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THE EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE

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AUTHORIZED EDITION, COMPLETE
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BOUND IN TWENTY-FIVE VOLUMES

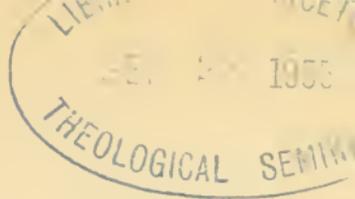
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1903



THE BOOK
OF
THE TWELVE PROPHETS
COMMONLY CALLED THE MINOR

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.—AMOS, HOSEA AND MICAH
*WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND A SKETCH OF PROPHECY
IN EARLY ISRAEL*

NEW YORK
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TO
HENRY DRUMMOND

P R E F A C E

THE Prophets, to whom this and a following volume are dedicated, have, to our loss, been haunted for centuries by a peddling and an ambiguous title. Their Twelve Books are in size smaller than those of the great Three which precede them, and doubtless none of their chapters soar so high as the brilliant summits to which we are swept by Isaiah and the Prophet of the Exile. But in every other respect they are undeserving of the niggardly name of "Minor." Two of them, Amos and Hosea, were the first of all prophecy—rising cliff-like, with a sheer and magnificent originality, to a height and a mass sufficient to set after them the trend and slope of the whole prophetic range. The Twelve together cover the extent of that range, and illustrate the development of prophecy at almost every stage from the eighth century to the fourth. Yet even more than in the case of Isaiah or Jeremiah, the Church has been content to use a passage here and a passage there, leaving the rest of the books to absolute neglect or the almost equal oblivion of routine-reading. Among the causes of this disuse have been the more than usually corrupt state

of the text; the consequent disorder and in parts unintelligibleness of all the versions; the ignorance of the various historical circumstances out of which the books arose; the absence of successful efforts to determine the periods and strophes, the dramatic dialogues (with the names of the speakers), the lyric effusions and the passages of argument, of all of which the books are composed.

The following exposition is an attempt to assist the bettering of all this. As the Twelve Prophets illustrate among them the whole history of written prophecy, I have thought it useful to prefix a historical sketch of the Prophet in early Israel, or as far as the appearance of Amos. The Twelve are then taken in chronological order. Under each of them a chapter is given of historical and critical introduction to his book; then some account of the prophet himself as a man and a seer; then a complete translation of the various prophecies handed down under his name, with textual footnotes, and an exposition and application to the present day in harmony with the aim of the series to which these volumes belong; finally, a discussion of the main doctrines the prophet has taught, if it has not been found possible to deal with these in the course of the exposition.

An exact critical study of the Twelve Prophets is rendered necessary by the state of the entire text. The present volume is based on a thorough examination of this in the light of the ancient versions and of

modern criticism. The emendations which I have proposed are few and insignificant, but I have examined and discussed in footnotes all that have been suggested, and in many cases my translation will be found to differ widely from that of the Revised Version. To questions of integrity and authenticity more space is devoted than may seem to many to be necessary. But it is certain that the criticism of the prophetic books has now entered on a period of the same analysis and discrimination which is almost exhausted in the case of the Pentateuch. Some hints were given of this in a previous volume on Isaiah, chapters xl.—lxvi., which are evidently a composite work. Among the books now before us, the same fact has long been clear in the case of Obadiah and Zechariah, and also since Ewald's time with regard to Micah. But Duhm's *Theology of the Prophets*, which appeared in 1875, suggested interpolations in Amos. Wellhausen (in 1873) and Stade (from 1883 onwards) carried the discussion further both on those, and others, of the Twelve; while a recent work by Andrée on Haggai proves that many similar questions may still be raised and have to be debated. The general fact must be admitted that hardly one book has escaped later additions—additions of an entirely justifiable nature, which supplement the point of view of a single prophet with the richer experience or the riper hopes of a later day, and thus afford to ourselves a more catholic presentment of the doctrines of prophecy and the Divine purposes for mankind. This general fact, I say, must be admitted. But the

questions of detail are still in process of solution. It is obvious that settled results can be reached (as to some extent they have been already reached in the criticism of the Pentateuch) only after years of research and debate by all schools of critics. Meantime it is the duty of each of us to offer his own conclusions, with regard to every separate passage, on the understanding that, however final they may at present seem to him, the end is not yet. In previous criticism the defects, of which work in the same field has made me aware, are four: 1. A too rigid belief in the exact parallelism and symmetry of the prophetic style, which I feel has led, for instance, Wellhausen, to whom we otherwise owe so much on the Twelve Prophets, into many unnecessary emendations of the text, or, where some amendment is necessary, to absolutely unprovable changes. 2. In passages between which no connection exists, the forgetfulness of the principle that this fact may often be explained as justly by the hypothesis of the omission of some words, as by the favourite theory of the later intrusion of portions of the extant text. 3. Forgetfulness of the possibility, which in some cases amounts almost to certainty, of the incorporation, among the authentic words of a prophet, of passages of earlier as well as of later date. And, 4, depreciation of the spiritual insight and foresight of pre-exilic writers. These, I am persuaded, are defects in previous criticism of the prophets. Probably my own criticism will reveal many more. In the beginnings of such analysis as we are

engaged on, we must be prepared for not a little arbitrariness and want of proportion ; these are often necessary for insight and fresh points of view, but they are as easily eliminated by the progress of discussion.

All criticism however, is preliminary to the real work which the immortal prophets demand from scholars and preachers in our age. In a review of a previous volume, I was blamed for applying a prophecy of Isaiah to a problem of our own day. This was called "prostituting prophecy." *The* prostitution of the prophets is their confinement to academic uses. One cannot conceive an ending, at once more pathetic and more ridiculous, to those great streams of living water, than to allow them to run out in the sands of criticism and exegesis, however golden these sands may be. The prophets spoke for a practical purpose ; they aimed at the hearts of men ; and everything that scholarship can do for their writings has surely for its final aim the illustration of their witness to the ways of God with men, and its application to living questions and duties and hopes. Besides, therefore, seeking to tell the story of that wonderful stage in the history of the human spirit—surely next in wonder to the story of Christ Himself—I have not feared at every suitable point to apply its truths to our lives to-day. The civilisation in which prophecy flourished was in its essentials marvellously like our own. To mark **only** one point, the rise of prophecy

in Israel came fast upon the passage of the nation from an agricultural to a commercial basis of society, and upon the appearance of the very thing which gives its name to civilisation—city-life, with its unchanging sins, problems and ideals.

A recent Dutch critic, whose exact scholarship is known to all readers of Stade's *Journal of Old Testament Science*, has said of Amos and Hosea: "These prophecies have a word of God, as for all times, so also especially for our own. Before all it is relevant to 'the social question' of our day, to the relation of religion and morality. . . . Often it has been hard for me to refrain from expressly pointing out the agreement between Then and To-day."¹ This feeling will be shared by all students of prophecy whose minds and consciences are quick; and I welcome the liberal plan of the series in which this volume appears, because, while giving room for the adequate discussion of critical and historical questions, its chief design is to show the eternal validity of the Books of the Bible as the Word of God, and their meaning for ourselves to-day.

Previous works on the Minor Prophets are almost innumerable. Those to which I owe most will be found indicated in the footnotes. The translation has been executed upon the purpose, not to sacrifice the

¹ J. J. P. Valeton, jun., *Amos en Hosea*, 1894: quoted by Budde in the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, September, 1894.

literal meaning or exact emphasis of the original to the frequent possibility of greater elegance. It reproduces every word, with the occasional exception of a copula. With some hesitation I have retained the traditional spelling of the Divine Name, Jehovah, instead of the more correct Jahve or Yahweh; but where the rhythm of certain familiar passages was disturbed by it, I have followed the English versions and written LORD. The reader will keep in mind that a line may be destroyed by substituting our pronunciation of proper names for the more musical accents of the original. Thus, for instance, we obliterate the music of "Isra'el" by making it two syllables and putting the accent on the first: it has three syllables with the accent on the last. We crush Yerushalayim into Jerusale[m]; we shred off Asshur into Assyria, and dub Misraim Egypt. Hebrew has too few of the combinations which sound most musical to our ears, to afford the suppression of any one of them.

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INTRODUCTION

Καὶ τῶν ἰβ' προφητῶν τὰ ὀστᾶ
ἀναθάλοι ἐκ τοῦ τόπου αὐτῶν,
Παρεκάλεσαν δὲ τὸν Ἰακώβ
καὶ ἐλυτρώσαντο αὐτοὺς ἐν πίστει ἐλπίδες.

*And of the Twelve Prophets may the bones
Flourish again from their place,
For they comforted Jacob*

And redeemed them by the assurance of hope.

ECCLESIASTICUS xlix. 10.

CHAPTER I

THE BOOK OF THE TWELVE

IN the order of our English Bible the Minor Prophets, as they are usually called, form the last twelve books of the Old Testament. They are immediately preceded by Daniel, and before him by the three Major Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah (with Lamentations) and Ezekiel. Why all sixteen were thus gathered at the end of the other sacred books, we do not know: Perhaps, because it was held fitting that prophecy should occupy the last outposts of the Old Testament towards the New.

In the Hebrew Bible, however, the order differs, and is much more significant. The Prophets¹ form the second division of the threefold Canon: Law, Prophets and Writings; and Daniel is not among them. The Minor follow immediately after Ezekiel. Moreover, they are not twelve books, but one. They are gathered under the common title *Book of the Twelve*;² and although each of them has the usual colophon detailing the number of its own verses, there is also

¹ Including, of course, the historical books, Joshua to 2 Kings, which were known as "the Former Prophets"; while what we call the prophets Isaiah to Malachi were known as "the Latter."

² ספר תרי עשר, the Aramaic form of the Hebrew שנים עשר, which appears with the other in the colophon to the book. A later contraction is תריסר. This is the form transliterated in Epiphanius: *δαθριασαρα*.

one colophon for all the twelve, placed at the end of Malachi and reckoning the sum of their verses from the first of Hosea onwards. This unity, which there is reason to suppose was given to them before their reception into the Canon,¹ they have never since lost. However much their place has changed in the order of the books of the Old Testament, however much their own internal arrangement has differed, the Twelve have always stood together. There has been every temptation to scatter them because of their various dates. Yet they never have been scattered; and in spite of the fact that they have not preserved their common title in any Bible outside the Hebrew, that title has lived on in literature and common talk. Thus the Greek canon omits it; but Greek Jews and Christians always counted the books as one volume,² calling them "The Twelve Prophets," or "The Twelve-Prophet" Book.³ It was the Latins who designated them "The Minor Prophets": "on account of their brevity as compared with those who are called the Major because of their ampler volumes."⁴ And this name has passed into most modern languages,⁵ including our own. But

¹ See Ryle, *Canon of the O.T.*, p. 105.

² So Josephus, *Contra Apion*, i. 8 (circa 90 A.D.), reckons the prophetic books as thirteen, of which the Minor Prophets could only have been counted as one—whatever the other twelve may have been. Melito of Sardis (c. 170), quoted by Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.*, iv. 26), speaks of τῶν δώδεκα ἐν μονοβίβλῳ. To Origen (c. 250: apud *Ibid.*, vi. 25) they could only have been one out of the twenty-two he gives for the O.T. Cf. Jerome (*Prolog. Galcatus*), "Liber duodecim Prophetarum."

³ Οἱ Δώδεκα Προφῆται: Jesus son of Sirach xlix. 10; Τὸ δώδεκα-κρόφητον.

⁴ Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, xviii. 29: cf. Jerome, *Proem. in Esaiam*.

⁵ The German usage generally preserves the numeral, "Die zwölf kleinen Propheten."

surely it is better to revert to the original, canonical and unambiguous title of "The Twelve."

