be

many whom they will fail to touch ; but with respect to the prayers and hymns of David there can be no such thing as old age. They are the voice of man as man, and they are the truest expression of what must ever be permanent and unchanging, man's relation to God.

Endowed
with perpetual
youth.

Nor is it necessary to look far for a reason, because the Psalms deal more especially with those aspects of human life in which all men are reduced to a common level, imminent danger, heart-rending grief, and the passionate longing for Divine assistance. It is self-evident that many of the Psalms are the natural spontaneous outpouring of the joy or sorrow of the writer. In this respect they are simply unrivalled, and stand alone among all the poetry of all nations and languages.

And of wide
sympathy.

But apart from this characteristic of them, many of the Psalms are perfect specimens of mere literary composition, as, for instance, the first, the twenty-third, the forty-second, the sixty-third, the hundredth, and many others. These are all jewels of the first water, and will bear comparison with the lyrical compositions of any poet or any language. There can be no question but that were it not for the sacred

And deep
piety.

and *religious* character of these poems, they would be hailed by all men as the choicest and most admired of lyrical productions. It is only because they are not secular that they do not find universal acknowledgment. But, in spite of the true universality of their interest, it is this feature of them which limits their appreciation to a class, the class, namely, of those who are not only capable of appreciating the writer's poetry, but also of sympathising with his faith.

Interwoven
with the
history and
prophecy.

Moreover the Hebrew poetry, as represented by the book of Psalms, is not without its bearing both on the historic and the prophetic elements of the Old Testament, and so forms a link in the integrity and unity of its structure. The historic Psalms, such as the seventy-eighth, the hundred and fifth, the hundred and sixth, the hundred and thirty-fifth, and hundred and thirty-sixth, whatever may be their date, are of priceless value, because they serve to confirm the substantial truth of the national records. They are an independent witness to the salient points of the national history. It is important to observe the limit at which these historical sum-

maries respectively end. The first goes no farther than the reign of David, who may have been still king when it was written. The second ends with the occupation of Canaan. The third is doubtful, as it may either embrace the period of the judges, or may be a review of the entire history down to the close of the monarchy, though the former is more likely. The fifth and sixth go no farther than the wars of Joshua, if so far. It is not possible to pronounce with certainty on the date of these Psalms, but there can be no doubt that from their contents a presumption exists in favour of their high antiquity, as it would have been natural in any late writer to carry down his allusions to the history nearer to his own time, which it is manifest has not been done. But in proportion to the antiquity of these Psalms is the value of their independent witness to the history of the nation. And the mere fact of their *silence* as to any events of which we have not the written record, is a strong reason for inferring that this record was in existence at the time when they were written, and a proof that it was deeply imprinted on the

memory of the people. It is this double stream of historical narration, and of national poetry corroborating it, that is so characteristic of the Hebrew literature, and that is at once unique in the Old Testament, and an evidence of its structural unity.

Some
Psalms
prophetical.

If however some of the Psalms are historical, there are many others which we must call prophetical. The second, the sixteenth, the twenty-second, and the seventy-second are such as cannot be interpreted without violence of merely personal incidents, or only of local and national affairs. Take for instance the second Psalm : *Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession*, are words which neither David nor Solomon could ever have spoken of himself or supposed would be realised in him. They transcend the limits even of self-adulation or eastern hyperbole.

The Hebrew
poets'
breadth of
view.

But whether we are at liberty to take them literally or not, certain it is that the Hebrew prophets and poets are full of the most confident expressions that the worship of their God is destined to be the worship of the whole world. It is continually asserted, in

language of no ambiguity, that the Lord is King of all the earth, and that He will eventually establish His kingdom. This is the broad and general way of stating the prophetic character of Scripture, and it is one that is incontrovertible, while the character itself is without parallel elsewhere. Exclusive as the Jewish nation was, it was nevertheless profoundly impressed with the consciousness of having a mission to the whole world, and possessing a knowledge of God that would one day be confessed. And it is no insignificant fact that the entire Christian Church has accepted that knowledge as authentic, and so far confessed the mission of Israel to have been Divine. This circumstance alone is a striking commentary on such words as *Out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from Ferusalem.* The Lord thy God, O Zion, shall be King for evermore and throughout all generations.† The Lord gave the word; great was the company of them that published it.‡* Compare especially Ps. lxvii. and I Kings viii. 43.

* Isa. ii. 3.

† Ps. cxlvi. 10.

‡ Ps. lxviii. 11.

Their principles of composition.

As the poetry of the Old Testament is neither rhythmical nor alliterative, but is marked by a peculiarity of structure, which is not easily lost in translation, so it is certain that no poetry is so little indebted to the accidents of its form as this. We are virtually ignorant of the principles of its composition, and, in fact, we may reasonably doubt whether it was governed by any other more recondite principles than those of parallelism, which are apparent to every one.* It seems to have been as little fettered in its composition as the more irregular of the Greek choruses were, and it certainly was far more successful than they in conveying to the mind of the unlearned reader the sense of its being poetry. Take for example these four verses from the eighty-ninth Psalm:—*O Lord, the very heavens shall praise Thy wondrous works, and Thy truth shall be praised in the congregation of the saints. For who is he among the*

* “Whatever other artifices might have been employed by the poets of ancient Israel, if there were others, it is impossible to ascertain; the doctrine of parallelism alone has been detected and developed.”—Dr. Phillips on the Psalms, 1872, vol. i., p. 20.

clouds that shall be compared unto the Lord? and what is he among the gods that shall be like unto the Lord? God is very greatly to be feared in the council of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about Him. Nothing can be more simple than the structure of these verses, which are not more *evidently* poetical in Hebrew than they are in English; and yet, such is the sublimity of the thought expressed, that none can fail to be affected by it, as by the most perfect form of metrical language. Indeed, so successfully and completely is the *effect* of poetry produced, that a somewhat rude prose translation of the Psalms, either in Latin or in English, is available for the purposes of *music* in a way that no other human compositions have ever been, or can be. Certainly, if a model were wanted which should serve as a universal type of poetry, we should turn instinctively to the Old Testament; for there, and there only, the phenomenon presents itself of poetry which again and again has been proved to be so in the languages of the east and west, and north and south.

The Psalms constitute a type of universal poetry.

But if the form in which the poetry of the

Old Testament is found, is a proof of its adaptation to a universal field and sphere of influence, so also is the exclusively human character of the sympathy to which it appeals. A very large proportion of the Psalms are the outpourings of personal sorrow or joy. And in this sense they are emphatically real. The sorrow or joy which is expressed in the choruses of the Greek drama is far less real than that of the Psalms, and it is difficult to imagine any one seeking to give utterance to his own grief or joy in the language of the Attic poets, or turning to them for sympathy. The more intense and real his grief, the less would be the pleasure he could find in them. But it is far otherwise with the Psalms. When the heart is most full of sorrow, there is a mine of sympathetic feeling there. *The enemy hath persecuted my soul, he hath smitten my life down to the ground, he hath laid me in the darkness as the men that have been long dead; therefore is my spirit vexed within me, and my heart within me is desolate.* What music for the sorrowful is in such words! how marvelously they lend themselves to the agony of the heart that longs to cry aloud in secret, that

They are
intensely
real.

must find some vent, and dares not try to find it in the noisy, heartless, sorrowless world! The very fact that the form of the poetry is so artless, so unshackled by metre or rhyme, is itself a feature of reality; for when we are really in sorrow or joy, our thoughts do not spontaneously express themselves in metre, though it is quite natural that they should flow in some form of measured prose, such as is characteristic of the Psalms.

