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# THE BIBLE
# FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE HIGHER CRITICISM

# THE BIBLE

## *FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE HIGHER CRITICISM*

## THE OLD TESTAMENT

BY

RAMSDEN BALMFORTH

AUTHOR OF

"THE NEW REFORMATION," "SOME SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PIONEERS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY," ETC.

"What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

"The pure in heart shall see God."

LONDON

SWAN SONNENSCHEIN & CO., LIM.

PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1904

# PREFACE

"To re-inthrone the Bible as explained by our current theology," said Matthew Arnold thirty years ago, "is absolutely and for ever impossible—as impossible as to restore the feudal system, or the belief in witches." And again,—"This is what everyone sees to constitute the special moral feature of our times: *the masses* are losing the Bible and its religion." Once more,—"An inevitable revolution, of which we all recognise the beginnings and signs, but which has already spread, perhaps, farther than most of us think, is befalling the religion in which we have been brought up."

Matthew Arnold was undoubtedly a true prophet. We are in the midst of the revolution of which he spoke. But the work of reconstruction has been well begun also, Arnold himself being one of the master-builders in the work. The Bible is slowly emerging from the neglect into which it has fallen. During these thirty years it has been studied with a painstaking industry and care which can only be described as marvellous, an industry and care of which

the mass of the people have not the least conception. One result of this Biblical study is that the 'current theology' of which Arnold spoke has been shaken to its foundations, and, to the man of culture, the Bible has become a human literature, therefore, a literature to be submitted to the investigations and the tests of the spirit which produced it, namely, the human spirit.

To the great mass of the people, I say, the results of this painstaking study of the Bible—the findings of the Higher Criticism—are virtually unknown. The vast majority of the people seldom open the Bible. Even of the minority who attend the Churches the acquaintance with the Scriptures of a considerable portion of this minority is limited to the passages they hear read in church; and a considerable number, again, merely accept the Bible as a bulwark of the 'current theology.' Of our school teachers how many are acquainted with even the elements of the Higher Criticism!

Before the Bible can again become a living force amongst the people the results of recent critical study must be made more widely known. The book must cease to be worshipped as a fetish. It must be made to appear what it really is—a human literature, alive and vivid with human passions, hopes, and feelings; and its truths must be rescued from the errors and obscurations which are necessarily blended with all human thought and effort. This is the task

the Higher Criticism set itself to accomplish, and it has done its work so thoroughly that its main conclusions can hardly be gainsaid. It is the more important results of this work that I have tried to bring home to the people in this series of discourses.

That a 're-inthronement' of a rationalized Bible is necessary, will not, I think, be denied by any thoughtful man. If we look at some of the results of popular education, at the reading of the people—the half-penny newspaper, the novelette, the 'snips' and 'snaps' of the popular 'literature' of the day, the meretricious magazine and periodical literature, the coarse and sensational fiction—we cannot but experience a feeling of disappointment, and one is inclined to long for a return of the old custom of family Bible reading, at least on one day in the week. Such a custom would at any rate tend to foster a more serious mood, and would help to familiarize both old and young with the nobler thoughts and language of this great classic. To do this effectually the Bible needs to be re-edited, especially for the young; and it requires to be made intelligible, from the evolutionary standpoint, to all. Only in this way can its treasures be worked into our common life—only in this way can the content of our moral experience be brought one step nearer to the 'Everlasting Real.' I hope that this series of discourses will be of some service in this direction, especially to parents, teachers, superintendents, class

leaders, lay preachers, and all who are interested in the progress of religious thought.

It remains for me to express my indebtedness to the principal authors from whose writings I have sought help in the preparation of these discourses, especially to Dr. Kuenen,—whose great work, *The Religion of Israel*, should be in the hands of every student of the Bible,—and also to Dr. Oort, Professor Sayce, Matthew Arnold, Bishop Colenso, Canon Driver, Canon Cheyne, Dr. George Adam Smith, Prof. W. Robertson Smith, and last, but not least, to the spoken and the written word of my tutor at Manchester College, Oxford—Professor J. Estlin Carpenter. In this brief survey it has been impossible, of course, to enter into minute detail, to adequately cover the ground travelled by any one of these writers, or even to mention their many reserves and qualifications. I have but tried to give a fair summary of the more important results, for the deductions from which, as expressed in this volume, I alone am responsible.

I must also record my indebtedness to my brother, for kindly undertaking the tedious work of revising the proof-sheets of this book.

Should this volume meet the want which I believe to exist, I hope to complete the work by a further series of discourses on the books of the New Testament.

R. B.

Chronological Table of the more important events in ancient Jewish history.

| | | B. C. |
|---|---|---|
| The Exodus under Moses ... | about | 1320 |
| Settlement in Canaan ... ... | „ | 1260 |
| Period of the "Judges" ... ... | „ | ——— |
| Samuel ... ... ... ... | „ | 1060 |
| Saul ... ... ... ... | „ | 1030 |
| David ... ... ... ... | „ | 1000 |
| Solomon ... ... ... ... | „ | 960 |
| Separation of the Tribes into two Kingdoms—Israel and Judah ... | „ | 931 |
| Ahab. Elijah ... ... ... | „ | 874 |
| Elisha ... ... ... ... | „ | 850 |
| Jehu ... ... ... ... | „ | 842 |
| Jeroboam II. ... ... ... | „ | 786 |
| Amos ... ... ... ... | „ | 760 |
| Hosea ... ... ... ... | „ | 746 |
| Call of Isaiah ... ... ... | „ | 740 |
| Hezekiah ... ... ... ... | „ | 728 |
| Micah ... ... ... ... | „ | 725 |
| Fall of Samaria and end of the Northern Kingdom ... ... ... | „ | 722 |
| Manasseh (period of reaction) ... | „ | 699 |
| Josiah ... ... ... ... | „ | 639 |
| Call of Jeremiah ... ... ... | „ | 626 |
| "Discovery" of *Deuteronomy* by Hilkiah | „ | 621 |
| Battle of Megiddo. Death of Josiah | „ | 609 |

| | | B. C. |
|---|---|---|
| Nebuchadnezzar. Victory over Egypt at Carchemish ... ... | about | 604 |
| First deportation to Babylonia ... | „ | 597 |
| Call of Ezekiel ... ... .. | „ | 592 |
| Second deportation. Jerusalem and the Temple devastated ... ... | „ | 586 |
| Second Isaiah ... ... ... | „ | 545 |
| Cyrus takes Babylon ... ... | „ | 538 |
| Return of first band of Exiles under Zerubbabel ... ... ... | „ | 538 |
| Second Temple completed ... | „ | 519 |
| Ezra reaches Jerusalem ... ... | „ | 458 |
| Nehemiah made Governor ... | „ | 445 |
| Introduction of "the Law" by Ezra | „ | 444 |
| Greek supremacy begins after victories of Alexander the Great ... | „ | 332 |
| Ptolemy, son of Lagos, takes Jerusalem. Many Jews banished to Egypt | „ | 320 |
| Antiochus Epiphanes ... ... | „ | 175 |
| Temple desecrated ... ... | „ | 167 |
| Revolt of Mattathias and his sons | „ | 166 |
| Temple service restored — Feast of "Lights" ... ... ... | „ | 164 |
| Death of Judas Maccabeus ... | „ | 161 |
| Book of *Daniel* appears ... ... | „ | 161 |
| Judea becomes independent ... | „ | 135 |
| Pompey takes Jerusalem ... ... | „ | 61 |
| Herod made King of Judea ... | „ | 37 |
| Birth of Jesus ... ... ... | „ | 5 |
| Death of Herod ... ... ... | „ | 4 |
| | | A. D. |
| Destruction of Temple by Titus ... | „ | 70 |

## CONTENTS

# I

# THE RELIGIOUS QUESTIONINGS OF OUR TIME

Eccles. vii. 25—"I turned about, and my heart was set to know, and to search out, and to seek wisdom and the reason of things."

John x. 10—"I came that they may have Life, and may have it abundantly."

THE last half-century has been a time full of advances and surprises in every direction. So marked have some of these advances been, especially in the realm of physical science, that were our great-grandfathers to return to the earth, they would hardly recognise the world they once lived in. This movement of advance in every department of physical science has had its corresponding movement in the region of thought. Science itself has frequently found itself in sharp antagonism with Theology. It has asserted its right to challenge every belief to justify itself by scientific methods of proof. Philosophy, too, has sought to

penetrate afresh the mysteries of thought, mind, and life, and to interpret all their various phenomena anew. Historians have investigated the most sacred traditions, creeds, doctrines, and institutions, and have sought to lay bare the roots and the soil from which those creeds, doctrines, and institutions sprang. They have unearthed the buried libraries of ancient civilisations; they have deciphered the laws and statutes, the hymns and prayers of peoples who worshipped at the shrine of the Infinite long before the Garden of Eden was heard of; they have gone to more ancient civilisations still, and shown the secret affinities of religious faith enshrined in ancient scriptures and languages, out of which have grown, by a slow process of evolution or development, the various faiths and religions of the humanity of to-day. In all this there has been a great conflict and upheaval of thought. The deepest convictions, the most cherished faiths, have been thrown into the alembic of criticism, and submitted to the most searching tests which science and reason can apply. In all this work, in so far, of course, as it has been sincere, thorough, conscientious, and inspired by lofty motives and aims, we of the Liberal Religious Faith rejoice. In the realm of thought or spirit we advance without fear, for the inner light, aided by the light which our fathers and brothers give, is the only guide we have, and if we go wrong, we shall be brought back to our

appointed ways by Him whose mysterious laws trace the pathway of the stars, bind and measure and order the operations of the Spirit, and guide our human aspirations and endeavours into His own curves of beauty and of good. If we refuse to follow that inner light we do so at our peril, for we so far tend to stunt and blight our own spiritual development; and the Church or the State which would attempt in any way to obscure or darken that light, demeans both itself and its subjects, and insults not only our human nature, but the Divine element IN our human nature. This, the freedom of the Spirit, is our most priceless possession.

But there come times when all men, all churches, all peoples have to ask themselves where they stand. They cannot go on doubting, questioning, inquiring, investigating for ever. Knowledge, to be of any use, must be applied. And so, I say, there come times when men have to sum up the results of their questioning, and enquiring, and investigating, to ascertain what they have won from Nature and the past, and to ask themselves on what they must build and live their life in the future. The bottom fact about every man is his religion—not his words, but his spirit and his life, and behind and beyond all our questionings and speculations looms Tolstoi's great question, "How to live?" and the harder and sterner rule of Jesus "Follow Me." Hence, it is a mistake to sup-

pose that Religion is a thing either of dreams and speculations or of forms and ceremonies: it is the most vital thing in our life. With all our speculations, then, it is necessary to try and arrive at some firm standing ground. One creed after another, one belief after another, has gone by the board. This has been declared unscientific, that unhistorical, the other superstitious or immoral. Many people have even doubted about supporting churches at all; others have become careless about prayer or worship when, as it seemed to them, there was no Being to hear and no Spirit to worship; others again, in faith, doubt, or despair, have thrown themselves into the arms of the Holy Mother Church to find there, in her sacraments, and her ritual, and her priesthood, what they believe to be a sure anchorage for their soul and a guide for their moral being while on earth. Let us try, then, to ascertain the drift of all these questionings of our time, and to find the firm standing ground which surely remains behind and beneath them.

It will be found, I think, that these questionings, in the main, run into four great lines of thought—(1) the thought of God; (2) the soul and immortality; (3) Jesus Christ; (4) the Bible. Let us take the thought of God first. When Darwin produced his epoch-making work on "The Origin of Species," and men had familiarised themselves with the outlines of the great theory of Evolution, many exclaimed, "Yes,

Evolution, development by Law, is all—we have no need of God." But that hasty conclusion has been wholly revised. Now it is admitted on all hands by scientists themselves that evolution is but a method or a process, not an originating force; that, as Darwin himself said, it does not account for beginnings; that behind it or within it there is the same old haunting mystery of which the author of Job, and the Indian mystics, and the Greek philosophers, and our modern poets, speak, the mystery of a marvellous universe in which

> "The meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

Now, Herbert Spencer himself tells us that we are ever in the "presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed;" Professor Huxley compares that Presence to an Almighty Chess-player who lays down the rules of the game but who plays for Love; Professor Clifford calls it "Mind-stuff;" Matthew Arnold—"The Eternal, not ourselves, which makes for Righteousness;" Shelley—"The awful shadow of some unseen Power, which floats, though unseen, among us." Such phrases do men substitute in all sincerity for "God"—the Spirit. What I wish to insist upon here is that all the questionings of our time have left unshaken this bottom fact in religion—the all-pervading presence of this

spiritual power from which all things proceed. Those questionings have indeed purified and enlarged our conception of that Power. We are no longer awed by the thought of a magnified giant who makes the world in six days, who thunders out laws on Sinai, who gives savage commands to kings and military leaders, and who requires worship through stated forms and ceremonials, and who would condemn three-fourths of the human race to perdition. The questionings of our time have driven, or are driving, such a barbaric conception out of the human mind. The Eternal Presence is something nobler than that. "When the half-gods go, the gods arrive." And the mystery of that Eternal Presence which shines out of star and sun, or from the wild flower at our feet, or from a mother's love, or the innocence of a little child, conveys more solemn lessons to us, if we will but read aright, than the thunderbolts of Jehovah of old. On the implications of all this I have not time to dwell. I simply wish to emphasise the foundation facts of man's speculative religious life, which the questionings of our time have purified of superstitious or erroneous elements, and have thereby made more secure.

The second great line of speculative thought into which these questionings have run, I said, is—the soul of man and immortalty, or the relation of man to the universe. Here, again, great changes have

taken place. On the one hand, the old Theology regarded man as inherently depraved, fallen, guilt-laden, and the mass of mankind as destined to eternal perdition; on the other hand, Science at one time seemed to have reduced man to the level of the plants or the beasts, and regarded him as a mere combination of chemical elements destined to disperse or to resolve themselves into dust and ashes at death. Now, whatever view may be taken of man's destiny, a much nobler view is taken of his nature as a reasoning and partly spiritual being. The theory of the inherent degradation of human nature, of man as a kind of fallen angel, irredeemably vile and sinful, has gone for ever, and in its place has come the nobler and saner theory which represents him as continually striving upwards and slowly attaining to a higher spiritual image—a theory which is so firmly supported and substantiated by the long upward climb of humanity. We have learned to judge of man not by his microscopic beginnings in protoplasm, but by the wondrous potentialities of conscience, mind, and soul contained within him. And the slow development of these, from the lowliest and faintest adumbrations, through dim æons of time, when the senses themselves were slowly struggling out of dumb, blind, amorphous lumps of life-stuff, slowly, through untold æons, creeping towards realms of light and sound; more slowly still towards the higher realms

of thought and feeling; wandering through more ages of twilight towards settled modes of life, and the alphabets of civilisation, and codes of law and morals; battling ever for higher and wider conceptions of right, until Humanity emerges into the higher reaches of government, science, art, ethics, worship, and religion, and produces men and women who form ideals for the race—all this must be read, not from the beginning, but from the end, if we would realise the complex and wondrous spiritual stuff out of which the nature of man is so finely wrought. And so, as a result of the questionings of our time, the nature of man at its highest has received an added dignity and nobility. As to the destiny of Man—ah! Science there leaves us pretty much as we were. It is true that there are indications which seem to me to dip on the affirmative side, and which point to the possibility of the survival of mind apart from matter; such indications as are furnished by the researches of the Psychical Research Society, and the communication of mind with mind without the intervention of matter, as in telepathy and hypnotism. But the evidence is perhaps too slight to build upon scientifically. Here, as of old, Science leaves the ground to Faith. But Faith has also been touched and purified by the questionings of our time. We no longer shrink in fear before the lurid torments of a terrible Hereafter, or recoil from the doubtful delights of a too tedious Heaven. The

moral sense of man rebels against such monstrosities of Faith, and looks forward rather to a progressive spiritual development through which the individual soul enters, with added capacities and powers, into an ampler and diviner air, wherein arise

> "August anticipations, symbols, types
> Of a dim splendour ever on before,"

and, from strength to strength advancing, mounts to Immortal Life. Here, again, then, the questionings of our time have placed little to the debit but much to the credit of the true religious spirit.

And the third great line of speculative thought into which these questions have run centres in the personality of Jesus of Nazareth. Fifty years ago it was regarded as most dangerous heresy to question either the Virgin Birth of Jesus, or the miracles, or the Ascension, or the Resurrection. Now, every one of these dogmas is openly questioned, not only outside, but within the Church itself. The doctrine of the Atonement also, the central doctrine around which the old Theology revolved, has been much modified, if not, indeed, in its old forms, altogether given up. For if the Fall of Man did not take place, an outward, mediatorial, reconciling sacrifice to avert the wrath of an offended Deity is no longer necessary—rather is the Spirit ever waiting to welcome men to its higher altitudes of Life and reconcile THEM to its ways.

What, then, is the result of all these questionings about Christ? Have they made Jesus, whom men called the Christ, less human, less noble, less gentle, less lovable? Or have they made Him more human, more noble, more gentle, more lovable? Nay, they have brought out the human lineaments, the human spirit, the human qualities, in clearer and holier light. The historic reality of that great figure is untouched. Here, again, the questionings and investigations of the critics and historians have brought great gain. It is true that we are still in doubt about some of his words; that his exact meaning on some points we shall perhaps never be able to ascertain; that the stories of some of his reputed deeds bear the after-growths of exaggeration and legend about them; but, allowing for all this, there still remains the life which has captured the affections and captivated the imagination of mankind—the indignation at the ways of crowned Wrong which utters its blind commands in the name of Right, the sublime scorn for the ways of the world, the love which overwhelms selfishness, the purity which shames sin, the simplicity which silently —but all the more effectively—rebukes luxury, the gentleness which finds its way to the hearts of children, the perfect peace and confidence which in its calm repose on God, allays our sorrows and unrest—all this the world will not willingly let die, all this our questionings have revealed to us in clearer light.

The authority of Christ is simply the highest and holiest of all authority—the authority of moral greatness. That greatness draws us like any other greatness, intellectual or artistic, and we feel its power, just as we feel the power of all other types of greatness, so long as we sit at its feet, humbly and reverently, seeking a greater richness and fulness for our common life by communion with the deep interior lives of those great ones of the earth who give us clearer spiritual light and nobler spiritual power.

And the fourth great groove into which the questionings of our time have run, I said, is concerned with the Bible, and the interpretation of the Bible. Here I need not say much, as I begin the special series of discourses on the Bible next Sunday evening, and I shall then have ample opportunity for entering upon this part of the subject at greater length. But I may say this—that the old idea that every word of the Bible was inspired by God, that every verse and proposition in it was of the Divine Spirit and of equal value – that idea also has gone for ever. I do not know of a single theologian of any repute who now holds it. Science, history, and criticism have here done, and are doing, their work with a thoroughness and completeness which are truly marvellous. They have taken us to the very springs and sources of human thought, and have bid us discern, and drink for ourselves, the clear or the

turbid waters. Now that throws us back upon our own mines and makes greater demands upon us. Whatever truths the Bible contains have to come to us through the intermediary of our own spiritual discernment, and be woven into our nature by our own mental and spiritual effort. Now that the Bible does contain these great truths, not merely explicit in its words, but implicit in its legends, stories, and histories, no thoughtful man would think of denying. Criticism, in clearing away much that was of doubtful value in the Bible, has made this diviner element more clear, and the whole teaching of the Bible, properly understood, less misleading. But this diviner element has to be sought for, and not only sought for, but put in its true relations with all the other elements which go to make up the great panorama of human life and history. Hence the next ten or twelve Sunday evenings I hope to introduce you to this great stream of human thought as it presents itself to and is interpreted by some of the best and most finely equipped minds in Europe—a stream of human thought of which no thoughtful man or woman can afford to remain ignorant, which has moulded the religious life of a large portion of humanity for scores of generations, and which has slowly interwoven itself with the moral and spiritual fabric of our Western civilisation.

What, then, is the result, so far, of all these religious questionings of our time? It is surely this—that

while there has been much undermining and cutting away of non-essential and now rapidly-decaying dogmas, the great fundamentals of religion remain. The All-pervading Presence of the Supreme Spirit; the worth and dignity of Human Nature, ever advancing to greater worth and power and dignity; the solemn unfolding and spiritual development of the life to come; the heroic and noble simplicity of Jesus to inspire us on our way; the noble aspirations, and struggles, and traditions, and sorrows, and joys of our forefathers in the past—all these remain. But within and beyond these, how much is there for us to accomplish? We see, all along the line of history, a progressive development of human thought, now resting in fixed forms which tend to become traditional, now leaving those forms behind to kindle, and animate, and vivify new and higher types of life. We live, for good or ill, in one of these latter times. Just as, in the first and second centuries—as has been well shown by Dr. Hatch and Dr. Gardner—the infantile Jewish Christianity, meeting the broad and mighty stream of Greek thought, was forced to adjust itself to that new and vast environment, and so had to modify every part of its intellectual or theological structure; just as Christianity, at the close of the middle ages, met that mighty stream of thought which we call the Renaissance, and had to adjust itself to the new thought and the new learning—so too the religious

life of our own day has to meet another mighty stream of thought, more searching, more penetrating, more overwhelming in its sweep and grasp, the stream of modern evolutionary Science. It must take into itself this new stream of thought, it must welcome and assimilate the ideas which it brings, fashioning them into more potent instruments for the ordering and beautifying of our human life and the ennobling of our human thoughts and ideals. And what a work is there! How amazed one is to see men and women, and young men and young women, wasting their precious hours on shallow, frothy, feeble current literature, and neglecting these great streams of thought and literature of the past! How ill-fitted such men and women must be to cope with the many problems which beset us in this universal awakening and unrest! How poor and starved such natures must be in the essential elements of religious life—of admiration, aspiration, reverence, hope, and love! For these are the dominating factors and impulses at the back of all great movements and in the lives of all great men. Isaiah, Socrates, Plato, Jesus, John, Paul —dreamers all, who gave to men new standards of judgment and new types of life, by which humanity might outgrow the feebler and exhausted types of the past, and so renew and vitalise its spiritual energies. They came that "men might have life and have it more abundantly." That, indeed, is the religious

spirit, and no questionings can undermine it. It belongs to the Eternal Verities. It is rooted in the very structure of the universe—in the heart of God. No, let us not imagine that the religion of to-day is less vital, less spiritual, less instinct with high hopes than that of previous days. "As you stand at the base of a mountain," says a thoughtful American preacher (the Rev. S. M. Crothers), speaking at the International Conference of Liberal thinkers, "you see perhaps a cloud hanging on the summit. It seems to you as if the little cloud has drifted across the sky, and is 'shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind.' But as you approach you feel that the wind is keen, and you see the hurrying particles of the mist. You ask why does not the wind drive the cloud away. Then you come to see that you are in the great laboratory of the sky, where the clouds are being made. From the lowlands the winds are sweeping up, trying to storm the mountains, forcing up the moisture-laden air. Just as they reach the summit the burden they have carried becomes visible. The wind is ever driving the particles upward, ever forming there the cloud at the summit. So it is with all the heights of human life. They are always shrouded in mystery. The winds (of thought) do not dissipate it, they create it. Courage, love, devotion, are lifted up to the heights. Behold there the ever-present mystery of Godliness! All life is touched at last by something

which we cannot understand. The whole life of man, all his civilisation, all his knowledge, all his achievements, are borne along by eternal forces, and reach at length to that great mystery wherein the thought of that which is highest in man blends insensibly with religion and with worship." Let us try to live on the heights, near to the "mystery of godliness," with spirits touched by courage, devotion, and love. There we shall meet with many who have communed with the Spirit of God, and, having communed, have won Immortal Life, and found that:

> "Out of the dark this circling sphere
> Is rounding onward to the light;
> We see not yet the full day here,
> We do but see the paling light."

II

# WHY STUDY THE BIBLE?

Romans xv. 4—"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience, and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope."

I CANNOT begin this series of discourses better than by a quotation from one of the foremost of English Old Testament Scholars—Canon Cheyne, of Oxford. "Sympathy," says Canon Cheyne, in his great work on the Psalter, "Sympathy is an essential condition of historical insight. With such sympathy let us go back into a far-off land, like that from which the Magi came, the land of Israel's religious antiquity. Let us study the products of the soil and gather such precious gifts as we can for Him to whom the star will point us. . . . Let St Paul be our model—St. Paul, that great reviser of exegesis, and yet steeped in reverence. The truths of the past let us, like him, revere, but not its errors. Imposing enough were

those errors in the past. A poetic attractiveness they had, which ensured their supremacy, and the Christian ideas of which they were the vehicle gave them the semblance of truth. But by degrees religion has outgrown its shelter. Fancied knowledge respecting the Old Testament has been weighed in the balances and found wanting. The old house has fallen and great has been the fall of it. To us, teachers of historical theology, and cramped by no theory of the inspiration of books, younger students look for guidance in the seeming chaos. . . . Historical truth is not like a sinking star, and if we band ourselves together in manly modesty we shall accomplish a serviceable though still imperfect reconstruction."

"Sympathy is an essential condition of historical insight"—that will be the keynote of this series of discourses on this ancient literature. But it will be, I hope, a discerning sympathy, a sympathy which tries to arrive at a true scale of values; which, while rejecting errors, yet strives to put itself in touch with the moods and feelings out of which those errors arose, and then sets itself to conserve the finer and nobler elements of truth which the elimination of error leaves behind as a deposit on which mankind has to build its thought and life. The old idea that the Bible is one book, that its parts are of equal value, that it was dictated by the Supreme Spirit,

in some miraculous or non-natural way—all that has gone for ever. This literature is a human literature, some of its various parts written hundreds, nay, a thousand years apart, and we must bring to it our human standard of judgment and appreciation. In no other way can we utilize its truths and beauties for our modern religious thought and life. In no other way can we separate the gold from the dross which is inevitably blended in the ore of human thought and endeavour.

But why study the Bible at all? it is often asked. Why go back to these far off ages to search for truth and wisdom? Have we not our own literature, our own art, our own poetry, our own scientific activities, our own philosophic speculations, without wasting our time among the dust and *debris* of ancient civilizations? Those who talk in this way little know how much we are indebted for what is best in our own civilization to the races and civilizations of Asia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. But this question—Why study the Bible? brings up the further question—what *are* we to study in our life? For we are bound to be exclusive. We cannot study everything. Hence, one will give his time to Art, another to Science, another to Literature, another to Philosophy, another to Religion, and so on. But every one, in so far as he has the least modicum of wisdom,—if he studies Art, he will go to

the masters in Art; if he studies Literature, he will go to the masters in Literature; if he studies Science, he will go to the masters in Science; if he studies Philosophy, he will go to the masters in Philosophy. Now, we are all concerned, more or less, with religion, with the mysteries of Life and Death, with the laws of Nature and the Universe, with the true way of life. Hence, if we would know something of Religion, something of this greatest of the forces which have moulded our human life, we must go to the masters of religious thought—men who have made it the special business of their lives to study the relation of man to the universe, of the soul to God, to see what glimmering of light we can get from their labour and their thought. We do not bind ourselves absolutely to their dicta, any more than Scientists bind themselves to the dicta of Kepler or Newton, or artists to the methods of Giotto or Raphael, or philosophers to the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle, but to neglect them would be as foolish as for a young student of art or science to neglect the precepts and teachings of the great masters. The idea I am trying to express is this: that in everything, we have great choices incessantly placed before us,—whether in thinking, acting, reading, we may choose the great or the small, the good, the bad, or the indifferent. And if we are going to choose the small, the music-hall ditties instead of the

works of the great masters, the daubs instead of the works of the great artists, the newspaper and the novelettes instead of the great classics—and the Bible is a classic —then we are going to stunt, and maim, and narrow, and degrade our lives to the littleness we love. Nay, go to any picture gallery, go to any great concert, take up any book which deals with the graver questions of life, and you cannot but be brought into contact with things and ideas which show how universally the leading ideas of the Bible have entered into the higher life of man. To be ignorant of these leading ideas is worse than to be ignorant of the leading ideas of Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, Emerson, or any of the great spirits of the modern era. Even from the historical and critical point of view it is well to know something of this great literature, for, as you know, in the Reformation and Puritan times it was the one great book of our forefathers. To them it was newspaper, magazine, novel, hymn and prayer book in one. In Catholic times, to the mass of men, the Bible was a comparatively unknown book, written in strange and unknown tongues, and even when it was first translated the Church forbade its common use under dire penalties, and burnt the translations by thousands. Martin Luther himself, though a monk, never read the Bible until he was twenty years of age. But, as I have pointed out in my little book, "The Evolution of Christianity," the

moment the Scriptures were translated into the common tongues they took possession of the popular imagination. When the six Bibles were first set up in the nave of St Paul's Cathedral crowds gathered round, day after day, to hear them publicly read. The new printing-press soon spread the popular translations broadcast despite the opposition of the Church. "If God spare my life," said William Tyndale, the printer, to a learned opponent, "ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture than thou dost." The new literature came like a new revelation. It was, indeed, the only literature as far as the people were concerned, and men went to it not so much for its theology, as for its legends, its battle-cries, its psalms, its prophetic denunciations of wrong, its biographies, its visions of a golden age when "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall blossom as the rose," its parables, its matchless story of the sublime heroism and self-sacrifice of Jesus. The effect was amazing. All the nobler activities of life were concentrated for the time on the assimilation of this new mine of thought which went to change, and revolutionise, and transform the spiritual impulses, —the morality, the politics, the religion—of the people. The Reformers had sent men back to the inner life, to their own individual conscience. But conscience itself must have something to feed and

educate itself upon. Here it was, as men thought, in the very word of God, as against the incomprehensible creeds of the Roman Catholic Church. And so, time after time, during the long struggle of the Reformation, the people gathered in hundreds, in thousands, in tens of thousands, to sing their new-born faith in the thundertones of the prophets and psalmists. And thus, often out of soil fertilized with blood, a new religious spirit arose, more strenuous, more vigorous, more self-contained than of old, to take the place of the sweet. subtle, sensuous charm of the ritual of the Church; and hymn and psalm, the great words of the prophets, and the gentler and more persuasive words of Jesus, began to mingle with the daily life and toil of the people—with the pulsing of the shuttle and the loom, the ring of the hammer on the anvil, the swing of the scythe and the beat of the flail. Hence, modern history, during the Reformation and Puritan times especially, was largely the outcome of religious forces which sprang from a popular study of the Bible. How necessary, then, to try to get a true and an intelligible view of the forces and aspirations which brought this great literature into being! We shall be the better able to understand the literature itself, and whatever guidance we get from it will be all the surer.

But apart from all this, there are two further

reasons which should induce to the study of the Bible, reasons which should be conclusive for every one. I may term them, roughly speaking, (1) the moral, and (2) the religious reason. The earliest thoughts of every people tend to converge round these two great ideas 'morality,' and 'religion.' The right way of life? Whence do I come? Whither shall I go when I die? These are questions which have troubled the mind of man ever since he emerged out of the morning twilight of savagery and barbarism. These questionings have had two important results. In every great race they have crystallized into what is called a sacred literature or Bible, containing some account of the early thoughts of men about these grave questions of life and destiny. And so we have at least six great Bibles in the world—the Vedas of the Hindoos, the Tripitika of the Buddhists, the Zend Avesta of the Parsees, the Sacred Books of the Chinese, the Koran of the Mohammedans, and the Jewish and Christian Scriptures. All these have their millions upon millions of readers. All have brought, in their way, comfort and consolation to the unrecorded millions who have passed away. All have some message on these grave questions: Whence come we? Whither are we going? What is life? Death? the Soul? God? And the more recent of these great literatures, particularly our own Bible and the Koran,

have undoubtedly had indirectly stamped upon their thought and teaching, something of the thought and teaching of the peoples of the East. Hence, we are here, as it were, in contact with the primal sources of human thought. In studying our own Bible we are bound to push our way back to these primal sources, to the men who wrote it, to the streams of thought which fed and enriched and fertilized their minds, and we find ourselves compelled to acknowledge that not one book nor one Bible contains the whole truth about Man and Destiny, but that many streams have helped to swell this great river of human life as it flows on into the Infinite Life of God.

> "Children of men! the unseen Powerye who, see
> Forever doth accompany mankind,
> Hath looked on no religion scornfully
> That ever man did find.
>
> Which has not taught weak wills how much they can?
> Which has not fall'n on the dry heart like rain?
> Which has not cried to sunk, self-weary man:
> Thou must be born again?"