The collection and arrangement of "The Twelve" are matters of obscurity, from which, however, three or four facts emerge that are tolerably certain. The inseparableness of the books is a proof of the ancient date of their union. They must have been put together before they were received into the Canon. The Canon of the Prophets—Joshua to Second Kings and Isaiah to Malachi—was closed by 200 B.C. at the latest, and perhaps as early as 250; but if we have (as seems probable) portions of "The Twelve,"¹ which must be assigned to a little later than 300, this may be held to prove that the whole collection cannot have long preceded the fixing of the Canon of the Prophets. On the other hand, the fact that these latest pieces have not been placed under a title of their own, but are attached to the Book of Zechariah, is pretty sufficient evidence that they were added after the collection and fixture of twelve books—a round number which there would be every disposition not to disturb. That would give us for the date of the first edition (so to speak) of our Twelve some year before 300; and for the date of the second edition some year towards 250. This is a question, however, which may be reserved for final decision after we have examined the date of the separate books, and especially of Joel and the second half of Zechariah. That there was a previous collection, as early as the Exile, of the books written before then, may be regarded as more than probable. But we have no means of fixing its exact limits. Why the Twelve were all ultimately put together is reasonably suggested by

¹ See Vol. II. on Zech. ix. ff.

Jewish writers. They are small, and, as separate rolls, might have been lost.¹ It is possible that the desire of the round number twelve is responsible for the admission of Jonah, a book very different in form from all the others; just as we have hinted that the fact of there being already twelve may account for the attachment of the late fragments to the Book of Zechariah. But all this is only to guess, where we have no means of certain knowledge.

“The Book of the Twelve” has not always held the place which it now occupies in the Hebrew Canon, at the end of the Prophets. The rabbis taught that Hosea, but for the comparative smallness of his prophecy, should have stood first of all the writing prophets, of whom they regarded him as the oldest.² And doubtless it was for the same chronological reasons, that early Christian catalogues of the Scriptures, and various editions of the Septuagint, placed the whole of “The Twelve” in front of Isaiah.³

The internal arrangement of “The Twelve” in our English Bible is the same as that of the Hebrew Canon, and was probably determined by what the compilers thought to be the respective ages of the books. Thus, first we have six, all supposed to be of the earlier Assyrian period, before 700—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah; then three from the late Assyrian and the Babylonian periods—Nahum, Habbakuk and Zephaniah; and then three from the

¹ *Talmud*: Baba Bathra, 14a: cf. Rashi's Commentary.

² *Talmud*, *ibid.*

³ So the Codices Vaticanus and Alexandrinus, but not Cod. Sin. So also Cyril of Jerusalem († 386), Athanasius (365), Gregory Naz. († 390), and the spurious Canon of the Council of Laodicea (c. 400) and Epiphanius (403). See Ryle, *Canon of the O.T.*, 215 ff.

Persian period after the Exile—Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. The Septuagint have altered the order of the first six, arranging Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel and Obadiah according to their size, and setting Jonah after them, probably because of his different form. The remaining six are left as in the Hebrew.

Recent criticism, however, has made it clear that the Biblical order of "The Twelve Prophets" is no more than a very rough approximation to the order of their real dates; and, as it is obviously best for us to follow in their historical succession prophecies, which illustrate the whole history of prophecy from its rise with Amos to its fall with Malachi and his successors, I propose to do this. Detailed proofs of the separate dates must be left to each book. All that is needful here is a general statement of the order.

Of the first six prophets the dates of Amos, Hosea, and Micah (but of the latter's book in part only) are certain. The Jews have been able to defend Hosea's priority only on fanciful grounds.¹ Whether or not he quotes from Amos, his historical allusions are more recent. With the exception of a few fragments incorporated by later authors, the Book of Amos is thus the earliest example of prophetic literature, and we take it first. The date we shall see is about 755. Hosea begins five or ten years later, and Micah just before 722. The three are in every respect—originality, comprehensiveness, influence upon other prophets—the greatest of our Twelve, and will therefore be treated with most detail, occupying the whole of the first volume.

The rest of the first six are Obadiah, Joel and Jonah.

¹ By a forced interpretation of the phrase in chap. i. 2, *When the Lord spake at the first by Hosea* (R.V.), *Talmud: Baba Bathra*, 14a.

But the Book of Obadiah, although it opens with an early oracle against Edom, is in its present form from after the Exile. The Book of Joel is of uncertain date, but, as we shall see, the great probability is that it is late; and the Book of Jonah belongs to a form of literature so different from the others that we may, most conveniently, treat of it last.

This leaves us to follow Micah, at the end of the eighth century, with the group Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk from the second half of the seventh century; and finally to take in their order the post-exilic Haggai, Zechariah i.—ix., Malachi, and the other writings which we feel obliged to place about or even after that date.

One other word is needful. This assignment of the various books to different dates is not to be held as implying that the whole of a book belongs to such a date or to the author whose name it bears. We shall find that hands have been busy with the texts of the books long after the authors of these must have passed away; that besides early fragments incorporated by later writers, prophets of Israel's new dawn mitigated the judgments and lightened the gloom of the watchmen of her night; that here and there are passages which are evidently intrusions, both because they interrupt the argument and because they reflect a much later historical environment than their context. This, of course, will require discussion in each case, and such discussion will be given. The text will be subjected to an independent examination. Some passages hitherto questioned we may find to be unjustly so; others not hitherto questioned we may see reason to suspect. But in any case we shall keep in mind, that the results of an independent inquiry are uncertain; and that in this new criticism of the prophets, which

is comparatively recent, we cannot hope to arrive for some time at so general a consensus, as is being rapidly reached in the far older and more elaborated criticism of the Pentateuch.¹

Such is the extent and order of the journey which lies before us. If it is not to the very summits of Israel's outlook that we climb—Isaiah, Jeremiah and the great Prophet of the Exile—we are yet to traverse the range of prophecy from beginning to end. We start with its first abrupt elevations in Amos. We are carried by the side of Isaiah and Jeremiah, yet at a lower altitude, on to the Exile. With the returned Israel we pursue an almost immediate rise to vision, and then by Malachi and others are conveyed down dwindling slopes to the very end. Beyond the land is flat. Though Psalms are sung and brave deeds done, and faith is strong and bright, there is no height of outlook ; *there is no more any prophet*² in Israel.

But our "Twelve" do more than thus carry us from beginning to end of the Prophetic Period. Of second rank as are most of the heights of this mountain range, they yet bring forth and speed on their way not a few of the streams of living water which have nourished later ages, and are flowing to-day. Impetuous cataracts of righteousness—*let it roll on like water, and justice as an everlasting stream* ; the irrepressible love of God to sinful men ; the perseverance and pursuits of His grace ; His mercies that follow the exile and the outcast ; His truth that goes forth richly upon the

¹ For further considerations on this point see pp. 142, 194, 202 ff., 223 ff., 308, etc.

² Psalm lxxiv. 9.

heathen ; the hope of the Saviour of mankind ; the outpouring of the Spirit ; counsels of patience ; impulses of tenderness and of healing ; melodies innumerable,—all sprang from these lower hills of prophecy, and sprang so strongly that the world hears and feels them still.

And from the heights of our present pilgrimage there are also clear those great visions of the Stars and the Dawn, of the Sea and the Storm, concerning which it is true, that as long as men live they shall seek out the places whence they can be seen, and thank God for His prophets.

CHAPTER II

THE PROPHET IN EARLY ISRAEL

OUR "Twelve Prophets" will carry us, as we have seen, across the whole extent of the Prophetical period—the period when prophecy became literature, assuming the form and rising to the intensity of an imperishable influence on the world. The earliest of the Twelve, Amos and Hosea, were the inaugurators of this period. They were not only the first (so far as we know) to commit prophecy to writing, but we find in them the germs of all its subsequent development. Yet Amos and Hosea were not unfathered. Behind them lay an older dispensation, and their own was partly a product of this, and partly a revolt against it. Amos says of himself: *The Lord hath spoken, who can but prophesy?*—but again: *No prophet I, nor prophet's son!* Who were those earlier prophets, whose office Amos assumed while repudiating their spirit—whose name he abjured, yet could not escape from it? And, while we are about the matter, what do we mean by "prophet" in general?

In vulgar use the name "prophet" has degenerated to the meaning of "one who foretells the future." Of this meaning it is, perhaps, the first duty of every student of prophecy earnestly and stubbornly to rid himself. In its native Greek tongue "prophet" meant

not "one who speaks before," but "one who speaks for, or on behalf of, another." At the Delphic oracle "The Prophētēs" was the title of the official, who received the utterances of the frenzied Pythoness and expounded them to the people;¹ but Plato says that this is a misuse of the word, and that the true prophet is the inspired person himself, he who is in communication with the Deity and who speaks directly for the Deity.² So Tiresias, the seer, is called by Pindar the "prophet" or "interpreter of Zeus,"³ and Plato even styles poets "the prophets of the Muses."⁴ It is in this sense that we must think of the "prophet" of the Old Testament. He is a speaker for God. The sharer of God's counsels, as Amos calls him, he becomes the bearer and preacher of God's Word. Prediction of the future is only a part, and

¹ Herodotus, viii. 36, 37.

² *Timæus*, 71, 72. The whole passage is worth transcribing:—

"No man, when in his senses, attains prophetic truth and inspiration; but when he receives the inspired word either his intelligence is enthralled by sleep, or he is demented by some distemper or possession. And he who would understand what he remembers to have been said, whether in dream or when he was awake, by the prophetic and enthusiastic nature, or what he has seen, must recover his senses; and then he will be able to explain rationally what all such words and apparitions mean, and what indications they afford, to this man or that, of past, present, or future, good and evil. But, while he continues demented, he cannot judge of the visions which he sees or the words which he utters; the ancient saying is very true that 'only a man in his senses can act or judge about himself and his own affairs.' And for this reason it is customary to appoint diviners or interpreters as discerners of the oracles of the gods. Some persons call them prophets; they do not know that they are only repeaters of dark sayings and visions, and are not to be called prophets at all, but only interpreters of prophecy."—Jowett's *Translation*.

³ *Nik.*, i 91.

⁴ *Phædrus*, 262 D.

often a subordinate and accidental part, of an office whose full function is to declare the character and the will of God. But the prophet does this in no systematic or abstract form. He brings his revelation point by point, and in connection with some occasion in the history of his people, or some phase of their character. He is not a philosopher nor a theologian with a system of doctrine (at least before Ezekiel), but the messenger and herald of God at some crisis in the life or conduct of His people. His message is never out of touch with events. These form either the subject-matter or the proof or the execution of every oracle he utters. It is, therefore, God not merely as Truth, but far more as Providence, whom the prophet reveals. And although that Providence includes the full destiny of Israel and mankind, the prophet brings the news of it, for the most part, piece by piece, with reference to some present sin or duty, or some impending crisis or calamity. Yet he does all this, not merely because the word needed for the day has been committed to him by itself, and as if he were only its mechanical vehicle; but because he has come under the overwhelming conviction of God's presence and of His character, a conviction often so strong that God's word breaks through him and God speaks in the first person to the people.

I. FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TILL SAMUEL.

There was no ancient people but believed in the power of certain personages to consult the Deity and to reveal His will. Every man could sacrifice; but not every man could render in return the oracle of God. This pertained to select individuals or orders.

So the prophet seems to have been an older specialist than the priest, though in every tribe he frequently combined the latter's functions with his own.¹

The matters on which ancient man consulted God were as wide as life. But naturally at first, in a rude state of society and at a low stage of mental development, it was in regard to the material defence and necessities of life, the bare law and order, that men almost exclusively sought the Divine will. And the whole history of prophecy is just the effort to substitute for these elementary provisions a more personal standard of the moral law, and more spiritual ideals of the Divine Grace.

By the Semitic race—to which we may now confine ourselves, since Israel belonged to it—Deity was worshipped, in the main, as the god of a tribe. Every Semitic tribe had its own god; it would appear that there was no god without a tribe:² the traces of belief in a supreme and abstract Deity are few and ineffectual. The tribe was the medium by which the god made himself known, and became an effective power on earth: the god was the patron of the tribe, the supreme magistrate and the leader in war. The piety he demanded was little more than loyalty to ritual; the morality he enforced was only a matter of police. He took no cognisance of the character or inner thoughts of the individual. But the tribe believed him to stand

¹ It is still a controversy whether the original meaning of the Semitic root KHN is prophet, as in the Arabic KâHiN, or priest, as in the Hebrew KôHeN.

² Cf. Jer. ii. 10: *For pass over to the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently; and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods?* From the isles of Chittim unto Kedar—the limits of the Semitic world.

in very close connection with all the practical interests of their common life. They asked of him the detection of criminals, the discovery of lost property, the settlement of civil suits, sometimes when the crops should be sown, and always when war should be waged and by what tactics.