The poetry of the Old Testament, as indeed that of the classical nations of antiquity, is conspicuously void of appreciation of natural beauty. In the mind of the writers the sense of outward nature was entirely subordinated to that of the presence of the God of nature. The sense of the invisible was an over-mastering passion with them. Nature was but the robe with which the King of kings arrayed Himself, and the thought of His glory overpowered and swallowed up all other considerations that did not centre in Him. There can be no stronger contrast to the Pantheistic tendencies of modern poetry, than that which is furnished by the poets of the Old Testament. From first to last it is the personal

For the most part unconscious of natural beauty.

But lost in the personal God.

God, the everlasting, ever-present, but invisible HE, before whom the writer bows with reverential awe ; but yet with the most unswerving and unbounded confidence.

There are not wanting evidences that the Hebrew mind was susceptible of the power of nature, and yet its response to it was something very different to our own. The three Psalms which speak most about natural objects are the twenty-ninth, which is descriptive of a storm, the hundred and fourth, which is a general survey of the works of nature, and the hundred and forty-eighth, which is an invitation to the powers of nature to join in praising* the Lord. It is not a little remarkable to observe how thoroughly these Psalms are imbued with the teaching of the first chapters of Genesis. Everywhere it is the invisible Lord who is perceived in and through His works. Nowhere do they hide Him from sight ; they are instinct with almost human life, and they are invoked, as though they participated in human consciousness, and were endowed with human reason, but nowhere

* See also Psalm lxxv.

are they mixed up with God, or identified with Him. They are merely the works of His fingers, and the agents of His will that hasten to do His pleasure.

From all this, it appears that the intense faith of the Hebrew poets never suffered them to lose sight of the Creator in the works of His creation, or to confound them with Him. If the Old Testament poets did not rise to the modern scientific conception of law, as an inanimate and impersonal force, they at least recognised in nature a Divine order and harmony in fulfilment of a Divine word, which, Their sense of a Divine order. it must be confessed, is the noblest idea of the outward world that it is possible for man's mind to cherish or conceive. It is ideally far grander and more poetic than that of an impersonal force which acts without consciousness and without design, inasmuch as the idea of life is nobler than that of inanimate existence, and the notion of mind carrying out a purpose is higher than that of blind and necessary impulse.

The characteristic features, therefore, of Their first feature. Old Testament poetry are : first, the breadth of its intense sympathy, which is as deep as

Second. human sorrow, and as wide as mental suffering; and secondly, its entire independence of merely verbal accidents, such as metre, rhyme, or the collocation of words, to which the very greatest poets owe so much. The melody of Shakespeare, and the harmony of Milton, are among their chiefest ornaments. Though

“One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,”

and in this sense Shakespeare is the poet of humanity, yet the empire of his influence must be bounded by the limits of the English language; where the knowledge of that has not penetrated, the influence of Shakespeare must be, comparatively speaking, unfelt; but it is not too much to say that in spite of the deficiencies of translation, the impossibility of *transplanting* the exotic peculiarities of Hebrew diction to which, of course, the native poets in common with all others must necessarily owe something, the influence of David as a poet has been felt far more widely among the English-speaking population of the world than ever it was felt in Palestine of old, and this, we repeat, is a test of true poetic excellence to which no

other poet of ancient or modern days can lay similar claim. Thirdly, the poets of the Old Testament are wholly independent of the national and local peculiarities of their time and country. It requires small knowledge of the incidents of David's life to be able to appreciate his Psalms. How many have received the message of the thirty-fourth Psalm who are ignorant of the circumstances under which it was penned, to say nothing of the doubt which has been cast upon its origin. The history of the Exodus has a very indirect and far-off influence on the truth and sweetness of the ninetieth Psalm, 'the prayer of Moses the man of God,' to say nothing of the gratuitous conjecture of Ewald, who refers it to the time of Manasseh.* The tenderness, the beauty, and the power of the Old Testament poetry are totally independent of any such adventitious circumstances connected with their origin or their date. But fourthly, the most distinctively characteristic feature yet remains, for is not the highest merit of all human poetry of two kinds, either that of

* Geschichte, iii. 371.

uttering with incisive accuracy and felicitous ease moral truth, or that of embellishing the outer world with an ideal grace that gives it a charm which for ordinary eyes it does not possess. When Milton says that

“The herald lark
Left his ground nest, high towering to descry
The morn’s approach, and greet her with his song,”

he speaks of a familiar circumstance, always beautiful, in language which brings home that beauty to the imagination through the ear, and enlists the aid of an ideal picture of a watch-tower, which heightens the pleasure conveyed to the ear by the suggestion of vague and undescribed images grateful to the eye; but he in no way transcends the limits of external nature; he only culls a garland of her beauties; and however melodious and grateful his language is in poetry, yet be it observed, when translated into simple prose, it becomes little better than absolute nonsense. But with the Hebrew poets there is not merely the potent enunciation of moral truth which comes home to the conscience, not merely the aggregation of noble images borrowed from the treasury of external nature,

as when Nahum says, *The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet,** but more than all this, the revelation of a new and spiritual world, which owes nothing for its beauty to the fairest images of this material universe, and which, in fact, is as far above it as the heavens are above the earth. This is really the exclusive glory of the Old Testament poets, who stand alone in their knowledge of God, their dependence on God, and their trust in God. It is needless to quote passages, but take the opening of the hundred and eighth Psalm as an instance: *O God, my heart is ready, my heart is ready: I will sing and give praise with the best member that I have. Awake, thou lute, and harp: I myself will awake right early. I will give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing praises unto Thee among the nations. For Thy mercy is greater than the heavens, and Thy truth reacheth unto the clouds. Set up Thyself, O God, above the heavens, and Thy glory above all the earth. That Thy beloved may be delivered, let Thy right hand*

Their spirituality.

* Nahum i. 3.

save them, and hear Thou me. Here is the revelation of the nature of a Being who can inspire the heart with the liveliest gratitude, to whom the devotion of all the powers is an inadequate offering, who has inspired the mind of the speaker with a sense of unmerited mercy that is as glorious as it is omnipotent, and whose majesty is only equalled by His truth. But without postulating the existence of this Being it is not possible to deduce His existence from the contemplation of nature; and yet, if that existence is a fact, of what infinite insignificance are all other facts and existences compared with it. If the world of the invisible is a reality, and man's relation to it real, as depicted in the Psalms, what a field is opened out for the poetic imagination, and how far more glorious must be its beauties than the fairest and loveliest of the images of earth! One glimpse of the azure heights of heaven must be incomparably more exquisite than the most successful embellishment of familiar natural sights, one breath laden with the odorous incense of its native airs far more transportingly fragrant than the sweetest and most luscious of Arcadian meadows.

If, therefore, the greatness and the worth of poetry bears any proportion to the dignity and worthiness of its subject-matter, it is obvious that the poetry of the Old Testament must stand pre-eminent in this respect, because it is unique.