But the special peculiarity of our own Bible is this —that not only does it contain explicitly, the teachings of some of the wisest men of the past on the true way of life, but it contains, implicitly, in the story of the lives both of individuals and of the Jewish people

itself, the proof that its highest teachings *are* the true way of life. If the Bible simply said—"Be good, be honourable, be righteous"—then its teachings would be of comparatively small value, for we should then have to fill in, from our own minds, the context of these great conceptions—"Goodness, Honour, Righteousness." But when it shows us, as it does indisputably show us, that wherever men and nations have slid from the pathways of goodness, honour, and righteousness, into the devious ways of evil, dishonour, and unrighteousness, they and their works have descended into untraceable ruin, then its teachings and warnings become solemn and weighty indeed. Man, Righteousness, God—these are the great themes round which the thought of the Bible revolves, sometimes descending, in its story of human development, to the lowest deeps of superstition, savagery, and barbarism, at other times rising to the loftiest heights of nobility and heroism. It is the story of the education of one great branch of the human race in character, in morality; and to be ignorant of that story is to be ignorant of the most important part of human history.

Lastly, there is a religious reason why we should study the Bible. Everywhere, as I pointed out in my last discourse, everywhere there is going on a questioning in men's minds which goes to the very fundamentals of religious theories and doctrines. In all these questionings we are bidden to go to the Bible as the

final authority. But, as I have tried to show, and as the Higher Criticism convincingly proves, the Bible cannot be the final authority. It is the human spirit, as an efflux of the Divine Spirit, which has produced all the Bibles in the world, and which must therefore be regarded as the final authority. To this great test we must bring all Bibles, and therefore all the dogmas and all the creeds which are based on the Bible. As Canon Cheyne says, "let St. Paul be our model here, —St. Paul that great reviser of exegesis, yet steeped in reverence." Let me explain what I mean, for it is only after a long battle that this position of freedom of inquiry has been won. You all know the story of how Dr. Colenso was brought to a conscientious full stop by the question of one of his Zulu converts. "While translating the story of the flood," writes Colenso, "I have had a simple minded but intelligent native—one with the docility of a child but the reasoning powers of mature age—look up and ask—'Is all that true? Do you really believe that all this happened thus,—that all the beasts and birds and creeping things upon the earth, large and small, from hot countries and from cold, came thus by pairs and entered into the ark with Noah? And did Noah gather food for them all, for the beasts and birds of prey, as well as for the rest?' My heart answered," says Colenso, in the words of the prophet—'Shall a man speak lies in the name of the Lord? I dared not do so.' When

Colenso published his famous treatise showing the historical inaccuracies of the Pentateuch, the Bishop of Carlisle denounced him as doing the Devil's work, and the Bishop of Manchester ascribed to him 'a savage glee and exultation which would rather become a successful fiend than the minister of a Christian congregation.' A Committee of the Convocation of Canterbury condemned Colenso's book; he was virtually unfrocked by his superior Bishop here, only to be reinstated by the Privy Council eighteen months afterwards.[1] And Dean Burgon declared from the Oxford University pulpit, that "the Bible is none other than the voice of Him that sitteth upon the throne. Every book of it, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every letter of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High. The Bible is none other than the Word of God, not some part of it more, some part of it less, but all alike the utterance of Him who sitteth upon the throne, faultless, unerring, supreme."[2] Now, what is the actual result of Colenso's work in Biblical criticism? Why, that his main conclusions are now accepted and taught in all the universities and theological colleges of Great Britain. I give this incident as an example, one out of hundreds, of the way in which the right of free inquiry has been won, the right, that is, of the human spirit to bring all things

[1] See Prof. Carpenter's "The Bible in the Nineteenth Century," chap. I.

[2] Quoted by Prof. Carpenter. *Ibid.* chap. I.

which are the outcome of itself to the tests which it alone can apply—the tests of experience, of scientific and historical investigation, in a word, of the moral sense and reason of man. Our thought of to-day, though it may be helped, should not be fettered, by the thought of two thousand years ago. But now, this follows—that in these grave religious questionings of our time it is not merely the fable of Eden, or the story of a Universal Deluge, or of Samson's asinine jawbone, that is at stake, it is the whole superstructure of dogmatic theology. The Fall of Man, Original Sin, the supposed Divine Covenant with a favoured people, the doctrine of a personal Messiah and the Second Coming, the Miraculous birth of Jesus, the Ascension, the Resurrection of the Body, Vicarious Sacrifice, the dogma of eternal perdition, the infallibility of the Bible, the separatism of the priesthood, the saving efficacy of ritual or ceremonial—all this is at stake. These are the questions which are shaking Christian Society to its foundations. Now, surely, you can see why we should study the Bible—to get light on these important questions; to ascertain what claims the Bible makes for itself; to see whether all these doctrines have taken their rise from actual historic facts, or from the after-growths of legend, superstition, and theological speculation; above all, to ascertain whether the Bible makes the acceptance of all these doctrines essential to religious life, or whether it does not make a simpler, nobler

appeal to the life, the heart, the spirit of man: "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright for the end of that man is peace." "God is Love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." Or the immortal words of the King in the parable: "Inasmuch as ye have done these things unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done them unto me."

This is the highest teaching of the Bible—highest because it has stood the test of ages of experience, and appeals to the heart of all, while the vast superstructure of dogma to which I have referred is cracking on every side. It is not many years ago that our orthodox friends called those of us who rely upon the inner voice of the spirit 'heretics' and 'unbelievers' and remarked, with sad faces, that though we might be very good people, they were very sorry for us. Really, if one desired to be uncharitable, one might say that the tables are being turned, and that though our orthodox friends are very good people, it is amazing how they can accept as Christianity the curious mixture of superstition and dogma which too often goes by that name. They have laid stress on the wrong things; they have brought to the study of the Bible their preconceived theories, unillumined by history, of what they thought it ought to teach, and so

their interpretation both of the various parts and of the whole has often been misleading. Stated forms and regular performance of ritual, calendars of sacred days, lists of prohibited meats, outward sacrifices, consecrated wafers, elaborate creeds and systems of theology, a separate order of men called a priesthood, dignified by a peculiar and sometimes fantastic dress—these are the mere husk and shard of the Bible and religion, and have no more to do, *necessarily*, with the core and spirit of religion than have the processions of the Grand Llama of Thibet, or the kissing of the Pope's toe. No. Revelation is something greater and holier than these things. It is the breaking in of new light. The soul of man is often covered by the clouds of ignorance or the mists of sin and passion—when the light of intellectual or moral truth pierces the clouds and dispels the mists—that is Revelation. It is a vital process, a work of the spirit, a growth towards perfection—seen most clearly in those whose lives are touched to finest issues, or those who "walk in lonely beauty" on the mountain tops of thought, or those, again, who, like Jesus, draw men after them by the saintly purity of their lives. We are drawn to these, and to the heights on which they live, by their higher spiritual power, and, being drawn, we are slowly gifted with clearer sight. Our tests and standards of moral and spiritual value are shifted on to another plane—the dry and repulsive details of Leviticus, the supposed

commands of an offended Deity, the cursings of a Psalmist, or the bias and particularism of priest or scribe—these take their proper place, and the Bible, as Dr. Drummond well says, "from being the despot of the intellect, becomes the minister of the spirit. We begin to see its contents in their true proportions and relations. . . . The latent forces of our own souls are thus called into exercise. A cut and dried theology no longer oppresses the activity of thought. A law of commandments and ordinances no longer supersedes the energy of conscience. We begin to see that an earthen vessel may contain a treasure of gold, and that the Spirit of God is not shut out by the limitations of human intelligence. Delicate beauties and subtle truths become apparent, which theologians have too often overlooked. The ancient books become tremulous with living light. We give the love of Christ within us; and this love draws our souls to God, and is a well of water springing up into everlasting life."[1]

Why study the Bible? Surely, there are a hundred reasons, and we shall find these reasons grow upon us, as we pursue our studies through this series of discourses. While sitting at the feet of ancient masters, however, let us never forget that religious thought is constantly changing from age to age, that we are the instruments, the media, poor and imperfect may be,

[1] Essay on Religion and Theology in *Religion and Life.*

through which that thought, the light of God, has to shine, and that if we are afraid of that light, or if we obscure it by artificial veils and ancient modes of vision, its rays, like wandering marshlights, tend to bring confusion and doubt to the mind, instead of that peace and confidence which reposes on the ordered laws of God, and which comes as the natural reward of the aspirations and yearnings of His Spirit within us.

## III

# HOW THE OLD TESTAMENT WAS COMPILED

Romans xv. 4—"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope."

In the *Life of Lord Shaftesbury* we are told that the great philanthropist was much annoyed by the assertion of the new school of Biblical critics which was already arising in his day, that all the books of the Bible were not on the same level of inspiration. "There is no security whatever," he said, "except in standing upon the faith of our fathers, and saying that the blessed old book is God's word written, from the very first syllable to the very last, and from the last book to the first." And Dean Burgon, as I pointed out in my last discourse, declared from the Oxford University pulpit, at the time of the *Essays and Reviews* controversy, that "every book of the

Bible, every chapter of it, every verse of it, every syllable of it, is the direct utterance of the Most High."

These utterances show how egregiously men of more than average learning and ability may err when they are ignorant of the facts of which they speak, or when they approach a subject from the point of view of preconceived theories. Others again, object and say: "If one part of the Bible is wrong how can we be sure that other parts are true?" Foolish as such an objection may be, I have more than once heard it urged by even otherwise intelligent people. Such utterances, again, show how warped our minds may become by the spiritual atmosphere in which we are reared. No one would think of making such an objection in regard to any other book. Shakespeare, as we know, made many mistakes. He wrote some things which we would prefer that he had not written. And yet no one would think of putting the treasures of Shakespeare aside because of the mistakes he made. So with every book in the world, except, perhaps, arithmetical and mathematical treatises. Homer, Plato, and Aristotle; Dante, Milton, and all our great modern writers made mistakes, and very grave mistakes, owing to the limitations of human knowledge in their time, but we should be foolish indeed were we to lay aside their truths and beauties be-

cause of their errors. In all things, and especially in studying history and literature, we have to use the faculties with which God has endowed us, the faculties of conscience, sympathy, reason, of spiritual apprehension and discrimination, in order to discern and appreciate truth and beauty. In so far as we refuse to do this our souls tend to become dead within us. I should be disposed to apologise for dealing with so feeble an objection did I not know that many people approach this subject of the critical study of the Bible with troubled minds and trembling hearts. In this series of discourses then I wish to be of some service, in stimulating to a worthier study and a truer interpretation of the Bible, both to those who perhaps may not think it worth serious study, and to those who believe it to be the veritable word of God.

How, then, did the old Testament come into existence? How did it come to be written? And who determined what should be included in it? Before I proceed to answer these questions it will be well to keep fixed before our minds one or two very simple facts. First, that the Bible is not one book, but many. That between the writing of the first portions and the later books more than a thousand years elapsed; that many of the ancient books, as the Bible itself tells us—such as the Book of Jasher, the Book of Nathan and Gad, the prophecy

of Enoch,—were lost or destroyed, and we shall therefore never know their contents; that others of the ancient books, like those of the Apocrypha, are included in some Bibles and excluded from others. You can easily understand why this is if you cast the difficulty of compiling a Bible into modern shape. Suppose you try to collect some of the best historical, theological, and poetical works in English literature, from the time of Alfred the Great or even from the time of Chaucer, down to Macaulay and Freeman, Tennyson and Browning—what a difficult task it would be? And how diverse would be the opinions of different authorities as to what should or should not be included in this great Bible or collection of English literature. So it is, or was, with this collection of Hebrew literature which we call the Bible—though the range of literature to choose from was, of course, much smaller; but, on the other side, there were even greater difficulties than we should have to-day, in the matter for example, of authentic records and accuracy of text. But the collection was made—how, we shall see in due course.

Our first question, then, is—how did the Bible, or the earliest parts of the Bible, come to be written? Nay, which are the earliest parts of the Bible? For to suppose that the books of the Bible were written in the order in which they appeared—Genesis,

Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and so on—would be to make a very grave mistake. These books are of comparatively late date, and appeared, *in their present form*, long after the Exile, that is in the fifth century B. C. Probably the earliest written parts of the Bible were the Ten Commandments, in much shorter form than we now have them, battle-songs, like the Song of Moses,[1] and the Song of Deborah and the "Book of the Covenant" (Exodus xx. 22—xxiii. 33). These, however, did not receive their present setting until the date above named. But let us try to get to the source whence the legends of these supposed earlier books were derived.

It is matter of common knowledge now that during the last half of the 19th century, many thousands of tablets of cuneiform writing have been unearthed from the cities of Babylonia. The story of the gradual decipherment of the writing on these tablets, and the yielding of their long-buried secrets to the patience of genius, I have not time to tell. You will find it—and a most interesting story it is—in the writings of Professor Sayce, Mr. George Smith, and other Assyriologists. I can only say here that those tablets give accounts of a very ancient civilization—the Babylonian, and of a more ancient civiliza-

[1] Even this is of late date—see Exodus xv. 13, where "holy habitation" implies the existence of the Temple at Jerusalem.

tion still—the Accadian, on which the Babylonian was based, and which was at its height long before the Israelitish nation came into being. This Babylonian literature goes back to a remote date and represents a highly cultured civilization. Every great city had its library. The "books" or clay tablets were carefully catalogued, arranged on shelves, and were accessible to every reader. Already a larger literature has been unearthed from these buried libraries than is comprised in our own Old Testament, and there are large libraries yet to bring to the light of day. In these libraries every branch of knowledge was represented—theology, astronomy, astrology, medicine, philology, geography, botany, history, mathematics, law and poetry. There were grammars, dictionaries, phrase-books, and commentaries. Collections of letters have also been unearthed, and we can read to-day, says Professor Sayce, the private correspondence, the love letters, and the business letters of men who lived five thousand years ago. All this represented, I say, a high stage of civilization. The cities of Babylonia were busy centres of trade. Commercial intercourse was carried on with the great cities of the East and West. Wheat, dates, and date wine were exported in large quantities. Vast flocks of sheep were kept, and wool was made into curtains, rugs, and dyed fabrics of various kinds. A large banking business was done. Law, civil, and

military government was organised and carried on in a high state of efficiency.

What is the bearing of all this on the earlier books of our own Bible? It is this—that amongst the tablets unearthed from these buried libraries, there has been discovered an account of the creation, very similar to the account given in Genesis—even the very wording and phrases of Genesis occur in it, says Prof. Sayce—a creation, however, not by the Israelitish God Yahweh (or Jehovah, the name Jehovah, by the way, being an erroneous form. "Jehovah" was never heard of before our own translators constructed the word from a misunderstanding of the text). This account of the creation, I say, ascribes it not to the Israelitish God Yahweh, but to the Babylonian and Accadian gods. We are told, also, on these tablets, of the institution of the Sabbath. The tree of life has also been found represented on Assyrian monuments; and one Babylonian gem has been discovered on which is represented a tree, on either side of which are seated a man and a woman with a serpent behind them, and their hands are stretched out towards the fruit which hangs upon the tree. There has also been discovered an account of the Deluge, very similar to the one we havein Genesis. This Deluge is also ascribed to the Babylonian gods.

What is the inference from all this? Surely this—that these legends were derived from a Babylonian

or Accadian source. We know that some of the Semitic tribes sprang from Chaldea and Babylonia. The Bible itself tells us that Terah, the father of Abraham, went forth from Ur of the Chaldees into the land of Canaan. Now, it is hardly likely that these wandering pastoral tribes, the ancestors of the Israelites, carried copies of these ancient legends about with them. But these legends would certainly be known to their priests, seers, and medicine men; they would float in their minds as traditions, perhaps for hundreds of years. When they were first written down in Hebrew no one knows. But we do know, approximately, when they were first compiled in the form in which we now have them. How do we know? The evidence is overwhelming, and is far too intricate to enter upon in detail here. We shall see how it grows upon us as we proceed. But a point like this is surely convincing enough to every one. In the 36th chapter of Genesis we find this sentence: "And these are the kings that reigned in Edom, before there reigned any king over the children of Israel." Now that, and many other like sentences, obviously fixes the date of this particular document later than the establishment of the Hebrew monarchy, for no writer would think of writing in that way of kings before kings were known in the land. Then, again, the ceremonial legislation of Deuteronomy and Leviticus betokens a state of

society and religion centuries in advance of that described in the "Book of the Covenant" (Exodus xx. 22, to xxiii. 33) as belonging to the age of Moses, though it is certainly much later. For example, in Exodus xx. 24, altars and sacrifices are expressly permitted in different parts of the land, and we know that this practice was followed for centuries; but in Deuteronomy and later parts of the law local sanctuaries are forbidden and sacrifices are only permitted at the central sanctuary at Jerusalem. Again, there is a gradual and perceptible development in the status and functions of the priesthood. In early times (see the story of Micah in Judges, chapters xvii. and xviii.) a layman might act as a priest; then in Deuteronomy we are told that only Levites were qualified to serve as priests of Yahweh. But in Leviticus we find that differentiation of function has so far taken place that the Levites are looked upon as a strictly subordinate body only qualified to serve as assistants to the priests. As a matter of history we know that this subordination of the Levites to the priesthood took place long after the Exile. The legitimate inference is, then, that these five books of the Law, so far from being the earliest parts of the Bible, represent various strata or deposits of priestly legislation covering some hundreds of years, that is, from the time of Moses in the 14th century B.C. to the time of Ezra in the 5th century B.C., though up to

recent times they have been commonly ascribed to Moses.

It follows from this, of course, that these books of the Law must be of composite authorship, that is, they are the work of several hands, the whole being edited by a later hand. Here again the evidence is overwhelming. As you may read for yourselves, there are in Genesis two narratives of the Creation, two stories of the Flood, two explanations of the origin of the name of Israel. This doubleness (more than doubleness, indeed,) continues through the whole of the Hexateuch. More convincing still, the writers of these two accounts each use a different name for the Almighty—one uses the term *Elohim*, the other uses the term *Yahweh*. Turn to the sixth chapter of Exodus and you will find this sentence, on which the modern analysis hangs: "I am Yahweh and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name Yahweh I was not known to them." That is, according to this account the name *Yahweh* or *Jehovah* was revealed for the first time to Moses, before then it was unknown. And yet one writer from the very beginning of Genesis implies that the name *Yahweh* was known from the beginning, and he is made to appear to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. The other writer, who uses the word *Elohim*, implies that the Divine Name *Yahweh* was unknown till the time of Moses.

Here, then, are two distinct documents, termed the J and E documents, welded together by a later editor. Then there is the Deuteronomic Code which, from its own evidence, again represents a different stage of ceremonial legislation and religious development. This document is designated by the letter D. Lastly, there is a further document, which embraces a mass of priestly legislation in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, and part of the narrative in *Joshua* This is called the Priestly Code, and it, in turn, is designated by the letter P. But it must be clearly understood that these unknown authorities signified by the letters J-E, D and P, are not the authors or original writers of these respective portions of the Pentateuch. They are, rather, compilers editing fragments of older literature, and perhaps adding such matter as they and their fellow priests and scribes deemed needful at the time. This conclusion, then, is now universally accepted amongst critics —that these books of the Law, and the appendix, *Joshua*, are the work of at least five independent compilers—J, E, J-E united, D, and P; and you can now buy, if you like, what is called a chromo-Bible, which shows, by differently coloured type, which portions of the Hexateuch are by these different writers, or rather compilers.

I have dealt at this length with the compilation of these supposed earlier books because it is in these

anonymous priestly writings that the greatest difficulties are found. The other books of the Old Testament, many of them of unknown authorship, do not present such great difficulties, except, perhaps, the Psalms. The early historical books —*Judges*, *Samuel*, and *Kings*—originally classed among the prophetical writings, tell the story of the rise of Israel and its history as a nation. Then we have the Psalms, really the Second Temple hymn-book, (mostly of unknown authorship); the Book of Job, —one of the finest dramas of ancient times—and the Wisdom literature, also of unknown authorship; then the writings of the prophets, the virtual creators, as we shall see, of the Bible and the higher Judaism —these, with the exception of numerous interpolated fragments, were mostly the spoken or the written word of the men whose names they bear. The latter part of *Isaiah*, however, (chapters xl. to lxvi.) was not written by Isaiah, but by a much later writer during the Exile, and chapters xxiv.-xxvii. are a post-Exile interpolation. *Zechariah* is also of composite authorship; and the book of *Daniel* was not written by the great and pious Jew of that name, who lived about the beginning of the 6th century B.C., but bears evidence of being of much later date *i.e.*, about the middle of the second century B.C., *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, originally one book, were not compiled by these men, but probably by the com-

piler of *Chronicles*, about 300 B.C.[1] *Ruth*, *Jonah*, and *Esther*, are Jewish tales, written with a religious or didactic purpose.

But now, how and when were all these books brought together and made into one? Here, again, investigation and criticism, beyond a certain point, have to give way to guesses and speculation. We are told in the book of *Nehemiah* that Ezra, the scribe, after the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in the year 444 B.C. (*i.e.*, 900 years after the age of Moses) brought "the Book of the Law of Moses" and read it to the people from early morning until midday, and for seven or eight days during the ensuing Feast of Tabernacles. This event was a most solemn one. "Men, women and children assembled on the open place before the water-gate of the Temple. A lofty and capacious platform had been erected. Upon this Ezra took his stand, with fourteen priests, seven on his right hand and seven on his left. At the request of the people he had brought from the Temple the 'book of the Law of Moses, which Yahweh had commanded to Israel.' He now opens the roll: the whole multitude stands up; Ezra utters a doxology to which the people respond, 'Amen, Amen,' bowing down to the earth and worshipping. The reading begins. Distributed

[1] See Canon Driver's Introduction to the Literature of the O. T. chapter xii.

among the people there are some Levites whose task it is to repeat and, where necessary, to explain the words read by Ezra. So deep is the impression made by the word of the Law, so violent is the emotion aroused by it, that Nehemiah, Ezra, and his assistants. have to guard against extravagance. 'This day,' they say, 'is holy unto Yahweh, mourn not, therefore, nor weep, rather go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared;' let it be a day of joy and remain so. The people give ear to this exhortation. The next day they all assemble again and the reading of the Law is resumed."[1] And so the solemn ceremony goes on for one or two days, and the public reading is again resumed during the ensuing Feast.

This great event, the public promulgation of the "Book of the Law" was the beginning of the compilation of the Bible as we now have it. But this refers only to the first five books. From that time onward the "Torah" or "Law" was probably read in the Jewish meeting-places every Sabbath Day, and was held in great veneration by every pious Jew. As to the further formation of the canon and its ultimate completion there is great uncertainty. We read in II. Maccabees, an apocryphal book, that

[1] Kuenen, *The Religion of Israel*, chapter viii; see also *Nehemiah*, chapter viii.

Nehemiah founded a library, "and gathered together the books about the kings and prophets, and in like manner Judas Maccabeus gathered together for us all those writings that had been scattered by reason of the war that befell." This was in the second century before Christ. There is an allusion in Josephus, towards the end of the first century after Christ, which seems to imply that the canon was then closed. "For during so many ages as have already passed," he says, "no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them [the Scriptures], to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it has become very natural to all Jews immediately and from their birth to esteem these books to contain divine doctrine." But even in the first century after Christ doubts existed as to the canonicity of *Ecclesiastes*, *Canticles*, *Esther*, and *Proverbs*, on account of the heretical and worldly tendencies to be discerned in these books. Different opinions continued to prevail about these until, in the year 90 A.D., the canon seems to have been definitely settled as we now have it by a Synod held at Jamnia in that year. Jewish rabbis still differed, however, about the worth and canonicity of the above named books, but the opinions of the minority were not strong enough to exclude them any longer from the generally recognised canon. Some authorities are of opinion that the men of the Great

Synagogue, continuing the work of Ezra, fixed the canon of the Old Testament, but, as Canon Driver points out, this is mere conjecture. What is certain is this—that up to the year 444 B.C., *i.e.*, the time of Ezra, there was no such thing as an Old Testament at all; that after that date, many other writings besides the books of the Law came very gradually to be regarded as sacred; but that right down to the Christian era it was matter of dispute whether such books as *Esther*, *Ecclesiastes*, and the Song of Solomon, should be included in the Scriptures. With regard to the later writings called the *Apocrypha*, the Catholic Church includes these in its Bible, the Protestant Church excludes them. It is probable that the canon as we now have it grew slowly by tradition, helped by the opinion of the learned Rabbis,—the Law, as most sacred, taking the first and highest place, the Psalms, the historical, and the prophetic and other writings being slowly added to it, until the whole by custom and tradition, rather than by formal decree, came to be regarded as sacred.

Now a few words as to the text and translation of Scripture, and I bring this very dry discourse to a close. The Old Testament was, of course, first written in Hebrew. But, with the exception of one small fragment, recently discovered, there are no original MSS. in existence, older than the 9th century. The earliest New Testament MSS. date from

the 4th century. Hence, we have to rely on copies of copies of copies many times removed from the original. Not only this—the original Hebrew contained no vowels, and the text was not divided into chapters or verses. The present text represents the labours of a long line of scholars, and it has always been studied and preserved with most minute care and scrupulous desire for accuracy. But you will easily understand how great was the liability to error. The word "Jehovah," for example, really consists of the consonants JHVH. This was one of the early Hebrew names for "God." It was read as 'Jehovah,' the vowels e, o, and a, being taken from *Adonai*, the word *Adonai* being a substitute in synagogue reading for the sacred name. The addition of these vowels was wholly irregular, and modern critics have restored the undoubtedly more correct form, 'Jahweh,' or 'Yahweh.'

The text of the Old Testament was first translated into Greek, then into Latin, then into our modern tongues. There is a fantastic story told about the Greek translation. It is said that Ptolemy Philadelphus, of Alexandria, sent to the Jews at Jerusalem for a copy of their Scriptures, and that the Jews sent seventy elders to Alexandria, all well skilled in Hebrew and Greek. The King, it is said, put each into a separate cell to prevent communication with each other, and bade each translate the books of

the Jewish Scriptures. When they came together at the end of their labours God was glorified, quaintly says an ancient narrative, for it was found that all the seventy versions exactly agreed in every word from beginning to end. Probably there are some who still believe that story just as there are some who still believe that every word in the Bible is the Word of God.

Such, in brief, is the story of the compilation of the Bible. How little we know, after all! And yet all that we do know, and all that scholars during the last fifty years have made known by their truly amazing industry and investigations, points conclusively to the human origin of this great literature. The human origin! But with the human spirit the Divine spirit is indissolubly blended. At every point we are forced back upon our own powers of spiritual apprehension and discrimination, upon our own sympathetic insight into the mind and spirit of our forefathers. There were many things that those forefathers said and did, many things which they included in their sacred writings which they might well have allowed to die: but they, like us, were striving to find their way through the darkness and twilight of our earthly pilgrimage and experience, to purer and clearer ethical insight and endeavour. That is the central aim and motive underlying this ancient literature, however much it may be temporarily

obscured. And the same aim and motive must underlie our own life, if it is to be of permanent value either to ourselves, or to the greater life of Humanity, or to the still greater and more mysterious life of God.

"Slowly the Bible of the race is writ,
And not on paper leaves or leaves of stone;
Each age, each Kindred, adds a verse to it,
Texts of despair or hope, of joy or moan.
While swings the sea, while mists the mountains shroud,
While thunder surges burst on cliffs of cloud,
Still the prophet's feet the nations sit."

# IV

# THE EARLY LIFE OF ISRAEL

Exodus vi. 7—"I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God."

WE saw in our last discourse that modern criticism has arrived at two or three very important conclusions respecting the supposed earlier books of the Bible—more particularly the first six books called the Hexateuch, for the book of Joshua is really an appendix to the Pentateuch. First, that these books contain legends obviously borrowed, through tradition, from an ancient Babylonian or Accadian civilization. Second, that, though long supposed to have been written by Moses, the Pentateuch was not written until hundreds of years after the death of Moses—in their final form, indeed, these books did not appear until the age of Ezra, that is, some nine hundred years after the time of Moses, and that they therefore embody different stages of religion, or

ecclesiastical and legal development. Third, that these writings are thus, undoubtedly, of composite authorship, and contain different accounts of the same events—the Creation, the Deluge, the origin of the names Bethel and Israel. Open your Bibles, for example, at the first chapter of Genesis and you will find an account of the creation beginning 1st chapter and the 1st verse and ending with the 4th verse of the 2nd chapter in which the word *Elohim* is invariably used for God. Then, in the 4th verse of the 2nd chapter another account of the creation begins in which the word *Jehovah* or Yahweh is used for God. This goes on to the end of the fourth chapter when there is another break in the narrative and the word *Elohim* for God is again introduced, and so it goes on right through the book of Genesis, the narrative of one writer being sandwiched between another by a later editor. This diversity of authorship accounts for the many contradictions in these earlier books, one account of the Flood, for example, stating that the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights, another account (both intermingled in one chapter) stating that the waters prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days; one account again, stating that of every clean beast seven are to be taken into the ark, while according to the other account only two of every living thing are to be taken into the ark. In the light furnished by modern

criticism these contradictions become understandable.

On these books, from the point of view of modern science, I do not intend to dwell. It would be flogging dead horses, indeed, were I to attempt to show that the first chapter of Genesis is entirely out of harmony with the teaching of geology, that a universal deluge is a physical impossibility, that the first twelve chapters of Genesis are but a travesty—a child-like travesty, of the early history of man, or that the Pentateuch is full of legendary stories, utterly unreliable as history. Forty years ago, for example, Bishop Colenso clearly showed how untrustworthy the Biblical accounts of the Exodus were—that while, according to Gen xlvi., 27, the whole of Jacob's or Israel's family, when they went down into Egypt, numbered only 70 persons, in four generations afterwards, when the Exodus from Egypt took place, the descendants of these seventy persons are said to have increased to the incredible number of 600,000 fighting men, implying a total population, including women and children, of about two millions and a half. One commentator, in trying to reconcile this incredible rate of increase, actually suggested that the Hebrew women might, by "the extraordinary blessing of God" have brought forth "six children at a time." To such straits are good and clever men driven when they try to reconcile impossible

traditions and legendary accounts with preconceived theories of infallibility. The notion also that these early books of the Bible contain the first historic code of laws known to man has been effectually disposed of by the tablets unearthed from the buried libraries in Babylonia, where a legal code has been discovered more than a thousand years older than the so-called Mosaic code. To go over this ground again would be waste labour indeed. What I wish to do in this series of discourses is to keep steadily in view the ethical and religious motive underlying this ancient literature. For politically, the story of the Israelitish people is of comparatively small importance. It is its religious history and its religious consciousness which is of importance, because this religious history and religious consciousness have dominated the religious life and development of peoples far, far more politically important than the Israelites. They have, indeed, dominated the life of the whole of our Western civilization. Modern Christendom, through both its cathedrals and its little Bethels, has its roots not only in the statutes of Moses and the speculations of the wandering sheiks and shepherds as they bowed before the stars at the doors of their tents in Syria and Arabia, but, through these, in the far-off life of ancient Accadia, Babylonia, Phœnicia and Egypt. It is true that this religion makes a supernatural claim for itself, but so does every other

ancient religion the world has seen—all claim a divine sanction through special revelations. The modern critical study of the Bible, however, has undermined this supernatural claim. Our conception of God and the all-embracing activity of God's spirit is too wide and grand to be limited to the affairs of a single people or race. It is only in so far as the religious history and the religious ideas of any particular race are of value to the intellectual and religious life of humanity as a whole that we are concerned with their genesis and development.

Whence, then, did this people come, of which the first six books of the Bible give us some account—partly historical, but mainly legendary, and written some hundreds of years after the events they describe. They were a part—and only a very small part—of wandering tribes—of a vast Semitic race which founded, amongst others, the kingdom of Babylonia, Assyria, and Phœnicia. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are the reputed fathers of the Hebrew tribes with which we are more particularly concerned; but, even if we grant the patriarchs to be historical personages, we are forced to the conclusion that their doings are either lost in the darkness of antiquity or are inextricably mingled with the mists of legend and fiction. Some of these shepherd tribes, migrating from Chaldea and Babylonia, moved in a south-westerly direction towards Canaan and the land of

Goshen, on the borders of Egypt. Here they established themselves. But Egypt, which was then in a comparatively high stage of civilisation, did not look with favour on the rise of a new and foreign people so close to its borders. Coercive measures were directed against them. They were compelled to make bricks and to build or enlarge two new cities, Pithom and Raamses. The lives of the Israelites were embittered by this bondage, which gradually led to a revolt under the leadership of Moses. Here we touch the firm ground of history, as distinct from legend and tradition, though there is still much legend mixed with the narrative, as, for example, where we are told that God (Yahweh) comes down and speaks with Moses, hardens Pharaoh's heart and visits the Egyptians with plagues, or where Aaron's rod turns into a serpent and swallows up the rods of the Egyptians.