The means by which the prophet consulted the Deity on these subjects were for the most part primitive and rude. They may be summed up under two kinds: Visions either through falling into ecstasy or by dreaming in sleep, and Signs or Omens. Both kinds are instanced in Balaam.¹ Of the signs some were natural, like the whisper of trees, the flight of birds, the passage of clouds, the movements of stars. Others were artificial, like the casting or drawing of lots. Others were between these, like the shape assumed by the entrails of the sacrificed animals when thrown on the ground. Again, the prophet was often obliged to do something wonderful in the people's sight, in order to convince them of his authority. In Biblical language he had to work a miracle or give a sign. One instance throws a flood of light on this habitual expectancy of the Semitic mind. There was once an Arab chief, who wished to consult a distant soothsayer as to the guilt of a daughter. But before he would trust the seer to give him the right answer to such a question, he made him discover a grain of corn which he had concealed about his horse.² He required the physical sign before he would accept the moral judgment.

Now, to us the crudeness of the means employed,

¹ Numbers xxiv. 4, *falling but having his eyes open*. Ver. 1, *enchantments* ought to be *omens*.

² Instanced by Wellhausen, *Skizzen u. Vorarb.*, No. v.

the opportunities of fraud, the inadequacy of the tests for spiritual ends, are very obvious. But do not let us, therefore, miss the numerous moral opportunities which lay before the prophet even at that early stage of his evolution. He was trusted to speak in the name of Deity. Through him men believed in God and in the possibility of a revelation. They sought from him the discrimination of evil from good. The highest possibilities of social ministry lay open to him: the tribal existence often hung on his word for peace or war; he was the mouth of justice, the rebuke of evil, the champion of the wronged. Where such opportunities were present, can we imagine the Spirit of God to have been absent—the Spirit Who seeks men more than they seek Him, and as He condescends to use their poor language for religion must also have stooped to the picture language, to the rude instruments, symbols and sacraments, of their early faith?

In an office of such mingled possibilities everything depended—as we shall find it depend to the very end of prophecy—on the moral insight and character of the prophet himself, on his conception of God and whether he was so true to this as to overcome his professional temptations to fraud and avarice, malice towards individuals, subservience to the powerful, or, worst snares of all, the slothfulness and insincerity of routine. We see this moral issue put very clearly in such a story as that of Balaam, or in such a career as that of Mohammed.

So much for the Semitic soothsayer in general. Now let us turn to Israel.

Among the Hebrews the *man of God*,¹ to use

his widest designation, is at first called *Seer*,¹ or *Gazer*,² the word which Balaam uses of himself. In consulting the Divine will he employs the same external means, he offers the people for their evidence the same signs, as do the seers or soothsayers of other Semitic tribes. He gains influence by the miracles, *the wonderful things*, which he does.³ Moses himself is represented after this fashion. He meets the magicians of Egypt on their own level. His use of *rods*; the holding up of his hands that Israel may prevail against Amaleq; Joshua's casting of lots to discover a criminal; Samuel's dream in the sanctuary; his discovery for a fee of the lost asses of Saul; David and the images in his house, the ephod he consulted; the sign to go to battle *what time thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees*; Solomon's inducement of dreams by sleeping in the sanctuary at Gibeah,—these are a few of the many proofs, that early prophecy in Israel employed not only the methods but even much of the furniture of the kindred Semitic religions. But then those tools and methods were at the same time accompanied by the noble opportunities of the prophetic office to which I have just alluded—opportunities of religious and social ministry—and, still more, these opportunities were at the disposal of moral influences which, it is a matter of history, were not found in any other Semitic religion than Israel's. However you will explain it, that Divine Spirit, which we have felt unable to conceive as absent from any Semitic prophet who truly sought after God, that Light which lighteth every man who cometh into the world, was present

¹ רֹאֵה² קֹזֵר

³ Deut. xiii. 1 ff. admits that heathen seers were able to work miracles and give signs, as well as the prophets of Jehovah.

to an unparalleled degree with the early prophets of Israel. He came to individuals, and to the nation as a whole, in events and in influences which may be summed up as the impression of the character of their national God, Jehovah: to use Biblical language, as *Jehovah's spirit and power*. It is true that in many ways the Jehovah of early Israel reminds us of other Semitic deities. Like some of them He appears with thunder and lightning; like all of them He is the God of one tribe who are His peculiar people. He bears the same titles—Melek, Adon, Baal (*King, Lord, Possessor*). He is propitiated by the same offerings. To choose one striking instance, captives and spoil of war are sacrificed to Him with the same relentlessness, and by a process which has even the same names given to it, as in the votive inscriptions of Israel's heathen neighbours.¹ Yet, notwithstanding all these elements, the religion of Jehovah from the very first evinced, by the confession of all critics, an ethical force shared by no other Semitic creed. From the first there was in it the promise and the potency of that sublime monotheism, which in the period of our "Twelve" it afterwards reached.² Its earliest effects of course were chiefly political: it welded the twelve tribes into the unity of a nation; it preserved them as one amid the many temptations to scatter along those divergent lines of culture and of faith, which the geography of their country placed so attractively before them.³ It taught them to prefer religious loyalty to material advantage, and so inspired them with high motives for self-sacrifice and

¹ Cf. Mesha's account of himself and Chemosh on the Moabite Stone, with the narrative of the taking of Ai in the Book of Joshua.

² Cf. Kuenen: *Gesammelte Abhandlungen* (trans. by Budde), p. 461.

³ So in Deborah's Song.

every other duty of patriotism. But it did even better than thus teach them to bear one another's burdens. It inspired them to care for one another's sins. The last chapters of the Book of Judges prove how strong a national conscience there was in early Israel. Even then Israel was a moral, as well as a political, unity. Gradually there grew up, but still unwritten, a body of Torah, or revealed law, which, though its framework was the common custom of the Semitic race, was inspired by ideals of humanity and justice not elsewhere in that race discernible by us.

When we analyse this ethical distinction of early Israel, this indubitable progress which the nation were making while the rest of their world was morally stagnant, we find it to be due to their impressions of the character of their God. This character did not affect them as Righteousness only. At first it was even a more wonderful Grace. Jehovah had chosen them when they were no people, had redeemed them from servitude, had brought them to their land; had borne with their stubbornness, and had forgiven their infidelities. Such a Character was partly manifest in the great events of their history, and partly communicated itself to their finest personalities—as the Spirit of God does communicate with the spirit of man made in His image. Those personalities were the early prophets from Moses to Samuel. They inspired the nation to believe in God's purposes for itself; they rallied it to war for the common faith, and war was then the pitch of self-sacrifice; they gave justice to it in God's name, and rebuked its sinfulness without sparing. Criticism has proved that we do not know nearly so much about those first prophets, as perhaps we thought we did. But under their God they made Israel. Out of their work grew

the monotheism of their successors, whom we are now to study, and later the Christianity of the New Testament. For myself I cannot but believe, that in the influence of Jehovah which Israel owned in those early times, there was the authentic revelation of a real Being.

2. FROM SAMUEL TO ELISHA.

Of the oldest order of Hebrew prophecy, Samuel was the last representative. Till his time, we are told, the prophet in Israel was known as the Seer,¹ but now, with other tempers and other habits, a new order appears, whose name—and that means to a certain extent their spirit—is to displace the older name and the older spirit.

When Samuel anointed Saul he bade him, for a sign that he was chosen of the Lord, go forth to meet *a company of prophets*—Nebi'im, the singular is Nabi'—coming down from the high place or sanctuary with viols, drums and pipes, and *prophesying*. *There*, he added, *the spirit of Jehovah shall come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man*. So it happened; and the people said one to another, *What is this that is come to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?*² Another story, probably from another source, tells us that later, when Saul sent troops of messengers to the sanctuary at Ramah to take David, they saw *the company of prophets prophesying and Samuel standing appointed over them*,

¹ 1 Sam. ix. 9.

² 1 Sam. x. 1-16, xi. 1-11, 15. Chap. x. 17-27, xi. 12-14, belong to other and later documents. Cf. Robertson Smith, *Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, 135 ff.

*and the spirit of God fell upon one after another of the troops; as upon Saul himself when he followed them up. And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?*¹

All this is very different from the habits of the Seer, who had hitherto represented prophecy. He was solitary, but these went about in bands. They were filled with an infectious enthusiasm, by which they excited each other and all sensitive persons whom they touched. They stirred up this enthusiasm by singing, playing upon instruments, and dancing: its results were frenzy, the tearing of their clothes, and prostration. The same phenomena have appeared in every religion—in Paganism often, and several times within Christianity. They may be watched to-day among the dervishes of Islam, who by singing (as one has seen them in Cairo), by swaying of their bodies, by repeating the Divine Name, and dwelling on the love and ineffable power of God, work themselves into an excitement which ends in prostration and often in insensibility.² The whole process is due to an overpowering sense of the Deity—crude and unintelligent if you will, but sincere and authentic—which seems to haunt the early stages of all religions, and to linger to the end with the stagnant and unprogressive. The appearance of this prophecy in Israel has given rise to a controversy as to whether it was purely a

¹ I Sam. xix. 20-24.

² What seemed most to induce the frenzy of the dervishes whom I watched was the fixing of their attention upon, the yearning of their minds after, the love of God. "Ya habeebi!"—"O my beloved!"—they cried.

native product, or was induced by infection from the Canaanite tribes around. Such questions are of little interest in face of these facts : that the ecstasy sprang up in Israel at a time when the spirit of the people was stirred against the Philistines, and patriotism and religion were equally excited ; that it is represented as due to the Spirit of Jehovah ; and that the last of the old order of Jehovah's prophets recognised its harmony with his own dispensation, presided over it, and gave Israel's first king as one of his signs, that he should come under its power. These things being so, it is surprising that a recent critic¹ should have seen in the dancing prophets nothing but eccentrics into whose company it was shame for so good a man as Saul to fall. He reaches this conclusion only by supposing that the reflexive verb used for their *prophesying*—*hihnabbē'*—had at this time that equivalence to mere madness to which it was reduced by the excesses of later generations of prophets. With Samuel we feel that the word had no reproach : the Nebi'im were recognised by him as standing in the prophetic succession. They sprang up in sympathy with a national movement. The king who joined himself to them was the same who sternly banished from Israel all the baser forms of soothsaying and traffic with the dead. But, indeed, we need no other proof than this : the name Nebi'im so establishes itself in the popular regard that it displaces the older names of Seer and Gazer, and becomes the classical term for the whole body of prophets from Moses to Malachi.

¹ Cornill, in the first of his lectures on *Der Israelitische Prophetismus*, one of the very best popular studies of prophecy, by a master on the subject. See p. 73 n.

There was one very remarkable change effected by this new order of prophets, probably the very greatest relief which prophecy experienced in the course of its evolution. This was separation from the ritual and from the implements of soothsaying. Samuel had been both priest and prophet. But after him the names and the duties were specialised, though the specialising was incomplete. While the new Nebi'im remained in connection with the ancient centres of religion, they do not appear to have exercised any part of the ritual. The priests, on the other hand, did not confine themselves to sacrifice and other forms of public worship, but exercised many of the so-called prophetic functions. They also, as Hosea tells us, were expected to give Tôrôth—revelations of the Divine will on points of conduct and order. There remained with them the ancient forms of oracle—the Ephod, or plated image, the Teraphim, the lot, and the Urim and Thummim,¹ all of these apparently still regarded as indispensable elements of religion.² From such rude forms of ascertaining the Divine Will, prophecy in its new order was absolutely free. And it was free of the ritual of the sanctuaries. As has been justly remarked, the ritual of Israel always remained a peril to the people, the peril of relapsing into Paganism. Not only did it materialise faith and engross affections in the worshipper which were meant for moral objects, but very many of its

¹ It is now past doubt that these were two sacred stones used for decision in the case of an alternative issue. This is plain from the amended reading of Saul's prayer in I Sam. xiv. 41, 42 (after the LXX.): *O Jehovah God of Israel, wherefore hast Thou not answered Thy servant this day? If the iniquity be in me or in Jonathan my son, O Jehovah God of Israel, give Urim: and if it be in Thy people Israel, give, I pray Thee, Thummim.*

² Hosea iii. 4. See next chapter, p. 38.

forms were actually the same as those of the other Semitic religions, and it tempted its devotees to the confusion of their God with the gods of the heathen. Prophecy was now wholly independent of it, and we may see in such independence the possibility of all the subsequent career of prophecy along moral and spiritual lines. Amos absolutely condemns the ritual, and Hosea brings the message from God, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*. This is the distinctive glory of prophecy in that era in which we are to study it. But do not let us forget that it became possible through the ecstatic Nebi'im of Samuel's time, and through their separation from the national ritual and the material forms of soothsaying. It is the way of Providence to prepare for the revelation of great moral truths, by the enfranchisement, sometimes centuries before, of an order or a nation of men from political or professional interests which would have rendered it impossible for their descendants to appreciate those truths without prejudice or compromise.