Old Testa-
ment poetry
unique.

But there is one book in the Old Testament collection that is commonly acknowledged as being of unrivalled sublimity; this is the book of Job, which treats of the very highest moral problems that can exercise the mind of man. The Greek tragedians were not unacquainted with the interest attaching to speculative questions connected with human destiny; but no poet, not even Shakspeare, has ever conceived a theme of such vast importance and of such universal interest as that which forms the subject of the book of Job. It is virtually the one problem of life which meets us at every turn, which out of the pale of revelation is enveloped in impenetrable obscurity, and which, even with the light shed upon it by the promises of the Gospel, is by no means devoid of profound mystery, namely, the unequal distribution of suffering in the world, and the blindness with which the righteous rather

The Book of
Job.

than the wicked appear to be selected as its victims. This verily was a theme well worthy of the noblest composition of the noblest literature in the world to deal with. No literature could lay claim to being really sacred or Divine, to have truly come from God, that did not deal with it.

Survives
defective
translation.

The poetry of the book of Job, however, has suffered more than any poetry of the Old Testament from the deficiencies of the translation. If the authors of the existing authorised version understood their original, which there is sufficient reason to suppose they did not, they certainly did not succeed in conveying its meaning to their readers; and yet, notwithstanding the rendering, which is oftentimes so inadequate, how many there are who have been enabled to discover in the book of Job the very noblest of poems; and, as it is, it is not possible to disguise the sublime beauty of such a passage as the twenty-eighth chapter and others. And, after all, it is the argument rather than the poetry that has suffered in the authorised translation. The grandeur of the plot is sufficiently manifest. The spectacle of a man of consistent and exceptional righteous-

The grandeur
of its
plot.

ness being subjected to altogether exceptional suffering, to the despair of his wife, and the dismay of his nearest friends—of his nevertheless holding fast his integrity through the strength of his faith in the righteousness of the unseen, till at last he is vindicated by the voice of God uttered through nature out of the whirlwind and the storm, showing him that if the principles of the moral government of the world are dark, those of its physical government are by no means clear, and till the tide of his prosperity returns in yet greater fulness than before, and he dies in extreme old age, full of riches and honour,—is one of the greatest interest, and fraught with lessons of the profoundest wisdom. The moral teaching of the poem, moreover, is in the highest degree salutary, inasmuch as we learn from it that man is not the plaything of destiny, that the current of his natural life is liable to the influence of spiritual agencies, which, however, are subject to the guidance of an incorruptible Judge, who worketh all things according to the counsel of His own will, to the ultimate advantage of His creatures, and the confusion of their spiritual

adversaries. So that we may truly say, whether we regard the artistic conception of the form, or the sublimity of its great moral lesson, that it is incomparably the grandest and noblest poem that any language or literature can boast. It is, in fact, an anticipation of the light which the Gospel narrative of the humiliation and exaltation of Christ has shed upon the problem of man's chequered existence in this life. The moral lesson of Job was the highest achievement of which the human mind was capable before the fuller and more direct revelation of the Gospel; or, however this might be in the abstract, as a matter of undeniable fact, the literature of the world has enshrined no higher. We may therefore point to it as a triumph of Old Testament genius, a typical sample of Old Testament poetry.

Not of
merely
national
scope.

It is, however, not a little remarkable, that in this respect the book of Job serves to illustrate another characteristic feature of the Hebrew literature, which is what we should call, in modern language, its cosmopolitan sympathy. The book of Job, though written in Hebrew, and no doubt indigenous to that

language, is nevertheless marked by a total absence of exclusively Hebrew thought.

The Mosaic history and the Mosaic law are barely, if at all, alluded to in it, and the religion of Job is of the purest, simplest, sublimest, and most spiritual type. The patriarch's lot is evidently cast outside the pale of the Divine covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and yet he is as devout a worshipper of the one true God as they were, and no less the object of His fatherly care. In short, the book of Job presents us with a picture of the relation in which the people outside the chosen race stood to the God of the covenant, and it represents Him as a God of righteousness and truth, who is no respecter of persons.

Nor is this a view of the Divine character that is peculiar to the book of Job. A large portion of the prophetic writings, as we have seen, are expressly concerned with nations not of the seed of Israel, and directly addressed to them. And certainly, in the Psalms if anywhere, we find the expression of a faith which is conscious of no limitations of race or family. If we take the sacred literature of any other religion, whether it be the Analects

No similar
example
elsewhere.

of Confucius, the Hymns of the Veda,* the Gáthás of the Zend-Avesta, or the Suras of the Kuran, we shall find it marked with national peculiarities so strong as to be an insuperable barrier to its universal acceptance or even its general circulation among men. But strange to say, the Jewish nation, which was the most exclusive of all, became the parent of a literature which, though mark-

* Cf. *e.g.* with the 136th Psalm, of which the chorus or refrain is, "For His mercy endureth for ever," the Vaidik hymn beginning, "Veracious drinker of the Soma juice," of which the chorus or refrain is, "Do thou, Indra of boundless wealth, enrich us with thousands of excellent cows and horses" (Wilson's *Rig-Veda-Sanhitá*, vol. i., 74); or that of which the chorus is, "Come hither (ye gods), from wherever you may be, and drink of the effused libation." (*Ibid.* p. 280.) In like manner cf. also the following, taken at hazard from the Yaçna:—

(1) Hymns, reverential adoration, to Ahura-Mazda, and Asha-Vahista,

(2) We give, we spread abroad, and we make known.

(3) May we attain Thy good kingdom, Ahura-Mazda, for ever.

(4) Thou art our Ruler, possessed of the good kingdom, for men as well as for women,

(5) The Wisest among beings in both worlds.

(6) The good increase we bestow on Thee, the worthy of adoration, the Friend of purity.

(7) Mayest Thou be to us life and body.

(8) Thou, the Wisest among the creatures in both worlds, etc., etc. (Bleeck's *Avesta*, vol. ii., p. 99.) The *Analects of Confucius* consist for the most part of prudential maxims, and the Kuran abounds with idle and absurd legends. The mere human interest and literary worth of the Old Testament is incomparably superior to any one of these. Next in rank we may place the Veda.

edly national, was nevertheless calculated to become the accepted heritage of every language under heaven, and was fitted to have a world-wide circulation. If the discovery of a universal language would be a boon to mankind, the production of a literature which should be capable of universal adoption, and the invention of a type of poetry which should be at once so lofty and so perfect as to be virtually indestructible, despite the process of transition into any tongue, must be acknowledged as a gain of no small advantage, while the bestowal of it would be an honour and glory to any people and to any language; but this is the honour that is due to the Hebrew nation, and this is the glory of the old Hebrew language. The glory of the Hebrew literature.

In the structure, then, of the Old Testament, Its destiny. the poetic element is a conspicuous feature. It lies like grains of gold in the unwashed sand, or a rich vein of silver in the mine. It springs naturally out of the stem of national life like a fruitful bough of graceful and luxuriant growth. It is the fairest, loftiest, and most fragrant flower in the whole garden of the national literature, and is as inseparable from

that literature, and as characteristic of it, as the rose is among flowers, or the diamond among gems. And if it is true that it is a far higher privilege to make a nation's songs than to frame its laws, that maxim has received striking illustration in the songs of Zion; for while the bulk of the nation's legal code has long ago fulfilled its purpose, which was essentially national and transient, the area of the moral and spiritual influence of its poetry is destined to expand indefinitely till it is commensurate with the family of man, and co-extensive with his speech and thought.