But the oppression, the revolt, and the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt are historical events, and Moses is an undoubted historical personage. Who Moses was we do not know. Josephus quotes a narrative of an Egyptian priest named Manetho, which tells us that a priest from Heliopolis, named Osarophis, placed himself at the head of the oppressed foreigners (Israelites) and, with the help of neighbouring tribes (the Hyksos) led them out of bondage. "It is related," writes Manetho, "that after he

had joined these men, the priest from Heliopolis named Osarophis, gave them (the Israelites) a form of Government and laws, changed his name and called himself Moses." Whoever Moses was, he stands out as one of the greatest and grandest figures in ancient history—the first labour agitator, prophet, military leader, judge, law-giver and civil ruler in one. Everyone knows, or should know, the leading incidents in that life—the legend of the child found amongst the bulrushes, his instruction in all the arts and wisdom of the Egyptians; his sympathy with the oppressed Israelites; his leading them out of bondage; the flight across the Red Sea; the wandering and trials in the wilderness; the legendary promulgation of the Ten Commandments; the judgings at the doors of the tents; the victories over hostile tribes; the journey towards Canaan; the last view from Pisgah, and the sad, solemn death of the great leader as he gazed upon the land which he was not to inherit,—and the land which was to see the rise of the Israelitish nation and the birth of Christ—the fruit of his labours which others were to enjoy. After the death of Moses, the leadership falls upon Joshua. Canaan is gradually occupied, but more than two hundred years passed away before the semblance of a nation can be said to have arisen. The quarrels of the tribes amongst themselves, the struggle with the Canaanites, the wars with the

Philistines and other peoples on their borders, the sad fortunes of the Israelites during this period of anarchy—all these were the long preparation for the rise of Israel as a nation.

So much for the political story embedded in these first six books of the Bible—for the book of Joshua is really a sort of appendix to the first five books—the Pentateuch, carrying on the story of the wars of the tribes under Joshua to the settlement in Canaan. But here let me remind you once more that these books were not written until some hundreds of years after the events related in them. That is why they are not to be relied upon as accurate historical records. Let me give you one or two dates. The Exodus under Moses occurred about the year 1320 B.C. The election of Saul, the first King of Israel, did not take place until about the year 1055, that is, nearly three hundred years later. We know, by historical references in the Pentateuch, that these books were not written until centuries after the establishment of the monarchy; parts of them, indeed, 300 years, other and larger parts 600 years after this event, the books of Chronicles later still. It is as though say, five hundred years hence, some one were reading an old book about South Africa and trying to get to know, from internal evidence, when it was written, and he comes across a reference to Lord Milner's High Commissionership. He at once says: "Why, this book must have been

written at any rate after the end of the nineteenth century for it was then that Lord Milner was High Commissioner in South Africa." So it is with the Pentateuch. The historical references and the ceremonial legislation contained in it imply a date from six to eight hundred years later than Moses, *i.e.*. many hundreds of years after the events narrated, Why do I so strongly emphasise this point? Because a writer, when he is recording contemporary events, when he may consult living witnesses and contemporary records, may be correct, but when he has to go back five hundred or a thousand years before his time he has to rely more and more upon doubtful evidence and tradition. Go back five hundred years in English history and you find a multitude of stories about witchcraft, demonology, miraculous cures and the like; go back a thousand years and history becomes almost lost in a cloud of legend. As a matter of fact many of these legends, when we know the actual facts, are susceptible of a natural explanation—the miraculous rain of manna, for example, may be accounted for by the real manna, which drops from the tarfa shrub in the Arabian desert, and the pillar of cloud and fire to the fire which was carried in front of the caravans to show the way.

But now let us get to the religious contents of these early books, for it is that with which we are mainly concerned. I showed in my last discourse

that for their ideas of the Creation and the Fall of man, the Israelites were indebted to the ancient Babylonians, and many of their religious usages were undoubtedly derived from the same source—others from the Egyptians, the Phoenicians, and the Canaanites—all peoples with whom they came in contact. But was their conception of God in early times any different from that prevailing amongst these ancient peoples?—for that, as you will see shortly, is an essential point. Turn to the book of Judges and you will find there two pictures—one very pathetic, the other very quaint—which help to give us some idea of these early religious conceptions and usages: and please remember that the period of the Judges comes long after the time of Moses, who was supposed to have had the revelation of the Ten Commandments from Yahweh. The first picture is the story of Jephthah and his daughter. You know it well enough so I need not repeat it in detail. Jephthah vows a vow that if Yahweh will grant him victory in battle, he, Jephthah—will offer up as a sacrifice the first thing that comes to meet him out of the doors of his house on his return. Jephthah gains the victory—and the first thing that comes to meet him out of the doors of his house is his only daughter! And Jephthah keeps his vow and offers her up as a thanksgiving sacrifice to Yahweh. This, I say, is long after the time of Moses. Nay, come down to the time of the prophet Micah in

the eighth century B.C., *i.e.*, six hundred years after Moses, and you find him writing in indignant tones of remonstrance: "Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" That in itself proves that even Micah six hundred years after the death of Moses, was not unacquainted with the practice of human sacrifice to Yahweh, else why should he remonstrate against it? What is the inference? Surely this, that for centuries after Moses and after the supposed revelation of the Law the worship of Yahweh was conducted with the same horrible and barbarous rites and sacrifices as was the worship of Moloch, Baal, Astarte, and the other gods of surrounding nations.

Now take the second picture from Judges. It is a quaint story, almost idyllic, of pastoral life in those early times. It relates how one Micah, who lives in the hill country of Ephraim, having stolen eleven hundred pieces of silver from his mother, confesses his deed, and his mother, full of joy at the confession, dedicates two hundred pieces unto Yahweh, that is, she gives them to the founder and ordershim to make from them a graven image and a molten image. And Micah 'had an house of gods, and he made an ephod and teraphim.' First of all he trains his own son to perform the priestly duties, then, a Levite journeying that way, Micah persuaded the priest, for money payment, clothing, and victuals, to remain with him

and be a priest unto him in his house of gods. Then the story goes on to say that certain men of the tribe of Dan journeying that way to spy out the land for a settlement, hear of this priest, and the graven image, and the molten image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and they carry them all off, priest as well, despite poor Micah's protests, and use them for a new tribal sanctuary which they establish at Dan.

Now, what does this quaint little story tell us? It tells us, firstly, that long after Moses, long after the supposed promulgation of the Ten Commandments, the worship of images, the ministration of priests at private sanctuaries, the offering of private sacrifices to Yahweh, the practice of divination or consultation with Deity by means of the ephod and teraphim, were widely recognised practices in connection with the worship of Yahweh. Secondly, it tells us, inferentially, that the Israelitish priesthood, as an organised hierarchy was still in its infancy. There was as yet no elaborate code of religious laws, no fixed forms of worship, no regular organised priesthood as we find them in Leviticus. These, in the form in which we find them prescribed in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, came centuries afterwards. 'What, you say, 'do you mean to tell us that these books were written centuries after Moses by later priests and scribes and then imputed to Moses!' Most emphatically I do. That is one of the firmest tenets of

modern criticism as taught in the foremost Universities of Europe and America, and you will never rightly understand your Bibles unless you bear that great fact constantly in mind. And why was this done? Why? in order to give the weight of tradition, and the still greater weight and authority of the great name of Moses, to this body of sacred law. 'The Law of Moses'—why, even to this day, the words have a sacred sound and meaning to the mind of every pious Jew—how much more so to the half-barbarous tribes of ancient Israel! Finally, this quaint story of Micah and his gods, and many other passages in the Old Testament, tell us something of the sources from which these religious usages sprang. The ephod, the teraphim, the urim and thummin—methods of divination and casting by lot—the sacred ark itself, were all in use in one or other of the ancient religions of the Babylonians, Assyrians, and Egyptians. We also know, from the Bible itself, that the Israelites worshipped Yahweh under the form of trees, sacred stones, and the image of a bull—all this long after Moses. These usages were all common to the surrounding nations and peoples. We know from other sources that the bull, in ancient times, was an emblem in use in the worship of the sun. It symbolized untamed power, the fierceness of the heat and light of the sun. "By various paths," says Dr. Kuenen, "we arrive at one and the same conclusion—that originally

Yahweh was a God of light or of the sun whom it was necessary to propitiate with human sacrifices." The moon-feasts of the Israelites also points to the worship of the moon and the planetary bodies. Can you not see, my friends, how these supposed supernatural revelations and religions are purely human in their character, taking up assimilable elements out of the religions of the past until they all fade in the dark night of antiquity where human speech resolves itself into inarticulate sounds and dumb gestures?

"Babylonian influence," says Professor Sayce, who writes from the conservative standpoint, "is deeply imprinted on the so-called Mosaic laws. The institution of the Sabbath went back to the Sumerian days of Chaldea; [*i.e.* 1000 years before Moses] the name itself was of Babylonian origin. The great festivals of Israel find their counterparts on the banks of the Euphrates. Even the year of jubilee was a Babylonian institution. It was only the form and application of the old institutions that were changed in the Levitical legislation. They were adapted to the needs of Israel, and associated with the events of its history. But in themselves they were all of Babylonian descent.[1]

Two points more and I conclude. The first is this. That in all this early time, long past the supposed revelation to Moses, nay, long past the age of the

[1] Early Israel, p. 269.

great prophets, there is hardly any mention of a life beyond the grave, no word of the hope of immortality. When men die they are gathered to their fathers. In the words of Ecclesiastes: "What befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth so dieth the other. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." In the account of the death of Moses, in the pathetic dirge of David over Saul, there is no gleam of hope, no mention of a life to come. The religious unit was the nation—the individual passed and was forgotten. There is indeed mention once or twice of Sheol, the abode of the dead—but it is a vague, shadowy place, where the spirits of men seem to exist in a half-conscious or comatose condition. The notion of a heaven and hell,—a state of eternal blessedness or punishment,—still lies in the far future. This comparative silence on the hope of immortality in the larger part of the Old Testament is all the more strange in that the doctrine of future rewards and punishment, for just and unjust deeds, was a familiar one in ancient Egypt, and must have been known to Moses and possibly to the early Israelitish priests.

Lastly; what is the chief thing we have to bear in mind in connection with this early life of Israel—the beginnings of Hebrew and therefore of the Christian religion? for, as I shall show in future discourses, our moral and religious life is rooted in that past. The

great thing which left its mark upon the whole future history of humanity, was this: that the worship of Yahweh, superstitious, grotesque, brutal, savage, as it often was,—was, from the time of Moses and his "Ten Words," indissolubly connected with right-doing, with moral principles, with the passion for righteousness. This was the saving grace of Yahwism, of Hebraism. From the time of the Exodus when the Covenant with Moses was supposed to have been made, that Covenant was slowly, in the course of the centuries, expanded into the Book of the Law, the Testament, the will of God. That Covenant was, briefly,—Make no covenants with other gods, obey my commandments, and I, Yahweh, will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God, and bring prosperity and blessings upon you. The motive was not a noble one,—but by such steps has humanity toiled its way to higher life. Henceforth, Yahweh becomes, slowly, very slowly, through the centuries, isolated, inaccessible, pure, holy. Holiness and righteousness —these become His supreme attributes. And if these attributes were often lost sight of in a noisome cloud of savage burnings and slaughterings; if treachery and deceit were held to promote His glory,—nay, if these things themselves were often set down as the very word and command of Yahweh, let us not look down [illegible]on this ancient race for that, for the so-called [illegible]stian nations of to-day bow before the same

shrine, and worship to the accompaniment of infinitely refined implements of destruction, the same God, or rather demon, of battles. But beneath all, I say, redeeming much of that ancient savagery, was this binding link of obedience to what, after all, is at the heart of the universe,—the Moral Law. For behind all, behind Elohim, behind El Shaddai, behind Yahweh, behind Moloch, and Baal, and Astarte, and all the tribal man-gods of ancient and modern times stands the Great God of the universe, the Supreme Spirit, silent, impassive, over all, in whose Moral Law this human consciousness of ours is born, cradled, and enwrapped. And it was because Yahwism was connected by this, often hidden, always invisible binding link to the true Supreme that it had within it, as we shall see, the seeds of living power, and that it handed on, through its prophets and teachers, the message of Righteousness which culminated in the great word of Him who, in scorn of all outward observances, said: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" —the Spirit.

V

# A BIBLE SAGA AND ITS LESSONS

Genesis xxviii. 16-17—"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said—Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not . . . this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

I HAVE thought it well, in this series of discourses to relieve the tedium of criticism by introducing as much of the "human" element in the Bible as I can, for we must always remember that this great literature was the outcome of the thoughts and aspirations, the joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears of the human heart and mind. If we lose sight of this we are apt to lose ourselves in the dry details of criticism. The religious consciousness of man is educated and deepened by experience, which is always the greatest and severest teacher, and the record of this experience, even when it is mingled with superstition, ignorance,

and error, is of value to us if we will only try to read it with sympathetic insight. I propose to-night, then, to take the story of the life of Jacob in order to illustrate the growth of religious experience. Let me say at the outset how I propose to treat the story. Most critics are now agreed that the book of Genesis and the stories of the patriarchs are largely if not wholly legendary, that is, they are not historically true. Even if we grant that great pastoral chieftains called Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did once live, their names and lives have become so interwoven with the marvellous that we can hardly now separate truth from legend. We must always bear in mind that these ancient stories were written hundreds of years after the events they narrate--ample time for the growth of the legendary and the marvellous. But how, you may ask, can we gain moral and religious truth from what is fictitious or legendary? Why, surely, some of our best and noblest lessons are derived from what is fictitious and legendary. Prometheus, Agamemnon, Antigone, Macbeth, Hamlet, Lear, Faust, Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, Christian and Faithful, Greatheart and Vanity Fair—all these are fictitious or legendary, yet what deep moral truths and lessons would be lost to mankind were their names and story blotted out of our literature! The real truth is—and we shall fail to understand the meaning of religion if we fail to appreciate this—that

a truth of imagination is a deeper and a wider truth than a truth of history, because a truth of history is limited to the time and person to which it relates, whereas a truth of imagination is applicable to every one of us in so far as we are affected by the same hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, sympathies and aspirations. Great personalities, even in imaginative literature, are representative. We can always find in their thoughts, feelings, and lives, something to which our own lesser thoughts, feelings, and lives respond. In that is the real power and beauty of all great creations —they "hold the mirror up to Nature," and show us the spiritual stuff, the warp and woof of experience, out of which our own lives are made. And that is why there is more religious truth and religious feeling to be got out of a great play, well presented, at a theatre, than out of many prosy sermons.

It is one of the difficulties in reading these ancient stories that they are so intermingled with sayings, customs, allusions, and sometimes accounts of superstitious and barbarous rites and ceremonies, which are an offence to the understanding. But we must bear in mind that these things are to be found in all great literature—they are simply the outcome of the manners, feelings, and customs of the time. The witches in *Macbeth*, the ghost in *Hamlet*, Satan in *Paradise Lost*, Mephistopheles in *Faust*, the Eumenides in Eschylus, what are these but symbols of great

spiritual forces, or the reflection of the conceptions which filled the popular imagination, and which, made use of by great imaginative genius, to purify men by pity and by fear. And that surely is the work of religion—the purification of the human spirit.

Then, again, let us remember, when we read in these ancient stories sentences like these: "God spake unto Abraham," or, "God appeared unto Jacob," or, "God spake unto Moses," that this is only a common way of speech which is still used in the East when any deep or strong impression is made upon the soul. "God spake unto me," "The Almighty appeared unto me in a dream"—this is the Oriental method of speech with religious minds to this day Reading these words in the Bible, the majority of Christian readers take them literally, and so we get those anthropomorphic conceptions of Deity which so limit and stunt our religious conceptions and religious life.

Bearing these things in mind let us try to get the moral and spiritual truth out of this story of Jacob—the reputed father of Israel; for the men, whoever they were, who wrote these stories of the fathers, the heroes of their race, were men both of great literary genius, and of fine religious imagination. Their biographies are not goody-goody, over-pious, unctuous as so many religious biographies of our day are. These ancient writers knew, in the main, what to

select and what to reject. They knew the meaning of life. They knew how to "hold the mirror up to nature," and so their words and word-pictures have lived through the centuries. The picture they give of the life of the father of the Hebrew race is the picture, I will not say of the average Jew, nor of the average man, but of a certain class of men all the world over. It is a picture of a double life—a life touched by the common affections and sympathies of men, and chequered by meanness, trickery, lying, and double-dealing, yet dignified by that "feeling after the Eternal" which visits us all, and ending in a penitential discipline and sorrow which purifies the heart and brings the soul nearer to God. What are the main outlines of that life as presented in this ancient saga?

The first two chief incidents give us the leading traits in the man's character. First, he bargains with his brother Esau when the latter is faint well-nigh unto death, and thereby secures Esau's birthright for a mess of pottage. Then he disguises himself in Esau's clothing and puts skins of the kids of goats upon his hands that he may resemble Esau, and, so deceiving his blind father, he obtains the blessing which is Esau's due. These things show the depths of meanness to which Jacob can descend. When Esau hears of this treachery his heart is hot within him. "The days of mourning for my father are at hand," he says,

"then will I slay my brother Jacob." And Jacob, with the craven fear of the double-dealer in his heart, leaves, for the first time the old home, and flies from the wrath of Esau. That is the first great wrench in his life, and we may be sure it left its mark upon him. His grandfather Abraham had made that pastoral home—had dug wells, and planted trees, and pitched his tents there, and had built there also an altar to Yahweh, at which, we may be sure, the whole family often worshipped. He leaves this home, and his father and mother, and, crossing the rolling lowlands of Beersheba, ascends the range of hills which he must cross on his way to Haran. There, with the huge rocks and stones of the bare hills about him, he lies down to rest, and there his first real spiritual experience comes to him. He dreams—and his dream is of his father's God—Yahweh! One wonders whether he would have had such a dream had he not worshipped all his boyhood at the altar of Yahweh! With the procession of the stars so lately in his eyes, and the rough rocks of the mountain up which he has climbed, for a pillow, he dreams of a ladder ascending from earth and reaching to heaven, and of the messengers of Yahweh ascending and descending, and Yahweh stands above it and repeats his old promise: "I am Yahweh, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy children, and in thee and in

thy children shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee whithersoever thou goest." And Jacob awaked out of his sleep and he said, "Surely Yahweh is in this place, and I knew it not." And he was afraid, and said: "How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." "Figments of the imagination" you say! Truths of the imagination say I. Does not Hamlet's father's spirit appear to him to stimulate him to action? Do not mysterious voices sound in Macbeth's ears saying: "Sleep no more?" Does not Faust make a compact with Satan? And do not the Eumenides pursue Orestes? Christian and Faithful walk daily through the streets of Vanity Fair, and on Greatheart's armour still ring the clanging blows. These, I say, are truths of the imagination which apply to all of us. For when great moral crises come upon us, when we sink below the line of honour in business or in politics; when we leave the old home for ever; when we stand beside the cold form of some loved one who will never hear our earthly voice again—do not visions of early days come before us and voices of warning sound in our ears reminding us of what we might have done in the opportunities which have gone for ever. Then, if we are wise, we look upon the world with new eyes; we rise above the commonplace of barter, and money-making, and party politics, and sordid cares, into a higher

spiritual mood in which the thought of self and the world is transfigured by the thought of a diviner life. We take the warning and say with Jacob: "This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven, and these voices are his spiritual messengers ascending and descending from heaven." But, unlike Jacob, we do not localise the dwelling-place of the Supreme Spirit. We find it in every heart that beats to high resolve, in every upward thought, in all spiritual emotion and aspiration—the Infinite Life, the Infinite Consciousness, the Infinite Presence, everywhere. It is the consciousness of this higher world of spiritual things—noble thoughts, dim but great ideals, and visions and unexpressed aspirations—perpetually calling us into a more intimate knowledge of its ways, which makes life supremely solemn and beautiful.

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and, after the superstitious custom of the time, raised a sacred stone and poured oil upon it, and called the name of the place Bethel, that is, the house of God. Then the worldly character of the man comes out once more, for he makes a bargain as it were with God, and he vows a vow, saying: "*If* God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall Yahweh be my God: And this stone, which I have set *for* a pillar, shall

be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

That is human nature all over. So long as prosperity is with us we go to church, and perform our devotions, and pay our subscriptions, and enter into our civic, and political, and religious duties readily enough; but when adversity comes, and cares depress, and trials embitter our soul, we become careless and indifferent, and are often inclined to follow the advice of Job's wife—to curse God, the Spirit of the good, and die. How long are men, sometimes, in learning that they have to be true to truth and good, whatever befall! But let us return to the saga. Jacob rises up and pursues his journey. With this consciousness of the support and blessing of Yahweh a great change has come into his life, just as a great change comes into the life of all of us when a great idea dominates us and we go on in the strength and purpose of it.[1] But the change does not go deep as yet—it only shows that there are henceforth two currents in the great chieftain's life—the religious and the worldly currents. Jacob rises and goes on his way towards Haran. Then occurs that old, old story, older than the Garden of Eden, yet ever new with every succeeding generation. In the bright sunshine of the Eastern morning Rachel

[1] See the Rev. Stopford Brooke's much more effective treatment of this theme in his *Sermons*—second series, to which I am indebted for some of the thoughts in this discourse.

comes from her father's tents to the wells to water the flock. Even in the passion of first love the old Jewish, worldly, trait comes out once more, for it came to pass, quaintly, runs the saga, that "when Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the *sheep* of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock. And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept." Fourteen years Jacob served Laban for Rachel, and six years for the flock. That at any rate shows the depths of passion and tenacity of purpose in the man, which is also characteristic of his race. On his dealings with Laban I have not time to dwell. They are entertaining reading—for it is cheat against cheat, trickster against trickster, and we are not sorry to find Laban worsted. In the end they quarrel, and Jacob folds his tents, and gathers his flocks and herds, and journeys towards Canaan, his old home. On the way he hears that Esau his brother, —now a great pastoral prince,—from whom he had fled twenty years before, is coming from Edom to meet him. The old fear takes possession of his heart—is vengeance to be taken upon him at last for his old treachery and sin? He offers up a prayer to Yahweh, then, with his usual craft, he sends his servants and messengers in advance with presents to Esau of two hundred and twenty goats, and two hundred and twenty sheep, and many camels, and kine, and asses.

But the fear of Esau and of death is still in his heart, and when he lay down alone that night, having sent his wives and servants on before, he passed through a great spiritual struggle, deeper, intenser, than the vision at Bethel. Again he is lifted out of his hard, bargaining, crafty, worldly self, into the invisible, moral, spiritual world. He is seized, as it were, by some Being or Power outside of, and greater than, himself. It is as though he wrestles with an angel of Yahweh, his God, and everything else, worldly interests, personal fear, ignoble passions, vanish in that great struggle. And as morning dawns Jacob wins in the struggle—his "Everlasting Yea" has become clearer and surer to him. That struggle again typifies the indomitable perseverance, the tenacity of purpose, of the Hebrew race, which makes the Jewish people still a power in the world.

That struggle in the darkness is also typical of our own moral life. These spiritual crises come to us all —when the world of men and things seems to be but a confused tangle of petty warring interests with no guiding golden thread of principle, or gleam of light to cheer us on our way; when we are wrapped in a grief for which we seek no consolation, and we have to fight our way through the darkness to an 'Everlasting Nay,' or an 'Everlasting Yea;' or, most awful struggle of all, when, at the last, we meet the great angel Death, and the terrific forces of nature press with steady over-

whelming power on every nerve and tendon in the physical casement, leaving only the central citadel of the soul calm and clear—then all worldly interests and passions drop away from us—our money-making and our striving after place and power, and our petty sectarian and political squabbles seem small indeed, as we enter upon that great and final struggle, and well it is for us if we can do so in the spirit of those beautiful lines of Charles Wesley:

"Come, oh thou Traveller unknown,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see;
My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with Thee.
With Thee all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day.

Yield to me now, though I am weak,
But confident in self-despair,
Speak to my heart, in blessings speak,
Be conquered by my instant prayer.
Speak! Or thou never hence shalt move,
And tell me if Thy name be Love.

My prayer hath power with God: the grace
Unspeakable I now receive.
Through faith I see thee face to face—
I see thee face to face and live!
In vain I have not wept and strove,
Thy nature and thy name is Love."

After such struggles, if we survive them, we are changed men. And so it was with Jacob. There

was no bargaining with God now—it is only his blessing he needs. A deeper note enters into the great chieftain's character. He meets Esau, and Esau—the large-hearted, ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him. And Esau refused his brother's presents, saying: "I have enough, my brother, let that thou hast be thine." The brothers separate, and Jacob goes to his old altar at Bethel, destroys the idols in his household, (so the story goes, again showing its late date) puts away strange gods, and rebuilds his altar and renews the covenant with Yahweh. It is the new spirit, the higher self within him, breaking away from the old, crafty, worldly life. And it is well, for troubles now come thick and fast upon him—his penitential discipline begins. First Deborah, Rachel's nurse, dies, then Rachel herself. His sons, now grown to manhood, bring sorrow and trouble upon him. Two of them embroil him with neighbouring tribes, another brings dishonour upon him, and Joseph, the child of Rachel, his earliest love, whom he "loved more than all his children," is murdered or kidnapped, he knows not which; and Jacob, in his grief, rent his garments, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days, and refused to be comforted, saying: "I will go down to the grave to my son mourning." Then a famine comes upon the land, and his children—all save

Benjamin—leave him to seek corn in Egypt. There they come to Pharaoh's overlord, who has stored corn in the granaries against the time of famine, and he questions the ten sons of Jacob as to their father and the brother whom they have left behind. You know the story. The overlord is none other than the long-lost Joseph whom they themselves had sold into slavery long years before. He charges them with coming to spy out the land, threatens to denounce them to Pharaoh, and refuses to give or sell them corn, unless they make true their word by bringing Benjamin before him. When Jacob learns this he is inconsolable, and remembering the fate of Joseph, refuses to let his youngest child—the child of Rachel —go. But the famine still prevails in the land, and Jacob ultimately relents with the great stoical cry: "If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." The sons again depart for Egypt and leave their father in his loneliness and despair. In all this we can easily see the motive of the writer of this great saga—it is the portrayal of the process of purification by experience, of moral regeneration by the discipline of sorrow which most of us have to undergo, for in this part of the narrative we see that something of dignity is added to the lives both of Jacob and his turbulent sons. They come again to the overlord, and Joseph makes himself known to them, and forgives them, and loads them with presents, and

this part of the saga ends in a blaze of eastern pomp and splendour. The brothers return to their father Jacob with the good news. And when he heard their words his heart fainted for he believed them not, but when he saw the presents, and the waggons which Joseph had sent to carry him back to Egypt, he gave a great cry of gladness and said: "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."

The penitential discipline is now over, and Jacob's life gradually closes in the sunset glory of old age. His spiritual education is complete. He goes down into Egypt, and as he passes through Beersheba offers sacrifices to Yahweh—the God of his fathers. He sends his son Judah on before him to announce his coming, and when Joseph hears of it he goes out in his chariot to meet him, and the old man falls on his child's neck with the words of natural and heart-felt thanksgiving: "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive."

But Jacob does not die. For many years he lived through the peace of the eventide of life, lived over again in the memory of bygone years—of past sin and evil, and worldly prosperity, of trial and suffering; saw the land prospering under the rule of his beloved son, chief minister in Egypt; and then, as the eventide deepens into twilight, in thankfulness to Yahweh, he blesses his children and his grandchildren

with the words: "The God which hath fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which hath redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." His education is completed. Sorrow, suffering, joy, peace, have finished their redeeming work as he enters into the Valley of Death. What matters it now that his God was only the tribal God of his race! Again let us say, with Matthew Arnold:—

> "Children of men! the unseen Power, whose eye
> For ever doth accompany mankind,
> Hath looked on no religion scornfully
> That men did ever find.
> Which has not taught weak wills how much they can?
> Which has not fall'n on the dry heart like rain?
> Which has not cried to sunk self-weary man:
> *Thou must be born again!*"

The story of these old patriarchs has to some extent passed out of our modern life. They take us back to the time when men were as over-grown children, swathed in superstition, and cradled and reared amid strange rites and hideous customs. In comparison with them, humanity has now grown wrinkled and grey. Life has become a thousand-fold more complicated to us than it was to them, and its very complexity of moral issues sometimes wearies and baffles us. And so it is well to go back occasionally to greet, across the centuries, these unsophisticated, immortal children of humanity in its

adolescence—to recall the nobler features of their lives and try to weave them into our religious consciousness. For these stories are instinct with great ideas and deep feelings which have been as a fount of inspiration to many generations of men, leading them towards paths of righteousness, and quickening in them the consciousness of a nobler life and a higher destiny.

The great Hebrew patriarch has been compared to the great Greek hero Ulysses, and we might well bring these ancient stories into connection with our modern life by recalling the words which Tennyson puts into the mouth of Ulysses—they remind us of the death of Jacob.

> "Death closes all: but something ere the end,
> Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
> Not unbecoming men that strove with God.
> The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
> The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
> Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
> 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
> Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
> We are not now that strength which in old days
> Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are—
> One equal temper of heroic hearts,
> Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
> To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

In our next discourse we shall resume our study of the early life and religion of Israel.

## VI

# THE RISE OF ISRAEL

Exodus xx. 3, 5—"Thou shalt have none other gods before me, . . . for I, Yahweh thy God, am a jealous God."

In my discourse on the early life of Israel we had reached the stage at which the Israelitish tribes were laying the foundations of the future nation. It will be well to follow this political development for a time, and then, having reached a further stage, to turn back and consider the religious development. We shall then get a clearer view of the history of the Hebrew people, of the political and religious forces which made them what they were, and of the influence of their religious ideas on our Western humanity. We shall then see, also, how the evolution of the one religion and one people affects other religions and other peoples, and how, as the great drama of human life is unfolded, one act or one series of events seems to prepare the way naturally for succeeding acts and events.

After the Exodus, the wanderings in the Sinaitic

desert and the uplands east of the Jordan, the settlement in Canaan, and the period of the "Judges" or leaders of the tribes, great need was felt for greater unity and cohesion amongst the tribes. They were sorely beset by the Philistines; and even the sacred ark itself, which was supposed to be the dwelling place of Yahweh, fell into the hands of their enemies. The change from a wandering to a settled life, the civil institutions which a settled life requires, the necessity for securing and maintaining a system of social and political order, and, above all, the instinct of self-preservation and union against external enemies, led to the unity of the tribes and their ultimate amalgamation into a nation. One of the great leaders in this work was Samuel—priest, Nazarite, and seer. A Nazarite was one who abstained from wine and intoxicating drinks, and lived according to a religious vow. They wore their hair uncut, and it is not without significance that the ancient sun-gods of the East were represented with long hair—another indication that the worship of Yahweh was at one time connected with the worship of the sun. The abstinence from wine was to distinguish and separate the Nazarite from the worshippers of the Canaanitish gods, the worship of which was often conducted with degrading and offensive rites. But the special significance of Samuel and his work lies in the fact that he roused the Israelites to a

greater confidence in and faithfulness to their national—or rather their tribal—God, Yahweh. Under the religious leadership of Samuel, and the military leadership of Saul, victory after victory was won over the Philistines. These victories were assigned to the protecting care and favour of Yahweh. When defeats were sustained the explanation was that His people must have done something to offend Yahweh, or that they were not sufficiently faithful or zealous in their worship. Thus the religious consciousness of the people and their dependence upon Yahweh was gradually strengthened, and the worship of other gods thereby weakened, for we must remember that all this time, and for centuries afterwards, the Israelites were by no means monotheists or worshippers of one God—they had many gods. The whole religious history, at this period, really resolves itself into a contest between Yahweh and other gods. The victories of Saul, and his selection as king about the year 1055 B.C., further developed the national consciousness, and the Israelitish nation at last emerges. Under David, and by his valour, skill, and resource, this consciousness is still further strengthened, and the whole of the tribes united in one kingdom. One of David's greatest triumphs was the capture of Jerusalem, then called Jebus, the stronghold of the Jebusites. David made the city his capital and brought thither,

in solemn procession, the sacred ark whose name is Yahweh, "even the name of the Lord of Hosts" as the book of Samuel has it. This policy, aided and supported as it was by the priests, still further increased the reputation of Yahweh as the chief God, and the renown of Jerusalem, the city of David, as his holy dwelling-place. Of the character of David I have not time to speak at length—it was a mixture of intrepid courage, devotion to great purposes, as he conceived them, base craft, treachery, and cruelty. We shall see, later on, that criticism has modified the traditional theory of the "golden age of David," just as it has deprived him of the authorship of most of the Psalms. After the military reign of David came the more peaceful reign of Solomon—a period in which, politically speaking, the nation reached the height of its glory. The people devoted themselves to more peaceful pursuits. Trade was carried on with Egypt, Phœnicia, Arabia, and other countries, and the riches of the far East adorned the palace and the city of the King. The principal event of Solomon's time, however, was the building of the Temple as the "dwelling place" of Yahweh—this again tending to increase the spiritual power and reputation of Yahweh as the chief God—though we must remember that Solomon himself was a worshipper of other gods and erected Sanctuaries in their honour. After Solomon's death the kingdom fell

asunder. Political and religious differences arose and ten of the tribes set up the kingdom of Ephraim under their leader Jeroboam, who founded a separate priesthood and temples, and set up golden bulls as symbols of Yahweh. The political history of the two separate kingdoms now becomes somewhat complicated, and it is not necessary that we should follow it in detail. It is sufficient to say that the Northern kingdom, the kingdom of Ephraim,—or Israel as it was called—after a stormy and troubled existence of some two hundred and fifty years came to an end. Assyria, now rapidly rising in power, had already conquered the tribes and peoples neighbouring Israel, and when one of the later kings of the northern kingdom broke faith with Assyria and opened negotiations with the king of Egypt, the Assyrian armies moved slowly towards the doomed kingdom, conquered the outlying tribes, besieged and overthrew Samaria, (722 B.C.) the capital, and carried away the principal inhabitants into captivity. But the most important historical and religious event in connection with this Northern Kingdom was the rise of the prophets, first Elijah then Elisha, and in a later century, Amos, Hosea and others whose teaching, as we shall see, leads to a new turning point in the development of religion. Briefly, their standpoint was this—that Israel had been unfaithful to Yahweh, had followed after other gods, and must therefore be

visited by the afflictions and punishment which Yahweh will send. But the prophets were not only deeply religious men, they were strong and active politicians, claiming to influence both social and national policy so that the wrath of Yahweh might be averted, and His favour and blessing won.