We may conceive then of these Nebi'im, these prophets, as enthusiasts for Jehovah and for Israel. For Jehovah—if to-day we see men cast by the adoration of the despot-deity of Islam into transports so excessive that they lose all consciousness of earthly things and fall into a trance, can we not imagine a like effect produced on the same sensitive natures of the East by the contemplation of such a God as Jehovah, so mighty in earth and heaven, so faithful to His people, so full of grace? Was not such an ecstasy of worship most likely to be born of the individual's ardent devotion in the hour of the nation's despair?¹ Of course there would be swept up by such a movement all the more

¹ Cf. Deut. xxviii. 34.

volatile and unbalanced minds of the day—as these always have been swept up by any powerful religious excitement—but that is not to discredit the sincerity of the main volume of the feeling nor its authenticity as a work of the Spirit of God, as the impression of the character and power of Jehovah.

But these ecstasies were also enthusiasts for Israel; and this saved the movement from morbidity. They worshipped God neither out of sheer physical sympathy with nature, like the Phœnician devotees of Adonis or the Greek Bacchantes; nor out of terror at the approaching end of all things, like some of the ecstatic sects of the Middle Ages; nor out of a selfish passion for their own salvation, like so many a modern Christian fanatic; but in sympathy with their nation's aspirations for freedom and her whole political life. They were enthusiasts for their people. The ecstatic prophet was not confined to his body nor to nature for the impulses of Deity. Israel was his body, his atmosphere, his universe. Through it all he felt the thrill of Deity. Confine religion to the personal, it grows rancid, morbid. Wed it to patriotism, it lives in the open air and its blood is pure. So in days of national danger the Nebi'im would be inspired like Saul to battle for their country's freedom; in more settled times they would be lifted to the responsibilities of educating the people, counselling the governors, and preserving the national traditions. This is what actually took place. After the critical period of Saul's time has passed, the prophets still remain enthusiasts; but they are enthusiasts for affairs. They counsel and they rebuke David.¹ They warn Rehoboam, and they excite Northern Israel to revolt.² They overthrow and they

¹ 2 Sam. xii. 1 ff.

² 1 Kings xi. 29; xii. 22.

set up dynasties.¹ They offer the king advice on campaigns.² Like Elijah, they take up against the throne the cause of the oppressed;³ like Elisha, they stand by the throne its most trusted counsellors in peace and war.⁴ That all this is no new order of prophecy in Israel, but the developed form of the ecstasy of Samuel's day, is plain from the continuance of the name Nebi'im and from these two facts besides: that the ecstasy survives and that the prophets still live in communities. The greatest figures of the period, Elijah and Elisha, have upon them *the hand of the Lord*, as the influence is now called: Elijah when he runs before Ahab's chariot across Esdraelon, Elisha when by music he induces upon himself the prophetic mood.⁵ Another ecstatic figure is the prophet who was sent to anoint Jehu; he swept in and he swept out again, and the soldiers called him *that mad fellow*.⁶ But the roving bands had settled down into more or less stationary communities, who partly lived by agriculture and partly by the alms of the people or the endowments of the crown.⁷ Their centres were either the centres of national worship, like Bethel and Gilgal, or the centres of government, like Samaria, where the dynasty of Omri supported prophets both of Baal and of Jehovah.⁸ They were called prophets, but also *sons of the prophets*, the latter name not because their office was hereditary, but

¹ 1 Kings xiv. 2, 7-11; xix. 15 f.; 2 Kings ix. 3 ff.

² 1 Kings xxii. 5 ff.; 2 Kings iii. 11 ff.

³ 1 Kings xxi. 1 ff.

⁴ 2 Kings vi.—viii., etc.

⁵ 1 Kings xviii. 46; 2 Kings iii. 15.

⁶ 2 Kings ix. 11. *Mad fellow*, not necessarily a term of reproach.

⁷ 1 Kings xviii. 4, cf. 19; 2 Kings ii. 3, 5; iv. 38-44; v. 20 ff.; vi 1 ff.; viii. 8 f., etc.

⁸ 1 Kings xviii. 19; xxii. 6.

by the Oriental fashion of designating every member of a guild as the son of the guild. In many cases the son may have succeeded his father ; but the ranks could be recruited from outside, as we see in the case of the young farmer Elisha, whom Elijah anointed at the plough. They probably all wore the mantle which is distinctive of some of them, the mantle of hair, or skin of a beast.¹

The risks of degeneration, to which this order of prophecy was liable, arose both from its ecstatic temper and from its connection with public affairs.

Religious ecstasy is always dangerous to the moral and intellectual interests of religion. The largest prophetic figures of the period, though they feel the ecstasy, attain their greatness by rising superior to it. Elijah's raptures are impressive ; but nobler are his defence of Naboth and his denunciation of Ahab. And so Elisha's inducement of the prophetic mood by music is the least attractive element in his career : his greatness lies in his combination of the care of souls with political insight and vigilance for the national interests. Doubtless there were many of the sons of the prophets who with smaller abilities cultivated a religion as rational and moral. But for the herd ecstasy would be everything. It was so easily induced or imitated that much of it cannot have been genuine. Even where the feeling was at first sincere we can understand how readily it became morbid ; how fatally it might fall into sympathy with that drunkenness from wine and that sexual passion which Israel saw already cultivated as worship by the surrounding Canaanites. We must feel these dangers of ecstasy if we would

¹ So Elijah, 2 Kings i. 8 : cf. John the Baptist, Matt. iii. 4.

understand why Amos cut himself off from the Nebi'im, and why Hosea laid such emphasis on the moral and intellectual sides of religion: *My people perish for lack of knowledge*. Hosea indeed considered the degeneracy of ecstasy as a judgment: *the prophet is a fool, the man of the spirit is mad—for the multitude of thine iniquity*.¹ A later age derided the ecstasies, and took one of the forms of the verb *to prophesy* as equivalent to the verb *to be mad*.²

But temptations as gross beset the prophet from that which should have been the discipline of his ecstasy—his connection with public affairs. Only some prophets were brave rebukers of the king and the people. The herd which fed at the royal table—four hundred under Ahab—were flatterers, who could not tell the truth, who said Peace, peace, when there was no peace. These were false prophets. Yet it is curious that the very early narrative which describes them³ does not impute their falsehood to any base motives of their own, but to the direct inspiration of God, who sent forth a lying spirit upon them. So great was the reverence still for the *man of the spirit*! Rather than doubt his inspiration, they held his very lies to be inspired. One does not of course mean that these consenting prophets were conscious liars; but that their dependence on the king, their servile habits of speech, disabled them from seeing the truth. Subserviency to the powerful was their great temptation. In the story of Balaam we see confessed the base instinct that he who paid the pro-

¹ Hosea ix. 7.

² Jer. xxix. 26: *Every man that is mad, and worketh himself into prophecy* (נִתְנַבֵּא, the same form as is used without moral reproach in 1 Sam. x. 10 ff.).

³ 1 Kings xxii.

phet should have the word of the prophet in his favour. In Israel prophecy went through exactly the same struggle between the claims of its God and the claims of its patrons. Nor were those patrons always the rich. The bulk of the prophets were dependent on the charitable gifts of the common people, and in this we may find reason for that subjection of so many of them to the vulgar ideals of the national destiny, to signs of which we are pointed by Amos. The priest at Bethel only reflects public opinion when he takes for granted that the prophet is a thoroughly mercenary character: *Seer, get thee gone to the land of Judah; eat there thy bread, and play the prophet there!*¹ No wonder Amos separates himself from such hireling craftsmen!

Such was the course of prophecy up to Elisha, and the borders of the eighth century. We have seen how even for the ancient prophet, mere soothsayer though we might regard him in respect of the rude instruments of his office, there were present moral opportunities of the highest kind, from which, if he only proved true to them, we cannot conceive the Spirit of God to have been absent. In early Israel we are sure that the Spirit did meet such strong and pure characters, from Moses to Samuel, creating by their means the nation of Israel, welding it to a unity, which was not only political but moral—and moral to a degree not elsewhere realised in the Semitic world. We saw how a new race of prophets arose under Samuel, separate from the older forms of prophecy by lot and oracle, separate, too, from the ritual as a whole; and therefore free for a moral

¹ Amos vii. 12.

and spiritual advance of which the priesthood, still bound to images and the ancient rites, proved themselves incapable. But this new order of prophecy, besides its moral opportunities, had also its moral perils: its ecstasy was dangerous, its connection with public affairs was dangerous too. Again, the test was the personal character of the prophet himself. And so once more we see raised above the herd great personalities, who carry forward the work of their predecessors. The results are, besides the discipline of the monarchy and the defence of justice and the poor, the firm establishment of Jehovah as the one and only God of Israel, and the impression on Israel both of His omnipotent guidance of them in the past, and of a worldwide destiny, still vague but brilliant, which He had prepared for them in the future.

This brings us to Elisha, and from Elisha there are but forty years to Amos. During those forty years, however, there arose within Israel a new civilisation; beyond her there opened up a new world; and with Assyria there entered the resources of Providence, a new power. It was these three facts—the New Civilisation, the New World and the New Power—which made the difference between Elisha and Amos, and raised prophecy from a national to a universal religion.

CHAPTER III

THE EIGHTH CENTURY IN ISRAEL

THE long life of Elisha fell to its rest on the margin of the eighth century.¹ He had seen much evil upon Israel. The people were smitten in all their coasts. None of their territory across Jordan was left to them; and not only Hazael and his Syrians, but bands of their own former subjects, the Moabites, periodically raided Western Palestine, up to the very gates of Samaria.² Such a state of affairs determined the activity of the last of the older prophets. Elisha spent his life in the duties of the national defence, and in keeping alive the spirit of Israel against her foes. When he died they called him *Israel's chariot and the horsemen thereof*,³ so incessant had been both his military vigilance⁴ and his political insight.⁵ But Elisha was able to leave behind him the promise of a new day of victory.⁶ It was in the peace and liberty of this day that Israel rose a step in civilisation; that prophecy, released from the defence, became the criticism, of the national life; and that the people, no longer absorbed in their own borders, looked out, and

¹ He died in 798 or 797.

² 2 Kings x. 32, xiii. 20, 22.

³ 2 Kings xiii. 14.

⁴ vi. 12 ff., etc.

⁵ viii., etc.

⁶ xiii. 17 ff.

for the first time realised the great world, of which they were only a part.

King Joash, whose arms the dying Elisha had blessed, won back in the sixteen years of his reign (798—783) the cities which the Syrians had taken from his father.¹ His successor, Jeroboam II., came in, therefore, with a flowing tide. He was a strong man, and he took advantage of it. During his long reign of about forty years (783—743) he restored the border of Israel from the Pass of Hamath between the Lebanons to the Dead Sea, and occupied at least part of the territory of Damascus.² This means that the constant raids to which Israel had been subjected now ceased, and that by the time of Amos, about 755, a generation was grown up who had not known defeat, and the most of whom had perhaps no experience even of war.

Along the same length of years Uzziah (*circa* 778—740) had dealt similarly with Judah.³ He had pushed south to the Red Sea, while Jeroboam pushed north to Hamath; and while Jeroboam had taken the Syrian towns he had crushed the Philistine. He had reorganised the army, and invented new engines of siege for casting stones. On such of his frontiers as were opposed to the desert he had built towers: there is no better means of keeping the nomads in subjection.

All this meant such security across broad Israel as had not been known since the glorious days of Solomon. Agriculture must everywhere have revived: Uzziah, the Chronicler tells us, *loved husbandry*. But we hear most of Trade and Building. With quarters in Damascus and a port on the Red Sea, with allies

¹ 2 Kings xiii. 22-25.