CHAPTER V.

THE LEGAL ELEMENT.

IN a highly composite literature, such as Cohesion a feature of the Old Testament. that of the Old Testament, which is the production of many minds, we should not expect to meet with anything like consistency or cohesion. Individuality of character would necessarily predominate over definite unity of purpose. Among writers stretching over a large space of time, there could indeed be no adherence to a uniform plan. For even if such a plan had been clearly conceived by the earliest writer, those who followed during many centuries would infallibly depart from it if they did not fail to appreciate it. If, however, on a survey of the completed whole, any such unity were distinctly visible, it could not but present a remarkable feature to any

thoughtful mind, and one for which it would be difficult to find a parallel. For example, notwithstanding its unity of origin, there is no such unity of principle to be discovered in the Kuran ; still less do the Hymns of the Veda manifest anything corresponding to the unity of the Old Testament, a unity which is the more remarkable inasmuch as it is the result of many opposite and incongruous elements. The unity is like that of the prismatic colours which blend into one white light. The divergence, for instance, between the book of Esther and the Psalms of David is a very wide one, and yet there are many points common to both. The book of Ruth is very different from the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and yet each in its own way serves to illustrate rather than disprove the unity referred to. For, briefly, the key to this unity is to be found in the underlying consciousness which more or less pervades every single book of the Old Testament of an external and revealed Law to which the nation was amenable, and by the knowledge of which it was bound together. It must be our endeavour now to estimate this remaining com-

ponent element in the structure of the Old Testament, which we may term the legal or forensic element. If we find that the influence of this element is everywhere perceptible, that it forms virtually the foundation of the whole literature, without which its present phenomena could not have been presented, then we may infer that herein lies a real principle of cohesion, and that something of the nature of an actual originating impulse was communicated by it.

Take, for example, the Lamentations of Jeremiah. Are there evidences in that book of a consciousness of this element as a present and operative influence? Let us look at the first chapter, by way of seeking for a reply to this question. In the fourth verse we find the prophet lamenting on behalf of Zion that *none come to her solemn feasts*, but that her *ways mourn*. Now this word rendered *solemn feast* is the one used in Exodus and elsewhere of the appointed *feasts* of the Lord; it is that after which the Tabernacle of the Congregation, or Tent of Meeting, was named. It is clear, therefore, that the prophet refers to some such kind of gathering as is contem-

The Lamentations.

plated and provided for in the Law. At the time of the Captivity, when he wrote, the observance of these feasts, which had been a custom of old, had ceased.

But besides this he refers to the principle of centralisation by which they are characterised, and implies that they were held in Zion, and that the people went up to Zion to keep them. Now there must have been some reason for this custom, to the observance of which his language is a witness. But we know that this principle of centralisation was a main feature of the legal system, so much so that on the establishment of the second kingdom, Jeroboam made a point of imitating it.

Their witness
to the Law.

Again, the prophet speaks also, in verses 4, 7, and 19, of *her priests*, and *her sabbaths*, and *her elders*, and alludes in verse 8 to legal separation on account of uncleanness; so that in addition to a recognised priesthood and company of elders we have two main features of the Law implied in the remarkably characteristic institution of the Sabbath and in the stringent provisions for ceremonial uncleanness found in it. In the tenth verse we have

express reference to the regulations of Deut. xxiii., and a clear proof that the prophet regarded these regulations as Divine. This is the more remarkable because they are only found in the fifth book of the Law. We may just notice the mention of the Nazarites in iv. 7, implying the law in Numb. vi., but otherwise it is not necessary to pursue this examination further. Any one can do so for himself.* This first chapter is taken only as a specimen of a book of the Captivity period, such as the Lamentations are. It affords undeniable testimony to the national condition of that period, and to what it must have been for many generations previously.

But in addition to these detailed instances of the presence of the legal influence there is pervading the writer's complaint a consciousness, see especially verse 18, that his own and his nation's sufferings are in consequence of the infringement of a Divine command. His whole soul is bowed down by

Their consciousness of sin

* In Lam. ii. 9, the prophet expressly mentions the Law in a connexion where it can only be understood technically : *the law is no more ; her prophets also find no vision from the Lord.*

the weight of the broken Law; and yet, in spite of this sense of guilt, he still places his hope in the Lord, and looks to Him as his only source of relief. The confession of sin, and the hope of redemption and deliverance out of and in spite of sin, are features of the Hebrew literature common to nearly all its books, and finding adequate expression in the books of the Law, if not owing its origin to them.

But the question may well suggest itself, whence did the prophet obtain his notion of a commandment against which he and his nation had rebelled, if not from that very Law which we have seen he acknowledged as Divine, and which certainly contained in it menaces on account of violation, and promises of restoration upon repentance?

The book of
Ruth.

Let us turn now to the book of Ruth, which, whatever its date, represents a condition of society and of national life far earlier than those of the Captivity. The entire plot of this book is based upon the supposed necessity of the next of kin marrying the widow of a deceased relative, which was a marked feature of the Mosaic Law, Deut. xxv. 5, and

Numb. xxxvi., based as that Law seems to have been on a yet earlier custom, Gen. xxxviii. But further than this, the fourth chapter of Ruth refers to a custom only mentioned elsewhere in Deut. xxv. 7—10, which, however, appears to have fallen into desuetude at the time when Ruth was written, and moreover makes allusion to the very chapter of Genesis which contains the earliest notice of the other custom of marrying a brother's widow, as well as to the history of Rachel and Leah, as being one of known familiarity. It is true that we cannot argue that the Law was older than the custom in the one case, without admitting that the custom must have been older than the Law in the other. But it is remarkable that the author of the book of Ruth evidently has knowledge, not only of Deuteronomy, but also of Genesis, while it is impossible to suppose that the Law in Deuteronomy was of later date than the only other book which mentions a peculiar custom which if not based upon the Law was clearly enforced and sanctioned by it, but was no longer in vogue. It is certain that the custom of marrying a brother's widow was not extinct in

our Lord's time ; it is no less certain that the custom of loosing the shoe upon refusing to marry such a relative had ceased to be in vogue soon after if not in the time of David, with whose genealogy Ruth, as we now have it, ends ; but no reasonable person can for a moment doubt that the Law in Deuteronomy must have been older than the book of Ruth, whenever that was written, by many generations, because when that Law was framed the custom referred to must, to say the least, have been still in vogue. The notion of a writer deliberately sitting down to frame an imaginary law to account for a custom alluded to in Ruth as long out of date is simply preposterous, to say nothing of the impossibility, on that supposition, of accounting for the way in which Deuteronomy was accepted as an integral portion of the primeval Law. Any unbiassed person will find it far easier to believe that whenever the book of Ruth was written, the author must have had before him the story in Genesis and the Law in Deuteronomy substantially as we have them now.