The Northern Kingdom being overthrown interest now centres in the Southern Kingdom—the Kingdom of Judah. Here, again, the political interest is of minor importance. It is largely a story of broils and wars both with its neighbour, the Northern Kingdom, and with surrounding nations. But Judah has left a deeper mark upon history, not merely from the fact that it survived the Northern Kingdom for another century or more, but because, also, (1) its history is bound up with the teachings of the great prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, and (2) its capital, Jerusalem, with its temple on Zion, became the centre of national faith, hope, aspiration and worship.

Before passing on to the religious life of this period let me say a word as to the books which describe it and their authorship and date. The books of Samuel were not, of course, written by Samuel—the title means, rather, books *about* Samuel, for they record things that took place long after Samuel's death. Parts were written probably in the 8th century B.C., *i.e.*, some three hundred years after Samuel, and parts still later, for all these earlier books, as I have

before remarked, are compilations of different writings by later editors. The two books of Kings are of still later date and bring the history down into the period of the Babylonian captivity, *i.e.*, 562 B.C. The two books of Chronicles, which go over much of the same ground, are much later, *i.e.*, they were written about the year 300 B.C. This accounts for the many contradictions between the two narratives of these periods, and the entirely different point of view from which they were written. It is generally thought by critics that the books of *Chronicles*, *Ezra*, and *Nehemiah* were written or compiled by one author about 150 years after Ezra's time. The writer was evidently a priest or a Levite, for in all his narratives he magnifies the priestly customs and usages, and gives them an importance which is quite unknown to the compiler of *Samuel* and of *Kings*. It is somewhat significant, as showing that a prophet is seldom honoured in his own time and country, that the writers of *Kings* and of *Chronicles* hardly ever mention the great prophets, except Isaiah and (twice) Jeremiah.

But now, after this brief and very dry survey, let us get back to the religious developments of the time, for it is with these that we are chiefly concerned. Here, we are still in a period of barbarism, superstition, idolatry, and even of human sacrifices. "What!" you say, "did not the Law of Moses abolish all that?" Again let me remind you that

the "Law of Moses" was not yet in existence, and did not come into existence as we now have it until after the time of the prophets. The Ten Words, or the Ten Commandments as they are called, along with a few laws respecting slavery, injury to life and limb, theft, and a few simple regulations respecting sacrifices, the observance of the Sabbath, and the holding of feasts—these are probably all that can be certainly attributed to Moses. How the complex law and ritual of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy came into being we shall see in later discourses. But all this time, right through the so-called "golden age" of David and the age of Solomon to the time of the great prophet's religion, the worship of Yahweh, is barbaric and idolatrous. Yahweh is simply one amongst other gods—the difference between him and others being that he occupies a higher and more distinctly honoured place. The Israelites were not yet monotheistic, *i.e.*, worshippers of one God. Even Solomon, the great king, built sanctuaries in the vicinity of Jerusalem, to Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, to Milcom, the God of the Ammonites, and to Chemosh, the God of Moab. What the great king did, that, we may be sure, his subjects would do. Nay, we learn further, incidentally, from the 2nd Book of Kings (xxiii. 13) that these sanctuaries to other gods existed right down to the days of King Josiah, that is, over three hundred

years after the death of Solomon. Sacred stones were worshipped and altars raised in various parts of the land. Or take this passage from the 1st Book of Samuel (xxvi. 19) as an indication of David's conception of God, where David is under the displeasure of Saul: "I pray thee," says David, "let my lord the king hear the words of his servant: if it be Yahweh that hath stirred thee up against me let him smell an offering; but if it be the children of men cursed be they before Yahweh." David himself has also the teraphim, *i.e.*, an image of a God, (1 Samuel xix. 13) in his house. He seeks signs and oracles by means of the superstitious practices of his time. Yahweh is supposed to be confined to, or mysteriously connected with, the ark, and a man who accidentally touches it is struck dead by Yahweh. As an instance of the religious savagery of the time, take David's compliance with the demand of the Gibeonites that seven of Saul's descendants should be hanged before Yahweh in order to take away the famine from the land. We are here, even in the "golden age" of David, far away from the spirit of the prophets, who preached mercy and not sacrifice. I emphasize these points, which might be multiplied tenfold, because I wish to show how inconceivably slow is religious and moral development. It is a great mistake to suppose that the people of Israel suddenly became worshippers of one God—Jehovah—about the time of Moses.

From the time of Moses onward, Yahweh becomes the chief tribal or national God and is worshipped *along with* other gods. We have now to see how Yahweh—Jehovah—becomes the one sole God of Israel, how, in a word, polytheism slowly, and through many centuries, developed into monotheism, and what this ultimately meant for mankind.

There were two or three things which had a great influence on this development. First, Samuel, who was a compound of priest, seer, necromancer, holy man, and warrior, threw the whole weight of his influence on the side of Yahweh, and founded a school or company of seers and prophets who undoubtedly spread and perpetuated that influence. Second, David also was a mighty formative influence on the side of Yahweh, and the removal by him of the ark of Yahweh from Kirjath-Jearim to his capital, Jerusalem, gave increased prestige to the worship of the God. Thirdly, the building of the Temple on Mount Zion by Solomon, in which the sacred ark was placed, tended to consolidate and strengthen the worship of Yahweh, to increase the power and influence of the regular priesthood, and to throw into the shade the other gods and the local sanctuaries. Fourthly, the teachings and example of the earlier prophets whose names have come down to us—Nathan, Elijah, Elisha—all tended in the same direction. It must not be supposed, however, that

all the prophets—or seers as they were formerly called—were prophets of Yahweh. There were many false prophets, and it is probable that the well-known names which have come down to us represent men who were far in advance of their time, and who deliberately set themselves against the more popular soothsayers. You all remember the story of Elijah. It conveys a fine picture of the savage and superstitious worship of the time. King Ahab, you will remember, had forsaken or neglected the worship of Yahweh and had built an altar unto Baal. Elijah, a prophet of Yahweh is indignant at this, though it must be remembered that it was a very common thing at the time. Solomon had done the same. Probably Ahab's fault consisted in that he had not paid the same honour to Yahweh as to Baal. So Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to call upon their god to show his power. "Now therefore send," he says, "and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the Asherah four hundred. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel. And Elijah came near unto all the people and said: How long halt ye between two opinions? if Yahweh be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. Then said Elijah unto the people: I, even I only, am left a

prophet of Yahweh; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty." This is probably an exaggeration on the part of the historian, but it shows, at any rate, that Yahweh-worship was far from universal or even popular. Then the story goes on to say that Elijah ordered two bullocks to be brought, and an altar to be built, and one of the bullocks was prepared as for sacrifice to Baal by the prophets of Baal. And they called upon their god from morning even until noon, saying, 'O Baal, hear us.' And they danced and leaped about and cut themselves with knives and lances and cried aloud to Baal, but Baal made no response. And Elijah taunted them saying, "Cry aloud for your god may be asleep, or musing, or maybe he has gone on a journey." But it was of no avail. Then Elijah, dressed only in his shaggy sheepskin cloak, ordered an altar to be built and his bullock to be prepared as for sacrifice. And Elijah called upon Yahweh, and Yahweh, so runs the legend, sent down fire and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when the people saw it they were afraid and cried: "Yahweh,[1] he is God; Yahweh, he is God." And

[1] This use of the term "Yahweh," instead of "Jehovah" or "the Lord," may seem to some pedantic, to others, offensive. But I use the term for two reasons—first, because it is the correct term; second, because it will help to convey to the mind of the

Elijah cried: "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." And they took them and slew them by the brook Kishon.

That picture shows us not only the grotesque and savage tribal God worship of the time, it shows us, also, that, through all those early centuries there was a continuous worship of many gods and a continuous strife to make Yahweh first, the supreme, afterwards, as we shall see, the sole God. It was not, as has been commonly thought, a backsliding towards idolatry, it was a slow gradual movement through idolatry and polytheism towards monotheism. Monotheism had not at this period been reached by any means. Yahweh's power is supposed to be restricted to his own land and people; and when, for example Naaman, the Syrian, a worshipper in the House of Rimmon, is cured of leprosy through the instrumentality of Elisha, the prophet of Yahweh, he takes back with him to Syria two mule-loads of earth, in order that, having some of Yahweh's land with him, he

reader, better than pages of argument, the undoubted fact that the God of the Israelites, up to the time of the eight-century prophets, and for long afterwards, was merely a tribal god—one amongst many others—but having a special and peculiar relationship to Israel. The use of the word may also help to break down narrow and sectarian conceptions of God. There is no more reason, save erroneous tradition why we should call the Supreme Spirit "Jehovah," than there is why we should call Him "Zeus" or "Ahura Mazda."

may be able to worship Yahweh! (2 Kings v. 17.) What a limited notion of God is here portrayed! "Palestine," says Dr. George Adam Smith, "repeats the religious record of Hauran, Moab, and Arabia. Baalim abound everywhere; Baalim of the mountains and Baalim of the plains; Baalim of the sun and Baalim of the stars; Baalim of the cities and Baalim of the tribes. Every nation has its own God, and believes in the reality of the gods of its neighbours. Every power in nature is worshipped, till altars rise on every high hill and under every green tree, with a mythology which is almost as elaborate as the Greek. The ritual of Israel is full of exact analogies to the ritual," of other religions, and its details "have not only the same names as in other Semitic languages, but—except for a higher moral character which, however, only sometimes distinguishes them—they are the same as among other Semites, in intention and details of execution."[1]

We see, then, that from the time of the settlement in Canaan there is a steady movement, through polytheism towards Yahweh-worship and the supremacy of Yahweh—a movement aided and supported by the greater kings and the more notable prophets, notable, that is, to later ages. But what did it matter, you may ask, when men worshipped a so-called sacred stone, or a tree, or an ark, whether they called

[1] *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the O.T.*, lecture IV.

it Yahweh, or Baal, or Moloch, or Ashtoreth, or Rimmon? It mattered this—that each particular divinity and order of worship connoted certain rites and customs, a certain order of life. Now there is not the least doubt that the worship of many, if not of all these gods, was mingled with immoral and degrading rites and practices. So, too, with Yahwism, but not to the same extent. The very fact that the Nazarites, like Samuel, abstained from intoxicants, points to a greater degree of purity. But what distinguished Yahwism also was this—that the worship of Yahweh was always and indissolubly connected with moral commands. The germ or the seed which Moses planted never died—it grew very slowly, but it did grow, and it became stronger and struck its roots deeper into the soil of human nature as Yahweh's power grew and Yahweh's victories were multiplied. And it was helped by one great spiritual force which casts its shadow over all religions and all life, that is, by Fear, the great purifier. Whenever defeat, or famine, or other calamity befell the Israelites, then it was felt that Yahweh had turned away from them and was visiting them with his anger and displeasure. What, then, must they do? Offer sacrifices to Him and observe the ceremonials? Yes, undoubtedly, but something more also. They must keep the moral commands, the Ten Words, as the Hebrews called them, which, according to tradition, had been given

to Moses amid the clouds and thunder at Sinai. Hence, I say, in times of crisis, the worshipper of Yahweh was always forced back upon himself, upon his inner consciousness—forced to ask himself: "Am I obeying Yahweh's commands? Am I doing what is right in His eyes? Am I observing the Law and Covenant? If I am, then He will bless me and keep me. And if He does not bless me, if He turns His face away from me and brings calamity upon me, that shows that I have not been sufficiently faithful to His Law." Strange reasoning, you will say, or rather, strange feeling, for these ideas were the outcome of feeling rather than of reason. We shall see, in later discourses, how the whole religious life of Israel vibrates with this feeling.

It was this holy fear of Yahweh, this reverence for His Law, which turned the scale in His favour. We can see the principle implicitly at work on almost every page of the Bible, hidden ofttimes, as it is, amid savagery which makes our blood run cold as we read. We see it when David, having ordered Uriah to be placed in the fore-front of the battle in order that he may take Uriah's wife to be his wife, Nathan, the prophet, beards the king in his palace with the parable of the poor man and his one ewe lamb, and hurls this accusation in the face of the royal murderer: "Thou art the man!" We see it when Elijah rebukes Ahab for the virtual murder of Naboth, and the theft

of his vineyard. We see it again when the uncouth prophet flies from the wrath of Jezebel, lies down in despair in his cave on the mountain and hears the word of Yahweh, not in the wind, or the earthquake, or the fire, but in the still small voice. We see it growing stronger and purer when Elisha commands the king of Israel to give his Syrian captives bread to eat and water to drink and then to set them free (2 Kings vi. 22). Hence, I repeat, it was the moral precepts, the moral conditions in the supposed covenant between Yahweh and Israel which distinguished Yahweh from the surrounding gods. "As soon as this difference was grasped and recognised in all its significance," says Kuenen, "the conception of Yahweh's nature began to develop itself *in the direction of spiritual monotheism.* The very point in which the distinction between Yahweh and the austere natural gods lay, His moral character presented itself as His proper nature; Yahweh's natural side [the side of savage might and power] fell into the background, and His moral character slowly advanced into the foreground." The other gods represented force, might, power—Yahweh represented *character* as well. We have not yet reached the time at which "*Yahweh is spirit.*" We shall reach that period in our next discourse when we come to the age of the great prophets. Meanwhile, it is essential to the right understanding of the Bible to bear in mind that

during the six hundred years which elapsed from the time of Moses (about 1320 B.C.) to the age of the great prophets, and even after the time of the great prophets, there is this continual strife—a moral struggle and development we may call it—between the worship of Yahweh and the worship of surrounding deities. We must remember also that the whole of the Old Testament was written under the dominating influence and impulse of this later thought—the supremacy of Yahweh. When the writer of Genesis says that "Yahweh made earth and heaven," and "formed every beast of the field out of the ground," we know that this writer lived after the early idolatrous time of which I have been speaking, lived in a later age in which Yahweh had become virtually supreme, and the creation of the heavens and the earth could be attributed to Him. And when we are told that Yahweh is "a jealous God" and will not endure other gods before Him; or that certain kings did that which was right in the eyes of Yahweh and therefore prospered, while other kings who followed not after Yahweh, but worshipped other gods, brought calamity and suffering upon Israel, we see history itself, both in fact and story, becoming dominated by the spirit and religion of Yahweh and His worshippers. In our next discourse we shall come to the life and work of the great men who made Yahweh supreme, who purified men's conceptions of him, and, in so doing,

purified also men's moral, political, and religious life; and who—derided in their own day, as all prophets are—virtually created the Old Testament and the higher Judaism, and unconsciously prepared the way for those nobler ideas which were to culminate in the teachings of Jesus.

## VII

# THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHETS

Jeremiah xxxi. 33—"This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my Law in their inward parts and in their heart will I write it."

Micah vi. 8—"What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

We have now reached, in these discourses, the most important period in the religious development of the people of Israel, and *one* of the most important periods in the religious development of the world—the age of the great eighth century prophets. It is a period the importance of which cannot be over-emphasized. We emerge now from the darkness of idolatry, superstition, savagery, and polytheism, into the dawn of a nobler religious life, higher ideals of morality, and loftier conceptions of God. Before dealing with this

period let me put aside one or two misconceptions which have tended to create and perpetrate a wholly false view both of the prophets' work and teaching, and of their relation to Christianity. The first misconception is this: that the prophets predicted the coming of Jesus Christ. Such a view of their mission and teaching is wholly puerile and misleading, and is not now held by any critic of repute. They never once mention Jesus, and their Messianic expectations cannot fairly be interpreted as referring to Him. If you will refer to the revised version of the Bible you will find that all the headlines and headings of chapters, which so frequently introduced the name of Christ, have disappeared. They have disappeared, for the very good reason that the prophets did not write them—they were introduced by translators who, full of their own theories of interpretation, conscientiously thought that they were giving a true index to the prophets' teachings. It is easy to understand how the mistake arose. The prophets, in their fervid, poetic way, did foretell the advent or the coming of a Messiah, a deliverer, who, if the people would only be true to Yahweh, their God, would bring back blessing and prosperity to the sorely tried and troubled nation. For hundreds of years the Jews looked forward to the coming of this Messiah. When Jesus began His mission and teaching, and claimed—or when His disciples claimed for Him—that He was the long-

expected Messiah, His followers began to apply, in all sorts of strange ways, the sayings of the prophets to Him. The formula of the apostles: "Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet," in some instances becomes absurd. Take just two examples: "Thus it is written by the prophet," says the writer of Matthew—"out of thee, Bethlehem shall come forth a governor, which shall be shepherd of my people Israel." Turn to the actual words of the prophet, which you will find in the 5th chapter of Micah, and you will see that this great governor or king is expected almost immediately, and that his task would be to defend Israel against the dreaded Assyrian invader. Take, second, the well-known passage—"Thus was it spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Behold the Virgin shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel!'" Turn to the 7th and 8th chapters of Isaiah, where the words occur, and you will find that Isaiah is trying to comfort King Ahaz with the hope that before the promised and then-expected child shall have reached years of discretion, "before it shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good," the land will not only be rid of the two invading Kings Rezin and Pekah, but *their* kingdoms shall be devastated also as a punishment. In the next chapter the child is born, and, says Isaiah, before it "shall have knowledge to cry,

my father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria (the capitals of the invading kings) shall be carried away before the (avenging hand of the) king of Assyria." But to follow this line of argument at any length would be a flogging of dead horses. There is not a single biblical critic who now holds the old theory of prophecy. "The prophet speaks always," says Canon Driver, "to his own contemporaries: the message which he brings is intimately related with the circumstances of his time." "The fundamental meaning of the prophecies," says Dr. George Adam Smith, "must be that which they bore to the living generation to whom they were first addressed." To apply them to something which occurred hundreds of years afterwards is to mistake or to distort their meaning.

And the second misconception which we must avoid is this: the idea that the prophets reflect the religious opinions of their time. They do not. They were generations, nay, centuries in advance of their time. They stood almost alone. They were opposed by the great majority of the priests and prophets of their own age. Attempts were made to silence them. They were derided, and sometimes persecuted. Though they pleaded for the people, the people, sunk in idolatry, did not understand their high spiritual conceptions. We are apt, in reading the prophets, to say to ourselves—"what a high conception

of religion the people of those days must have had!" That is not so. The people, as we have seen, though recognising Yahweh as the chief God, were sunk in idolatry, image-worship, superstition, and degrading sacrificial ceremonials. The prophets were great and bold reformers—social, moral, political, and religious reformers, and they had to pay the penalty, the usual penalty, of great reformers—that of being compelled to stand almost alone.

Guarding ourselves, then, against these two popular misconceptions, let us get back to our history. The political situation in that eighth century B.C. was, briefly, this: the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah are in danger, both from internal dissension and from the growing power of Assyria. During the century, Israel, the northern kingdom, falls before the invader and its chief citizens are deported as slaves and captives to Assyria. The kingdom of Judah is now in continual fear of the power of Assyria. Two parties now arise. One party favours making an alliance with Assyria. The other party favours making an alliance with Egypt in order to beat back Assyria should the occasion arise. That is the political situation.

The religious situation you know from previous discourses. Briefly, it is this: Yahweh is worshipped as the national God of Israel, and the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem, by David, and the building of the

Temple at Jerusalem, by Solomon, had given great prestige to the worship of Yahweh. But other gods are also worshipped, and Yahweh himself is worshipped under the symbol of a bull in the northern kingdom, and under the symbols of sacred stones and trees in all parts of the land. This worship was often grotesque, immoral, and savage, degenerating occasionally even to human sacrifices. Images were worshipped. Divination and necromancy were practised. Yahweh's power was strictly limited to His own land and people, and it was considered quite proper and natural that every nation should have its own particular God. There was as yet no Pentateuch —there were the Ten Words or Commandments, in much shorter form than we have them now, and possibly the 21st, 22nd and 23rd chapters of the book of Exodus —"the book of the Covenant," embodying certain moral commands, judgments, and primitive ceremonial legislation.

In this situation the first great prophet to arise was Amos, the herdsman of Tekoa. Read the first two chapters of Amos, bearing in mind the prevailing idolatry of the time, and you will see what an immense exaltation of the conception of Yahweh—of God—he brings with him. Here Yahweh is not merely the God of Israel, He is the God of all the nations, and he arraigns both Israel and the surrounding peoples before Him. Nay, more. He is not only, in Amos's

mind, the God of all the nations, He is the God of the universe. Listen to the prophets' magnificent sentences: It is Yahweh

"That maketh the Pleiades and Orion,
And turneth the deep darkness into the morning,
And maketh the day dark with night;
That calleth for the waters of the sea,
And poureth them out upon the face of the earth:
Yahweh is his name."

"Lo, he that formeth the mountains and createth the wind,
And declareth unto man what is his thought;
That maketh the morning darkness,
And treadeth upon the high places of the earth:
Yahweh, the God of hosts, is his name."

This is sublime indeed, and far above the puny, superstitious, tribal-god worship of the time, symbolised by a bull or confined to an ark. The other prophets, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, preach in the same strain. Yahweh, to them, is the God of nations and the God of nature. He bringeth forth the fruits of the earth, He regulates the seasons, He raises up and destroys nations, He sends calamities and blessings to all. Nay, for the first time we hear of the "spirit of Yahweh"—the spirit of God. The spirit of Yahweh, says Isaiah, is

"The spirit of wisdom and understanding,

The spirit of counsel and courage,
The spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Yahweh."

Here, then, we have reached a pure Monotheism as against the degrading polytheism and idolatry of the time. The worship of images and other gods is denounced in unsparing language. Yahweh is not only the Supreme, he is the only God. Nay, more. We have reached here an *ethical* Monotheism, for the teaching of the prophets is severely and grandly ethical. Who, asks Isaiah, shall be the favoured of Yahweh? Who shall dwell continually with a glowing hearth?—

"He that walketh righteously and speaketh the truth,
He that despiseth the gain of oppressions,
That closeth His hands from holding of bribes,
That stoppeth His ears to the proposal of bloodshed,
And shutteth his eyes from looking upon evil—
He shall dwell on high,
His place of defence shall be a stronghold of rocks;
His bread shall be given unto him and water in abundance."[1]

"Let judgment roll down as waters and righteousness as an everflowing stream," says Amos; for "the ways of Yahweh are right, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein" (Hosea). With this lofty conception of God it is easy to understand the prophets' condemnation of idolatry and of

[1] Isaiah xxxiii. 15, 16. Kuenen's rendering.

the disgusting ceremonial and sacrifices of their time.

"As a thief is made ashamed when he is found,
So stands the house of Israel ashamed,
They, their kings, princes, priests, and prophets,
Who say to a stock, 'Thou art my father!'
And to a stone, 'Thou hast brought me forth!'

For as numerous as thy cities have thy gods become, O Judah."[1](Jeremiah). Amos puts into the mouth of Yahweh himself the words: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt offerings and meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the thank offerings of your fatted calves." Isaiah, Hosea, and Micah, are equally emphatic: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil: learn to do well. Seek judgment, set right the oppressor, do justice to the fatherless, plead for the widow." "What doth Yahweh require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Still further—these great reformers preach not

[1] Jer. xi. 26-28 Kuenen's rendering.

merely a God of might and power who brings punishment upon transgressors, but a God who is holy, pure, righteous, the friend of the lowly. The men they assail are the men in high places—the chief priests, orthodox prophets, rulers, and princes of the land. No wonder that Amaziah, the priest, charges Amos with treason. "The lofty looks of man shall be brought low, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and Yahweh alone shall be exalted in that day. For there shall be a day of Yahweh of hosts upon all that is proud and haughty, and upon all that is lifted up, and it shall be brought low." "Woe unto them which justify the wicked for a reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him. . . as the dry grass sinketh down in the flame, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust. Woe unto them that join house to house and field to field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land." "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and to the writers that write perverseness: to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right of the poor of my people." (Isaiah) "Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, and which crush the needy, Yahweh hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come unto you, that they shall take you away with hooks, and your

residue with fish-hooks" (Amos). "For every one, from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely." "Will ye come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered; that ye may do all these abominations" (Jeremiah) "And ye, daughters of Zion, that are haughty, walking, and mincing as they go . . . .Yahweh will take away the bravery of their anklets, and the networks, and the crescents; the pendants and the bracelets; the head-tires, and the ankle-chains, and the sashes, and the perfume boxes, and the amulets; the rings and the nose-jewels and the festival-robes; the hand-mirrors, and the fine linen, and the turbans, and the veils. And it shall come to pass that instead of sweet spices there shall be rottenness, and instead of a girdle a rope." (Isaiah). Truly, our mealy-mouthed agitators of to-day must go to the Hebrew prophets for lessons in invective! And it must be remembered that Isaiah was of aristocratic birth!

Once more—these great fore-runners of Christ preach Yahweh, not primarily as a God of Battles, but a God of Peace. The battle-bow shall be hewn in pieces, and war shall cease out of the earth, the war-chariots and war-horses shall be rooted out, and the strongholds and fortresses shall be overthrown. To those who would rely on the armies of Assyria or of Egypt, Isaiah cries:

"The strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame."
"Woe unto them that go down to Egypt for help,
And stay on war-horses;
And trust in chariots because they are many,
And in horsemen because they are very strong;
But they look not unto the Holy One of Israel,
Neither seek Yahweh!"
But—"Yahweh shall stretch out His hand,
Both he that helpeth shall stumble, and he that is holpen shall fall,
And they shall all perish together."
For "swords shall be beaten into plough-shares,
And spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war any more;"
For—"the work of righteousness shall be peace,
And the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence for ever."

Truly, these men, in their seemingly sublime impracticableness, were the prototypes of Tolstoi as he arraigns the nations of to-day—arraigns them with greater cause, for the peoples of to-day have reached a high level of civilization, yet their mouths are full of professions about being followers of the Prince of Peace, while their armouries are filled with weapons of destruction, and their hands are red with human blood.

Two other characteristics of these great religious reformers, and of their conception of God, let us note. The first is from Hosea. Hosea, from the

form in which he casts his writings, had evidently suffered heavy domestic affliction—his wife had proved unfaithful to him, and her unfaithfulness had brought trouble into the home. So he compares Israel to his unfaithful spouse. The people have been unfaithful to Yahweh, misled by their own priests and leaders, they have followed after other's gods, and brought trouble, and oppression, and all manner of unrighteousness into the land. That is their punishment. But just as the prophet is filled with compassion and forgiveness for his erring spouse, so will Yahweh forgive His people Israel if they will but return to Him. "I will betroth thee unto me for ever," he makes Yahweh say; "yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people, and they shall say, Thou art my God. For I desire mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." Here, then, we have the attributes of mercy and forgiveness especially emphasized. Out of the prophet's heart they are born, and he makes God in his own spiritual image.

One other characteristic of the prophets' conception of Yahweh I take from the teachings of Jeremiah. Jeremiah came a century after Isaiah, but I refer to

his teachings here because I want to bring home to your minds at least a faint idea of the exalted spiritual conceptions of these great pre-Christian reformers. The times of Jeremiah and those immediately preceding were even more troublous than the days of Amos, Isaiah, and Hosea. There had been Reformation, and brutal re-action. The streets had run with blood. More than one of the prophets had suffered martyrdom. The chief citizens who took their part were thrown from the rocky cliffs of Jerusalem. The furnace of Tophet had been rebuilt, fathers and mothers sacrificed their own children in its flames. Men and women told Jeremiah that Yahweh had deserted them, that they *would* worship other gods, they would "burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and pour out drink offerings unto her as we and our fathers have done: for then we had plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense unto the queen of heaven we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine."[1] Jeremiah himself was more than once cast into prison, and, with all, the dread of the invader, the shadow of impending doom, which none knew how to avert, lay over the sorely-stricken kingdom. Even Jeremiah himself feels his heart fail within him. His perplexity and trouble is the perplexity and problem of

[1] Jeremiah xliv.

us all—the sufferings of the righteous through the wrong-doing of the wicked—and he cries, as with the agonised heart in Gethsemane: "Oh, Yahweh, only let me put before Thee certain questions of justice: Why is the way of the wicked fortunate, and how are they happy who deal treacherously? Thou plantest them, they take root, and flourish, and bring forth fruit. Thou art familiar in their mouths, but far from their reins. Yet thou, O Yahweh, seest me, and triest my heart towards thyself."[1] "Cursed," he cries, "be the day wherein I was born." As Dr. George Adam Smith well says,—It is one of the most pathetic cries in literature. But, as in Gethsemane also, Jeremiah comes out of the agony of trial still faithful, courageous, and pure. "Trust ye not in lying words," he says, "crying, the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour then I will cause you to dwell in this place." "Behold, the days come, saith Yahweh—Yahweh, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirreth up the sea that the waves thereof roar: Yahweh of Hosts is His name, thus saith Yahweh—I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house

[1] Jeremiah xii. 1-3. Dr. George Adam Smith's rendering.

of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day *that* I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith Yahweh; But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith Yahweh, I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know Yahweh: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Yahweh: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more."[1]

Here we are on the heights indeed! We have reached the sublime conception that 'God is Spirit' to be attained through inward purity. It does not matter now what we call that spirit—Yahweh, Jehovah, Lord, Christ, God—so long as we try to write His law in our hearts and fill our lives with his spiritual being, that is, with Wisdom, Justice, Mercy, Truth.

There are two other great prophets—the Great Unknown called the second Isaiah, and the prophet-priest, Ezekiel—who left their mark on the life of Israel, and through Israel, on the life of our western humanity, for the theocracy which the prophets

[1] Jeremiah xxxi. 31-35.

founded has stamped its influence more or less on every succeeding generation. But these come in a later period. What I wish to do now is to answer a question which must surely have framed itself in your minds. How was it, you will ask, that there was apparently so sudden a development, in the minds of these great men, towards so high a level of ethical and spiritual monotheism, out of the darkness, idolatry, tribal-god worship, and savagery by which they were surrounded? We must remember, however, that the development was not so sudden as it seemed. From the time of Samuel, David, Solomon, and especially through the labours of Elijah, and Elisha, and Micaiah, Yahweh had slowly tended to become the supreme God of Israel. We must remember, also, that the great prophets, in their monotheism, stood almost alone, just as, at a later period, Socrates and his pupils, and Jesus and his disciples, stood almost alone. But I might answer your question by asking another: Why was it that in the age of Pericles, in Athens, there suddenly burst forth a spirit of philosophic, artistic, and literary splendour—a line of artists, poets, and philosophers, at whose feet the whole world has continued to sit to this day? How was it that at the close of the Middle Ages, during the period of the Renaissance, there burst forth a spirit of creative activity which gave to the world products of artistic genius to the

haunts of which mankind still pays its pilgrimages? How was it, again, that in England, in the Elizabethan and Puritan age—embracing a period no longer than that from Amos to Jeremiah—there arose a line of men—from Spencer and Shakspeare to Milton, from Hooker and Chillingworth to Bunyan, from Locke and Bacon to Hobbes and Newton—who raised the nation to the level of the highest in point of intellectual and moral greatness? It is the same in every nation. Great men appear at given periods, they are often scorned, derided, and persecuted by their contemporaries, but their thought and teaching inspire and mould the generations of the future. "Still at the prophet's feet the nations sit," but the nations, alas! will not hear, or hearing, will not understand. The operations of the Spirit, "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and courage, the Spirit of Knowledge and of the fear of the Most High," are past finding out. "Lo! these are the skirts of His ways, and how little a portion do we hear of Him!"

The teaching of those great religious reformers of 2600 years ago has influenced the whole religious history — Catholic and Protestant — of the great nations of the West. But it had also immediate effects on the religious life of the time, for, as I shall show, it virtually created the Old Testament and the higher Judaism. What those immediate effects were

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## VIII

# AN ANCIENT REFORMATION—THE DISCOVERY OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW.

Deut. vi. 6—"These words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children."