² xiv. 28, if not Damascus itself.

³ Kings xv. : cf. 2 Chron. xxvi.

in the Phœnician towns and tributaries in the Philistine, with command of all the main routes between Egypt and the North as between the Desert and the Levant, Israel, during those forty years of Jeroboam and Uzziah, must have become a busy and a wealthy commercial power. Hosea calls the Northern Kingdom a very Canaan¹—Canaanite being the Hebrew term for trader—as we should say a very Jew; and Amos exposes all the restlessness, the greed, and the indifference to the poor of a community making haste to be rich. The first effect of this was a large increase of the towns and of town-life. Every document of the time—up to 720—speaks to us of its buildings.² In ordinary building houses of ashlar seem to be novel enough to be mentioned. Vast *palaces*—the name of them first heard of in Israel under Omri and his Phœnician alliance, and then only as that of the king's citadel³—are now built by wealthy grandees out of money extorted from the poor; they can have risen only since the Syrian wars. There are summer houses in addition to winter houses; and it is not only the king, as in the days of Ahab, who furnishes his buildings with ivory. When an earthquake comes and whole cities are overthrown, the vigour and wealth of the people are such that they build more strongly and lavishly than before.⁴ With all this we have the characteristic tempers and moods

¹ xii. 7 (Heb. ver. 8). Trans., *As for Canaan, the balances, etc.*

² Amos, *passim*. Hosea viii. 14, etc.; Micah iii. 12; Isa. ix. 10.

³ אַרְמוֹן, a word not found in the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, or Samuel, is used in 1 Kings xvi. 18, 2 Kings xv. 25, for a citadel within the palace of the king. Similarly in Isa. xxv. 2; Pro. xviii 19. But in Amos generally of any large or grand house. That the name first appears in the time of Omri's alliance with Tyre, points to a Phœnician origin. Probably from root אַרַם, *to be high*.

Isa. ix. 10.

of city-life : the fickleness and liability to panic which are possible only where men are gathered in crowds ; the luxury and false art which are engendered only by artificial conditions of life ; the deep poverty which in all cities, from the beginning to the end of time, lurks by the side of the most brilliant wealth, its dark and inevitable shadow.

In short, in the half-century between Elisha and Amos, Israel rose from one to another of the great stages of culture. Till the eighth century they had been but a kingdom of fighting husbandmen. Under Jeroboam and Uzziah city-life was developed, and civilisation, in the proper sense of the word, appeared. Only once before had Israel taken so large a step : when they crossed Jordan, leaving the nomadic life for the agricultural ; and that had been momentous for their religion. They came among new temptations : the use of wine, and the shrines of local gods who were believed to have more influence on the fertility of the land than Jehovah who had conquered it for His people. But now this further step, from the agricultural stage to the mercantile and civil, was equally fraught with danger. There was the closer intercourse with foreign nations and their cults. There were all the temptations of rapid wealth, all the dangers of an equally increasing poverty. The growth of comfort among the rulers meant the growth of thoughtlessness. Cruelty multiplied with refinement. The upper classes were lifted away from feeling the real woes of the people. There was a well-fed and sanguine patriotism, but at the expense of indifference to social sin and want. Religious zeal and liberality increased, but they were coupled with all the proud's misunderstanding of God : an optimist faith without moral insight or sympathy.

It is all this which makes the prophets of the eighth century so modern, while Elisha's life is still so ancient. With him we are back in the times of our own border wars—of Wallace and Bruce, with their struggles for the freedom of the soil. With Amos we stand among the conditions of our own day. The City has arisen. For the development of the highest form of prophecy, the universal and permanent form, there was needed that marvellously unchanging mould of human life, whose needs and sorrows, whose sins and problems, are to-day the same as they were all those thousands of years ago.

With Civilisation came Literature. The long peace gave leisure for writing; and the just pride of the people in boundaries broad as Solomon's own, determined that this writing should take the form of heroic history. In the parallel reigns of Jeroboam and Uzziah many critics have placed the great epics of Israel: the earlier documents of our Pentateuch which trace God's purposes to mankind by Israel, from the creation of the world to the settlement of the Promised Land; the histories which make up our Books of Judges, Samuel and Kings. But whether all these were composed now or at an earlier date, it is certain that the nation lived in the spirit of them, proud of its past, aware of its vocation, and confident that its God, who had created the world and so mightily led itself, would bring it from victory by victory to a complete triumph over the heathen. Israel of the eighth century were devoted to Jehovah; and although passion or self-interest might lead individuals or even communities to worship other gods, He had no possible rival upon the throne of the nation.

As they delighted to recount His deeds by their

fathers, so they thronged the scenes of these with sacrifice and festival. Bethel and Beersheba, Dan and Gilgal, were the principal ;¹ but Mizpeh, the top of Tabor,² and Carmel,³ perhaps Penuel,⁴ were also conspicuous among the countless *high places*⁵ of the land. Of those in Northern Israel Bethel was the chief. It enjoyed the proper site for an ancient shrine, which was nearly always a market as well—near a frontier and where many roads converged ; where traders from the East could meet half-way with traders from the West, the wool-growers of Moab and the Judæan desert with the merchants of Phœnicia and the Philistine coast. Here, on the spot on which the father of the nation had seen heaven open,⁶ a great temple was now built, with a priesthood endowed and directed by the crown,⁷ but lavishly supported also by the tithes and free-will offerings of the people.⁸ *It is a sanctuary of the king and a house of the kingdom.*⁹ Jeroboam had ordained Dan, at the other end of the kingdom, to be the fellow of Bethel ;¹⁰ but Dan was far away from the bulk of the people, and in the eighth century Bethel's real rival

¹ 1 Kings xii. 25 ff., and Amos and Hosea *passim*.

² Hosea v. 1.

³ 1 Kings xviii. 30 ff.

⁴ 1 Kings xii. 25.

⁵ Originally so called from their elevation (though oftener on the flank than on the summit of a hill) ; but like the name High Street or the Scottish High Kirk, the term came to be dissociated from physical height and was applied to any sanctuary, even in a hollow, like so many of the sacred wells.

⁶ The sanctuary itself was probably on the present site of the Burj Beitin (with the ruins of an early Christian Church), some few minutes to the south-east of the present village of Beitin, which probably represents the city of Bethel that was called Luz at the first.

⁷ 1 Kings xii. 25 ff. ; Amos vii.

⁸ Amos iv. 4.

⁹ Amos vii. 13.

¹⁰ 1 Kings xii. 25 ff.

was Gilgal.¹ Whether this was the Gilgal by Jericho, or the other Gilgal on the Samaritan hills near Shiloh, is uncertain. The latter had been a sanctuary in Elijah's day, with a settlement of the prophets; but the former must have proved the greater attraction to a people so devoted to the sacred events of their past. Was it not the first resting-place of the Ark after the passage of Jordan, the scene of the re-institution of circumcision, of the anointing of the first king, of Judah's second submission to David?² As there were many Gilgals in the land—literally *crom-lechs*, ancient *stone-circles* sacred to the Canaanites as well as to Israel—so there were many Mizpehs, *Watch-towers*, *Seers' stations*: the one mentioned by Hosea was probably in Gilead.³ To the southern Beersheba, to which Elijah had fled from Jezebel, pilgrimages were made by northern Israelites traversing Judah. The sanctuary on Carmel was the ancient altar of Jehovah which Elijah had rebuilt; but Carmel seems at this time to have lain, as it did so often, in the power of the Phœnicians, for it is imagined by the prophets only as a hiding-place from the face of Jehovah.⁴

At all these sanctuaries it was Jehovah and no other

¹ Curiously enough conceived by many of the early Christian Fathers as containing the second of the calves. Cyril, *Comm. in Hoseam*, 5; Epiph., *De Vitis Proph.*, 237; *Chron. Pasc.*, 161.

² Josh. iv. 20 ff., v. 2 ff.; 1 Sam. xi. 14, 15, etc.; 2 Sam. xix. 15, 40. This Gilgal by Jericho fell to N. Israel after the Disruption; but there is nothing in Amos or Hosea to tell us, whether it or the Gilgal near Shiloh, which seems to have absorbed the sanctity of the latter, is the shrine which they couple with Bethel—except that they never talk of "going up" to it. The passage from Epiphanius in previous note speaks of the Gilgal with the calf as the "Gilgal which is in Shiloh."

³ Site uncertain. See *Hist. Geog.*, pp. 579, 586.

⁴ Amos ix. 3. But cf. i. 2.

who was sought: *thy God, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*¹ At Bethel and at Dan He was adored in the form of a calf; probably at Gilgal also, for there is a strong tradition to that effect;² and elsewhere men still consulted the other images which had been used by Saul and by David, the Ephod and the Teraphim.³ With these there was the old Semitic symbol of the Maççebah, or upright stone on which oil was poured.⁴ All of them had been used in the worship of Jehovah by the great examples and leaders of the past; all of them had been spared by Elijah and Elisha: it was no wonder that the common people of the eighth century felt them to be indispensable elements of religion, the removal of which, like the removal of the monarchy or of sacrifice itself, would mean utter divorce from the nation's God.⁵

One great exception must be made. Compared with the sanctuaries we have mentioned, Zion itself was very modern. But it contained the main repository of Israel's religion, the Ark, and in connection with the Ark the worship of Jehovah was not a worship of

¹ 2 Kings xii. 28.

² See above, p. 37, n. 1.

³ The Ephod, *the plated thing*; presumably a wooden image covered either with a skin of metal or a cloak of metal. The Teraphim were images in human shape.

⁴ The *menhir* of modern Palestine—not a hewn pillar, but oblong natural stone narrowing a little towards the top (cf. W. R. Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 183-188). From Hosea x. 1, 2, it would appear that the maççebah of the eighth century were artificial. *They make good maççebah* (A.V. wrongly *images*).

⁵ So indeed Hosea iii. 4 implies. The Asherah, the pole or symbolic tree of Canaanite worship, does not appear to have been used as a part of the ritual of Jehovah's worship. But, that there was constantly a temptation so to use it, is clear from Deut. xvi. 21, 22. See Driver on that passage.

images. It is significant that from this, the original sanctuary of Israel, with the pure worship, the new prophecy derived its first inspiration. But to that we shall return later with Amos.¹ Apart from the Ark, Jerusalem was not free from images, nor even from the altars of foreign deities.

Where the externals of the ritual were thus so much the same as those of the Canaanite cults, which were still practised in and around the land, it is not surprising that the worship of Jehovah should be further invaded by many pagan practices, nor that Jehovah Himself should be regarded with imaginations steeped in pagan ideas of the Godhead. That even the foulest tempers of the Canaanite ritual, those inspired by wine and the sexual passion, were licensed in the sanctuaries of Israel, both Amos and Hosea testify. But the worst of the evil was wrought in the popular conception of God. Let us remember again that Jehovah had no real rival at this time in the devotion of His people, and that their faith was expressed both by the legal forms of His religion and by a liberality which exceeded these. The tithes were paid to Him, and paid, it would appear, with more than legal frequency.² Sabbath and New Moon, as days of worship and rest from business, were observed with a Pharisaic scrupulousness for the letter if not for the spirit.³ The prescribed festivals were held, and thronged by zealous devotees who rivalled each other in the amount of their free-will offerings.⁴ Pilgrimages were made to Bethel, to Gilgal, to far Beersheba, and the very way to the latter appeared as sacred to the Israelite as the way

¹ See below, p. 99.

² Amos iv. 4ff.

³ Amos vii. 4: cf. 2 Kings v. 23.

⁴ Amos iv. 4f.

to Mecca does to a pious Moslem of to-day.¹ Yet, in spite of all this devotion to their God, Israel had no true ideas of Him. To quote Amos, they sought His sanctuaries, but Him they did not seek; in the words of Hosea's frequent plaint, they *did not know Him*. To the mass of the people, to their governors, their priests, and the most of their prophets, Jehovah was but the characteristic Semitic deity—patron of His people, and caring for them alone—who had helped them in the past, and was bound to help them still—very jealous as to the correctness of His ritual and the amount of His sacrifices, but indifferent about real morality. Nay, there were still darker streaks in their views of Him. A god, figured as an ox, could not be adored by a cattle-breeding people without starting in their minds thoughts too much akin to the foul tempers of the Canaanite faiths. These things it is almost a shame to mention; but without knowing that they fermented in the life of that generation, we shall not appreciate the vehemence of Amos or of Hosea.