The point of union, therefore, which subsists between books so dissimilar as Ruth and

Lamentations is the regard which each has for a code of laws recognised as binding by the people at ages widely separated, and the witness which each bears in a very different way to its influence on the national life. Of course, over and beyond this, there is in both the same consciousness of a special and peculiar relation subsisting between Israel, as the people of the Lord, and the Lord their God.

Ruth and Lamentations alike in this.

Again, let us turn to what is commonly regarded as one of the very latest books of the Old Testament, namely, the book of Esther. Whatever else may be said of this book, no one will deny that it is intensely Jewish. It is true that the name of God does not occur in it, but surely the hand of God is recognised virtually in such places as ix. 1, 22, x. 3, ii. 17, iv. 14. There may be no direct reference to the Law of Moses, though the conduct of the Jews in chapter ix. 10, 15, 16, is singularly in accordance with the provisions of the Law in Deut. vii. 26, xiii. 17, more especially when contrasted with the king's permission in chapter viii. 11; but their national distinctness, and their complete isolation from all the people of other lands,

The book of Esther.

is markedly set forth and witnessed to as an authentic fact; and how is this to be accounted for but by the peculiar and distinctive character of the Law which explicitly marked them out from all other people, Deut. vii. 6, and provided for their separation partly by the rite of circumcision, but still more by its own statutes and judgments? Deut. iv. 8, 33, 34, etc. No writer, however, would be so rash as to maintain that the Law of Moses as we have it now was not in existence at the time when the book of Esther was written. From its silence, therefore, we can draw no argument adverse to the authority of that Law; while the book itself, when it speaks of Jews being found throughout the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the empire of Ahasuerus, viii. 9, is a sufficient and suitable witness to the fulfilment of the threatenings of the Law at Lev. xxvi. 33, Deut. iv. 27, xxviii. 64.

Its relation
to the Law.

We may consequently hold it for certain that traces of the influence of the Law are not wanting in the book of Esther; and that by its relation thereto it is seen to possess a substantial unity with other literary monuments of the Old Testament.

Still more easily may we perceive in it a close connexion with many of the Psalms. And to the Psalms. The spirit and bias of the book of Esther is identical with that which prays for or predicts vengeance on the enemies of David, or of Israel, or of God—such are the 18th, the 69th, the 79th, the 109th, and the 137th Psalms, with others. However adverse such a spirit may be to the sentimental philanthropy of the present day, or however opposite it may seem to the spirit of the Gospel, it is nevertheless the expression of a Divine verity that Christ Himself was not slow to proclaim, inasmuch as He died to establish it—that, namely, of the irreconcilable opposition between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, and of the ultimate triumph of truth and right, to the utter confusion and discomfiture of falsehood and wrong. Men may oftentimes have erred in their application of this principle, but for all that the principle is a just one; and it was in belief of this principle that the book of Esther, and such Psalms as then were penned, to say nothing of many portions of Isaiah, such as xli. 11—16, xlv. 14, lx. 12, etc., and of the Prophets generally.

The ultimate triumph of truth and right, however it is brought about, is really vengeance executed upon falsehood and wrong, and the impassioned longing for such triumph may easily, though unwisely, be confounded with vindictiveness.

It becomes, however, an interesting and important question to trace the influence of the Law upon the Psalms of David, and to note the indications of acquaintance with it. Foremost in this respect among the Psalms stands the 119th. Of its date of course nothing is known, and upon it therefore nothing can be built. But surely no one can doubt that whenever it was written the author was acquainted with the books of the Law. In every verse there is mention made of the *Law of the Lord*, or His *testimonies, statutes, commandments, judgments, word, precepts*, or the like, except verse 122: *Be surety for Thy servant for good; let not the proud oppress me.* Cf. verses 3, 84, 90. So marked a feature as this must be the work of design on the part of the writer, and must have a meaning; and the only meaning it can have is that he had in his possession a code of precepts, judg-

The 119th
Psalm.

ments, testimonies, and the like, which he regarded as of Divine authority, and as worthy of the utmost reverence, and capable of rewarding study. It is inconceivable that such a Psalm as this could have been written if there had not been at the time a code of laws in existence which were commonly acknowledged as of Divine origin and authority. The Law of Moses was such a code, and there is no trace of any other. At the time then when the 119th Psalm was written this code must have been in existence. The Psalm itself is at once a witness to it and the creation of it.

Moreover the spiritual character of the Psalm shews that the writer was imbued with the spirit of Deuteronomy, or the second Law. It is no mere ceremonial rites that he will observe, but the requirements of Him who demanded the circumcision of the heart. Had the first four books of Moses alone existed, it is scarcely too much to say that the 119th Psalm could not have been written ; another element must have operated in its production, which was the influence of the latest words of the great Lawgiver. Certainly it is conceivable that the writer may

Breathes the
spir' t of Deu-
teronomy.

also have had before him some of the works of the prophets; but this does not alter the fact that the Psalm is continually referring to an external legal code as a rule of life, to a level with which other writings may have been raised, but which they could not and did not supersede.

The 19th
Psalm.

We turn then to another Psalm which is ascribed to David, and, for aught we know or can prove to the contrary, was written by him—the nineteenth. In the last eight verses of this brief Psalm we have a similar use of no less than six of the type words of the 119th. We have *the Law of the Lord, the testimony of the Lord, the statutes of the Lord, the commandment of the Lord, the fear of the Lord, and the judgments of the Lord*. In short, the latter half of this Psalm is a condensation of the 119th; it breathes the same spirit, and may well have proceeded from the same mind, in which case the 119th Psalm must of course have been by David. But be this as it may, assuming the nineteenth Psalm to have been by him, can any one for a moment suppose the writer of it not to refer to a definite legal code? What did he mean by the *command-*

ment, the *statutes*, the *judgments*, and the *testimony* of the Lord, if he did not mean the Law of the Lord? Whence had he learnt the fear of the Lord, if not from the Law, which inculcated and implanted that fear? It is morally impossible that the nineteenth Psalm can have been written by a man who was ignorant of the Law as an external authoritative code. And if it was written by David, as it probably was, then he was acquainted with the Law. And the knowledge of, and the reverence for, the Law, which is implied at least in this Psalm, and it matters not whether or not it is implied elsewhere, at once constitutes a bond of union which connects his writings with others of the Old Testament, so widely divergent, both in age and subject-matter, as the Lamentations, Ruth, and Esther.

Nor is it less evident that a knowledge ^{Isaiah.} of the Law underlies the writings of the prophets as a body, and is presupposed by their mission and work. The vision of Isaiah opens with an adoption of the first words of the song of Moses. In the ninth verse it alludes to the guilt of Sodom and Gomorrah,

which is recorded in Genesis. In the eleventh and following verses it implies the whole sacrificial system of the Law, as one that had been long outwardly complied with, while the more spiritual obligations of the Law had been forgotten or disregarded. In the eighth chapter, verse 20, the prophet appeals to *the Law and the testimony*, as to an authority which was at once supreme and final. What was this *Law and testimony*, if it was not an acknowledged external code which could be *bound up and sealed* among the Lord's disciples? The moral platform from which the prophets spoke to the men of their own day is abolished, if there was no antecedent Law to which to recal them, and for the violation of which they could be reprov'd. There must have been a previous education in spiritual truth ere the prophetic enunciations on either side could have been given or received. The entire foundation of their work was laid in the spiritual recognition of a standard from which their own generation had departed.