Deut. xxx. 14—"The word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."

WE saw, in our last discourse, that the prophets of the eighth century B.C. threw into the arena of the religious and political life of their time certain new and great ideas respecting the nature, the attributes, and the moral requirements of God. These ideas—as all new and great ideas do—caused an immense intellectual and religious convulsion. Yahweh—God—to the prophets was not merely a tribal-god to be worshipped under the symbol of a brazen-bull, tree-stems, or sacred stones, to the accompaniment of dis-

gusting, cruel, and sometimes inhuman rites and sacrifices, he was the God of nature and of nations, the God of Righteousness, Justice, Purity, Mercy, Truth, and Peace, requiring all these things from his worshippers, so that, as Jeremiah said, all, from the greatest to the least, might know him. In one word, we pass, here, from polytheism, to the beginnings—only the beginnings—of monotheism. Yahweh—God—now becomes the synonym for Righteousness. And though the prophets, and particularly their followers, were not always righteous in their methods, yet it was a great gain to humanity to have this idea continually enforced and impressed upon it—that men should worship God by righteousness and purity of life rather than by abominable and degrading rites. I cannot sufficiently emphasize this difference between the eighth-century prophets, and all who went before them. We stand, here, as you will see, at one of the turning-points in the religious history of the world.

What, then, was the immediate effect of the preaching of these new and great ideas? Let us again consider, for a moment, the political and the religious situation of the time. The Northern Kingdom, (Israel), as we have seen, had already fallen before the might of Assyria, its capital being reduced to ruin in the year 722 B.C. after all the horrors of a three years' siege. The Southern Kingdom, (Judah,) stands now in mortal fear of Assyria, and indeed, under King Hezekiah, and

despite the protests of Isaiah, who has great influence at Court, bows in submission to the Assyrian monarch for a time. But Hezekiah ultimately defies the Assyrian monarch, and Sennacherib advances with his hosts towards Jerusalem, and sends messengers on before to negotiate and threaten, saying to the people: "Hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, Yahweh will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations ever delivered his land out of the hand of the King of Assyria? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of my hand, that Yahweh should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" You can see here the contest between the tribal-gods of the time. Then Hezekiah rent his clothes and covered himself with sack-cloth, and went into the house of Yahweh, not knowing what to do. But under the inspiration of Isaiah, he decides to stand firm, and Lo! the host of Sennacherib were smitten by a pestilence, and his horses and his army dissolved away —an incident with which all of us are familiar if not through our Bibles, through Byron's famous lines:

"The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:

Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay wither'd and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he pass'd;
And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heav'd, and for ever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there roll'd not the breath of his pride:
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!"

So Judah was saved for a time.

The religious situation was much the same as that described in previous discourses, but complicated now by the higher spiritual monotheism of the prophets. Yahweh, the principal God, is still worshipped under the symbols of sacred trees and stones, at altars in all parts of the land. Gold and silver statues to other gods were very numerous, and in the cities altars were raised at the corners of the streets. On the roof of the Temple, the house of Yahweh itself, small altars were erected for the worship of the heavenly bodies. At the entrance to the Temple court chariots dedicated to the worship of the sun were kept. The Temple itself, with its arrangements for the sacrifices, was like a vast slaughter-house, the warm flowing blood representing, to the ancient mind, the idea of life. The

courts were crowded with oxen, sheep, and goats. The carcases were roasted on huge altars underneath which were gutters or drains to carry off the streams of blood. How largely fear entered into the worship of the time may be gathered from the account, given by the prophet Joel, of the great fast which was called, to plead with Yahweh for mercy from an immense and dreadful visitation of locusts. The fruit and crops were destroyed. Cattle and sheep were reduced to starvation. The brightness of the Eastern sky was darkened by this immense cloud of insects. Even the flour and oil for the meat-offering failed, and the priests called a solemn assembly and fast-day. "The harsh blast of the consecrated ram's horn called an assembly for an extraordinary fast," says Dean Stanley, in his description of the event. "Not a soul was to be absent. Old and young, men and women, mothers with infants at their breasts, the bridegroom and the bride—all were there stretched in front of the altar. The altar itself presented the dreariest of all sights—a hearth without its sacred fire, a table spread without its sacred feast. The Priestly caste, instead of gathering as usual upon its steps and its platform, were driven, as it were, to the further space; they turned their backs to the dead altar, and lay prostrate, gazing towards the Invisible Presence within the sanctuary. Instead of the hymns and music which, since the time of David, had entered into their prayers, there was nothing heard but the

passionate sobs, and the loud dissonant howls such as only an Eastern hierarchy could utter. Instead of the mass of white mantles, which they usually presented, they were wrapped in black goat's-hair sackcloth, twisted round them not with the brilliant sashes of the priestly attire, but with a rough girdle of the same texture, which they never unbound night or day. What they wore of their common dress was rent asunder or cast off. With bare breasts they waved their black drapery towards the Temple, and shrieked aloud, 'Spare Thy people, O Yahweh!'"[1]

It was in such circumstances as these that the prophets came with their high spiritual teachings, on which I dwelt in my last discourse. The first in authority to give heed to these teachings was King Hezekiah. He was influenced by both Micah and Isaiah, and, under their influence, he set himself to bring about a complete revolution in the religious customs and usages of the people. He not only gave all the weight of his kingly authority to the worship of Yahweh at the Temple, but he abolished all the local sanctuaries and "high places," at which the people had worshipped Yahweh for generations under the symbols of sacred stones and trees. The object of this was obvious—the reformers knew that they could not abolish idolatry as long as the local altars remained. These drastic

[1] *History of the Jewish Church*, lecture xxxvii. See also *Joel* c. I. and II.

measures, interfering as they did with the most cherished relics, rites and customs—rites and customs hallowed by long traditions and venerable associations, uprooting and destroying places which were consecrated by centuries of religious usage—must have produced widespread dissatisfaction. At any rate we know that on the death of Hezekiah a violent reaction took place. Manasseh, the successor of Hezekiah, restored all the 'high places' and local sanctuaries, and the worship of sacred stones and trees. Two altars were set up in the courts of the temple to the worship of the heavenly bodies. A statue was raised to the goddess Astarte. The old polytheism returned, apparently stronger than ever. The sacred furnace of Tophet had been rebuilt. Nay, the king himself, Manasseh, sacrificed his own child there. The hopes of the prophets and reformers must have suffered sorely during this violent reaction, which lasted over fifty years. There is a legend that Isaiah suffered martyrdom. How utterly and pitiably foolish this barbarous idolatry was, you will say! But we must remember that the prophets and priests of the other gods and of the local sanctuaries must have had a good deal to say for themselves. Think of Manasseh, sacrificing his own son in the sacred furnace! Think of the inner compulsion urging to the dreadful decision! Of the last days and hours when every look and smile of the child would cut to the hearts of the parents! Fathers and mothers

who could do these things must have been terribly in earnest about their religion. Then the orthodox prophets and priests—how they would rail against the reformer-prophets, Isaiah and his followers, as impracticable dreamers. "They want us to rely upon Yahweh and his righteousness," they would say, "and they denounce our reliance upon our soldiers, and our horses, and our war chariots!" Exactly the same sarcasm, you will note, that the worshippers of the God of Battles to-day hurl at Tolstoi and the worshippers of the God of Peace. You see how these moral ideas of 2500 years ago come into our life to-day. The retort is obvious—if it is 'practicable' to die in the service of the sanguinary God of Battles, it is equally 'practicable' to die in the service of the holier God of Peace.

But with the death of Manasseh and his son Amon the period of reaction came to an end. The older prophet-reformers had passed away, but they had sowed good seed, and left faithful followers behind them, the greatest of whom was Jeremiah. Under King Josiah they again raised the standard of reform, but this time with more caution and care. In the eighteenth year of King Josiah's reign, that is, in the year 621 B.C. a curious and epoch-making incident occurred. It appears that some repairs were required in the Temple, and the king, (who was probably acting in concert with the reformers) sent Shaphan,

his scribe, to Hilkiah, the high-priest, for the money which he had received from the doorkeepers of the Temple, in order to pay the workmen who were doing the repairs. Shaphan went for the money, and Hilkiah then made an important communication to him—he had found, he said, in that part of the Temple which was undergoing repair, a most important book, no other than "the Book of the Law." This was a pious fraud, as we shall see. Shaphan immediately read the book, then he hastened to the King and informed him of this important discovery. The King himself then ordered Shaphan to read the book to him: Josiah was very much impressed by it. He rent his clothes and lamented, for he found that this "Book of the Law" contained precepts which he and his people had continually and habitually violated, and which their fathers had broken for generations and centuries past. What, then, was this mysterious "Book of the Law?" It was no other than the book of Deuteronomy—or rather chapters iv. 44—xxvi, and xxviii., the other parts being merely an historical and exhortatory framework—here brought to light for the first time, for it had never been heard of before. The 8th century prophets never once mention it, and they would surely have done so had it been in existence. How it come to be written we will consider shortly. Let us follow the course of events. The King sent

five of his ministers to consult with Huldah, a prophetess of Jerusalem, about this mysterious book. She, after predicting all sorts of punishments for the idolatry of the people, declared that the words of the book were the words of Yahweh. The King hesitated no longer. He called an assembly of all the priests and the people, in the Temple, and read aloud all the words of the book to them and publicly bound himself to order his life by them, "to walk after Yahweh, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and all his soul," and all the people stood up likewise to the covenant. Then the work of reform began. Everything connected with the worship of the false gods was taken out of the Temple; the chariots of the sun were burnt up; the altars to the worship of the heavenly bodies were broken down; the furnace of Tophet, where the children were sacrificed, was defiled; the old sanctuaries to Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Milcom, which Solomon himself had built, were laid waste; the sacred stones and tree-stems throughout the whole land were broken down; every image and idol was burnt or broken. From Geba to Beersheba, from north to south, the local sanctuaries or "high places" were destroyed, and the priests who had ministered at them were brought to Jerusalem, to perform subordinate functions in the Temple; and the work of reform was crowned by a

splendid celebration of the passover, "such as had not been holden from the days of the Judges." Two great principles animated this reformation—the principles of the great eighth-century prophets. Spiritual monotheism was substituted for polytheism and idolatry, and, as we shall see, a higher standard of morality was inculcated and enforced.

But let us now turn for a moment to the book which was made the basis of these great and drastic reforms. As to its authorship no one knows anything. Some critics have inclined to the opinion that Jeremiah was the writer of it. Indeed, so many of the expressions and turns of phrase—such as 'with all thy heart and with all thy soul' 'walk in the ways of Yahweh,' 'that Yahweh thy God may bless thee,' 'the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow'—which are peculiar to Deuteronomy are also to be found in Jeremiah, that Colenso came to the conclusion that Jeremiah was the author of the book,—an opinion which has not been upheld by later critics. However this may be, what is certain is that the book had never been heard of before, that one or other of the reformer prophets had written it, and that it was accepted and adopted as the written or legislative programme of the reformers. Let us remember that the Orientals at that time had not our modern conception of the gradual unfolding of man's reason and conscience by slow stages of natural development;

that any supposed message from God or his prophets was solemnly accepted as a revelation of the Divine Will. We must remember also that it was regarded as a perfectly legitimate practice in ancient times to ascribe a writing to some great and revered authority. Just as the book of Deuteronomy, 'found' in the Temple, was ascribed to Moses, so, many of the Psalms were ascribed to David, many of the Proverbs to Solomon, the book of Daniel to the great Jew of that name, the second part of *Isaiah* to Isaiah the eighth century prophet, the Gospels to the Disciples, and some of the New Testament epistles to the great apostle Paul. It is evident, then, that the prophet-reformers in Hezekiah's time failed, partly because they were in advance of their time, partly because they had no authorized programme. This time, under Josiah, they were more cautious—they provided themselves with an authorized programme, in the shape of Deuteronomy.

Let us now look at the book itself, for we are here at a distinct stage in the evolution of religion towards Judaism—the evolution from polytheism to monotheism. The only parts of the Law in existence before Deuteronomy were the "Ten Words," in very brief form, the "Book of the Covenant," to which they form an introduction, that is the 20th, 21st, 22nd, and 23rd chapters of the book of Exodus, and some unedited fragments of ritual legislation like Exodus xxxiv.

17-26, also in brief form. Thus, Deuteronomy was the second layer of strata in the formation or development of the Law. Compare the two strata, and compare also the prevailing idolatry with the precepts of Deuteronomy, and you will see what a great advance there is in moral and religious conceptions. In Deuteronomy we find the echo of the great teachings of the eighth-century prophets. Yahweh, here, is not merely a tribal-god—he is the "God of gods and Lord of lords." To him belong the heavens and the earth and all that is therein. He is the only God—"Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one." The Israelite must "love Yahweh with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might," and he must show this love by observing Yahweh's commandments and walking in his ways of righteousness. One regulation is most striking and significant. The older code, the "Book of the Covenant" had permitted, and indeed authorized, the worship of Yahweh by sacrifices and feasts at the 'high places' and local sanctuaries,[1] but the new code of the Deuteronomist strictly and absolutely forbade this. Again and again it insists that all sacrifices must be offered at the one place "which Yahweh shall choose," that is, the central sanctuary at Jerusalem, and ye shall break down, he says, all "their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars (sacred stones), and burn their Asherim (sacred trees)

[1] Exodus xx. 24.

with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods." The motive for this was obvious. The prophet-reformers knew that the local sanctuaries and high places were the haunts of idolatry, and that they could not hope to exterminate idolatry, while the local shrines, with all their old associations, remained.

Lastly, the ethical and humanitarian precepts of this new code are most striking. Yahweh is here a God of mercy and loving-kindness, and he will rule his people in mercy and loving-kindness if they will but walk in his ways. Love to God, not fear, or dread of consequences, is laid down as the motive to human action. Regulations are given for modifying and humanising the then existing system of slavery. After six years of service male and female slaves must be released if they so desire. Usury is forbidden, except towards foreigners. Even animals are not to be treated cruelly. Especial solicitude is shown for the fatherless and the widow. Justice is to be impartially administered to all, and the judges must not receive gifts. Weights and measures must be just and perfect. How fine is an injunction like this: "when thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow. When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it after thee: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow." How fine, also, the gentle solicitude for the

education of the children: "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." How many of us do that, even to-day! The harshest precepts of of the book—really inhuman—are directed against idolaters and idolatrous cities. But these we can readily understand, knowing the circumstances of the time, and remembering the horrible practice of human sacrifice which was connected with idolatry.

This, then, was the great programme of the radical reformers of the seventh century B.C. It was the fruit of the teaching of the great eight-century prophets. It was the second stage in the evolution of the Law—the third stage is still to come, for the greater part of the Pentateuch is yet unborn. But note, even now, how this high spiritual teaching, born in the spirit of the prophets, contains within itself the seeds of decay and death—how, reduced to the mechanism and formalism of the letter, dependent for its enforcement on a centralized priesthood, and still allied—through necessary compromise perhaps—to disgusting sacrifices and puerile ceremonial, it is ultimately destined to be broken up by Him who had to take up the mantle of the prophets, to preach again an inward religion, and who taught that:

"Greater love hath no man than this—that he lay down his life for his friends;" "Blessed are the pure in heart, for *they* shall see God."

But, alas! for the vanity of human hopes. The zeal of the reformers seemed, after a few years, to have been spent in vain. After some years of peace and apparent prosperity, which the people attributed to the favour of Yahweh, King Josiah was killed in a rashly undertaken campaign against Egypt. The clouds of adversity and foreign domination again gathered over the doomed kingdom, and the people, though purified somewhat by the reformation, sank back into many of their old immoralities and idolatries. The only great priest—for he was priest as well as prophet—who remained faithful, was Jeremiah, with his trusted friend Baruch, and the people virtually told him that they *would* worship the old gods, for since they had worshipped Yahweh only they had "been consumed by the sword and by the famine." Meanwhile, a power, mightier even than Egypt, mightier than Assyria, was advancing from the East—the Chaldeans, under Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Jeremiah, torn now between his feelings of patriotism and his faithfulness to Yahweh, in other words, between his affection for his country and his love of righteousness, God, remains faithful to his high spiritual mission. Denounced as a traitor, twice cast into prison, and threatened with death, he still

advises the people to amend their ways, to remain faithful to Yahweh, and to submit to the King of Babylon,—and he predicts seventy years of exile. "Thus saith Yahweh, the lord of Hosts: I will shatter this people and this city as one breaketh a potter's vessel that cannot be made whole again," and the prophet appeared in the Temple court with a wooden collar round his neck to signify the coming bondage of the kingdom. The people of Jerusalem, rent by faction and by social and religious disputes which broke up homes, and families, and life-long friendships, knew not which way to turn for safety and independence. They first submit to Nebuchadnezzar, then revolt. Then Nebuchadnezzar, with his army, appears before Jerusalem and carries off some thousands of the principal inhabitants into captivity to Babylon. Cowed by this severity the Israelites submit for a time. Some years later, however, they revolt again, and the king of Babylon again orders his armies against the doomed city. For eighteen months the Jews held out, while the city underwent all the horrors of siege. The besieging forces, with their huge catapults and engines, poured great blocks of stone into the city. Supplies of food were stopped. Pestilence added its horrors to famine. The nobles who had prided themselves on their beautiful complexions, "purer than snow," became so ghastly with starvation that their wasted skeletons could hardly

be recognized in the streets. Fathers and mothers devoured the flesh of their own children. The priestly orders clothed themselves in sackcloth and cast their gold and silver offerings into the streets. After eighteen months the city fell—in the year 586 B.C.—and was given over to the soldiery. The Temple, the house of Yahweh, was desecrated and set on fire. The palaces, walls, and gates were destroyed, and those of the principal inhabitants who had survived were carried away in captivity to Babylon.

"How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow, that was great among the nations! and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks. . . . The ways of Zion do mourn and all her gates are desolate."

And from the exiles in Babylon comes the sad refrain—at least in spirit[1]—

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul!
And why art thou disquieted within me?"
"As the hart panteth after the water-brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God!
My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:
When shall I come and appear before him?"

[1] Canon Cheyne places this Psalm at a much later date—the Greek period.

"My tears have been my meat day and night,
For they continually say unto me: Where is thy God?
I think of olden days and give memory rein,
How I went with the throng to the house of God,
With the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping holyday.
Why art thou cast down, O my soul!
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him;
Who is the health of my countenance, and my God!
Yet Yahweh will command his loving-kindness in the day-time
And in the night his song shall be with me.
Even a prayer unto the God of my life.
I will say unto God, my rock: 'Why hast thou forgotten me?
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?'
They stab me to the heart with their taunts,
With their daily questionings: 'Where is thy God?'
Why art thou cast down, O my soul!
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him
Who is the health of my countenance, and my God!
Uphold my cause, O God, and plead with me against an ungodly nation. . . .
O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me,
Let them bring me unto thy holy hill,
And to thy dwelling-place,

And I will come to the altar of Yahweh, the God o
my joy,
And upon the harp will I praise thee, O Yahweh,
my God.
Why art thou cast down, O my soul!
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him,
Who is the health of my countenance, and my
God!"[1]

What influence the exile in Babylon had on the development of Judaism we shall see in our next discourse.

[1] See the rendering of Drs. Oort and Hooykaas in "The Bible for Young People" vol. iv., which, however, I have not followed absolutely.

## IX

# THE EXILE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS JUDAISM.

Isaiah xl. 1. 2—"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her time of service is accomplished, that her punishment is accepted."

Isaiah lviii. 6—"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To lose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bonds of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free."

Ezekiel xxxvi. 27—"I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."

THE scene in the great drama, or tragedy, of the life of Israel, which we have seen slowly unfolding, now shifts for a time to Babylon. But before taking up the story of the exiles in Babylon let me emphasise once more the immense exaltation of the conception of God which the great prophets brought into the religious life of Israel. I cannot emphasize this

sufficiently. In two ways, especially, did it work. Under the old conception of Yahweh, that is, of Yahweh as only one amongst other gods, the idea of national *glory* is the dominant motive at work. 'Let us worship Yahweh,' it was said, 'and he will bring us national prosperity and greatness.' But under the new and higher conception of Yahweh as the one and only God of nature and of nations, national *righteousness* —'to suffer, rather than do, injustice'—becomes the root motive of religious life, at least amongst the prophets and their followers. 'Let us *obey the commandments* of Yahweh, and worship him alone, and he will make us his favoured people above all the other nations of the earth.' Secondly, under the old conception, the nation was the unit before Yahweh. Under the new conception of the prophets, the individual is the unit before Yahweh. Individual righteousness must precede national righteousness; the value of the individual soul is raised; and thus there comes into the life of Israel the sense of a *personal* relation to, and dependence upon, God. To the realization of these ideas in every individual life the efforts of the later prophets and priests were now devoted—with what results on religious life we shall see. They are great and far-reaching ideas, as you will recognize, and I might ask you to think them out at home, for I have not time to enforce and dwell upon them here

We must remember, also, that even during the Exile the worship of Yahweh as the one and supreme God had not by any means established itself. The old idolatrous party was still very numerous, if not predominant. There were, indeed, three, if not four, parties—the idolaters and anti-Yahvists; the safe-side people, who wished to worship all the gods alike; the Yahweh worshippers, who wished for much ceremonial, and whom we might call the compromisers; and the pure prophet-reformers who preached mercy and not sacrifice, righteousness and not burnt offerings, and who bade the people, in pregnant phrase: 'Rend your hearts, not your garments,' for 'what doth Yahweh require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.' The argument of the idolators was this: 'Why have all our calamities and sufferings come upon us? Because, they said, we have not worshipped Astarte, and Moloch, and Baal, and all the other gods as we ought.' And so they erected their stone and wooden images, and occasionally sacrificed their children even on the bank of the Chebar in Babylon.[1] They had all the national and religious traditions on their side. On the other hand, the argument of the Yahweh worshippers was this: 'Why have all our calamities and sufferings come upon us? Because we have worshipped other gods, and have not obeyed the commandments

[1] Ezekie xvi., 21 36.

of Yahweh, and walked in his ways, and done that which was right in his sight.' You see how slow is the progress and the realization of great ideas. Nearly two centuries had elapsed since Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah had come with their great message of ethical and spiritual monotheism—and yet this monotheism is still struggling for supremacy against the prevailing polytheism of the time. Judaism, in the full sense of the word, is not yet born.

Let us now return to our story. There were three men who were taken with the exiles to Babylon, two of whom not only had great influence on the religion of Israel but who have also left their mark through Judaism, on the religious development of Christianity. One of these three was the great Daniel, who left behind him an undying reputation for probity and wisdom, not only amongst his fellow Jews, but also amongst the Babylonians and Persians. Of him one cannot say much—his name is so largely mingled with legend and tradition. His name and reputation have come down to us in the famous saying: 'A Daniel come to judgment.' It was to him that the book of *Daniel*, written some four hundred years later, was attributed, in order to give it the weight of his great name and authority.

The second of these three was the prophet-priest Ezekiel, or perhaps I should say priest-prophet, for in him the priestly element predominated. On the

banks of the Chebar, in Babylon, he represented and continued, in some respects, the spirit of Jeremiah. (Jeremiah, by the way, is said to have been stoned to death by his fellow Jews, but this is one of those traditions of which the basis is unknown.) But Ezekiel is harder, more austere, more priestly, than Jeremiah. His visions are often fantastic, incomprehensible, grotesque, extravagantly oriental, and his language degenerates sometimes into a coarseness which grates harshly upon our ears. The manner of his life, the austerity, the hardness, the voluntary self-repression and self-mortification of it, show how stern a heart and how set and firm a purpose was mingled with his spiritual nature. He had come with the first batch of exiles to Babylon, some years before the fall of Jerusalem, and during the last years of the kingdom's life his heart was full of mourning and bitterness for his own country and people. But he carries on amongst the exiles the work of Jeremiah, and emphasizes Jeremiah's great principle—the necessity for personal righteousness, and the personal dependence of every individual soul on Yahweh. To the great question which had been put to Jeremiah—with which I shall deal more fully in my next discourse—"why does Yahweh punish the innocent for the sins of the guilty, why does he visit the sins of the fathers on to the children?" he returned the ringing reply: Let every man get him a clean heart within him, let

him be just, and do that which is lawful and right, and Yahweh will surely grant him long life and prosperity, "he shall save his soul alive." Ezekiel was wrong, as we shall see, but his conviction enabled him to give a strong impetus to the development towards Judaism. For how was this personal righteousness to be brought home to every individual? The answer to this question is given by Ezekiel in chapters forty to forty-eight in his book. Here the priestly element in his nature comes out most strongly. He first of all predicts the restoration of his people. The dry bones of the dead nation shall be re-animated with a living spirit, pure, holy, dedicated to the service of Yahweh. Then he describes the new Temple which will be built on Mount Zion. He gives the measurements of the outer courts, the inner courts, the chambers, and the holy sanctuary, and describes how the glory of Yahweh will fill the restored temple. He prescribes the duties of the two orders of priests, the qualifications for admission into the priesthood, the dress they are to wear, the food they are to eat, the way in which they must wear their hair. He gives instructions as to the burnt-offerings, the sin-offerings, and the meat-offerings, the animals that are to be offered, the way in which their blood is to be used for the purpose of atonement, the sacrifices that are to be made at the festivals, and so on. What is the meaning of all this? It means this: first, that, in

accordance with Ezekiel's priestly conception of things, this ideal of personal righteousness, of man's relation to God, must be fastened upon every individual heart and life by the most solemn ritual and ceremonial, precisely regulated in the most minute detail, so as to convey to the mind of the worshipper the idea of Yahweh's supreme holiness and purity. Secondly, it means this: *that the Pentateuch, as a whole, was not yet in existence*, for all these priestly regulations are laid down, even with fuller detail and precision, in the priestly portions of the Pentateuch. Why, then, if the Pentateuch was in existence, should Ezekiel go over the same ground again? Here again, then, we see religion in the making. The prophets are the inspirers and originators of the Old Testament. Just as Moses (for he, too, is in the line of the prophets) inspired and originated the Ten Words; just as later prophets inspired and originated the first primitive ceremonial and legislation in the "Book of the Covenant" (Exodus xxi. xxii. and xxiii.); just as the great eighth-century prophets, and their followers, inspired and originated the Book of Deuteronomy; so the prophet-priest Ezekiel and his school inspire and originate the priestly legislation of the Pentateuch. The last eight chapters of Ezekiel form the first rough draft of this priestly legislation. The hard, uncouth, austere, "calvinistic" prophet-priest on the banks of the Chebar has been fitly called "the father of Juda-

ism." For Judaism is not yet born. Hitherto, the religion of Israel has been but a mixture of polytheism and Yahwism, with Yahwism tending to become supreme. Truly, I say, the Higher Criticism has taught us to see religion in the making!

The third great figure among the exiles in Babylon was the great unknown who goes by the name of the second Isaiah, and from whom come chapters xl. to lxv. of what is called the book of Isaiah.[1] How can I describe the noble teachings of this unknown writer! Here, the spirit of Hebrew prophecy reaches its culminating point. I need not waste time in seeking to prove that these twenty-seven chapters were not written by the Isaiah of the eighth-century B.C. The style, as anyone may see, is altogether different from that of the first Isaiah; and the historical allusions to the fall of Jerusalem, the Captivity in Babylon, and the release by Cyrus are patent to every one. How fine his language, and how deep and biting his contempt for the idol-worship of his fellow-Jews! "To whom, then, will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? The graven image,—a workman melted it, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold." Man "maketh a graven image; he falleth down unto it, and saith, Deliver me, for thou art my God." "Shall I fall down to the stock of a

[1] Chapter lxvi. is supposed to be by a still later writer than the Second Isaiah, and possibly chapter lxv. also.

tree?" No, for "Yahweh, who created the heavens, he is God, . . . a just God and a Saviour. He it is that sitteth above the vault of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in; that bringeth princes to nothing; that maketh the judges of the earth as vanity." "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the breath of Yahweh bloweth upon it. Surely the people is grass—the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever." Not for this great spirit is the priestly system and its sacrifices: "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and to take off every yoke? Is it not to break thy bread for the hungry, to bring the wandering poor into thy house?" But this great Unknown reaches the highest level of spiritual insight and inspiration when he approaches the problem of the sufferings of the righteous, to which he gives a different and a truer answer than that given by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In a highly poetic description, which some have thought referred to Jeremiah as the long-suffering

"Servant of Yahweh," but which others interpret as an ideal representation of the faithful and upright few in Israel, who shall ultimately bring all the nations to the service of Yahweh, he lays down what he conceives to be the principle which underlies the sufferings of the righteous. In ever memorable and beautiful words he says, probably thinking of the great and good who had gone before: "He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face, he was despised, and we esteemed him not. But—it was our griefs that he bare, our sorrows that he carried: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement which would give us peace was upon him; and with his stripes we were healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, and had turned every one to his own way, but Yahweh laid upon him the iniquity of us all.[1] He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself and opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb, yea, he opened not his mouth.. . . . And they made his grave with the wicked and with the violent in his death." (You will remember that Jeremiah was said to have been stoned to death). That passage shows magnificent moral insight, and embodies a universal

[1] See Kuenen's rendering in *The Religion of Israel.*

principle in human relationships—the principle that Socrates was soon after to enforce upon the youth of Athens,—the principle that it is far nobler "to suffer than to do injustice." As a thoughtful modern writer well says in this connection: "The soft answer which restores good humour in a casual conversation; the forbearance with which a statesman meets the ignorances and prejudices, the censures and the slanders of those to whom he only sues for leave to do them good; are but instances of the universal law of man's constitution discoverable in all human relationships, and which enacts that men can, and do, endure the evil doings of their brethren in such sort, that through that endurance on the part of the innocent, the guilty are freed from the power of their ill deeds. There is hardly anyone but has known some household in which, year after year, selfishness, and worldliness, and want of family affection have been apparent enough; and yet, instead of the moral shipwreck which might have been expected, and the final moral ruin of the various members, the original bond of union has held together; there has plainly been some counteracting redeeming power at work. And when we look to see what is that redeeming power ever at work for those who know and care nothing about it, we always find that there is some member of that family—oftenest the wife or mother—who is silently bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all

things, for them, but for her or himself expecting little or nothing in this world but the rest of the grave. Such a one is really bearing the sins of that household: which is no forensic phrase, transferred by way of illustration from the practice of the law courts; but a fact, a vital formation, actually taking place, here, under our very eyes."[1] This great ethical principle applies, not only to individuals and families, but to communities and nations; and when we have learnt this great lesson, when this disordered nightmare which we call "modern civilization" has passed away, when the boasted military glories of the nations have passed into well-deserved oblivion and the remnants of our bloody and barbaric pageants are mouldering in the dust, then we shall be able to repeat the words of this great and mysterious Unknown of two thousand five hundred years ago: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth! Break forth into joy, sing together . . . for all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God. . . . He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with

[1] From Sir E. Strachey's *Hebrew Politics*. I take this quotation from Dean Stanley's *History of the Jewish Church*.

young . . . Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard? that Yahweh is an everlasting God, the creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon Yahweh shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."

Let us return again to our history. Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of Babylon, died in the year 561 B.C., and about the time of his death another and a greater power was rising to supremacy in the East. This was Cyrus, the son of Cambyses, King of Persia. Having subdued the Medes and the Lydians, Cyrus turned his forces against Babylon, which was supposed to be impregnable, but which ultimately fell (538 B.C.) to the renowned Persian leader by stratagem,—to the great joy of the Judeans, who expected much from him, and looked upon him as their deliverer. And so it happened. Cyrus gave the Jews in Babylonia permission to return to Judea. The words of the second Isaiah show the spirit of rejoicing which now prevailed amongst the exiles: "The spirit of Yahweh is upon me; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to

the captives, and the opening of the prisons to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable years of Yahweh, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to give unto them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. . . . And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations. . . . Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of Yahweh is risen upon thee."

The exiles, or rather, a considerable number of them, set out for Jerusalem under the leadership of Zeribbabel, (a descendant of David), and of Joshua, the high priest. There were 42,360, says the book of Ezra, beside many thousand men-servants and maid-servants, and probably many children, and two hundred singing men and singing women, all necessitating many thousands of horses, mules, asses, and camels. One thousand Persian cavalry accompanied the caravan, and they took with them 5,400 sacred gold and silver vessels, belonging to the worship of the Temple, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought with him to Babylon when, on the fall of Jerusalem, he had plundered and desecrated the house of Yahweh. It was a four or five months journey, and many must have died by the way, but the returning exiles cheered their way with sacred songs of rejoicing:

"The ransomed of Yahweh shall return,[1]
And come with singing unto Zion,
And everlasting joy shall be upon their heads:
They shall obtain gladness and joy,
And sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

"Yahweh is my Shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside the still waters;
He restoreth my soul. . . .
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of Yahweh for ever." [2]

"Who is the King of Glory?
Yahweh strong and mighty,
Yahweh mighty in battle.
Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
Yea, lift them up, ye everlasting doors:
And the King of Glory shall come in.
Who is this King of Glory?
Yahweh of hosts,
He is the King of Glory."