Such a religion had no discipline for the busy, mercenary life of the day. Injustice and fraud were rife in the very precincts of the sanctuary. Magistrates and priests alike were smitten with their generation's love of money, and did everything for reward. Again and again do the prophets speak of bribery. Judges took gifts and perverted the cause of the poor; priests drank the mulcted wine, and slept on the pledged garments of religious offenders. There was no disinterested service of God or of the commonweal. Mammon was supreme. The influence of the commercial character of the age appears in another very remarkable result.

¹ See below, p. 185.

An agricultural community is always sensitive to the religion of nature. They are awed by its chastisements—drougths, famines and earthquakes. They feel its majestic order in the course of the seasons, the procession of day and night, the march of the great stars all the host of the Lord of hosts. But Amos seems to have had to break into passionate reminders of Him that maketh Orion and the Pleiades, and turneth the murk into morning.¹ Several physical calamities visited the land. The locusts are bad in Palestine every sixth or seventh year: one year before Amos began they had been very bad. There was a monstrous drought, followed by a famine. There was a long-remembered earthquake—the earthquake in the days of Uzziah. With Egypt so near, the home of the plague, and with so much war afoot in Northern Syria, there were probably more pestilences in Western Asia than those recorded in 803, 765 and 759. There was a total eclipse of the sun in 763. But of all these, except perhaps the pestilence, a commercial people are independent as an agricultural are not. Israel speedily recovered from them, without any moral improvement. Even when the earthquake came *they said in pride and stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycomores are cut down, but we will change to cedars.*² It was a marvellous generation—so joyous, so energetic, so patriotic, so devout! But its strength was the strength of cruel wealth, its peace the peace of an immoral religion.

I have said that the age is very modern, and we shall indeed go to its prophets feeling that they speak to conditions of life extremely like our own. But if

¹ But whether these be by Amos see Chap. XI,

² Isa ix. 10.

we wish a still closer analogy from our history, we must travel back to the fourteenth century in England—Langland's and Wyclif's century, which, like this one in Israel, saw both the first real attempts towards a national literature, and the first real attempts towards a moral and religious reform. Then as in Israel a long and victorious reign was drawing to a close, under the threat of disaster when it should have passed. Then as in Israel there had been droughts, earthquakes and pestilences with no moral results upon the nation. Then also there was a city life developing at the expense of country life. Then also the wealthy began to draw aloof from the people. Then also there was a national religion, zealously cultivated and endowed by the liberality of the people, but superstitious, mercenary, and corrupted by sexual disorder. Then too there were many pilgrimages to popular shrines, and the land was strewn with mendicant priests and hireling preachers. And then too prophecy raised its voice, for the first time fearless in England. As we study the verses of Amos we shall find again and again the most exact parallels to them in the verses of Langland's *Vision of Piers the Plowman*, which denounce the same vices in Church and State, and enforce the same principles of religion and morality.

It was when the reign of Jeroboam was at its height of assured victory, when the nation's prosperity seemed impregnable after the survival of those physical calamities, when the worship and the commerce were in full course throughout the land, that the first of the new prophets broke out against Israel in the name of Jehovah, threatening judgment alike upon the new civilisation

of which they were so proud and the old religion in which they were so confident. These prophets were inspired by feelings of the purest morality, by the passionate conviction that God could no longer bear such impurity and disorder. But, as we have seen, no prophet in Israel ever worked on the basis of principles only. He came always in alliance with events. These first appeared in the shape of the great physical disasters. But a more powerful instrument of Providence, in the service of judgment, was appearing on the horizon. This was the Assyrian Empire. So vast was its influence on prophecy that we must devote to it a separate chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE INFLUENCE OF ASSYRIA UPON PROPHECY

BY far the greatest event in the eighth century before Christ was the appearance of Assyria in Palestine. To Israel since the Exodus and Conquest, nothing had happened capable of so enormous an influence at once upon their national fortunes and their religious development. But while the Exodus and Conquest had advanced the political and spiritual progress of Israel in equal proportion, the effect of the Assyrian invasion was to divorce these two interests, and destroy the state while it refined and confirmed the religion. After permitting the Northern Kingdom to reach an extent and splendour unrivalled since the days of Solomon, Assyria overthrew it in 721 and left all Israel scarcely a third of their former magnitude. But while Assyria proved so disastrous to the state, her influence upon the prophecy of the period was little short of creative. Humanly speaking, this highest stage of Israel's religion could not have been achieved by the prophets except in alliance with the armies of that heathen empire. Before then we turn to their pages it may be well for us to make clear in what directions Assyria performed this spiritual service for Israel. While pursuing this inquiry we may be able to find answers to the scarcely less important

questions : why the prophets were at first doubtful of the part Assyria was destined to play in the providence of the Almighty ? and why, when the prophets were at last convinced of the certainty of Israel's overthrow, the statesmen of Israel and the bulk of the people still remained so unconcerned about her coming, or so sanguine of their power to resist her ? This requires, to begin with, a summary of the details of the Assyrian advance upon Palestine.

In the far past Palestine had often been the hunting-ground of the Assyrian kings. But after 1100 B.C., and for nearly two centuries and a half, her states were left to themselves. Then Assyria resumed the task of breaking down that disbelief in her power with which her long withdrawal seems to have inspired their politics. In 870 Assurnasirpal reached the Levant, and took tribute from Tyre and Sidon. Omri was reigning in Samaria, and must have come into close relations with the Assyrians, for during more than a century and a half after his death they still called the land of Israel by his name.¹ In 854 Salmanassar II. defeated at Karkar the combined forces of Ahab and Benhadad. In 850, 849 and 846 he conducted campaigns against Damascus. In 842 he received tribute from Jehu,² and in 839 again fought Damascus under Hazael. After this there passed a whole generation during which Assyria came no farther south than Arpad, some sixty miles north of Damascus ; and Hazael employed the respite in those campaigns which proved so disastrous for Israel, by robbing her of the provinces across Jordan, and ravaging the

¹ "The house of Omri" : so even in Sargon's time, 722—705.

² The Black Obelisk of Salmanassar in the British Museum, on which the messengers of Jehu are portrayed.

country about Samaria.¹ In 803 Assyria returned, and accomplished the siege and capture of Damascus. The first consequence to Israel was that restoration of her hopes under Joash, at which the aged Elisha was still spared to assist,² and which reached its fulfilment in the recovery of all Eastern Palestine by Jeroboam II.³ Jeroboam's own relations to Assyria have not been recorded either by the Bible or by the Assyrian monuments. It is hard to think that he paid no tribute to the "king of kings." At all events it is certain that, while Assyria again overthrew the Arameans of Damascus in 773 and their neighbours of Hadrach in 772 and 765, Jeroboam was himself invading Aramean land, and the Book of Kings even attributes to him an extension of territory, or at least of political influence, up to the northern mouth of the great pass between the Lebanons.⁴ For the next twenty years Assyria only once came as far as Lebanon—to Hadrach in 759—and it may have been this long quiescence which enabled the rulers and people of Israel to forget, if indeed their religion and sanguine patriotism had ever allowed them to realise, how much the conquests and splendour of Jeroboam's reign were due, not to themselves, but to the heathen power which had maimed their oppressors. Their dreams were brief. Before Jeroboam himself was dead, a new king had usurped the Assyrian throne (745 B.C.) and inaugurated a more vigorous policy. Borrowing the name of the

¹ 2 Kings x. 32 f.; xiii. 3.

² 2 Kings xiii. 14 ff.

³ The phrase in 2 Kings xiii. 5, *Jehovah gave Israel a saviour*, is interpreted by certain scholars as if the saviour were Assyria. In xiv. 27 he is plainly said to be Jeroboam.

⁴ The entering in of Hamath (2 Kings xiv. 25).

ancient Tiglath-Pileser, he followed that conqueror's path across the Euphrates. At first it seemed as if he was to suffer check. His forces were engrossed by the siege of Arpad for three years (*c.* 743), and this delay, along with that of two years more, during which he had to return to the conquest of Babylon, may well have given cause to the courts of Damascus and Samaria to believe that the Assyrian power had not really revived. Combining, they attacked Judah under Ahaz. But Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-Pileser, who within a year (734—733) had overthrown Damascus and carried captive the populations of Gilead and Galilee. There could now be no doubt as to what the Assyrian power meant for the political fortunes of Israel. Before this resistless and inexorable empire, the people of Jehovah were as the most frail of their neighbours—sure of defeat, and sure, too, of that terrible captivity in exile which formed the novel policy of the invaders against the tribes who withstood them. Israel dared to withstand. The vassal Hoshea, whom the Assyrians had placed on the throne of Samaria in 730, kept back his tribute. The people rallied to him; and for more than three years this little tribe of highlanders resisted in their capital the Assyrian siege. Then came the end. Samaria fell in 721, and Israel went into captivity beyond the Euphrates.

In following the course of this long tragedy, a man's heart cannot but feel that *all* the splendour and the glory did not lie with the prophets, in spite of their being the only actors in the drama who perceived its moral issues and predicted its actual end. For who can withhold admiration from those few tribesmen, who accepted no defeat as final, but so long as they were left to their fatherland rallied their ranks to its

liberty and defied the huge empire. Nor was their courage always as blind, as in the time of Isaiah Samaria's so fatally became. For one cannot have failed to notice, how fitful and irregular was Assyria's advance, at least up to the reign of Tiglath-Pileser; nor how prolonged and doubtful were her sieges of some of the towns. The Assyrians themselves do not always record spoil or tribute after what they are pleased to call their victories over the cities of Palestine. To the same campaign they had often to return for several years in succession.¹ It took Tiglath-Pileser himself three years to reduce Arpad; Salmanassar IV. besieged Samaria for three years, and was slain before it yielded. These facts enable us to understand that, apart from the moral reasons which the prophets urged for the certainty of Israel's overthrow by Assyria, it was always within the range of political possibility that Assyria would not come back, and that while she was engaged with revolts of other portions of her huge and disorganised empire, a combined revolution on the part of her Syrian vassals would be successful. The prophets themselves felt the influence of these chances. They were not always confident, as we shall see, that Assyria was to be the means of Israel's overthrow. Amos, and in his earlier years Isaiah, describe her with a caution and a vagueness for which there is no other explanation than the political uncertainty that again and again hung over the future of her advance upon Syria. It, then, even in those high minds, to whom the moral issue was so clear, the political form that issue should assume was yet temporarily uncertain,

¹ Salmanassar II. in 850, 849, 846 to war against Dad'idri of Damascus, and in 842 and 839 against Hazael, his successor.

what good reasons must the mere statesmen of Syria have often felt for the proud security which filled the intervals between the Assyrian invasions, or the sanguine hopes which inspired their resistance to the latter.

We must not cast over the whole Assyrian advance the triumphant air of the annals of such kings as Tiglath-Pileser or Sennacherib. Campaigning in Palestine was a dangerous business even to the Romans; and for the Assyrian armies there was always possible besides some sudden recall by the rumour of a revolt in a distant province. Their own annals supply us with good reasons for the sanguine resistance offered to them by the tribes of Palestine. No defeat, of course, is recorded; but the annals are full of delays and withdrawals. Then the Plague would break out; we know how in the last year of the century it turned Sennacherib, and saved Jerusalem.¹ In short, up almost to the end the Syrian chiefs had some fair political reasons for resistance to a power which had so often defeated them; while at the very end, when no such reason remained and our political sympathy is exhausted, we feel it replaced by an even warmer admiration for their desperate defence. Mere mountain-cats of tribes as some of them were, they held their poorly furnished rocks against one, two or three years of cruel siege.

In Israel these political reasons for courage against Assyria were enforced by the whole instincts of the popular religion. The century had felt a new outburst of enthusiasm for Jehovah.² This was con-

¹ See in this series *Isaiah*, Vol. I., pp. 359 ff.