Hosea. One of the earliest of the prophets was Hosea, and his mission was to Israel rather than to Judah, and yet in the brief writings

of this prophet we find abundant references to the books of the Law and the earlier historical books. We find him speaking of the Law as of a code which existed in writing. He says to Ephraim, in the name of God, viii. 12, *I have written to him the great things of my Law, but they were counted as a strange thing.* Eight hundred years before Christ, then, the Law must have been known in the divided kingdom, and reckoned of sufficient authority to be appealed to as Divine, or for the nation to be charged with contempt of it. Such authority could not have been the growth of a day, and it must have rested on a foundation of some solidity to be acknowledged as authoritative at all. But independently of this, the fact remains that in the writings of Hosea, as of all the prophets, the Law is recognised as the great condemning instrument in the charge which they brought against the nation. Their writings are unintelligible, and their mission is inconceivable, but for the fact of a previously existing Law. When Joel, who perhaps is even older than Hosea, says, using the language of the Mosaic Law, ii. 1, *Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and*

sound an alarm in my holy mountain, he witnesses to two facts ; first, that Mount Zion had been so long the centre of Divine worship as to be acknowledged as God's *holy mountain* ; and secondly, that it was the scene of those ceremonial and festive observances which the Law prescribed. When the last book of the Law was written, it was still a matter of uncertainty where the Lord would *place His name*, and no place was permanently fixed until the time of David ; but from his time onward, for a period of more than two hundred years, Zion was regarded as the *holy mountain*, and acquired in the minds of the people that degree of sanctity which in the time of Joel it possessed. But in this respect, we must remember it had competed successfully and successively with Gibeon, Shiloh, and Gilgal. All this was a work of time, but the succession of events not only demands, but supplies the time.

It must have
been the
Law we
have.

Nor granting the existence, as we are compelled to grant it, of a recognised code of laws, is there room to suppose that it was substantially different from the one which we possess. The prophet Hosea, in mentioning a written

Law, gives us fragmentary allusions to the Law which we have, thereby shewing us that our Law was his. Nay, more, he shews his acquaintance with those intermediate books that carry on the history between the occupation of Canaan and his own era, and which themselves presuppose the entire fabric of the Law. For example, his constant allusion to the kingdom of Israel as *Ephraim* is a tacit admission that it was founded by Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, and that Shechem, in Mount Ephraim, was the centre of his 'kingdom, as stated, 1 Kings xii. 25. If there was no record of this fact then, which we cannot prove, at least, the fact itself was well known, and the record that we have agrees with it. The words, *I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath*, Hos. xiii. 11, are surely an allusion to the choice and subsequent rejection of Saul. The calf-worship of Jeroboam is the subject of frequent reference; *e.g.*, viii. 5, 6; x. 5; xiii. 2. The words in x. 9, *O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: there they stood: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them*, are a

clear and circumstantial reference to the record in Judges xix. and xx. ; cf. also Hos. ix. 9, *They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah.* The prophet must have had before him the same narrative that we have, and those for whom he wrote must have been acquainted with it too.* Hosea ix. 15, *All their wickedness is as Gilgal, for there I hated them,* may possibly be an allusion to the words in Joshua v. 9, *This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you,* though this may be open to question; cf. Hos. xii. 11. At any rate, the fact of Gilgal being a great centre of even idolatrous worship is probably due to its connexion with national religious associations, such as the history in Joshua explains, and certainly the allusion to the *valley of Achor*, Hos. ii. 15, is not to be understood without knowledge of, and reference to, the story in Joshua vii. 24, 26, from which the name was derived, which is only once mentioned again in the Old Testament by Isaiah, lxxv. 10. The statement in Hosea xii. 10, *I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and*

* In Hosea v. 8, "After thee, O Benjamin," there appears to be a reminiscence of the song of Deborah, Judges v. 14.

used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets, implies a state of things such as that of which the writer of I Sam. iii. 1, *The word of the Lord was precious in those days, there was no open vision,* must have had a cognisance that enabled him to contrast it with the past; cf. also Hos. vi. 5. Still more is the peculiar mention of *David their king*, iii. 5, unintelligible without a knowledge of the history of the books of Samuel. Hosea may not indeed have known Samuel and the earlier historical books as we have them. But he clearly was acquainted with the history as it is contained in them; for he refers to the history in a way that these books as we have them explain and corroborate. The testimony of the two, therefore, is independent, and so far as it agrees, each serves to authenticate the other, the prophet the historical books, and the historical books the prophet. At that early age, however, the multiplication of historical documents is not likely, but it is clear that either then or later our own documents existed. It is a question, therefore, of probability whether Hosea was acquainted with the events to which he referred from written documents or

from unwritten tradition. But seeing that the existence of written documents then or later is proved, it is certainly not improbable, *per se*, that referring to events contained in our existing documents, the memory of which would be more easily preserved by documents than by tradition, he referred to those very documents themselves. The thing does not admit of conclusive proof, but probability points to the conclusion. The history, however, in Joshua, Judges, and Samuel is inseparable from that of the Law; it is absolutely meaningless without it. If, therefore, Hosea implies the record of the intermediate history, and that history implies the existence of the Law, then the prophet himself implies the existence of the Law. The twelfth chapter is full of allusions to points in the history of Jacob as recorded in Genesis, and of which we have no knowledge but from that narrative. The mention of Admah and Zeboim together is only found in Gen. xiv. 2, 3 Deut. xxix. 21, and Hosea xi. 8. The mention of Baal-peor, Hos. ix. 10, implies a knowledge, both on the part of the prophet and on that of the people, of the history of Numbers.

Nor is this all, for in Hosea we have even a verbal quotation from Gen. iii. 18, as is proved by the fact that here only and in that passage is the word *dardar*, thistle, found in the whole of the Old Testament. In the Hebrew the phrase is identical in the two cases, but the authorised version of Genesis renders the two words by plurals, and so the connexion is the more disguised. When therefore we remember, in addition to all this, that the moral, ceremonial, and sacrificial system of the Law is implied in Hosea ii. 11, v. 6, 10, viii. 13, ix. 4, 5, xii. 9, etc., it seems impossible to doubt for one moment that the books of the Law, substantially as we have them now, were known to the prophet Hosea and to those also to whom he wrote in the middle of the eighth century before Christ.*

This is a conclusion which, on the testimony, spontaneous and undesigned, of the prophet Hosea, not to mention others, we must accept for certain. The evidence to be derived from his fourteen brief chapters is at once incontrovertible and irresistible. He

* Three times the Law is expressly mentioned by Hosea, iv. 6, viii. 1, 12.

doubtless, though exercising a mission chiefly directed to Israel, had in his hands the books of the Law, and referred to them as documents familiar even to the seceded tribes. We can detect allusions to or acquaintance with the contents of each book of the five, and the testimony is the more important because it is so obviously unintentional.