When the returning exiles reached Jerusalem they set about restoring or refounding their homes, repairing the waste places, and, after a time, rebuilding

[1] Isaiah, chap. xxxv. This chapter is not Isaiah's, but is a later fragment, written probably during the closing years of the exile. See Driver's *Introduction to the O.T.*, p. 214.

[2] This Psalm is probably of later date, but I am trying to give the spirit which animated the returning exiles.

the Temple. I have not time to dwell on the disappointments and calamities which befell them. Suffice it to say that some twenty-two years elapsed before the sacred building was completed. The Jews were poor now, and the edifice lacked the splendour and magnificence of that of Solomon's time.

Let us now return to the exiles who preferred to remain in Babylonia. There were many of these. We must remember that nearly fifty years had elapsed since they had left Jerusalem. (Jeremiah had predicted seventy years of exile, but he was mistaken in this.) Many had been born in Babylonia and knew nothing of strange Judea. Others had grown up in Babylon; others again had their business and almost life-long connections established there; others were too old to bear the fatigues of the journey. What, then, did these Babylonian Jews do while their comrades were struggling on in Jerusalem? They set themselves to study their national traditions, to read regularly the writings of the prophets, to observe the words of the Law as laid down in Deuteronomy. Heathenism or polytheism had almost vanished by this time, for the deliverance by Cyrus and the return to Jerusalem must have been a great blow to the heathen party and have given great prestige to the worship of Yahweh. There were some clever men amongst these Babylonian Jews, men of the priestly school of Ezekiel, and there is no doubt that they set

themselves to amplify Ezekiel's work, to re-edit and perhaps re-write the national traditions, and to frame regulations for the worship of Yahweh in the future, so that it should never be overthrown. After a time a great man arose amongst them—Ezra, the priest and scribe, "a ready scribe in the law of Moses" we are significantly told—one "who had set his heart to seek the law of Yahweh, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments." Ezra obtains permission of the king to go to Jerusalem and he takes with him much money and gifts for his brethren and for the house of Yahweh in Jerusalem, and also certain sacred documents (458 B.C.). Several thousands of his compatriots accompany him. When he arrives at Jerusalem he is very severe upon his fellow-Jews for their laxity in religion, and especially for inter-marrying with heathens and aliens. He evidently meets with opposition in his work, and we hear no more of him for thirteen years. (We must remember that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, originally one book, were not compiled till nearly two hundred years after their time). What Ezra did during these thirteen years is uncertain. Probably he was conferring with his fellow-priests and scribes, modifying his proposed priestly legislation, bringing it into conformity with existing usages, and softening opposition to new regulations. After these thirteen years another great Jew in Babylonia—Nehemiah, cup-bearer to the king—hearing of

the distressed state of his brethren in Jerusalem, requests permission to go there. The king, Artaxerxes, not only grants his request, but appoints him governor of Judea. Nehemiah is a man of great vigour, energy, and power of mind, and a devoted servant of Yahweh. When he arrives at Jerusalem he reproaches his fellow-Jews for their indolence and apathy, and sets about restoring the dilapidated parts of the city and repairing the walls. He works hand in hand with Ezra, the priest and scribe. Then, on the first day of the seventh month in the year 444 B.C.—a feast day amongst the Jews—a great event takes place. Nehemiah and Ezra arrange for the public reading of "the book of the Law of Moses" at the Water-gate. A great crowd assembles. Ezra reads from early morning until mid-day and "all the people wept when they heard the words of the Law." This public reading is continued for eight days during the ensuing feast, and at the end the chief priests and laymen present make and sign a solemn covenant to observe the words of the Law. What is this mysterious "book of the Law of Moses?" It is the Pentateuch—*now publicly produced for the first time*—or at least the priestly legislation of the Pentateuch. See, now, how far we have travelled! And note how, at every turn, the *spirit* of the prophets is reduced to the *letter* and clogged by ceremonial by the priests! Nearly 900 years before, Moses,—for he, too, is in the line of the prophets—

had led the Exodus from Egypt and had promulgated his Ten great Words; then the earlier Yahweh-prophets inspire and originate the earliest code of law in "the Book of the Covenant" (Exodus xx. 23-xxiii. 33); the great eighth-century prophets and their followers inspire and originate the book of Deuteronomy; the prophets of the exile and their priestly followers inspire and originate the priestly narrative and legislation of the Pentateuch. For nearly 900 years we see the religion of Israel struggling through polytheism and Yahweh-worship towards a completed Judaism. We see the Old Testament gradually taking shape before our eyes. First, and always first, the prophets—just as Jesus, John, and Paul come first in the formation of Christianity—then the Law, then the historical writings, all in layers or strata, and we shall see, in due course, how the other parts of the Bible fall naturally into their place. We understand now why, in those old traditions, Yahweh is made to create Adam, to cause the Flood, to appear to the patriarchs and to Moses and enter into a supposed Covenant with them, and to promise them his protection and blessing if they will only be faithful to him—it is because everything is viewed and written down and combined with older and current traditions by Yahweh prophets or priests, looking through a long perspective of Yahweh worship.

Judaism, under Ezra and Nehemiah, is now

established, and the religion of the law is gradually fastened upon the life and soul of every pious Israelite by the machinery of ecclesiasticism—by a vast hierarchy of priests, by the Temple-worship, by sacrifices, by fasts, by festivals, by a rigid observance of the Sabbath, by the most minute regulation of moral and religious life through stated forms and ceremonial. How far are we here from the spirit of the prophets: "What doth Yahweh require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God!" Truly we may say that the religion of the letter begins to stifle the religion of the pirit. And yet, there is something in Paul's saying, that the law was as a schoolmaster to bring men into the Spirit of Christ, for, as Professor Estlin Carpenter points out in his recent book on *The Bible in the Nineteenth Century*: "The law was the vehicle through which the truths of the higher Prophecy were preserved and adapted to the national life. The framers of the Levitical code did what the Isaiahs had been unable to do; but without the Isaiahs they could not have done it. By the labours of Ezra and his fellow-workers Yahwism was consolidated and sent forth upon a new career. It is the eternal glory of the Prophets to have discerned the far-off vision of a universal spiritual faith. The law endeavoured to bring their principles of the universal Deity of Yahweh, his spiritual nature and his righteous rule, into direct

application to the circumstances of a community still in danger of frittering away the positive gains of prophetic thought. It thus accomplished what Prophecy had been unable to achieve . . . The 'Saints,' so full of trust and love, waiting for Yahweh to show them the path of life; the poor and meek, patient under suffering, and faithful through the direst persecution,—these are the holy people nurtured under the Law . . . The shell might be hard and rigid; but it guarded the spiritual power of the true faith within, till the hour was ripe for it to burst forth into new life. Then the law gave way again to Prophetism in the still nobler form of the Gospel. Its essential aim after the divine ideal—'Be ye holy, for I, Yahweh your God, am holy,' was set free for ever from the limitations of ancient ritual, and transfigured into the final goal of all religion,—'Be ye perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect.'"

# X.

# THE DRAMA OF JOB.

Job xxvii. 6—"My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go."

Job xxvi. 14—"Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways, and how little a portion do we hear of him."

WE have seen, during the last two or three discourses, how the life of Israel slowly deepened into the darkest suffering and tragedy. War, sieges, famine, pestilence, the overthrow of the kingdom, the desecration of their beloved Temple, exile, captivity—all these, and the frightful sufferings they engendered, were enough to appal and depress the stoutest heart. No wonder that long before the end despairing complaints were heard. Even Jeremiah, at one time, seemed to despair. "Oh Yahweh," he cries, "Only let me put before thee certain questions of justice: Why is the way of the wicked fortunate, and how are they happy who deal treacherously? Thou plantest them, they take root, and flourish, and bring forth fruit.

Yet thou, O Yahweh, seest me, and triest my heart towards thee." If Jeremiah could speak in this way we may be sure that the feelings of the less faithful would be even more despairing and resentful, and that they would easily fall away to the worship of other gods than Yahweh. There was, indeed, an oft-quoted proverb in Israel, which shows how keenly and bitterly the people felt about this awful, and, as far as the innocent were concerned, undeserved suffering. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes," the proverb ran, "and the children's teeth are set on edge." But Jeremiah would not believe that Yahweh—God—is unrighteous. The people's sufferings have come upon them, he says, because they have been unfaithful to Yahweh, because they have disobeyed his commandments, because they have not walked in His ways and done that which was right in His sight. Let them do justice and judgment, let them write Yahweh's law in their hearts, and He will then forgive their iniquity and bring prosperity to His people. They shall no more have occasion to repeat the old proverb, but every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth sour grapes, his own teeth only shall be set on edge.

Ezekiel, too, takes up the same proverb, and meets the difficulty in the same way as Jeremiah. Your sufferings have come upon you, he says, because of your sins, because you have disobeyed Yahweh and

followed after other gods. Get you a clean heart and a clean spirit, serve Yahweh, do that which is lawful and right, and ye shall surely live happily and prosperously—ye shall no more have occasion to use the old proverb, but "the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."

Now we know that both Jeremiah and Ezekiel were wrong. We know that if "the fathers eat sour grapes the children's teeth *are* set on edge"; that the law of heredity, for example, is universal in its application, covering both the evil and the good, the just and the unjust, in the wide sweep of its far-reaching and sometimes untraceable effects; that if a man lives an evil life, and either wantonly or ignorantly disobeys the laws of Nature and of God, sometimes he himself, but often his innocent posterity, have to pay the penalty of his negligence, ignorance, or sin, in bitter and incomprehensible pain. Surely that is one of the greatest and most mysterious problems which surround our mysterious life! And the problem presented itself in more naked simplicity to the Israelities than it does to us, for it was a cardinal point of their faith that God—Yahweh—directly ordered and controlled the life of man. To the problem of undeserved suffering they—before the book of Job was written—had only one answer, an answer which had grown up with, or rather out of, their conception of God.

That answer, as already indicated, was this: Yahweh is the only true God, terrible in His might, but just and righteous in all His dealings, and full of mercy and loving kindness for those that faithfully serve Him and walk in His ways: "Yahweh ordereth a good man's going," "the righteous are never forsaken." Hence, to the pious Israelite, there was no such thing as undeserved suffering. If those who seemed good were afflicted, then their very affliction was proof that they were guilty of some secret sin, for Yahweh, who was all-righteous, would never punish His faithful and innocent people. For hundreds of years Hebrew thought and religion was dominated by this idea of temporal retribution—the idea that righteousness, obedience to God's will, and faithfulness in the worship of Yahweh would bring happiness, long life, and prosperity, and that unfaithfulness, unrighteousness, would bring misery, suffering, and ruin. That is the burden of the whole of the prophets: Woe unto ye people! Turn ye, turn ye from the wickedness of your ways. Cease to do evil, learn to do well, and Yahweh will come with judgment and with justice: peace and prosperity shall reign over you;—your present punishment is a sign of your sin. For ages, no one thought of questioning the doctrine. It lingers amongst us even yet. There are people who still see the avenging hand of Providence in flood, fire, earthquake, famine, or pestilence.

Let us now turn to the Book of *Job* and see what answer its author gives to this grave problem, for, by the consent of all, this great poem is one of those landmarks, nay, one of those peaks in literature, which mark the stages of man's moral growth. No one knows when it was written; no one knows where or by whom it was written. It is very evident, from the majestic thoughts and language of which the poem is full, that the author has risen far above the tribal-God worship of his people, evident, also, from this, that he puts into the mouth of Job and his friends, in the poetic part of the drama, not the usual Hebrew name for God—Yahweh,[1] but the older and more general names in use, El, Shaddai, Eloah. The Book, as everyone now knows, is not the story of a real or historical personage, but is a dramatic poem like *Prometheus Unbound*, *Faust*, or *Hamlet*, which in its various characters, and especially in its chief figure, Job, brings before us the play of those instincts and feelings which largely determine our attitude towards the universe and human life—towards the Spirit in which we live, and move, and have our being. The central thought on which the argument and the action of the poem turn is—this great mystery of undeserved suffering, a mystery which presses upon each one of us, and which has surely pressed upon

[1] Yahweh—the Lord—is used twice in the speeches: chap. xii. 9, and xxviii. 28.

every thinking man and woman since the first mother bent in the agony of helpless sympathy, over her suffering child. Children born with legacies of pain; nations oppressed by despots; other nations or peoples put to fire, and sword, and unnameable outrage through outbursts of racial and religious fanaticism; multitudes stricken by famine or pestilence, or overwhelmed by earthquake, storm, or raging sea—why should all this be? And especially if the universe is ruled by an almighty and yet all-righteous Being, why should the innocent suffer? That the intentionally wicked should suffer—that may be understandable. But the good! Surely, that is a mystery. Let us go, all too briefly, through this great poem, and see what it has to tell us about this grave problem. The primal feelings of our common humanity—the soul standing in grief and misery before its God—will be made real and vivid to us, even from that far-off age, by the genius of this unknown writer.

Job is a great chieftain in the land of Uz, a fearless, an upright, and a perfect man, one who serves God and eschews evil. His wealth and substance are great. His sheep, his camels, his asses, his oxen, are numbered by the thousand, and he has a great household. In private and in public life he is universally respected and revered. He was the father of the oppressed and those who had none to help them; he "put on righteousness as a garment," and his justice

was "as a robe and a diadem"; he was "eyes to the blind and feet to the lame"; a father to the poor and needy, and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. A council is held in the courts of Heaven, and amongst those present is Satan. And Yahweh said unto Satan: "Hast thou considered My servant Job? for there is none like him in the earth—a perfect and an upright man." And Satan answered Yahweh and said: "Doth Job fear God for nought? But put forth Thy hand now and touch all that he hath and he will renounce Thee to Thy face." That is, the suggestion of Satan is that Job is just and upright only because he is happy and prosperous. Take away his happiness and his prosperity, says Satan, and you will find him as he really is—a weak man, a lover of evil, and ready to do evil that he may regain his prosperity. The insinuation goes to the very roots of character. Is our conduct governed by some high ideal or is it controlled and motived by the petty interests which centre in self?

Then Yahweh gave unto Satan power over Job, over his property, and his family, and his health, in order to try his faithfulness, to see whether, as Satan insinuates, he is righteous simply because he obtains prosperity and happiness as the result of his righteousness. So Satan causes many afflictions to fall upon Job. His oxen are stolen, his sheep are destroyed by a storm, his camels are taken by a hostile tribe, his

servants are slain, his sons and daughters are killed in a whirlwind, and yet Job is faithful through all. He still holds fast to his character, his ideal of righteousness. Naked was I born, he says, and naked shall I return to the grave: "Yahweh gave and Yahweh hath taken away; blessed be the name of Yahweh."

Then Satan comes to closer quarters. He afflicts Job with grievous, and loathsome, and painful diseases which make his very life a burden to him. Cursed now by poverty, and stricken with pain and an unclean disease, he sits deserted upon the ash-mound of his house, silent and suffering, with the patience of despair. His wife, who has hitherto been faithful, who has uttered no word of complaint when the wealth, the property, and the savings of a lifetime have gone, who has silently borne her grief when the children were taken away, now breaks down in the presence of this helpless pain. "Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity?" she says. "Renounce God and die." But Job is still faithful: "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women. Shall we receive good at the hand of God and not receive evil?"

But Job's sharpest trials are yet to come. The story of the misfortunes and sufferings of the great and righteous man has spread far and wide, and three friends of Job, men of great power and renown—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite—come to condole with him and

comfort him. Like Job, they are upright, devout, and holy men, who are sincerely concerned for the material and spiritual welfare of their friend. So altered is Job by his sufferings and his frightful disease, that his friends do not know him, and they lift up their voice and weep. Day after day and night after night do they sit with him, as was the custom of the East, in that sympathetic silence which only friends can bear, for they saw that his suffering and grief were very great.

Then, gently at first, and with mild suggestiveness, they begin to offer Job advice and consolation. They do not openly press the received doctrine upon him, but they insinuate it. "If one assay to commune with thee wilt thou be grieved? Whoever suffered or perished being innocent? Or where were the upright cut off? Happy is the man whom God correcteth, therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty." Yes, thou Job must have sinned, or thou wouldst not have to suffer in this way. Confess thy sins before God, and return to thine integrity, and 'peace shall dwell in thy tent' and scourge and famine shall depart from thee. If thou wert pure and upright surely now 'he would awake for thee and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous and bring peace unto thy tent.' In this strain do each of the three friends offer consolation unto Job.

Now this is the unkindest cut of all. Job could

bear with his calamities, his afflictions, his pains, but he cannot bear that those from whom he expected comfort, sympathy, and love should doubt and suspect that very thing which is dearer to him than life itself —his integrity, his uprightness. In the bitterness of his suffering and disappointment he pours out the strength of his feeling and passion, spurning the received doctrine, turning indignantly from his friends, praying to have his wrong-doing revealed unto him, yea, upbraiding the Power which brought him into being, and longing for the last sleep of death. How like that is to our own feelings in time of trouble! With what magnificent insight does this unknown author pierce to the deepest feelings of the human heart!

"My soul is weary of my life,
I will give course to my complaint;
I will speak in the bitterness of my soul;
I will say unto God 'Do not condemn me.'
Is it good unto thee that thou shouldst oppress?
That thou shouldst despise the work of thine hands?
Thou enquirest after mine iniquity
And searchest after my sin,
Although thou knowest that I am not wicked
And there is none that can deliver me out of thine hand.
I despise my life.
It is all one; therefore I say
He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked."

"Thine hands have framed me and fashioned me
Together round about; yet thou dost destroy me."
"Wherefore hast thou brought me forth out of the
womb?
Are not my days few? Cease, then,
And let me alone, that I may take comfort a little,
Before I go whence I shall not return,
Even to the land of darkness and of the shadow of
death;
A land of thick darkness, as darkness itself,
A land of the shadow of death, without any order,
And where the light is as darkness."

The three friends are shocked, pained, and grieved at this outburst. Their several speeches are worth careful reading. Job himself, they say, has before time essayed to instruct many, and his words have upholden the weak, but now that trouble has come upon him he faints and falls away. How dare he question the goodness of the Almighty?

"Shall mortal man be more just than God?
Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?"
"Oh, that God would speak,
And open His lips against thee,"
Then thou wouldst know
"That God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity
deserveth.
Canst thou by searching find out God?
Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?
It is high as heaven; what canst thou do?

Deeper than Sheol; what canst thou know?"
"What is man that he should be clean?
And he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous?"
"If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away,
And let not unrighteousness dwell in thy tents;
Then thou shalt be steadfast, and shall not fear;
For thou shalt forget thy misery."
"Why doth thine heart carry thee away?
And why do thine eyes wink?
That thou turnest thy spirit against God,
And lettest such words go out of thy mouth!"[1]

But Job retorts with even greater irony and indignation—the indignation born of undeserved suffering;

"No doubt but ye are the people,
And wisdom shall die with you!
But I have understanding as well as you;
I am not inferior to you."
"What ye know, the same do I know also."
"Miserable comforters are ye all."
"Your sayings are proverbs of ashes,
Your defences are defences of clay.
Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak,
And let come on me what will.
Though He slay me yet will I wait for Him
And maintain my ways before Him. . .
Let me speak, and answer thou me—
How many are mine iniquities and sins?
Wherefore hidest thou thy face,

[1] In these brief quotations I have not kept strictly to the *order* of the speeches as given in the poem.

And holdest me for thine enemy?
Wilt thou harass a driven leaf?
And wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?"
"My face is foul with weeping,
And on my eyelids is the shadow of death;
Although there is no violence in mine hands,
And my prayer is pure."

Then he descends to the deeps of agnosticism:

"I loathe my life; I would not live alway,
Let me alone; for my days are vanyit."
"Man that is born of a woman
Is of few days, and full of trouble.
He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down:
He fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not. . .
As the waters are gone from the sea,
And the river decayeth and drieth up;
So man lieth down and riseth not."

A passage reminding us of the cry of the modern poet:

"What is it all but the trouble of ants, in the gleam of a million million suns?" "The earth is given into the hand of the wicked," continues Job, "If it be not He, who then is it?"

Yea "the tents of robbers prosper," while, "the just, the perfect man, is a laughing stock;" the wicked vaunt, and rejoice, and spend their days in prosperity, and say:

"What is the Almighty that we should serve Him?
And what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?"

What, then, is the use of life? he virtually cries, for

"God hath subverted me in my cause,
And hath compassed me with his net."
"He multiplieth my wounds without cause."
"Behold I cry out against wrong, but I am not heard,
I cry for help but there is no judgment."

The three friends are more pained than before, and return upon Job, one after the other, with warmth, severity, and upbraiding. This, they say, is the very obstinacy of wickedness. Job is a blasphemer, a reviler, a heretic. He dares to scorn the received doctrine, to challenge God himself. How dare he question that which has been received for generations?

"What knowest thou that we know not?
What understandest thou which is not in us?
Art thou the first man that was born?
With us are both grey-headed men, and the very aged men,
Much elder than thy father."
"Thine iniquity teacheth thy mouth,
And thine own lips testify against thee;
Yea, thou doest away with fear
And restrainest devotion before God."

"Thy wickedness must be great,
Neither is there any end to thine iniquities;
For thou hast taken pledges of thy brother for nought,
And stripped the naked of their clothing;
Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink,
And thou hast withholden bread from the hungry."
We know that "the wicked man travaileth with pain all his days,
His prosperity shall not endure.
God shall cast the fierceness of His wrath upon him,
And shall rain it upon him while he is eating.
This is the portion of a wicked man from God,
And the heritage appointed unto him by God."

So with attack and defence, with counter attack and counter defence, through three cycles of speeches, the poem proceeds.

Then, as the anger and the unfairness of his friends increase, the language of Job becomes calmer and more majestic. He has sounded the depths of despair. His very friends have unhinged his faith, have done what Satan himself could not do,—have made him waver in his steadfastness to the right, have led him through the Valley of Desolation wherein he has longed for death. But now he strikes the true note. The light which had flickered in darkness and doubt beams out clearly once more. But it does not come from the orthodox doctrine of his friends. That he still rejects—but he appeals again, with less of anger

and more of dignity and reverence than before, from man, to God Himself, from the narrowness and short-sightedness of the orthodox theory to the Justice of the Supreme Tribunal itself. In a powerful speech, a speech which shows a wide knowledge and a large experience of life, he lays down his final position: It *is* true that the wicked often prosper, 'yea, that they are mighty in power, that their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them.' But their support is not in wickedness. The only unfailing support of the good man is in his innocency. Therefore,—

"Till I die I will not put away mine integrity from me.
My righteousness I hold fast and will not let it go:
My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.
I was a father to the needy:
And the cause of him that I knew not I searched out.
I brake the jaws of the unrighteous,
And plucked the prey out of his teeth.
I was eyes to the blind,
And feet was I to the lame.
The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me:
And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.
I put on righteousness, and it clothed me:
My justice was as a robe and a diadem."

All this, virtually says Job, I will do again. I ap-

peal from earth's injustice to the invisible justice of God:

"Let me be weighed in an even balance
That God may know mine integrity.
For I know that my Vindicator liveth,
And apart from my flesh shall I see God."

The mystery of the outer world is too deep for me —he virtually says—'man's wisdom compasseth it not, neither is it found in the land of the living.'

"The deep saith it is not in me:
And the sea saith it is not with me.
Only, God understandeth the way thereof,
And He knoweth the place thereof.
He bindeth up the waters in His thick clouds,
And hangeth the earth upon nothing.
He hath described a boundary upon the face of the waters,
Unto the confines of light and darkness.
By His spirit the heavens are garnished;
The pillars of heaven tremble
And are astonished at His rebuke.
Yea, He meteth out the waters by measure,
And maketh a way for the lightning of the thunder.
Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways:
And how little a portion do we hear of him!
Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;
And to depart from evil is understanding."
Therefore, "Till I die I will not put away mine integrity from me."

That is Job's answer—and it is the only possible answer that can be given in this world—to the problem of undeserved suffering. We cannot fathom it, virtually says the author of Job. We must not question it, because, not knowing all, we cannot judge. If we do judge, we judge in ignorance of all the causes and all the issues, and the judgment of ignorance is the judgment of fools. We must not pretend that we can lay bare the secrets of the Infinite. Who are we that we should judge the Eternal? We see but the skirts of His ways. Our integrity is our support. Our righteousness will we hold fast and we will not let it go.

Then, towards the close of the poem,—after the speech of Elihu, which it is now generally agreed was not written by the author of Job,—towards the end of the poem the author introduces Yahweh, just as Milton introduces Jehovah in *Paradise Lost.* Yahweh answers Job out of the whirlwind, and the author in majestic language, brings before us the signs of God's wondrous wisdom and power:

"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . . .
When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy? . . . .
Who shut up the sea with bars and doors,
And said—Hitherto shalt thou come but no further;
And here shall thy proud waves be stayed. . . . .

Have the gates of death been revealed unto thee?
Or hast thou seen the gates of the shadow of death? . .
Canst thou bind the cluster of the Pleiades.
Or loose the bands of Orion? . . . .
Where is the way to the dwelling of light,
And as for darkness, where is the place thereof.
Doubtless thou knowest for thou wast then born,
And the number of thy days is great!
Hast thou entered the treasuries of the snow,
Or hast thou seen the treasuries of the hail? . . . .
Knowest thou the ordinances of the heavens? . . . .
Canst thou send forth lightnings that they may go
And say unto thee, Here we are?
Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts?
Or who hath given understanding to the mind?"

Then Job answered Yahweh in humility and said:

"I know that thou canst do all things,
Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not
Things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.
Wherefore I loathe my words, and repent
In dust and ashes."

But Job is in the right after all. For after Yahweh had done speaking with Job, says the author, he called before him Eliphaz the Temanite and said unto him—

"My wrath is kindled against thee and against thy two friends, for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job hath." It is *not* true that when a man suffers through the working of my laws

he is therefore guilty of sin. It is not true that men are righteous only because righteousness brings prosperity. "Now, therefore, take unto you seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering, and My servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept that I deal not with you according to your folly; for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right as My servant Job hath." So Yahweh blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning, and he had fourteen thousand sheep and six thousand camels and one thousand yoke of oxen and his family and friends again came around and did eat bread with rejoicing. So Job lived and died full of days and honour.

The ending of the poem (which some think was added by a later hand) recalls to our minds those well-known lines by Leigh Hunt:

"Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel, writing in a book of gold.
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
'What writest thou?' The vision raised its head,
And, with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered, 'The names of those who love the Lord.'

'And is mine one?' said Abou. 'Nay, not so,'
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerily still, and said, 'I pray thee, then,
Write me as one that loves his fellow-men.'
The angel wrote and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names of those whom God had blessed,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest."

Such is the poem of Job—standing like a monument amid the literature of, in many respects, a barbarous age, and giving the only certain answer it is possible to give to the deepest and most troubled questionings of the human heart. The only answer, but not by any means a complete answer. We see so little that a complete answer is impossible. We see only in part and we know only in part. We know, indeed, that the reign of Law, though it crushes, at need, both the just and the unjust in its undeviating course, yet upholds us all and brings inestimable benefits to all, and that, deprived of reliance upon this reign of Law, our last state would be worse than our first. We know, also, or at least we believe, that the Power at the back of all things is at one with man's highest aspirations; or, as George Eliot makes homely Dolly Winthrop say to Silas Marner when recalling the time that his little hoard of gold had been stolen:

"You were hard done by that once, Master Marner, and it seems as you'll never know the rights of it; but that doesn't hinder there being a rights, Master Marner, for all it's dark to you and me. . . . For if us, as knows so little, can see a bit o' good and rights, we may be sure as there's a good and a rights bigger nor what we can know. I feel it i' my own inside as it must be so."

We know, also—for it is the great lesson which this ancient poem so finely enforces, that when, in our complex life, the punishments of Law fall heavily and undeservedly on the innocent, the consciousness of our integrity—no, the consciousness that we have tried our best to be pure and upright—is our greatest support in the hour of trial, and that we would prefer this consciousness to all the wealth and all the honours in the world unjustly or dishonourably obtained. Give the unjust man all he desires, place mountains of wealth at his beck and call—should we change places with him, and go down to our graves with unnumbered accusing voices sounding in our ears reminding us of the deeds we could never undo and the injustice we could never remedy? The general law is, indeed, that righteousness, integrity, does bring contentment, reputation, prosperity. But there are many, many exceptions. Calamity comes to good and bad alike. Sunshine, and storm, and famine, fall on good and evil alike, but, to quote George Eliot

again: "Calamity falling on a base mind, is the one form of sorrow which has no balm in it."

And lastly, this great poem teaches us that the only right attitude before the impenetrable secrets of the universe is one of reverent humility; that the only true knowledge is that which makes us conscious of infinite ignorance. It is this thought that brings consolation to Job, and it may bring consolation to us if we will but remember that our burden of "the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world"—to use Wordsworth's words, is only part of the "great world-mystery of good and evil" in which we are all as humble fellow-workers, striving to be faithful to each other, and to help and strengthen each other in the onward way.

It is here, possibly, that we may gain a hint towards a solution of the problem—a hint which I must leave you to think out for yourselves—that inasmuch as we are parts of the Supreme Spirit which lies in and behind all things, that Supreme Spirit suffers with our suffering and sorrows with our sorrow. We make too much of the word 'almighty.' Almightiness there may be as compared with our own feebleness, but there is a limit even to the power of Universal Being, which surely cannot contravene the laws of its own existence, or the necessities of its own evolution. There are many great souls in the world, who, like Shelley and Mill, would prefer a suffering God to an Almighty God.

Reverent humility then, before these impenetrable mysteries, is the only rightful attitude. Theological doctrines which profess to explain all the ways of the Eternal are but "proverbs of ashes," straw and stones to the weary soul. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar we may meet every day in the week—they are preaching now from ten thousand pulpits explaining everything by their "plan of salvation," and thousands of hearts outside are telling them that their preaching and their doctrines are vain. This, only, is the one thing needful—"our righteousness we will hold fast, we will not let it go." As for the rest :

"Lo, these are but the skirts of His ways,
And how little a portion do we know of him."

"The fear of the Lord," that is, the fear to be untrue to the still, small voice within, the fear to hurt, or maim, or injure, the sweet and gentle spirit which surely abides somewhere in all our hearts—"*that* is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding."

# XI

## THE WISDOM LITERATURE

Proverbs iii. 13, 15, 19.—"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. She is more precious than rubies: and none of the things thou canst desire are to be compared unto her."

"The Lord by wisdom founded the earth."

IT will be obvious to every one, even from a cursory reading of the poem of Job, that, in the making of the religion of Israel, there were other forces at work than the passion of the prophet, the ceremonial piety of the priest, and the scriptural piety of the scribe. One of these forces was the calm, shrewd, philosophic study of life as a whole which gave birth to what is called the *Chokhmah* or Wisdom-Literature. If, to the pious Israelite, the religion of the Law was summed up in the word *Torah*, to the philosophic student of life as a whole his reflections were summed up in the word *Chokhmah*, wisdom, which, in its higher developments at any rate, included and was therefore something more than *Torah*. This class undoubtedly formed a kind

of school in Israel. They might be compared to the utilitarians of the nineteenth century, to men like Bentham, the two Mills, George Henry Lewes, Herbert Spencer, Professsor Huxley, Henry Sidgwick, and Sir Arthur Helps; or, on their poetic side,—for the book of Job was a product of this school—to Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Arthur Hugh Clough, and William Watson. When the school took its rise it is impossible to say, but there is no doubt that Solomon gave a great impetus to it. Everybody has heard of Solomon's reputed wisdom, of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to him, of his answers to her questions, and his famous judgment as to the parentage of the dead and the living child. (1 Kings iii.) Unfortunately, few written remains of his wisdom have come down to us, for the Book of Proverbs is a compilation of much later date and was attributed—or rather the larger part of it was attributed,—to Solomon, in order to give it the weight of his authority, just as many of the Psalms were attributed to David. It is probable, of course, nay more than probable, that some of the Proverbs were originally uttered by Solomon and were afterwards included in the collection of Proverbs by the later compiler, for the book is admittedly of composite authorship. I need not linger long on the Proverbs themselves except to say that they cover almost every position and situation in life—the great and the lowly, the rich and the poor, the foolish and the wise, the simple and the

wanton, the industrious and the careless, the diligent and the slothful, the proud and the humble, the gluttonous and the temperate, the life of the city and the field, the workshop and the mart, the school and the senate. How finely some of the sentences go directly to the point: "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches;" "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirits;" "There are many devices in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand;" "Better is it that it be said unto thee, Come up hither, than that thou shouldst be put lower in the presence of the prince;" "The wicked flee when no man pursueth;" "Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his maker;" "Be not wise in thine own eyes;" "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but the companion of ools shall be broken;" "Whoso loveth correctionf loveth knowledge, but he that hateth reproof is brutish;" "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel;" "The destruction of the poor is their poverty;" "The way of the foolish is right in his own eyes;" "A false balance is an abomination to the Lord but a just weight is his delight;" "A wise son maketh a glad father, but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother;" "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a beautiful woman who is without sense;" "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick;" "The heart knoweth its own bitter

ness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joy;" "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil;" "Better is a morsel and quietness therewith, than a house full of feasting with strife;" "In the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death;" "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink, for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head;" "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver;" "It is better to dwell in the corner of the house-top, than with a contentious woman in a wide house;" "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water, therefore leave off contention, before there be quarrelling;" "A friend loveth at all times;" "If thou sayest, Behold, we knew not this, doth not he that weigheth the hearts consider it? And he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? And shall not he render to every man according to his work?"