² See above, pp. 35 ff.

sequent, not only upon the victories He had granted over Aram, but upon the literature of the peace which followed those victories : the collection of the stories of the ancient miracles of Jehovah in the beginning of His people's history, and of the purpose He had even then announced of bringing Israel to supreme rank in the world. Such a God, so anciently manifested, so recently proved, could never surrender His own nation to a mere Goï¹—a heathen and a barbarian people. Add this dogma of the popular religion of Israel to those substantial hopes of Assyria's withdrawal from Palestine, and you see cause, intelligible and adequate, for the complacency of Jeroboam and his people to the fact that Assyria had at last, by the fall of Damascus, reached their own borders, as well as for the courage with which Hoshea in 725 threw off the Assyrian yoke, and, with a willing people, for three years defended Samaria against the great king. Let us not think that the opponents of the prophets were utter fools or mere puppets of fate. They had reasons for their optimism ; they fought for their hearths and altars with a valour and a patience which proves that the nation as a whole was not so corrupt, as we are sometimes, by the language of the prophets, tempted to suppose.

But all this—the reasonableness of the hope of resisting Assyria, the valour which so stubbornly fought her, the religious faith which sanctioned both valour and hope—only the more vividly illustrates the singular independence of the prophets, who took an opposite view, who so consistently affirmed that Israel

To use the term which Amos adopts with such ironical force :
vi. 14.

must fall, and so early foretold that she should fall to Assyria.

The reason of this conviction of the prophets was, of course, their fundamental faith in the righteousness of Jehovah. That was a belief quite independent of the course of events. As a matter of history, the ethical reasons for Israel's doom were manifest to the prophets within Israel's own life, before the signs grew clear on the horizon that the doomster was to be Assyria.¹ Nay, we may go further, and say that it could not possibly have been otherwise. For except the prophets had been previously furnished with the ethical reasons for Assyria's resistless advance on Israel, to their sensitive minds that advance must have been a hopeless and a paralysing problem. But they nowhere treat it as a problem. By them Assyria is always either welcomed as a proof or summoned as a means—the proof of their conviction that Israel requires humbling, the means of carrying that humbling into effect. The faith of the prophets is ready for Assyria from the moment that she becomes ominous for Israel, and every footfall of her armies on Jehovah's soil becomes the corroboration of the purpose He has already declared to His servants in the terms of their moral consciousness. The spiritual service which Assyria rendered to Israel was therefore secondary to the prophets' native convictions of the righteousness of God, and could not have been performed without

¹ When we get down among the details we shall see clear evidence for this fact, for instance, that Amos prophesied against Israel at a time when he thought that the Lord's anger was to be exhausted in purely natural chastisements of His people, and before it was revealed to him that Assyria was required to follow up these chastisements with a heavier blow. See Chap. VI., Section 2.

these. This will become even more clear if we look for a little at the exact nature of that service.

In its broadest effects, the Assyrian invasion meant for Israel a very considerable change in the intellectual outlook. Hitherto Israel's world had virtually lain between the borders promised of old to their ambition—the *river of Egypt*,¹ and the *great river, the River Euphrates*. These had marked not merely the sphere of Israel's politics, but the horizon within which Israel had been accustomed to observe the action of their God and to prove His character, to feel the problems of their religion rise and to grapple with them. But now there burst from the outside of this little world that awful power, sovereign and inexorable, which effaced all distinctions and treated Israel in the same manner as her heathen neighbours. This was more than a widening of the world: it was a change of the very poles. At first sight it appeared merely to have increased the scale on which history was conducted; it was really an alteration of the whole character of history. Religion itself shrivelled up, before a force so much vaster than anything it had yet encountered, and so contemptuous of its claims. *What is Jehovah*, said the Assyrian in his laughter, *more than the gods of Damascus, or of Hamath, or of the Philistines?* In fact, for the mind of Israel, the crisis, though less in degree, was in quality not unlike that produced in the religion of Europe by the revelation of the Copernican astronomy. As the earth, previously believed to be the centre of the universe, the stage on which the Son of God had achieved God's eternal purposes to mankind, was

¹ That is, of course, not the Nile, but the great Wady, at present known as the Wady el 'Arish, which divides Palestine from Egypt.

discovered to be but a satellite of one of innumerable suns, a mere ball swung beside millions of others by a force which betrayed no sign of sympathy with the great transactions which took place on it, and so faith in the Divine worth of these was rudely shaken—so Israel, who had believed themselves to be the peculiar people of the Creator, the solitary agents of the God of Righteousness to all mankind,¹ and who now felt themselves brought to an equality with other tribes by this sheer force, which, brutally indifferent to spiritual distinctions, swayed the fortunes of all alike, must have been tempted to unbelief in the spiritual facts of their history, in the power of their God and the destiny He had promised them. Nothing could have saved Israel, as nothing could have saved Europe, but a conception of God which rose to this new demand upon its powers—a faith which said, “Our God is sufficient for this greater world and its forces that so dwarf our own; the discovery of these only excites in us a more awful wonder of His power.” The prophets had such a conception of God. To them He was absolute righteousness—righteousness wide as the widest world, stronger than the strongest force. To the prophets, therefore, the rise of Assyria only increased the possibilities of Providence. But it could not have done this had Providence not already been invested in a God capable by His character of rising to such possibilities.

Assyria, however, was not only Force: she was also the symbol of a great Idea—the Idea of Unity. We have just ventured on one historical analogy. We may try another and a more exact one. The Empire

¹ So already in the JE narratives of the Pentateuch.

of Rome, grasping the whole world in its power and reducing all races of men to much the same level of political rights, powerfully assisted Christian theology in the task of imposing upon the human mind a clearer imagination of unity in the government of the world and of spiritual equality among men of all nations. A not dissimilar service to the faith of Israel was performed by the Empire of Assyria. History, that hitherto had been but a series of angry pools, became as the ocean swaying in tides to one almighty impulse. It was far easier to imagine a sovereign Providence when Assyria reduced history to a unity by overthrowing all the rulers and all their gods, than when history was broken up into the independent fortunes of many states, each with its own religion divinely valid in its own territory. By shattering the tribes Assyria shattered the tribal theory of religion, which we have seen to be the characteristic Semitic theory—a god for every tribe, a tribe for every god. The field was cleared of the many: there was room for the One. That He appeared, not as the God of the conquering race, but as the Deity of one of their many victims, was due to Jehovah's righteousness. At this juncture, when the world was suggested to have one throne and that throne was empty, there was a great chance, if we may so put it, for a god with a character. And the only God in all the Semitic world who had a character was Jehovah.

It is true that the Assyrian Empire was not constructive, like the Roman, and, therefore, could not assist the prophets to the idea of a Catholic Church. But there can be no doubt that it did assist them to a feeling of the moral unity of mankind. A great historian has made the just remark that, whatsoever

widens the imagination, enabling it to realise the actual experience of other men, is a powerful agent of ethical advance.¹ Now Assyria widened the imagination and the sympathy of Israel in precisely this way. Consider the universal Pity of the Assyrian conquest: how state after state went down before it, how all things mortal yielded and were swept away. The mutual hatreds and ferocities of men could not persist before a common Fate, so sublime, so tragic. And thus we understand how in Israel the old envies and rancours of that border warfare with her foes which had filled the last four centuries of her history is replaced by a new tenderness and compassion towards the national efforts, the achievements and all the busy life of the Gentile peoples. Isaiah is especially distinguished by this in his treatment of Egypt and of Tyre; and even where he and others do not, as in these cases, appreciate the sadness of the destruction of so much brave beauty and serviceable wealth, their tone in speaking of the fall of the Assyrian on their neighbours is one of compassion and not of exultation.² As the rivalries and hatreds of individual lives are stilled in the presence of a common death, so even that factious, ferocious world of the Semites ceased to *fret its anger and watch it for ever* (to quote Amos' phrase) in face of the universal Assyrian Fate. But in that Fate there was more than Pity. On the data of the prophets Assyria was afflicting Israel for moral reasons: it could not be for other reasons that she was afflicting their neighbours. Israel and the heathen were suffering for

¹ Lecky: *History of European Morals*, I.

² The present writer has already pointed out this with regard to Egypt and Phœnicia in *Isaiah* (Expositor's Bible Series), I., Chaps. XXII. and XXIII., and with regard to Philistia in *Hist. Geog.*, p. 178.

the same righteousness' sake. What could have better illustrated the moral equality of all mankind! No doubt the prophets were already theoretically convinced¹ of this—for the righteousness they believed in was nothing if not universal. But it is one thing to hold a belief on principle and another to have practical experience of it in history. To a theory of the moral equality of mankind Assyria enabled the prophets to add sympathy and conscience. We shall see all this illustrated in the opening prophecies of Amos against the foreign nations.

But Assyria did not help to develop monotheism in Israel only by contributing to the doctrines of a moral Providence and of the equality of all men beneath it. The influence must have extended to Israel's conception of God in Nature. Here, of course, Israel was already possessed of great beliefs. Jehovah had created man; He had divided the Red Sea and Jordan. The desert, the storm, and the seasons were all subject to Him. But at a time when the superstitious mind of the people was still feeling after other Divine powers in the earth, the waters and the air of Canaan, it was a very valuable antidote to such dissipation of their faith to find one God swaying, through Assyria, all families of mankind. The Divine unity to which history was reduced must have reacted on Israel's views of Nature, and made it easier to feel one God also there. Now, as a matter of fact, the imagination of the unity of Nature, the belief in a reason and method pervading all things,

¹ I put it this way only for the sake of making the logic clear; for it is a mistake to say that the prophets at any time held merely theoretic convictions. All their conviction was really experimental—never held apart from some illustration or proof of principle in actual history.

was very powerfully advanced in Israel throughout the Assyrian period.

We may find an illustration of this in the greater, deeper meaning in which the prophets use the old national name of Israel's God—Jehovah Şeba'oth, *Jehovah of Hosts*. This title, which came into frequent use under the early kings, when Israel's vocation was to win freedom by war, meant then (as far as we can gather) only *Jehovah of the armies of Israel*—the God of battles, the people's leader in war,¹ whose home was Jerusalem, the people's capital, and His sanctuary their battle emblem, the Ark. Now the prophets hear Jehovah go forth (as Amos does) from the same place, but to them the Name has a far deeper significance. They never define it, but they use it in associations where *hosts* must mean something different from the

¹ יהוה צבאות: 1 Sam. i. 3; iv. 4; xvii. 45, where it is explained by the parallel phrase *God of the armies of Israel*; 2 Sam. vi. 2, where it is connected with Israel's battle emblem, the Ark (cf. Jer. xxii. 18); and so throughout Samuel and Kings, and also Chronicles, the Psalms, and most prophets. The plural צבאות is never used in the Old Testament except of human hosts, and generally of the armies or hosts of Israel. The theory therefore which sees the same meaning in the Divine title is probably the correct one. It was first put forward by Herder (*Geist der Eb. Poesie*, ii. 84, 85), and after some neglect it has been revived by Kautzsch (*Z. A. T. W.*, vi. ff.) and Stade (*Gesch.*, i. 437, n. 3). The alternatives are that the hosts originally meant those of heaven, either the angels (so, among others, Ewald, *Hist.*, Eng. Ed., iii. 62) or the stars (so Delitzsch, Kuenen, Baudissin, Cheyne, *Prophecies of Isaiah*, i. 11). In the former of these two there is some force; but the reason given for the latter, that the name came to the front in Israel when the people were being drawn into connection with star-worshipping nations, especially Aram, seems to me baseless. Israel had not been long in touch with Aram in Saul's time, yet even then the name is accepted as if one of much earlier origin. A clear account of the argument on the other side to that taken in this note will be found in Smend, *Alttestamentliche Religionsgeschichte*, pp. 185 ff.

armies of Israel. To Amos the hosts of Jehovah are not the armies of Israel, but those of Assyria : they are also the nations whom He marshals and marches across the earth, Philistines from Caphtor, Aram from Qir, as well as Israel from Egypt. Nay, more ; according to those Doxologies which either Amos or a kindred spirit has added to his lofty argument,¹ Jehovah sways and orders the powers of the heavens : Orion and Pleiades, the clouds from the sea to the mountain peaks where they break, day and night in constant procession. It is in associations like these that the Name is used, either in its old form or slightly changed as *Jehovah God of hosts*, or *the hosts* ; and we cannot but feel that the hosts of Jehovah are now looked upon as all the influences of earth and heaven—human armies, stars and powers of nature, which obey His word and work His will.

¹ See below, Chap. XI.