The case, then, stands thus : we have clear reference to the Law 800 B.C. At that time it must have been acknowledged by Israel as well as Judah, and consequently must have dated prior to the division of the kingdom, some 200 years before. But the same writer makes allusions to the books of Joshua and Judges, which must therefore have been in existence long before his time, and been then accepted as trustworthy history of a much earlier period. But whenever these books were written, the Law was still in existence, for it must have preceded them, whatever their date is ; and if their narrative is at all to be trusted, the Law was not only known when they were written, but also known at the times to which they related, long before. In short, we have no record of any period in the history

The Law old
in his time.

of Israel subsequent to the occupation of Canaan, at which the Law was not known; and as far as the evidence of the records that we have is available, it clearly witnesses to the authority and influence of the Law from the very first. But whether or not this evidence is accepted historically, it is equally certain that there is no one section or era of Hebrew literature, whether it be the Prophets, Psalms, or History, which is free from the traces of an influence which can only be referred to the Law recognised as an authoritative code of Divine obligation and origin. From first to last, throughout the entire literature, we discover unmistakable traces and tokens of the existence and effects of this Law: it is permeated and pervaded by it. Under any theory of the composition of these books, the inference is still the same, that a knowledge of the Law was prior to them; and we have seen that it cannot be placed later than a thousand years before Christ, because it must have been earlier than the undivided monarchy.

But it is certain that the reverence attaching to the Law, if it was an energetic influence in the nation a thousand years before Christ,

The Law
associated
with Moses.

must have taken time to develop itself. It could not have been the growth of a day. And with unvarying consistency, throughout the entire literature, the Law is associated with the name of Moses. He is universally recognised as the sole Lawgiver. It is more or less an ideal and arbitrary arrangement to associate the history with Ezra, the prophecy with Isaiah, or with the principal monarch in whose reign Isaiah flourished, the poetry with David ; but to associate the Law with the name of Moses is inevitable. In the other departments there were many labourers, but in the matter of the Law, traditionally, and as far as all evidence goes, he stands alone. At whatever period the Law was first accepted, and this must have been before 1000 B.C., it was only accepted because it was believed to come with the authority of Moses. The existing Law, therefore, must either have been the original Law, or one which was successfully palmed off upon the nation in its stead. It cannot have been one which was commonly accepted by the people as an imposture, seeing that the very existence and constitution of the nation was more or less owing to the Law, and dependent upon it,

even when its moral precepts were set at nought and violated. It is possible that in the process of ages the original Law may have undergone certain modifications. Special injunctions may have fallen into neglect and desuetude from the mere force of circumstances; the text at times may have become glossed, and the glosses eventually become incorporated with it; but there is no room for doubt that fundamentally and substantially the Law as we have it now is what it always was. To suppose that the Law, being originally something very different, was afterwards developed in its present form, is to imagine what could not have taken place without a national revolution such as we have no hint or record of. The establishment of the schools of the prophets, moreover, as founded by Samuel, almost necessitates the existence of a literature for the basis of their education, but if so, this literature can have been none other than the Law, while the very notion of the schools of the prophets seems like a suggestion growing out of the promise in Deuteronomy xviii. 18: *I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren.* Besides, one of the

The schools
of the pro-
phets.

purposes of their existence would naturally be found in the careful preservation of the Law, and in handing it down as it had been received, more especially as we have no evidence of any original literary work emanating from them, though, indeed, certain of the historical books may not improbably be referred to individual members of their body. We must grant, however, in that case, the previous existence of the Law as an indispensable condition.

We see, then, that the entire literature of the Old Testament, unless it is necessary to except such books as Job and Canticles, is penetrated and permeated with the influence of the Law. It is the one foundation underlying the whole. We come upon traces of it wherever we search. And it is this fact which gives to the several and widely different component elements of the literature a bond of cohesion and a substantive and substantial unity such as we can discover in no other literature whatever. It is, moreover, a unity which is entirely independent of the individual will of the various writers. They personally and intentionally contributed nothing to this

Appearance
of unity
undesigned.

unity. It is a phenomenon which arises out of the fact that each separate writer was a member of a nation of whose existence one of the most marked features was the possession of the Law, and which was created and bound together by nothing so much as by it, and by the traditions enshrined in it.

And this unity is an indestructible fact, which is entirely independent of the age to which critically we may assign particular portions of the literature. There are no very urgent reasons for believing that the commonly received periods of composition are very far from wrong ; but however this may be, the fact which has been pointed out remains, because there are no existing monuments of Hebrew literature which do not bear witness to the previous existence of the Law, just as there are none which do not owe allegiance to it, and either make it the basis of their teaching, as the prophets do, or else, like the Psalms, carry on its work in other directions, and develop the spiritual life created by it. Nor can it be said that there is any parallel to such a phenomenon as this, turn where we will. May we not admit, without disparagement, that, compared

And not
destroyed by
criticism.

with the Old Testament, the literature of Greece or Rome is a heterogeneous medley? There is no common bond of unity between the philosophers and the poets, the historians and the orators. They speak, indeed, the same language, and, within certain limits, their thoughts are cast more or less in the same mould, but there is no unity of sentiment discoverable in them, and still less any singleness of purpose. But we may safely affirm that there is no one writer in the Old Testament who has not the object before him of enhancing the glory of God, even though it be at the expense of himself and his nation. Throughout the development of the history, which is necessarily the growth of ages, there is the gradual unfolding of a plan, to which every writer, unconsciously and in spite of himself, contributes something. What can be a more instructive commentary upon the indignation of Samuel at the nation's desire for a king, than the history of the kingdom from first to last? What a striking fulfilment of the worst forebodings of Moses do we read in the narrative of the nation's growth and decay! How fitly might the words of Pharaoh

be taken as a motto expressive of the long result of national experience at the close of the history: *The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.* If we turn to the poets, this is the very lesson that they have learnt, and that they desire their fellow-countrymen to learn: *We have sinned with our fathers; we have done amiss, and dealt wickedly;* while the spontaneous confession of one of the latest in order of the Psalms is this: *The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works,* cxlv. 17. Nor is the complaint of Isaiah different, among the prophets: *For our transgressions are multiplied before Thee, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and as for our iniquities, we know them,* lix. 12; and he also, speaking in the name of the Lord, declares, *My salvation shall be for ever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished.* But this, again, in substance is the special revelation of the Law: *And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the*

guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation,
Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

The writers'
faith in God.

The most distinctive feature, however, which is common to all the writers in the Old Testament, and peculiar to no one age or portion of the literature, while the classical authors of Greece and Rome, as well as the writings of Confucius, and even the Hymns of the Veda, may be said in comparison to be entirely devoid of it, is an unswerving faith in God, and a confident and firm reliance and dependence upon His unfailing goodness and mercy. We may truly say that, beyond the limits of the Old Testament, and those writings which have come under its influence and imbibed its spirit, there is nothing that bears any adequate analogy to this feature. Here these ancient writings stand pre-eminent and unique.

What is
proved by it.

And this fact alone, as characterising the best specimens of the nation who produced such a literature, is sufficient to stamp them as the covenant people of God. If the Almighty were to make a covenant with any nation, we might surely pronounce beforehand

that this is how it would manifest itself. But this in the Jewish nation is how it did manifest itself, as witnessed by the national literature; and seeing that a like manifestation was made in no other people, the inference is not unnatural, but much rather inevitable—nay, forced upon us—that their poet was warranted in his joyous and grateful outburst, *He hath not dealt so with any nation, neither have the heathen knowledge of His laws.*

It can hardly be needful to attempt to shew the intrinsic superiority of the Jewish code over any other legal system. The decalogue alone is an unrivalled monument of wisdom and of spiritual insight into the nature of man, and the deepest wants of society; and of all ethical systems, the Mosaic was the only one which anticipated the Christian precept, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* The spirituality of the Law. Lev. xix. 18, 34. Whatever might be the faults or deficiencies of any other human ethical system, we may safely affirm that the possession of two such jewels as these, the decalogue and this golden precept, would be held worthy to redeem them all.*

* The golden precept is inculcated in a *negative* form in the writings of Confucius.