Many of these may be copy-book maxims, but would that their wisdom were more widely and more faithfully taken to heart! In this connection, however, let me draw your attention to the introduction to the book of Proverbs, which consists of the first nine chapters of the book. How true it is that men conceive of God according to their own likeness, and fashion Him after *their* spiritual image, ascribing to Him the qualities which they themselves possess! Just as, in the earlier times, we found the Israelites attributing

to Yahweh their own ideas, feelings, and sensations,—appearing to men and talking with them, subject to fits of anger and despondency, delighted with the smell of sacrifices, showing might and prowess in battle, so here, in these later times, we find "the Wise" conceiving of Yahweh as the Spirit of Wisdom. In these first nine chapters of Proverbs we have a fine personification of Wisdom, which is conceived as an attribute of Yahweh, and which reminds us of Matthew Arnold's saying:

"Wisdom and Goodness—they are God."[1]

So, too, in *Job*:

"Yahweh by wisdom founded the earth;
By understanding he established the heavens;
By his knowledge the depths were broken up,
And the skies drop down their dew."
"Yahweh possessed me in the beginning of his way,
The first of his works of old.
I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning,
Or ever the earth was . . . .
When he established the heavens, I was there:
When he set a circle on the face of the deep:
When he made the skies firm above,
When he appointed the foundations of the earth:
Then I was with him as a master-workman:
And I was daily his delight."

[1] Sonnet—"The Divinity."

"Whence, then, cometh Wisdom?
God understandeth the way thereof,
And he knoweth the place thereof.
For he looketh to the ends of the earth,
And seeth under the whole heaven."

You can see for yourselves how far we are here from the tribal-God worship of the Mosaic, Davidic, and pre-prophetic days. And so, too, in the fine feeling which animates "the Wise." For where is this all-gracious Wisdom? Not merely far away in the heavens, but, like the love which Jesus preached, it is ever waiting to enter the hearts of men:

"Wisdom crieth aloud in the street;
She uttereth her voice in the broad places;
She crieth in the chief place of concourse;
At the entering in of the gates,
In the city, she uttereth her words:
How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?
And scorners delight them in scorning,
And fools hate knowledge?
Turn you at my reproof:
Behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you,
I will make known my words unto you."

Then, the immortal words in praise of Wisdom:

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom,
And the man that getteth understanding.
For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver,

And the gain thereof than fine gold.
She is more precious than rubies:
And none of the things thou canst desire are to be compared unto her.
Length of days is in her right hand;
In her left hand are riches and honour.
Her ways are ways of pleasantness
And all her paths are peace."

And how necessary in these days of discursive reading and want of application and concentration of thought is the oft-repeated injunction:
"Get wisdom: Yea, with all thou hast gotten, get understanding."

"Forget her not," "Love her," "Keep her sayings in the midst of thine heart," "Take fast hold of instruction," "Keep her, for she is thy life,"—that is, "the Wise" virtually take the Socratic position, that knowledge is the essence of virtue.

"Let not mercy and truth forsake thee:
Bind them about thy neck;
Write them upon the table of thine heart:
So shall thou find favour and good understanding
In the sight of God and man."

Truly, if the passion of the prophets may be described as the birth-agony of monotheism, the calm philosophy and wisdom of "the Wise," at its best,

may be taken as its mature expression and permanent vindication.

But the most remarkable product of this school of "the Wise"—after the poem of *Job*—was the book of *Ecclesiastes*. This, too, was attributed to Solomon, but, in the opinion of most critics, it was not written until about the end of the third century B.C., that is, over seven hundred years after Solomon. The book is remarkable for its pessimistic outlook upon life. It reminds us in some ways of Tennyson's "Two Voices," parts of "The Ancient Sage," and of that doubt-tossed soul Arthur Hugh Clough. The book is also remarkable in this—that it does not once use the term "Yahweh" for God, but the more general term *Elohim*. There came a time when the Jews shrank from using the sacred name too freely—a feeling which many of us naturally share—and the author probably lived about that time. But let us look, for a few minutes, at the philosophy of the book. The writer was evidently a man of wide experience and deep thought, but his outlook upon life is tinged with depression and melancholy. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," he says. "What profit hath man of all his labour? One generation goeth, and another generation cometh; and the earth abideth for ever. . . . All things are full of weariness; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. That which hath

been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. . . . I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven: it is a sore travail that God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and a feeding on wind. That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. . . . In much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. . . . All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to him that sacrificeth and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner. . . . The living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. . . . All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." How like that is to Merlin's lines:—

> "Rain, sun, and rain! and the free blossom blows:
> Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he who knows?
> From the great deep to the great deep he goes;"

or to one of Tennyson's "Two Voices":—

"A still small voice spake unto me,
'Thou art so full of misery,
Were it not better not to be?'"

"For every worm beneath the moon
Draws different threads, and late and soon
Spins, toiling out his own cocoon."

"A life of nothings, nothing worth,
From that first nothing ere his birth
To that last nothing under earth!"

or to Clough's "Dipsychus," and the two voices which we hear in his poems:—

"O end to which our currents tend,
Inevitable sea,
To which we flow, what do we know,
What shall we guess of thee?

A roar we hear upon thy shore,
As we our course fulfil;
Scarce we divine a sun will shine
And be above us still."

But there are two voices also in Ecclesiastes, and though the dominant tone is one of sadness and melancholy, the other occasionally breaks forth in sadly cheerful strains, reminding us of stray gleams of wintry sunshine after days of gloom. After having tried all the pleasures which wealth and life

can give, and having found that all is vanity, yet he urges that "God hath made everything beautiful in its time," and "that there is nothing better for men than to rejoice and to do good so long as they live," for there is nothing more to hope for,—"for that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other." Therefore, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." As for the rest: "Let thy words be few, for God is in heaven and thou upon the earth," and "to draw nigh to hear is better than to give the sacrifice of fools." "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy life," for "truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." And, after all, there is something more than we can understand here: "Remember," then, "the Creator in the days of thy youth," for the time will come when "the silver cord will be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern; and the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit return unto God who gave it." "This," then, "is the end of the matter: fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." How many echoes do we hear of all this in our own time:—

"For all that laugh, and all that weep
And all that breathe are one,
Slight ripple on the boundless deep,
That moves, and all is gone."

Yet:

"That one ripple on the boundless deep
Feels that the deep is boundless, and itself
For ever changing form, but evermore
One with the boundless motion of the deep."

Hence:

"Think well! Do well will follow thought,
And in the fatal sequence of this world
An evil thought may soil thy children's blood;
But curb the beast would cast thee in the mire,
And leave the hot swamp of voluptuousness
A cloud between the Nameless and thyself,
And lay thine uphill shoulder to the wheel,
And climb the mount of Blessing, whence, if thou
Look higher, then — perchance — thou mayest—
beyond
A hundred ever-rising mountain lines,
And past the range of Night and Shadow—see
The high heaven dawn of more than mortal day
Strike on the Mount of Vision!"

But how came it, you may well ask, that such a book as *Ecclesiastes* came to be included in the Bible, a book which so glaringly contradicts other portions

of this great literature? It is impossible to answer that question. We know that there was some difficulty about its inclusion in the *Canon*, but we may well congratulate ourselves that the men who made the selection were wise and large-minded enough to include it, and so enrich the spiritual patrimony of the race. For surely, in a great literature, we need to have reflected all the various phases of human emotion,—the gloom of disappointed hopes, the sickness of wearied hearts, and the sadness of the soul baffled and subdued by the incomprehensible mysteries of life and death, eternity and infinity. Let us ever remember that the soul which thinks deeply about these things, even though its thinking is smitten with doubt, shows richer and deeper feeling than do those who will not take the trouble to think, but who are content to repeat unintelligible creeds by rote. Let us remember, also, that the author of *Ecclesiastes* lived in sad times, times of fearful persecution and suffering which might well make the sternest spirit quail.

One step further the school of "the wise" was to take. Unfortunately, we do not find it in our Bibles, at least in our Protestant Bible, though it is included in the Roman Catholic collection of the Scriptures. We have it in the Apocrypha. There you will find the book of *Ecclesiasticus*, written by Jesus, the son of Sirach, in the second century before Christ. It is after the manner of the book of *Proverbs* and quite

worthy to be placed beside it. I have only time here to draw your attention to it in passing, and to note the unfortunate exclusiveness which shuts it out from the Bible. But there is another book in the Apocrypha, more remarkable still. It is called *The Wisdom of Solomon*, and was written in the first century before Christ by an Alexandrian Jew. Here, in this book, we meet with a significant, and, in some respects, a portentous phenomenon in the world of thought—it is the union of Hebrew with Greek thought, which we shall meet with again and again in the New Testament and in early Christianity. For these Alexandrian Jews mingled much with the Greeks and with men who were steeped in Greek wisdom, and Platonic and neo-Platonic speculations. Listen to one or two of the sentences of this unknown writer, and see how they remind us of that which was to come:

> "O God of the fathers, and Lord who keepest Thy mercy,
> Who madest all things by Thy word; [or thought];
> And by Thy wisdom formedest man!"

How like that is to the first chapter of John: "In the beginning was the Word [or thought], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." So, too, in other passages, the influence of Platonic ideas is clearly discernible. The world, he says, was created

out of "formless matter," and "the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthy frame lieth heavy on a mind that is full of cares, and hardly do we divine the things that are on earth."

"O Sovereign Lord, thou lover of men's lives,
Thine incorruptible spirit is in all things."
"With Thee is wisdom, which knoweth thy works,
And was present when thou wast making the world,
And which understandeth what is pleasing in Thine eyes,
And what is right according to Thy commandments.
Send her forth out of the whole heavens,
And from the throne of thy glory bid her come,
That being present with me she may toil with me,
And that I may learn what is well-pleasing before thee.
For she knoweth all things and hath understanding thereof,
And in my doings she shall guide me in the ways of soberness,
And she shall guard me in her glory."

For,

"Wisdom is radiant and fadeth not away;
And easily is she beheld of them that love her,
And found of them that seek her.
She forestalleth them that desire to know her, making herself first known.
He that riseth up early to seek her shall have no toil,
For he shall find her sitting at his gates."

And lastly, this unknown writer of the Book of Wisdom has arrived at a conviction which is but seldom expressed, and then but faintly, in the Old Testament, save in the book of *Daniel*, and occasionally in the Psalms—the conviction of personal immortality:

"Men said within themselves, reasoning not aright,
Short and sorrowful is our life;
Because by mere chance were we born,
And hereafter we shall be as though we had never been:
Because the breath in our nostrils is smoke,
And reason is a spark kindled by the beating of our heart,
Which, being extinguished, the body shall be turned into ashes,
And the spirit shall be dispersed as thin air;
And our name shall be forgotten in time,
And no man shall remember our works;
And our life shall pass away as the traces of a cloud,
And shall be scattered as is a mist,
When it is chased by the beams of the sun.
Come, therefore, let us enjoy the good things that now are;
And let us use the Creation with all our soul as youth's possession.
Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and perfumes;
And let no flower of spring pass us by:
Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they be withered;

Let none of us go without his share in our proud revelry:
Because this is our portion, and our lot is this."

"Thus reasoned they, and they were led astray;
For they knew not the mysteries of God,
Neither hoped they for wages of holiness,
Nor did they judge that there is a prize for blameless souls.
Because God created man for incorruption,
And made him an image of His own proper being.
The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
And no torment shall touch them.
In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died,
And their departure was accounted to be to their hurt,
And their journeying away from us to be their ruin:
But they are in peace.
For even if in the sight of men they be punished,
Their hope is full of immortality;
And having borne a little chastening, they shall receive great good;
Because God made trial of them, and found them worthy of Himself."

Here, then, in the period say from the year 165 B.C. (the date of the book of *Daniel*), to the time of the writer of the Book of Wisdom, we find the thought, the hope, of immortality taking clearer and more definite shape in the minds of the Jews.

Truly, if the school of "the Wise" could produce

men like the unknown author of the book of *Job*, the authors of *Proverbs*, and this unknown author of the book of *Wisdom*, we may well say that "Wisdom is justified of her children."

We have thus seen how the prophets, the priests, and "the Wise" contributed to the religion of Israel, and to the formation of the Old Testament. In our next discourse we shall see how this religion was brought home to the hearts of the people by the Psalms—the Hymn-book of the Temple and the Synagogues.

# XII

# THE PSALMS

Psalm xlii., 4.—"I went with the throng, and led them to the house of God,
With the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping holy day."

We have seen, in previous discourses, how the religious and ethical spirit of the great prophet-reformers slowly raised Israel out of idolatry and polytheism, founded a religion of "ethical monotheism," and virtually gave birth to the Old Testament. We have seen, also, how the ceremonialism of the priests and the work of the Scribes helped to fasten the religion of the Law on the daily life of the people. We have seen how "the Wise," looking, perhaps, with mild contempt on the ceremonialism of the priests—for they scarcely ever mention it—gave breadth, and depth, and permanence to this great religion. We have now to see how the Psalmists—the hymn-writers—of the time,—or rather, of a much later time than the Prophets—

brought home the precepts and the ordinances of this religion to the hearts of the people, and helped to make it one with their deepest feelings and emotions.

If you turn to the Psalms—which, in the Revised version of the Bible, you will find divided into five books after the manner of the books of the Law—you will notice that many of them are ascribed to David. This, however, must be taken in the same sense in which the Law was ascribed to Moses, and the Proverbs to Solomon. Many of the greatest Biblical scholars are of opinion that David was not the writer of a single one of the Psalms as we now have them. The question of date, which need not otherwise detain us, is important in this way—that it helps us to understand the slow development of religious ideas. The chief arguments for the late date of the Psalter are these: that these religious poems presuppose a very high stage of religious development; the old idolatries and polytheism lie far behind and are scarcely ever mentioned; the spiritual teachings of the great prophets have evidently been assimilated by the bulk of the nation. This brings us down several centuries after David, and further, many of the Psalms presuppose the Law in its later and fully developed stages, and sing the praises of the Law.

This brings us down to the time of Ezra, for the Pentateuch was not completed until Ezra's time, nearly six hundred years after David. Others pre-

suppose the existence of synagogues, which brings us to a still later date; others again seem to refer to the fearful persecutions suffered under Antiochus Epiphanes, which brings us down to the second century before Christ. Indeed, several critics place the date of most of the Psalms in the Maccabean age. It is sufficient for our purpose at present to bear in mind that the composition of the Psalms probably extends over several centuries, that odd phrases and verses may have come down from David out of older collections and have been incorporated in our present collection by later compilers, but that the whole was compiled at a very late date, probably in the second century B.C. Bearing this in mind we shall see how long it takes for great spiritual ideas to be assimilated by the people. Another fact worthy of note is the use of different names for 'God' in the Psalms. According to Canon Driver's analysis, in the first Book the term *Yahweh* is used 272 times, the term *Elohim*, only 15 times; in the second Book, however, the term *Yahweh* is used only 30 times, and the term *Elohim* 164 times; in the third Book, taking it as a whole, there is little preponderance of one name over the other, though there is in certain parts of the Book; while in Books IV. and V. the term *Yahweh* is used almost exclusively. One other consideration to to be borne in mind in reading the Psalms is this—

that the Psalm is always the outcome of some mood or feeling existing in the mind of the writer, which mood or feeling may have been called forth either by some personal experience or by some historical event. But this statement requires qualification in this way: that the religion of the Jews was a national religion, and it is almost certain that the individual Psalmist would always have his fellow-worshippers, or the Temple or Synagogue services in mind when writing his Psalm; that is, he would try to reflect or express in his Psalm not merely his own feelings, but the feelings of the united Church-nation. Take, for example, the 126th Psalm—the reference to the return from the exile in Babylon is clear, though it was obviously written somewhat later:—

"When Yahweh brought home the captivity of Zion,
We were like unto them that dream,
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing:
Then said they among the nations,
'Yahweh hath done great things for them.'
Yahweh hath done great things for us
Whereof we are glad . . .
They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.
Though he go on his way weeping, bearing forth the seed,
He shall come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him."

So, too, in the 137th Psalm:

"By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down, yea, we wept,
When we remembered Zion.
Upon the willows in the midst thereof
We hanged up our harps.
For there they that led us captive required of us songs,
And our tormentors required of us mirth, saying,
'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.'
How shall we sing Yahweh's song
In a strange land?"

There again, the reference is obvious, yet Canon Cheyne expresses the opinion that this Psalm was not written until the age of the Maccabees, that is, four hundred years after the exile. That is (if Canon Cheyne's opinion is correct) the poet, having passed through bitter persecution in his own time—for the age of the Maccabees was perhaps more cruel to the Jews than that of the exile,—can the more fervently and dramatically place himself in the position of his compatriots of a former age, and so, converting his and their sorrow into song, console and strengthen his fellow-worshippers to bear their heavy trials.

So again, the kind of Hebrew *Te Deum* at the close of the 24th Psalm, which was probably composed for some great Temple festival, or after some great victory:

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates,
Yea, lift them up, ye everlasting doors:
And the King of Glory shall come in.
Who is this King of Glory?"

And the chorus replies:

"Yahweh of hosts,
He is the King of Glory"—

an idea which one of our modern poets has finely applied to the revelations of astronomy as manifesting to man the entry of the Supreme Spirit through the eternal portals of the skies:—

"Bright portals of the sky,
Emboss'd with sparkling stars;
Doors of eternity,
With diamantine bars,
Your arras rich uphold;
Loose all your bolts and springs,
Ope wide your leaves of gold:
That in your roofs may come the King of Kings."[1]

And in the 42nd Psalm there is a fine expression of what was probably a personal experience. The poet is an exile, or a refugee, or a captive staying near Mount Hermon. As he sits by the mountain torrent, where

[1]Aubrey de Vere's *The Death of Copernicus*—quoted in this connection by Canon Cheyne in *The Origin of the Psalter.*

"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy cataracts."

a deer springs past him to quench its thirst, and the incident, mingling with his own sad thoughts, gives birth to the well-known lines:

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God."

Some of the Psalms have obviously been added to by later writers; in others, as in the 19th Psalm, the poems of two writers have been combined in one. Take also the 51st Psalm, where, after the beautiful lines:

"For thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it:
Thou has no pleasure in burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

we descend to the words, probably added by a priest:

"Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion:
Then shalt thou delight in the sacrifices of righteousness, in burnt offering and whole burnt offering:
Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar."

Other Psalms express, to our modern minds, incongruous ideas, and descend rapidly from the

sublime to the ridiculous, as in the 133rd Psalm, beginning:

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell together in unity!"

after which come the lines:

"It is like the precious oil upon the head,
That ran down upon the beard,
Even Aaron's beard;
That came down upon the collar of his garments;"

reminding us of the ridiculous anointings at our modern coronations of popes and kings, which surely fill most sensible men with melancholy laughter.

But now let us turn our attention to the theology and the moral and religious spirit of these wonderful poems. I said that the Psalmists had fully appropriated the spirit of the great prophets. They represent a great advance in religious conceptions. Take the well-known 19th Psalm, beginning:

"The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament showeth his handywork;"

Or the great words of the 90th Psalm:

"Thou hast been our dwelling-place
In all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,

Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.
Thou turnest man to dust
And sayest, Return, ye children of men.
For a thousand years in thy sight
Are but as yesterday when it is past,
And as a watch in the night.
Thou carriest them away as with a flood ; they are as a sleep ;
In the morning they are like grass which groweth up.
In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up ;
In the evening it is cut down and withereth.
The days of our years are threescore years and ten,
Or even by reason of strength fourscore years ;
Yet is their pride but labour and sorrow ;
For it is soon gone, and we fly away."

Beside how many millions of graves have those great words been read! They remind us of the solemn and overpowering strains of the Dead March in *Saul.* The conclusion of the Psalm (it is absurd to suppose that it was written by Moses as the title states) probably refers to the completion of the restored Temple, or the promulgation of the "Book of the Law" by Ezra after the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem by Nehemiah. We can imagine with what feeling the great congregation would sing these well-known words:

"Let thy work appear unto thy servants,
And thy glory upon their children.
And let the beauty of Yahweh our God be upon us ;

And establish thou the work of our hands upon us;
Yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

Or take the beautiful 139th Psalm:

"O Yahweh, thou hast searched me and known me.
Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising,
Thou understandest my thought afar off.
Thou searchest out my path and my lying down,
And art acquainted with all my ways.
For there is not a word in my tongue,
But lo, O Yahweh, thou knowest it altogether.
Thou hast beset me behind and before,
And laid Thine hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot attain unto it.
Whither shall I go from Thy spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, Thou are there:
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there shall Thy hand lead me,
And Thy right hand shall hold me."

Could any words more vividly express the omnipresence of the Eternal! How far are we here from the tribal-God worship of David and Solomon, when the whole of the people worshipped Yahweh under the symbols of stocks and stones!

Or take one or two passages from the beautiful

Accession Psalms (95th, 96th, and 97th), written, probably, for the dedication of the Second Temple, to commemorate the virtual enthronement of Yahweh on Zion :

"O come, Let us worship and bow down ;
Let us kneel before Yahweh our Maker ;
For He is our God,
And we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand."
"O sing unto Yahweh a new song :
Sing unto Yahweh, all the earth.
Sing unto Yahweh, bless His name.
Shew forth His salvation from day to day.
Declare His glory among the nations,
His marvellous works among all the peoples.
For all the gods of the peoples are things of nought,
But Yahweh made the heavens.
Honour and majesty are before Him :
Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.
O worship Yahweh in the beauty of holiness.
He shall judge the peoples with equity.
Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice ;
Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof ;
Let the field exult, and all that is therein,"
"Let the multitude of the isles be glad.
Clouds and darkness are round about Him :
Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne.
His lightnings lightened the world :
The earth saw, and trembled.

The hills melted like wax at the presence of Yahweh.
The heavens declare His righteousness,
And all the peoples have seen His glory."

Truly, these great poets and singers of two thousand years ago, like the prophets before them, whose teachings they bring down to the hearts of the people, rise to the noblest heights of monotheism.

But the God of the Psalmists is not merely a God of Power, he is a God of Justice, of Righteousness, of the Moral Law. The Psalmists, like the prophets again, are not merely monotheists, they are, above all things, *ethical* monotheists. In this the Psalmists are the true children of the Prophets. From the very first verse of the 1st Psalm:

"Happy is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked."

how often is the striving after ethical perfection put forward as the one thing needful! How often are we told that "Yahweh abhorreth" the evil, the wicked, the bloodthirsty, or the deceitful man! How often are we reminded that the Spirit "loveth righteousness," that "the upright shall behold His face," that with the perfect He will shew Himself perfect, and with the pure He will shew Himself pure! How expressive is that searching phrase:

"Thou hast set our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance!"—

reminding us, by contrast of ideas, of those equally expressive lines in Wm. Gaskell's beautiful hymn :

"In God's clear sight high work we do,
If we but do our best."

Again, how penetrating and humbling are the words of the great prayer :

"Create in me a pure heart, O God,
And renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from Thy presence ;
And take not Thy holy spirit from me."

Then the high ideal and determination expressed in the lines :

"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way :
Oh, when wilt thou come unto me ?
I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.
I will set no base thing before mine eyes :
I hate the doing of unfaithfulness,
It shall not cleave unto me."

And lastly, in this connection, take the ideal of the perfect gentleman pictured in the 15th Psalm, which Ruskin calls the "gentleman Psalm" :

"Who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle ?
Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill ?
He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,
And speaketh truth in his heart.
He that slandereth not with his tongue,

Nor doeth evil to his friend,
Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.
In whose eyes a reprobate is despised,
But who honoureth them that fear Yahweh.
He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.
He that putteth not out his money to usury,
Nor taketh reward against the innocent.
He that doeth these things shall never be moved."

How many of us, even in these days, attain to this ideal? For we must remember that the word "usury," which so many foolishly suppose to mean excessive interest, means really, interest in any shape, form, or amount—a custom on which modern society and civilization, in an economic sense, may be said to be based. What a perfect state of society that will be, economically speaking, when every man is paid a fixed and just reward for his labour, and no more! Oh, who can conceive the depth and the height, the length and the breadth of Perfect Goodness in relation to man and society! And what poor creatures we all are in comparison with it!

But the God of the Psalmists is not only a God of Power and Justice, he is a God of Mercy and Loving Kindness. Here, as in the case of the author of *Job*, the heart of the pious Israelite must often have been sorely tried as he reflected on the difference between the good man's actual lot and his real deserts; so he took refuge in the mystery

surrounding the ways of the Eternal, and in a deep and fervent belief in God's loving kindness, gentleness, and mercy. These phrases are often on the lips of the Psalmist:

"Remember, O Yahweh, Thy tender mercies and Thy loving kindnesses;
For they have been ever of old.
Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions:
According to Thy loving kindness remember thou me,
For Thy goodness sake, O Yahweh.
Good and upright is Yahweh,
Therefore will he instruct sinners in the way.
The meek will he guide in judgment:
And the meek will He teach His way.
All the ways of Yahweh are loving-kindness and truth."—Ps. 25.

"Thy loving-kindness, O Yahweh, is in the heavens,
Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the skies.
Thy judgments are a great deep,
And the children of men take refuge under the shadow of Thy wings."—Ps. 36.

Then the beautiful words of the 51st Psalm:

"Thou delightest not in sacrifice, else would I give it:
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

And one of the Hallel Psalms has the great refrain :

"For his loving-kindness endureth for ever."

But this phase of the Psalmist's religious spirit is best summed up in the well-known 23rd Psalm, where the Eternal is pictured as a Shepherd guarding His flock :

"Yahweh is my shepherd ; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures :
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for thou art with me :
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."[1]

Here, the Universe is God's Temple, and the good man can never be outside it, never lost from the fold of the great Shepherd. Turn your eyes, my friends, to that humble Hebrew home in Nazareth two or three centuries later, where the boy Jesus would often

[1] The Hebrew prophets and psalmists are always anthropomorphic, but behind all their anthropomorphism there is the Spirit of Righteousness, Goodness and Mercy. We can personalize this Spirit or not, as we please, so long as we are true to it. Perhaps the truest attitude is that of Emerson—that these things of the Spirit manifest not something lower than Personality, but somethiug higher than Personality *as we know it.*

hear these Psalms read, and you will easily recognise the source whence he drew some of his inspiration and many of his greatest figures of speech. Here, amongst the Hebrew Psalmists, in this mysterious realm of religious thought, we may see great ideas *in the germ*, waiting, as it were, for further expansion and development. As Canon Cheyne so finely says: "The conception of God formed by the Jews during the Exile was oppressive in its awful grandeur, till, in their deep depression, they ventured to dream that the same greatness and goodness which filled the world might, by a miracle of love, contract itself within a human heart, or, to speak more correctly, within the hearts of all those who belonged to the true Israel."[1] 'Though Yahweh be on high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly,'—an idea, which, as we have seen, they expressed under the figure of the watchfulness, the patience, the gentleness, the protecting care of an Almighty Shepherd—the same idea which Jesus, taking up, applied not only to his fellow-Jews, but to all mankind.

But if, you will say, the Psalmists had reached such a high stage of religious development, why is it that their work is disfigured by a savage vindictiveness and passion which betrays itself in passages which we should hardly dare to utter:

[1] *The Origin of the Psalter*, p. 343.

"Mine adversary has rewarded me evil for good,
And hatred for my love," therefore
"Let his days be few,
And let another take his office.
Let his children be fatherless,
And his wife a widow.
Let his children be vagabonds and beg,
And let them seek their bread out of their desolate places.
Let there be none to extend mercy unto him,
Neither let there be any to have pity on his fatherless children." (Ps. 109.)
"As for the head of those that compass me about,
Let burning coals fall upon them:
Let them be cast into the fire;
Into deep pits, that they rise not up again." (Ps. 140.)
"O daughter of Babylon, that art laid waste,
Happy shall he be that rewardeth thee
As thou hast served us.
Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones
Against the rock." (Ps. 137.)

It is not for me to justify such words as these,—it is for those who believe every word of the Bible to be divinely inspired. But surely, those of us who have so recently passed through the deeps of racial hatred and consequent war, or who have read something of of the terrible persecutions of the Jews in olden times, nay, of their atrocious treatment to-day in Russia and

the East, can understand that these words come from men like ourselves, that they are born of the fierce passion and resentment engendered by bitter suffering.

One step further the Psalmists were to take towards the development of great religious ideas. I have before remarked that in the Old Testament there are few indications of a belief in personal immortality. One or two of these indications we find in the Psalms and in the book of *Daniel.* We find them at this late period because, as I shall show in my next discourse, the Jews had by this time come into contact with the great religion of the Persians—which expressly taught this belief,—and also with the philosophy of the Greeks. But the belief was by no means general, for as late as the second century before Christ we find Jesus, the son of Sirach, whom we may take as a representative Jew, writing in *Ecclesiasticus*: "The son of man is not immortal;" and even some of the Psalmists express the same opinion:

"For in death there is no remembrance of thee:
In Sheol who shall give thee thanks?" (Ps. 6.)
"The dead praise not Yahweh,
Neither any that go down into silence." (Ps. 114.)
"What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit?
Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?" (Ps. 30.)

"Surely every man at his best estate is altogether vanity ;
Surely every man walketh in a vain show.
O spare me that I may recover strength,
Before I go hence, and be no more." (Ps. 39.)
"What man is he that shall live and not see death,
That shall deliver his soul from the power of the grave?" (Ps. 89.)
"He seeth that wise men die,
The fool and the brutish together perish,
And leave their wealth to others.
Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever,
And their dwelling places to all generations ;
But man abideth not in honour :
He is like the beasts that perish." (Ps. 49.)

Other Psalmists, however, sing far differently, though their belief and their vision lack definiteness :

"Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth :
For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol ;
Neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." (Ps. 16.)
"Men of the world, whose portion is in this life,
And whose belly thou fillest with thy treasure :
They are satisfied with children,
And leave the rest of their substance to their babes.
As for me, let me behold Thy face in righteousness :
Let me be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." (Ps. 17.)

And there is a curious passage in the forty-ninth Psalm which seems to imply that only the righteous shall attain immortality :

"The fool and the wicked are appointed as a flock for Sheol ;
Death shall be their shepherd :
And the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning :
And their beauty shall be for Sheol to consume, that there be no habitation for it.
But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol:
For he shall receive me."

Here again, then, we see great ideas struggling into birth, and moving, as we shall see in our next discourse, towards those brighter and more definite shapes —Judgment, Paradise, the Heavenly city—which were to form so striking a feature in early Christian life and imagination. How mysterious is this realm of religious thought, in which ideas are born—we know not how—and, gathering power with the years, slowly but inevitably play their part in the education and development of the race !

Here we must leave these great religious poems, leaving much unsaid, for I have not time even to hint how some of the Psalmists, influenced, doubtless, by the teachings of the Second Isaiah, unconsciously modified Messianic conceptions and anticipations in

the direction, not of a royalist Messiah who should sit on the throne of David, but of a suffering "Servant of Yahweh,"[1] by whose sorrows and sufferings mankind is pointed to the heavenly way. Neither have I time to show how they regarded the law as Yahweh's special instrument of education and spiritual discipline. Here, I say, we may leave these great poems, which have ministered to the griefs and sororws of countless millions in all the sad and devious ways of suffering and adversity. They teach us to see the hand of the Eternal, not only in the pavilion of the heavens and the silent procession of the stars, in the solitude of the mountains and the multitudinous roar of the sea, in the wild-flower at our feet and the sheep safely sheltered within the fold, but, above all, in the pure and upright in heart:

"Who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle?
Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?
He that hath clean hands and a pure heart."

"Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright:
For the latter end of that man is peace."

1 See the Discourse on "The Exile."

## XIII.

# THE DISPERSION OF THE JEWS, AND THE LATER BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Daniel iv. 37—"I praise and extol and honour the King of heaven; for all his works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase."