For the sake of these men would gladly condone the rest. Nay, we may be sure that if a new literature were to be discovered possessed of such sublime precepts, no limits could be set to the praise that would be lavished upon it. We may fairly claim, then, for the legal element of the Old Testament, if on this ground alone, a higher standard of merit than is due to any other ethical system prior to the Gospel.

Conception
of God
uniform.

It is often remarked that the religion of the Old Testament is a sublime monotheism, which is perfectly true; but if so, this is surely a feature that tends to show a very marked principle of unity pervading all the writers. Not only are they at one in holding and inculcating the unity of God, but also in the prevailing conception of His character. His truth, His righteousness, His faithfulness, His mercy and loving-kindness, are constant themes both with the poets and the prophets, while that this is His nature is abundantly illustrated in the page of the history, and explicitly enunciated by the Law. The Hebrew writers, however, have this in common, that they do not hold any such belief about

God as an abstract philosophical sentiment. It is no theory with them, but the expression of the form and character that His dealings with them and their fathers have taken. With them God is not an abstraction to be discoursed about, but a living and acting Person to be known. He has made Himself known. They do not lay claim to the merit of having discovered Him, but He revealed Himself to their fathers as He did to no other nation. The beginning and end of the Law is this knowledge. *I am the Lord thy God*, ushers in the decalogue; *I am the Lord*, shuts up specific enactments, and clenches so apparently trivial a precept as *Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you*. Lev. xix. 28. It is thus that the Law itself set before its disciples a higher and further end than itself, and did not contemplate the performance of literal precepts otherwise than as a means to an end. Surely nothing less than this is implied in the words, *Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and judgments, which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the Lord*. Personal holiness, personal well-being, personal knowledge of

The ultimate
object of the
Law.

and union with God, were objects expressly contemplated by the Law. Though it too often found its votaries carnal, it yet amply vindicated its own claims to spirituality, and set before the nation a standard that was never attained, and still less surpassed, at any period of the national history. The earliest compositions of the Old Testament bear witness to the influence of the Law, and the latest are conscious of departure from it, but nowhere is its authority undervalued or its Divine origin called in question. It is the backbone of the entire literature, to which every part has more or less organic relation, and upon the framework of which all the rest hangs together so as to form an organic whole. The very latest injunction of the latest prophet is, *Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb*

Mal. iv. 6. *for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments;* while his book closes with a solemn warning of the curse that shall overtake non-compliance with the spirit of one of its most characteristic precepts.

The patriot-
ism of the
writers.

It is no marvel that the literature of a nation such as this, whose chief bond of

national union was the Law, should have been intensely patriotic ; for the nation possessed the noblest and the truest incentive to patriotism ; and in its literature this patriotism found an utterance that is unrivalled elsewhere in any language. *The hill of Zion is a fair place, and the joy of the whole earth, the city of the great King. God is well known in her palaces as a sure refuge. The city of the Lord of hosts, the city of our God. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.*

Ps. xlviii.
2, 3, 8.

Ps. l. 2.

Jerusalem is built as a city that is at unity in itself. O pray for the peace of Jerusalem : they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and plenteousness within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sake I will wish thee prosperity, yea, because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek to do thee good.

Ps. cxxii.
3, 6—9.

Can anything be more beautiful ? Can anything be more eloquent ? The psalmist was the most ardent of patriots, because his country was the chosen of God. Therefore he could say, *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of God.* But in the choice of Zion was involved

Ps. lxxxvi
2, 3.

the history of David, and the revelation made to David, *The Lord hath chosen Zion to be a habitation for Himself: He hath longed for her. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein.* And in this revelation was the ultimate fulfilment of the earlier promise of the Law, *There shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell there.* Thus every portion of this ancient literature is intimately bound up with every other. The prophecy with the poetry, and the poetry with the history, and all together with the Law, and the Law of Moses is not only an integral element in the composition of the Old Testament, but is also the corner-stone of its internal structure, and the firm, essential basis of its organic and indestructible unity.

Ps. cxxxii.
14, 15.
Cf. 2 Sam.
vii. 10—29.

Deut. xii. 11.
Cf. 2 Sam.
vii. 10.

Chronological Table of Important Events.

EVENTS, ETC.	Date B.C.	Century B.C.
Cicero, Virgil, Horace, &c.		I.
Death of Cæsar	44	
Battle of Pharsalia	48	
Ptolemy VII. Physcon (Euergetes II.).. .. .	116 to 145	II.
Death of Judas Maccabæus	161	
Simon II.	195 to 217	
Ptolemy III. (Euergetes I.)	222 to 247	III.
Grandson of Jesus perhaps arrives in Egypt	230	
Septuagint Version perhaps made.. .. .	270	
Ptolemy II. (Philadelphus)	246 to 284	
Jesus son of Sirach, perhaps	270 to 310	
Ptolemy I.	284 to 323	IV.
Simon I. (the Just)	300 to 370	
Alexander the Great	323 to 336	
Aristotle, Demosthenes		
Plato, Xenophon		
The Peloponnesian War	405 to 431	V.
Malachi, perhaps	420	
Nehemiah	445	
Ezra	456	
Battle of Marathon	490	
Haggai, Zechariah, Darius	520	VI.
The Temple rebuilt, after being desolate for 53 years.. .. .	535	
Edict of Cyrus, Zerubbabel	536	
Jehoiachin released	562	
Zedekiah taken captive	588	
Temple destroyed, after having stood 416 years	588	
Ezekiel begins to prophesy	595	
Jehoiachin carried captive	599	

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF IMPORTANT EVENTS.

(Continued.)

EVENTS, ETC.	Date B.C.	Century B.C.
Daniel carried captive	606	VII.
Josiah slain at Megiddo	610	
Era of Nabopolassar	625	
Capture of Nineveh	625	
Zephaniah prophesies	630	
Jeremiah begins to prophesy	629	
Amon	641 to 643	
Manasseh	643 to 698	
Hezekiah	698 to 726	VIII.
Samaria destroyed.. .. .	721	
Ahaz	726 to 742	
Jotham	742 to 758	
Micah' prophesies in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah	750	
Isaiah prophesies in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah	760	
Hosea prophesies in the reigns of the same kings, and Jeroboam II.	722 to 785	
The first Olympiad	776	
Amos prophesies in the reigns of Uzziah and Jeroboam II.	787	
Joel prophesies about	800	
Uzziah	758 to 810	
Jeroboam II.	784 to 825	
Jonah prophesies about	862	
Rehoboam	958 to 975	X.
Solomon	975 to 1015	
Temple dedicated	1004	XI.
David	1015 to 1055	
Samuel	1150	XII.
Moses. The Law.. .. .	1451	XV.

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