Daniel xii. 3—"They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

PROPHETS, priests, scribes, "the Wise," the psalmists, —all these, as we have seen, brought their contribution to the making of this great literature which we call the Bible. Let us now pick up the threads of our history and see how events and circumstances produced some of the later books of the Old Testament.

You will remember that, in a previous discourse, we had reached the time when Ezra, the Scribe, read the virtually completed book of the Law to the

assembled Jews at the Watergate, after the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. I say virtually completed book of the Law, because there were many slight additions and emendations made even after Ezra's time. Now there is no doubt that Ezra and Nehemiah were exceedingly narrow and severe in some of the reforms which they introduced. They held, sincerely enough, that the Israelites were the chosen people of Yahweh, and that they must not intermarry with the heathen peoples around them. Ezra, indeed, before Nehemiah's arrival, had gone so far as to command those Israelites who had married heathen wives to send both their wives and children away from them, so that the holy people might be cleansed from heathenish pollution. A court was constituted. Every Israelite who had married a foreign wife was summoned before it, and this narrow-minded and savage decree, breaking the holiest and deepest domestic ties and affections, was carried out. But there was undoubtedly a party which was hostile to these severe measures, a party which held that Yahweh was the God of the heathen as well as the God of the Israelite.

Out of this party, though perhaps of somewhat later date than Ezra, came the Book of *Jonah*, and possibly the Book of *Ruth*, both of which teach this great lesson of the all-embracing mercy of God. There is no book in the Bible which has been more

laughed at than the Book of *Jonah*. How many Agnostic audiences have been made to laugh—and rightly so if the book is taken as literal history—at the story of the prophet living inside a big fish for three days! And what excruciating pictures have been drawn of the antics of both prophet and fish during their strange partnership! But, really, the Book of *Jonah* is simply a Jewish novel, after the manner of the stories in the "Arabian Nights," written to enforce the great truth that God is the God of the heathen as well as of the Jew. The story is this—bear in mind that it is purely imaginative—Jonah is commanded by Yahweh to go to the great city of Nineveh and announce its fall as a punishment for its wickedness. But the prophet does not care to do this—he cannot believe that Yahweh will carry out his awful threat. So in order to escape his task he takes passage by ship for Tarshish, and it is while on this journey that his fishy experiences befall him. But Yahweh is gracious to him, disobedient as he is, and causes the fish to deliver up its uncomfortable burthen, and he again commands Jonah to go on his mission to Nineveh. This time the prophet goes, and announces to the people the destruction of their city within forty days because of their wickedness. The Ninevites actually believed his words, and, in fear and trembling, put on sackcloth and ashes, and the king ordered a general humiliation and repentance.

And when Yahweh saw this, says the story, he was full of pity, and determined not to carry out his threat. Then Jonah was very angry, for it had been made to appear as though he were a false prophet. After expostulating with Yahweh he went and dwelt in a tent close to the city, to see whether Yahweh would after all carry out his threat. Whilst he was there Yahweh devised means—so runs the story—to bring the foolishness of the prophet home to him. He caused a tree to grow up miraculously in a single night to provide a shelter for Jonah from the heat of the sun. Jonah was exceeding glad at this. But Yahweh next day caused a worm to gnaw at the roots of the tree so that it withered. And again Jonah was angry, and had pity on the tree, and requested for himself that he might die, for he was sore beset by the heat of the sun and the scorching wind. Then Yahweh said unto Jonah: "Thou hast had pity on the tree, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than one hundred and twenty thousand little children that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?" You see the moral which this Eastern story-teller wishes to enforce—God is the God of the heathen as well as of the Jew; and you can easily understand how the quaint tale would tell against the

measures and the party of the severe and somewhat narrow-minded scribes of the type of Ezra.

A much more beautiful story, written, if not at the same time, with much the same object, is told in the Book of *Ruth*. In the little town of Bethlehem, we are told there lived, in ancient times, a man named Elimelech and his wife Naomi, with their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. Driven by famine out of Judah, Elimelech settled in Moab, and in course of time his sons married Moabites, that is heathen women. Then the sons died, and the mother, Naomi, now bereft of all, decided to return to her native country, Judah. Her two daughters-in-law, pitying the lonely woman, begged to be allowed to accompany her. But Naomi would not hear of it—what could they do, and how could they marry again, in a strange land? And they lifted up their voices and wept. And Orpah, one of the daughters-in-law, kissed her mother-in-law and bade her farewell. But Ruth refused to stay behind, and in words which music has helped to make immortal, said: "Intreat me not to leave thee, and to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: Yahweh do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." So the two went together to Bethlehem, and the upshot of the story

is that Boaz, a well-to-do Israelite, marries Ruth, the heathen, and Ruth gives birth to a son named Obed, and Obed becomes the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of—David, the great king of Israel! That is, even a heathen woman might be ancestress to the royal house of David! Here, again, the moral is obvious—God is the God, not of the Jews alone, but of the heathen, of all men.

But I must leave Ezra and his times and skip lightly over the two following centuries. During those centuries events occurred big with fate not for the Jews only but for the whole world. Before this time the great Persian Empire, under Darius Hystaspis and Xerxes, had thrown its forces in vain against the free cities of Greece; now, in the fourth century (334 B.C.) the Greeks and Macedonians, under Alexander the Great, attacked the Persian Empire in its own territories, shattered its power, and in so doing established the triumph of the West over the East and introduced the Hellenic spirit into Asia. This event, I say, had important consequences for the Jews. Judea, from being a province of the Persian Empire, passed under the dominion of the Greeks, and Greek ideas began to influence Jewish thought. In the turmoil which followed Alexander's death, and the division of his great Kingdom, there was carried on that movement which took the Jewish faith into nearly all quarters of the then civilized world—the Dispersion of the

Jews. The movement had really been begun by the earlier deportations to Assyria and Babylon. During the wars with Babylon many Judeans had fled into Egypt. Others, during the Persian period, settled in Persia. Now, during the Greek overlordship, many settled in Syria and the cities of Asia Minor, and thence spread to the Islands of the Ægean Sea and to the cities of Europe. In the wars which followed the death of Alexander the Great many thousands—some accounts say a hundred thousand of Jews, were deported to Egypt, chiefly to the city of Alexandria, where an influential Jewish community established itself, produced many noted thinkers and writers, and gave to the world the Septuagint—the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures. Wherever they went, the Jewish people, with the tenacity which is one of their chief characteristics, carried their exclusiveness and their religion with them, establishing synagogues wherever they were numerous enough to do so. It was during this Greek period, that is, about the year 250 B.C. that the books of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, and the two books of *Chronicles* were compiled.[1] They are obviously written from a priestly standpoint, give a review of Israel's history through a priestly perspective,

[1] There is some difference of opinion as to the date of these books, some critics placing them as early as the year 300 B.C., others, a hundred years or more later.

and differ materially on many points from the older accounts in the books of *Samuel* and *Kings*.

But what concerns us here, in these world-transforming movements, is the effect they had on the formation of the Old Testament, which was not yet completed. In the year 175 B.C. Judea came under the overlordship of Antiochus Epiphanes, the then king of Syria, who, during his reign, was mad enough to attempt to suppress the Jewish religion—as a punishment for rebellion,—and establish the worship of the Pagan deities in its place. Jerusalem was given over to the fury of his soldiers; the Temple was made a shrine of Jupiter Olympius; a sow was sacrificed upon the altar; the books of the law were burnt; synagogues were destroyed; the keeping of the Sabbath was forbidden; swine's flesh was forced down the throats of unwilling worshippers; while many of those who refused to conform to the new religion were cruelly tortured or put to slow deaths. The Scribe, Eleazar, over ninety years of age, walked bravely to the rack on which he was scourged to death, saying: "By manfully parting with my life now, I will show myself worthy of mine old age, and leave behind a noble example to the young to die willingly and nobly a glorious death for the reverend and holy laws."[1] One Jewish mother and her seven sons were

[1] II Maccabees vi.

put to horrible tortures and lingering deaths one after the other, the mother encouraging and imploring her sons to remain faithful the while. Some of the Psalms reflect the despair of the people at this time:

"O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever?
Thine adversaries have set thy sanctuary on fire;
They have profaned the dwelling place of thy name even to the ground.
They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land." (Ps. 74.)

"Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long:
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.
Awake, why sleepest thou, O Yahweh?
Arise, cast us not off for ever.
Wherefore hidest thou thy face,
And forgettest our affliction and our oppression?"
(Ps. 44.)

But soon the spark of indignation and revolt burst into flame. An aged priest, named Mattathias, with his five sons, publicly refused to sacrifice at the pagan altar, fled to the hills, and gathered a faithful band about him. The gray-haired leader soon fell, but his third son, Judas Maccabeus, being selected to take his place, won victory after victory against overwhelming odds. He retook Jerusalem, cleansed and purified the Temple, restored the sacred vessels, removed the desecrated altar and built a new one, and then, with great rejoicing, which continued for eight days, re-

established the worship of Yahweh, and instituted a new festival in commemoration of the event—the feast of the "restoration of the temple," or of "lights." This great event, also, is celebrated in the Psalms:

"O give thanks unto Yahweh, for he is good:
For his mercy endureth for ever.
Out of my distress I called upon Yahweh:
Yahweh answered me and enlarged my place.
Yahweh is on my side; I will not fear;
What can man do unto me?
It is better to trust in Yahweh
Than to put confidence in man.
It is better to trust in Yahweh
Than to put confidence in princes.
All nations compassed me about:
They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about,
But Yahweh helped me.
Yahweh is my strength and my song,
And he is become my salvation.
Yahweh hath chastened me sore:
But he hath not given me over unto death.
Open to me the gates of righteousness:
I will enter into them, I will give thanks unto Yahweh.

The stone which the builders rejected
Is become the headstone of the corner.

This is Yahweh's doing,
It is marvellous in our eyes.
Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Yahweh.
Yahweh is God, and he hath given us light;
Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.
O give thanks unto Yahweh, for he is good,
For his mercy endureth for ever." (Ps. 118).

Judas died two or three years afterwards whilst fighting against overwhelming numbers, with the words: "If our time be come, let us die manfully for our brethren, and let us not leave behind a stain upon onr honour." The struggle was continued under the leadership of his two brothers, Jonathan and Simon, under whom the Jews actually achieved their independence. The story of the struggle of the Maccabees is really one of the noblest epics in the history of the world, and it is strange indeed that the books of the Maccabees have found no place in the Bible.

But the interest of the struggle, for us, lies in what it brought forth in relation to the Bible, that is, the Book of *Daniel*. "It was at this crisis," says Ewald, —that is, in the early part of the Maccabean struggle —"it was at this crisis, in the sultry heat of an age thus frightfully oppressive, that this book appeared with its sword-edge utterance, its piercing exhortation to endure in face of the despot, and its promise, full of Divine joy, of near and sure salvation. No dew

of Heaven could fall with more refreshing coolness on the parched ground, no spark from above alight with a more kindling power on the surface so long heated with a hidden glow. With winged brevity the Book gives a complete survey of the history of the kingdom of God upon earth, showing the relations which it had hitherto sustained in Israel to the successive great heathen empires of the Chaldeans, Medo-Persians, and Greeks—in a word, towards the heathenism which ruled the world; and with the finest perception it describes the nature and individual career of Antiochus Epiphanes and his immediate predecessors so far as was possible, in view of the great events which had just occurred. Rarely does it happen that a book appears as this did, in the very crisis of the times, and in a form most suited to such an age, artificially reserved, close, and severe, and yet shedding so clear a light through obscurity, and so marvellously captivating. It was natural that it should soon achieve a success entirely corresponding to its inner truth and glory." What, then, was the message of this strange book? In order to give it weight and authority it was ascribed to the great and wise Jew, named Daniel, who lived at the period of the Babylonian captivity. The earlier chapters of the book are concerned with the history of Daniel, and relate how his three companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego suffered themselves to be cast into a fiery

furnace rather than be untrue to their religion and their God, and how Daniel himself was cast into a den of lions because of his piety and faithfulness to his God. You can imagine how these stories would nerve the hearts of the faithful during the terrible persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes. But the chief historical interest of the book lies in its mysterious visions and predictions, which take the form of a brief survey of past empires and of the times which are to come. The "revelations" are made to Daniel by an angel, who declares that the judgment of the world will shortly take place, that the "Ancient of Days," the Eternal one, will come in the clouds of heaven, and that his dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and he shall give judgment to the saints of the Most High, that is, to the faithful Israel. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

That was the great message of the Book of *Daniel*, which, as you will see, gives a totally new turn to Messianic dreams and expectations. Not a royalist Messiah, not a suffering "servant of Yahweh," but a triumphant world-judgment, in which everlasting righteousness shall reign, and judgment be given for

the faithful Israel—for "everyone that shall be found written in the book." Here, for the first time in the history of the Jewish religion, the theory of the resurrection is proclaimed, and the doctrine of immortality clearly and definitely laid down. We have seen in previous discourses how, partly through contact with Persian and Greek thought and religion, this doctrine has been struggling, as it were, into being. Here, in the Book of *Daniel*, it takes definite shape, and we can easily understand how it would fire the imagination and thrill the hearts of those who were suffering, and perhaps despairing, under crushing persecution or in face of overwhelming odds. Let us try to trace, very briefly, some of the ideas of the Book of *Daniel* to their source, for it is interesting to note how one religion is influenced by the ideas and doctrines of another.

We know, then, that from the time of the capture of Babylon by Cyrus the Jews were brought into contact with the religion of the Persians, and we know that this religion included a belief in retribution after death. "There can be but one opinion" says Canon Cheyne, "among those who have perused the Gâthâs [*i.e.* the sacred songs of the Zoroastrian Church] that, in the midst of a world almost wholly given up to a gross material eschatology, Zoroaster declared the true rewards and punishments to be spiritual. His teaching is based on a distinction, which to the

Jews came much later, between the material or bodily life and the mental or spiritual, the latter of which connects us with 'those veritably real (eternal) worlds where dwells Ahura' (Yasna xliii. 3.) Here is a prayer in the 'middle Avesta'—'And now in these thy dispensations, O Ahura Mazda! do thou act wisely for us, and with abundance with thy bounty and thy tenderness as touching us; and grant that reward which thou hast appointed to our souls, O Ahura Mazda! Of this do thou thyself bestow upon us for this world and the spiritual; and now as part thereof (do thou grant) that we may attain to fellowship with Thee, and Thy righteousness, for all duration' (Yasna xl. 1.) . . . In short, heaven and hell are not primarily the localities appointed for souls after death; the one is 'life,' 'the best mental state,' the other is 'life's absence,' 'the worst life.' . . . 'Where is the rewarding?' is asked in the Vendîdâd. 'When the man is dead, when his time is over,' comes the answer. (Vendîdâd xix. 27, 28.) 'He shall be cast into the place (destined) for the wicked, into the darkness of darkness begotten by darkness. To that world, to the dismal realm, you are delivered by your own doings, by your own souls, O sinners.' (Vendîdâd v. 62,) Conscience, in fact, appears to the soul of the deceased man, and conducts it to its place."[1] According to another

[1] From "The Origin of the Psalter," pp. 398, 399.

passage in the Zoroastrian Scriptures the righteous soul passes from the Judge's Bridge by four steps. The first places him in the Good Thought Paradise, the second in the Good Word Paradise, the third in the Good Deed Paradise, and the fourth in the "Endless Lights," where is the house of songs, and the pure spirit "sees" God. The soul of the wicked man, on the other hand, passes successively into the Evil Thought Hell, the Evil Word Hell, the Evil Deed Hell, and the Endless Darkness (Yast xxii. 33).[1] Another prayer expresses the worshipper's hope that he may go openly to the better world of the saints, and there attain to entire companionship with God.

All this and similar teaching could not fail to have a great fascination for minds perplexed by suffering, and by the apparent heedlessness of their God. The doctrine of immortality, of a resurrection, of the spiritual triumph of the faithful Israel, would slowly make its way into their hearts and minds, filling them with renewed hope and zeal. The companion doctrine of angels, which we meet with so frequently in Daniel and in some of the later Psalms and prophecies, though indigenous to Israel, was also largely influenced by Persian thought—Yahweh, now far away, more frequently needed supernatural messengers to bring his commands down to earth. The Hebrew conception of Satan, also, as the

[1] *Ibid*, pp. 399, 400.

adversary of God, was much modified by contact with the religion of Zoroaster. Here, then, in the Book of Daniel, and in some of the later Psalms and prophecies, we can trace the meeting-point of Persian, Greek, and Jewish thought, slowly moving towards those pictures of Resurrection, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell, which were to form so prominent a feature in Christian eschatology, and which were destined to play so large a part in the education of the race.

We know now that the visions and predictions of the book of *Daniel* were but the dreams of a strong religious imagination, hungering, in sore trial, for the judgments of Eternal Justice. The "Ancient of Days" with his "thousand thousands ministering unto him" never came. Even the temporal power and prosperity of the renewed Jewish State was shortlived. The rise of the Roman Empire and the alliance of the Jewish State with Rome again brought Israel into the turbulent maelstrom of world-politics. The quarrels of the Jewish rulers amongst themselves soon gave Rome occasion to interfere. In the year 61 B.C. Pompey, the great Roman general, fresh from his great victories in Asia, appeared before Jerusalem, which fell after a three months' siege. Entering the city in triumph the great general proceeded to the Temple, where the priests sat robed in black sackcloth, which, on days of lamentation, superseded their white garments. Then, the

man whom Dean Stanley calls "the gentlest and the most virtuous soldier of the Western world," did what no layman had ever done before save in the dark days of Antiochus Epiphanes. He penetrated into the most sacred place, the Holy of Holies, which none but the High Priest might enter, and he only on one day in the year, to see under what mysterious symbol this mysterious God of the Jews was worshipped—he entered, and found there—nothing! Fit symbol of the Eternal but invisible Presence.

It is in these last two centuries that the great Jewish sects and parties—Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, and the Supreme Court called the Sanhedrin come into prominence, but I have no time to linger over them here. In the year 37 B.C. the great Herod established himself as king of Judea. In these later times too we meet with the gentle Jewish teacher Hillel, who, on being asked to give the substance of the Law in a single sentence, replied: "What thou wouldst not thyself, do not to thy neighbour; this is the whole Law, and its application is—Go and do this." And in the last years of Herod, the year 5 B.C. there was born, at Nazareth, the boy—Jesus.

A new chapter in the history of humanity opens, a chapter which we shall do well to study reverently and carefully, in preparation for our next series of discourses.

# XIV.

# THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Job xxviii. 12, 23, 24, 28. "Where shall wisdom be found?
And where is the place of understanding?
God understandeth the way thereof,
And He knoweth the place thereof,
For He looketh to the ends of the earth,
And seeth under the whole heaven.
Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;
And to depart from evil is understanding."

DURING the last ten or twelve Sunday evenings we have seen how this great literature called the Old Testament came gradually into being—how it was born, as it were, of man's hopes, and fears, and beliefs, as he was beset by circumstances which seemed now to overwhelm him, now to bring him nearer to the Spirit of God. We have seen how the ecclesiastical or the supernatural view,—the view that this great

literature was miraculously given, that God had made one small people the sole depository of divine truth—has had to give way before the pressure of the multitude of facts which the Higher Criticism, with untiring industry, has brought to light. "Just as," says Dr. Kuenen, in his great work on *The Religion of Israel*,—"just as our ideas of God's relation to mankind underwent a complete revolution upon the discovery that our earth is not the centre of the universe, but one of the millions of globes which are suspended in immeasurable space, so our conception of God's designs with regard to the world had to be modified as our horizon became wider . . . The idea that with respect to one small nation, not exceptionally excellent, God should have followed quite another line of action than with regard to all other nations on earth, now . . . seems to us a childish fancy. Israel is no more the pivot on which the development of the whole world turns, than the planet which we inhabit is the centre of the universe. In short, we have outgrown the belief of our ancestors. Our conception of God and of the extent of His activity, of the plan of the universe and its course, has gradually become far too wide and too grand for the [exclusive] ideas of Israel's prophets to appear any longer otherwise than misplaced in it. To confine that activity at first and for many centuries to a single people, afterwards and during a fresh series

of centuries still to a comparatively small portion of the human race, would be an absurdity from which any thoughtful man must shrink."

But the substitution of a natural for a supernatural explanation of the Bible does not in the least detract from the interest or the value of this great literature as a means of edification and inspiration. Nay, such an explanation rather adds to the educational value of the Bible, for by means of it we are enabled to trace the growth of the moral and religious conceptions of a considerable section of mankind. We see, for example, man, not created perfect, as under the old interpretation, but slowly winning his way from lower and barbarous stages of life to the higher ranges of morality and humanity. We see him purifying his religious ceremonial from cruel and horrid rites; slowly attaining to higher conceptions of justice and moral relationships; reaching out towards nobler ideas of God; and, in this long process, creating a great and noble literature. In a word, we see the Bible, and the religion of which it is the outcome, brought into line with the great scientific conception of Evolution, and taking its place—with a special and peculiar interest for us—along with the other great religious and sacred books of the world. Let us now take a glance backward once more and try to summarize our previous conclusions, illustrating these conclusions by a reference to religious

ceremonial, moral relationships, and man's conception of God.

Bearing in mind that the earlier narratives were not written until some hundreds of years after the events to which they refer, and that they must therefore have many of their harsh realistic details removed by the softening hand of Time, even so, the most cursory reader of the Old Testament cannot but be impressed by the primitive and awful savagery of those early times. In regard to religious ceremonial, this savagery is most clearly exemplified in the horrible practice of human sacrifice. There is not the least doubt, as we have seen, that this practice was continued amongst the Israelites, as amongst surrounding peoples, for centuries after the time of Moses, yea, even for ages after the great prophets fulminated against it. It sprang from the idea that Yahweh was a stern and angry God and required the most precious gifts, when offended, in order to be propitiated. How often does man make God in his own childish image! Slowly, through the growth of gentler feelings, the sacrifice of animals was substituted. This substitution of animals or other gifts was called "redeeming"; that is, a man owes something to Yahweh, or his God, and at the appointed time redeems his promise or debt by his gift at the altar. These redemptions were afterwards strictly regulated by the Law. You see how all these terms,

"substitution," "redemption," "vicarious sacrifice," which have played so large a part in Christian theology, run back to the most horrible rites and customs, and how far away they are from the nobler teachings of the prophets, the psalmists, and of Jesus: "What doth Yahweh require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness." "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the Law and the prophets."

I have not time to dwell on the various kinds of sacrifices or offerings; on image-worship and the fact that, for centuries, altars, both to Yahweh and to other gods, were erected in all parts of the land;[1] that, in the earlier times, even laymen might conduct the sacrificial ceremony; that, slowly, a regular or professional priesthood established itself; that, in due course, all ceremonial came to be restricted to this professional priesthood, just as in early Christian times, all ceremonial came gradually to be restricted to professional ecclesiastics; that, even in this priesthood, there gradually evolved a differentiation of

[1] The second of the Ten Words or Commandments is doubtless a later addition. However this may be, we know that for centuries afterwards the Israelites lived in apparent ignorance of it, and in the glaring contradiction to it.

orders and functions until, in Ezra's time, an organised hierarchy was established; and how, in this long course of development, occupying many centuries, all local sanctuaries and altars were ultimately abolished, and the vast and complicated sacrificial system, which virtually made the Temple a huge shambles, was established at Jerusalem. In this long process of development we see, not a clean-cut system of worship given once for all by divine ordinance, but a natural and human growth evoked by changing circumstances and supposed human needs—a growth, which, as we have seen, can be traced in the successive layers of the Pentateuch itself. One word, however, I may say about the crowning point of this sacrificial system, that is, the great "Day of Atonement." On this one day in the year—which is still observed by the Jews, though in different fashion from former ages—the high priest conducted a most elaborate sacrificial ceremony, by which the whole people were supposed to be purified from the pollution of sin. I should only weary you were I to describe the minute and elaborate ceremonial by which this general purification was supposed to be accomplished. You can read the account for yourselves, if you feel so disposed, in the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus, and then compare with it the appeal for inward purity which the great prophets and psalmists make. Here, again, we may trace a survival of ancient modes of thought in the mediatorial offices

which our modern priesthoods assume to themselves as of divine right. When will men learn that inward purity cannot be attained by external acts, and that no one can stand between the individual soul and God!

But a much more interesting line of development can be traced in the Old Testament in regard to moral conceptions and the moral relationships of men. In the earlier times we are struck by the cruelty, the savagery, the slavery, the light esteem in which human life is held. The most awful commands are recorded, and even, in some cases, attributed to God, for the indiscriminate slaughter of men, women and children. The death penalty is imposed for comparatively trivial offences. The individual seems of no account. Even the children of wrong-doers are sometimes punished because of their fathers' sin. Polygamy is recognised and allowed. Disobedient and rebellious children may be stoned to death, and in some cases the ancient law of Retaliation is laid down as by Divine command: "Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." But in *Deuteronomy*, which was the outcome, as you know, of the teachings of the prophets, and which was not written until some seven hundred years after Moses, we have a much more humane moral code. There is a perceptible advance in the estimate of the

value of human life. The individual is of greater worth. Slavery is modified. The duties of philanthropy and benevolence are insisted upon. Even animals are to be treated humanely. Justice is to be equitably administered to all, and a tender solicitude is shown for the education and training of children. In the teachings of the prophets again there is a great advance in the conceptions of moral duty and the worth of man as man. Isaiah declares that man shall be more rare, that is, more precious, than gold; Jeremiah preaches inward purity rather than sacrifices; "the wise" insist upon instruction and the gentler virtues, and declare that the riches of the mind are of more worth than rubies; the psalmists sing the beauty of individual holiness. Even in *Deuteronomy* moral conceptions are somewhat exclusive, as, for example, in the command: "Ye shall not eat of anything that dieth of itself: thou mayest give it unto the stranger that is within thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto a foreigner." But in the later age of *Proverbs* we meet with the far nobler injunction, in which exclusiveness is melted into pity—"If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head."

This growth of moral conceptions and the gradually heightening worth of human individuality may be

seen in the development of the idea of immortality. In the earlier writings—just as in the old mythologies —only the heroes of the race seem to attain to a vague sort of immortality. Abraham was called "the friend of God"; Enoch, we are told, "walked with God"; the spirit of Samuel was called up from the dim realm of shades; and Elijah was supposed to have been translated to heaven in a chariot of fire. But for the mass of mankind there is no word of immortal life,—coming from the dust, they "return to dust again"; they are as the beasts that perish, "as the one dieth, so dieth the other." But in the later writings, as I pointed out in my last discourse, we see this hope of immortality for all men struggling, as it were, into being; it gradually becomes democratic,—not the privilege of the few, but the birthright of the many. Here too, then, in the realm of morality and the conception of human rights and duties, we see, not a definite revelation of divine commands given once for all, but a progressive development of moral and political conceptions springing out of the varying needs of different ages and circumstances.

But still clearer evidence of the evolution of religious conceptions in the Old Testament is to be found in the varying character of God as given in the different books at different stages of development. Students of ethics, metaphysics, and theology, will dispute for

ever, I suppose, as to whether an advance in man's moral ideas and customs is due to a higher conception of God, or whether a higher conception of God is the result of purer and loftier moral ideas. Perhaps there is a certain amount of truth in both views, and I need not stay now to try to determine which is the major truth. But of this we may be sure—that our conception of God, our interpretation of the Universe and our ideal of duty and society,—for this is really our conception of the Will of God—will largely determine our character and conduct. Tell me what kind of God you worship, what is your ideal of life, and I will tell you what kind of man you are—patient and forgiving, or impatient and resentful; sympathetic and helpful, or narrow and self-centred; gentle and magnanimous, or arrogant and small-minded; simple and unostentatious, or proud, showy, and a lover of luxury; willing to suffer, rather than do injustice, or conceitedly determined to stand upon your rights; a man of peace, or a man of war. So it is in the Bible—the character of God changes with the changing character of humanity. In the earlier ages he is pictured as a largely magnified man, strong and mighty in battle. He is represented as delighting in the smell of sacrifices; as walking and talking occasionally with the patriarchs; as being jealous and angry; as contending with other gods; as advising the Israelites to deceive and rob the Egyptians; as

authorising and even commanding indiscriminate massacre. And so, human society, in those early ages, takes upon itself the character of its God, which it has simply made in its own image. But if we could have the life of those early ages revealed to us in detail we should see these lower conceptions contending with higher and purer ones for mastery; and there is not the least doubt that in those earlier ages the character of Yahweh was higher than the character of surrounding deities—Baal, Moloch, Chemosh, and Astarte. But it is not until the time of the prophets that universalist ideas come and God is conceived as the creator of the Universe, the subverter and the builder of empires, the Supreme Master-worker, and the Lord of Life and Death. Then, again, a further development takes place as the human spirit turns in upon itself in Job, Ecclesiastes, the Prophets, and the Psalmists, and Yahweh becomes not only a God of Power and a God of Righteousness, but a God of Mercy, Truth, Pity, and Loving-Kindness.

"Like as a father pitieth his children,
So Yahweh pitieth them that fear him.
For he remembereth that we are dust.
As for man, his days are as grass;
As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
For the wind passeth over it and it is gone,
And the place thereof shall know it no more.
But the loving-kindness of Yahweh is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him,—"

We must interpret the word "fear" here in the sense that a tender-hearted child would fear to hurt or wound the feelings of father or mother. What a wide gulf there is between the command to spoil the Egyptians and the words:

> "Who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle?
> Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?
> He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness,
> And speaketh truth in his heart!"—

between the God of Samuel, who commands the slaughter of babes and sucklings, and the God of Jesus, whose words fall like dew upon the heart: "Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." "God is love, and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God in him!"

But though some of the prophets and psalmists rise to the noblest heights of monotheism, Judaism as a whole failed to meet the moral and spiritual needs of mankind. Its dreams of a Messiah were never realised. The elaborate ceremonial and intricate minuteness of the Law tended to become a burden, and to restrict the free play of the spirit. The "machinery" of the Law failed to give a sufficiently strong impulse to pure and single-minded religious endeavour in the satisfaction of man's inextinguishable longings and aspirations after a "perfect society."

To this day Judaism has never been able to free itself from a certain atmosphere of exclusiveness and particularism. To this day many of the Jews believe that they stand in a special and peculiar relation to God, that they are his chosen people—a particularism which Jesus and Paul set themselves to break down, proclaiming in its place, a universalism in which all men, Jew or Gentile, Roman or barbarian, bond or free, should be morally equal in the sight of God. But this we shall see more clearly in our next series of discourses.

On all these points then—religious ceremonial, the deepening and widening of moral obligations, and the conception of the Supreme—we see that the Bible, rightly interpreted, strengthens and enforces the modern scientific conception of evolution, of progress from simple to complex, from lower to higher stages of life and society. What is the lesson for us? It is surely this—that we cannot limit our minds to man-made definitions and conceptions of God suited to one particular age, or stage of development; we cannot rest in final conceptions of the Good. Always there is something that would draw us higher, towards a purer air.

"To insight profounder
Man's spirit must dive,
His aye-rolling orbit
No goal will arrive;

The heavens that now draw him
With sweetness untold,
Once found,—for new heavens
He spurneth the old."

Hence, we come once more to the point at which we started when we began this series of discourses—that our life, at either end, is shrouded in mystery, but it is mystery which, like mountain tops hidden in cloud, are seen to be full of hitherto unrevealed possibilities the moment the sunlight touches them. And here, on the plains, between these boundary lines of mystery, how much is there of beauty and of good which we need to assimilate and weave into our souls, if only that we may be prepared for the sunlit heights that are to come, when, from out this bourne of Time and Place we are "called again home!" Two things only do we need to bear in mind in this our pilgrimage toward the heights. First, the worth and dignity of our individual life, and the use we may make of it. Second, that this worth and dignity of our individual life is indissolubly bound up with, and dependent upon, the common life of which we form a part. We are members one of another. No man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself. Hence, to cut ourselves aloof from this common life and thought, and live in selfish isolation from it, or to look upon it merely as a field for personal or family aggrandisement, is to court moral blindness and spiritual atrophy. Even in this one religion of

Judaism and this one literature of the Old Testament, we see how many streams of thought mingle, and how each religion is helped by the life and thought of others. Assyrian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Persian, and Greek thought, mingle with Jewish, and bring their contributions to the development of the human spirit. So, too, as we shall see, was it during the Christian era. So, too, in the times that are to come—we must be willing to welcome every contribution, from whatever source, which will enable us to enrich our moral, our intellectual, and our religious being, and to mould aright the fabric of our social and political life, content to know that the great scheme goes onward, and that we are responsible fellow-workers in the infinite activities of the Universe. Our moral progress will depend upon the insight we gain into the nature of these activities. For the rest —that this or that scheme may fail and bring disappointment to our hearts—let us be patient, believing that these tremendous spiritual forces of the Universe are in right hands—the hands of Righteousness. We shall arrive in time

"If we stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time; we press God's lamp
Close to our breast; its splendour, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom: we shall emerge one day."

THE END.

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