AMOS

“Towers in the distance, like an earth-born Atlas . . . such a man in such a historical position, standing on the confines of light and darkness, like day on the misty mountain-tops.”

CHAPTER V

THE BOOK OF AMOS

THE genuineness of the bulk of the Book of Amos is not doubted by any critic. The only passages suspected as interpolations are the three references to Judah, the three famous outbreaks in praise of the might of Jehovah the Creator, the final prospect of a hope that does not gleam in any other part of the book, with a few clauses alleged to reflect a stage of history later than that in which Amos worked.¹ In all, these verses amount to only twenty-six or twenty-seven out of one hundred and forty-six. Each of them can be discussed separately as we reach it, and we may now pass to consider the general course of the prophecy which is independent of them.

The Book of Amos consists of Three Groups of Oracles, under one title, which is evidently meant to cover them all.

The title runs as follows:—

Words of 'Amos—who was of the herdsmen of Tekôá—which he saw concerning Israel in the days

¹ The full list of suspected passages is this: (1) References to Judah—ii. 4, 5; vi. 1, *in Zion*; ix. 11, 12. (2) The three Outbreaks of Praise—iv. 13; v. 8, 9; ix. 5, 6. (3) The Final Hope—ix. 8-15, including vv. 11, 12, already mentioned. (4) Clauses alleged to reflect a later stage of history—i. 9-12; v. 1, 2, 15; vi. 2, 14. (5) Suspected for incompatibility—viii. 11-13.

of 'Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jarab'am son of Joash,¹ king of Israel: two years before the earthquake.

The Three Sections, with their contents, are as follows :—

FIRST SECTION : CHAPS. I., II. THE HEATHEN'S CRIMES AND ISRAEL'S.

A series of short oracles of the same form, directed impartially against the political crimes of all the states of Palestine, and culminating in a more detailed denunciation of the social evils of Israel, whose doom is foretold, beneath the same flood of war as shall overwhelm all her neighbours.

SECOND SECTION : CHAPS. III.—VI. ISRAEL'S CRIMES AND DOOM.

A series of various oracles of denunciation, which have no further logical connection than is supplied by a general sameness of subject, and a perceptible increase of detail and articulateness from beginning to end of the section. They are usually grouped according to the recurrence of the formula *Hear this word*, which stands at the head of our present chaps. iii., iv. and v.; and by the two cries of *Woe* at v. 18 and vi. 1. But even more obvious than these commencements are the various climaxes to which they lead up. These are all threats of judgment, and each is more strenuous or explicit than the one that has preceded it. They close with iii. 15, iv. 3, iv. 12, v. 17, v. 27 and vi. 14; and according to them the oracles may be conveniently divided into six groups.

1. III. 1-15. After the main theme of judgment is stated in 1, 2, we have in 3-8 a parenthesis on the prophet's right to threaten doom; after which 9-15, following directly on 2, emphasise the social disorder, threaten the land with invasion, the people with extinction and the overthrow of their civilisation.

¹ So designated to distinguish him from the first Jeroboam, the son of Nebat.

2. IV. 1-3, beginning with the formula *Hear this word*, is directed against women and describes the siege of the capital and their captivity.

3. IV. 4-12, with no opening formula, contrasts the people's vain propitiation of God by ritual with His treatment of them by various physical chastisements—drought, blight and locusts, pestilence, earthquake—and summons them to prepare for another, unnamed, visitation. *Jehovah God of Hosts is His Name*.

4. V. 1-17, beginning with the formula *Hear this word*, and a dirge over a vision of the nation's defeat, attacks, like the previous group, the lavish ritual, sets in contrast to it Jehovah's demands for justice and civic purity; and, offering a reprieve if Israel will repent, closes with the prospect of an universal mourning (vv. 16, 17), which, though introduced by a *therefore*, has no logical connection with what precedes it.

5. V. 18-26 is the first of the two groups that open with *Woe*. Affirming that the eagerly expected *Day of Jehovah* will be darkness and disaster on disaster inevitable (18-20), it again emphasises Jehovah's desire for righteousness rather than worship (21-26), and closes with the threat of captivity beyond Damascus. *Jehovah God of Hosts is His Name*, as at the close of 3.

6. VI. 1-14. The second *Woe*, on them *that are at ease in Zion* (1, 2): a satire on the luxuries of the rich and their indifference to the national suffering (3-6): captivity must come, with the desolation of the land (9, 10); and in a peroration the prophet reiterates a general downfall of the nation because of its perversity. *A Nation*—needless to name it!—will oppress Israel from Hamath to the River of the Arabah.

THIRD SECTION: CHAPS. VII.—IX. VISIONS WITH INTERLUDES.

The Visions betray traces of development; but they are interrupted by a piece of narrative and addresses on the same themes as chaps. iii.—vi. The FIRST TWO VISIONS (vii. 1-6) are of disasters—locusts and drought—in the realm of nature; they are averted by prayer from Amos. The THIRD (7-9) is in the sphere not of nature, but history: Jehovah standing with a plummet, as if to show the nation's fabric to be utterly twisted, announces that it shall be overthrown, and that the dynasty of Jeroboam

must be put to the sword. Upon this mention of the king, the first in the book, there starts the narrative (10-17) of how Amaziah, priest at Bethel—obviously upon hearing the prophet's threat—sent word to Jeroboam; and then (whether before or after getting a reply) proceeded to silence Amos, who, however, reiterates his prediction of doom, again described as captivity in a foreign land, and adds a FOURTH VISION (viii. 1-3), of the *Ḳaits* or *Summer Fruit*, which suggests *Ḳêts*, or *End* of the Nation. Here it would seem Amos' discourses at Bethel take end. Then comes viii. 4-6, another exposure of the sins of the rich; followed by a triple pronouncement of doom (7), again in the terms of physical calamities—earthquake (8), eclipse (9, 10), and famine (11-14), in the last of which the public worship is again attacked. A FIFTH VISION, of the Lord by the Altar commanding to smite (ix. 1), is followed by a powerful threat of the hopelessness of escape from God's punishment (ix. 1b-4); the third of the great apostrophes to the might of Jehovah (5, 6); another statement of the equality in judgment of Israel with other peoples, and of their utter destruction (7-8a). Then (8b) we meet the first qualification of the hitherto unrelieved sentence of death. Captivity is described, not as doom, but as discipline (9): the sinners of the people, scoffers at doom, shall die (10). And this seems to leave room for two final oracles of restoration and glory, the only two in the book, which are couched in the exact terms of the promises of later prophecy (11-15) and are by many denied to Amos.

Such is the course of the prophesying of Amos. To have traced it must have made clear to us the unity of his book,¹ as well as the character of the period to which he belonged. But it also furnishes us with a good deal of evidence towards the answer of such necessary questions as these—whether we can fix an exact date for the whole or any part, and whether we can trace any logical or historical development through the chapters, either as these now stand, or in some such re-arrangement as we saw to be necessary for the authentic prophecies of Isaiah.

¹ Apart from the suspected parentheses already mentioned.

Let us take first the simplest of these tasks—to ascertain the general period of the book. Twice—by the title and by the portion of narrative¹—we are pointed to the reign of Jeroboam II., *circa* 783—743; other historical allusions suit the same years. The principalities of Palestine are all standing, except Gath;² but the great northern cloud which carries their doom has risen and is ready to burst. Now Assyria, we have seen, had become fatal to Palestine as early as 854. Infrequent invasions of Syria had followed, in one of which, in 803, Rimmon Nirari III. had subjected Tyre and Sidon, besieged Damascus, and received tribute from Israel. So far then as the Assyrian data are concerned, the Book of Amos might have been written early in the reign of Jeroboam. Even then was the storm lowering as he describes it. Even then had the lightning broken over Damascus. There are other symptoms, however, which demand a later date. They seem to imply, not only Uzziah's overthrow of Gath,³ and Jeroboam's conquest of Moab⁴ and of Aram,⁵ but that establishment of Israel's political influence from Lebanon to the Dead Sea, which must have taken Jeroboam several years to accomplish. With this agree other features of the prophecy—the sense of political security in Israel, the

¹ Chap. vii.

² And, if vi. 2 be genuine, Hamath.

³ 2 Chron. xxvi. 6. In the list of the Philistine cities, Amos i. 6-8, Gath does not occur, and in harmony with this in vi. 2 it is said to be overthrown; see pp. 173 f.

⁴ 2 Kings. In Amos ii. 3 the ruler of Moab is called, not king, but שׁוֹפֵט, or regent, such as Jeroboam substituted for the king of Moab.

⁵ According to Grätz's emendation of vi. 13: *we have taken Lo-Debar and Karnaim*. Perhaps too in iii. 12, though the verse is very obscure, some settlement of Israelites in Damascus is implied. For Jeroboam's conquest of Aram (2 Kings xiv. 28), see p. 177.

large increase of wealth, the ample and luxurious buildings, the gorgeous ritual, the easy ability to recover from physical calamities, the consequent carelessness and pride of the upper classes. All these things imply that the last Syrian invasions of Israel in the beginning of the century were at least a generation behind the men into whose careless faces the prophet hurled his words of doom. During this interval Assyria had again advanced—in 775, in 773 and in 772.¹ None of these expeditions, however, had come south of Damascus, and this, their invariable arrest at some distance from the proper territory of Israel, may have further flattered the people's sense of security, though probably the truth was that Jeroboam, like some of his predecessors, bought his peace by tribute to the emperor. In 765, when the Assyrians for the second time invaded Hadrach, in the neighbourhood of Damascus, their records mention a pestilence, which, both because their armies were then in Syria, and because the plague generally spreads over the whole of Western Asia, may well have been the pestilence mentioned by Amos. In 763 a total eclipse of the sun took place, and is perhaps implied by the ninth verse of his eighth chapter. If this double allusion to pestilence and eclipse be correct, it brings the book down to the middle of the century and the latter half of Jeroboam's long reign. In 755 the Assyrians came back to Hadrach; in 754 to Arpad: with these exceptions Syria was untroubled by them till after 745. It was probably these quiet years in which Amos found Israel *at ease in Zion*.² If we

¹ In 775 to Erini, "the country of the cedars"—that is, Mount Amanus, near the Gulf of Antioch; in 773 to Damascus; in 772 to Hadrach.

² vi. 1,

went down further, within the more forward policy of Tiglath-Pileser, who ascended the throne in 745 and besieged Arpad from 743 to 740, we should find an occasion for the urgency with which Amos warns Israel that the invasion of her land and the overthrow of the dynasty of Jeroboam will be immediate.¹ But Amos might have spoken as urgently even before Tiglath-Pileser's accession; and the probability that Hosea, who prophesied within Jeroboam's reign, quotes from Amos seems to imply that the prophecies of the latter had been current for some time.

Towards the middle of the eighth century—is, therefore, the most definite date to which we are able to assign the Book of Amos. At so great a distance the difference of a few unmarked years is invisible. It is enough that we know the moral dates—the state of national feeling, the personages alive, the great events which are behind the prophet, and the still greater which are imminent. We can see that Amos wrote in the political pride of the latter years of Jeroboam's reign, after the pestilence and eclipse of the sixties, and before the advance of Tiglath-Pileser in the last forties, of the eighth century.

A particular year is indeed offered by the title of the book, which, if not by Amos himself, must be from only a few years later:² *Words of Amos, which he saw in the days of Uzziah and of Jeroboam, two years before the earthquake.* This was the great earthquake of which other prophets speak as having happened in the days

¹ vii. 9.

² Even König denies that the title is from Amos (*Einleitung*, 307); yet the ground on which he does so, the awkwardness of the double relative, does not appear sufficient. One does not write a title in the same style as an ordinary sentence.

of Uzziah.¹ But we do not know where to place the year of the earthquake, and are as far as ever from a definite date.

The mention of the earthquake, however, introduces us to the answer of another of our questions—whether, with all its unity, the Book of Amos reveals any lines of progress, either of event or of idea, either historical or logical.

Granting the truth of the title, that Amos had his prophetic eyes opened two years before the earthquake, it will be a sign of historical progress if we find in the book itself any allusions to the earthquake. Now these are present. In the first division we find none, unless the threat of God's visitation in the form of a shaking of the land be considered as a tremor communicated to the prophet's mind from the recent upheaval. But in the second division there is an obvious reference: the last of the unavailing chastisements, with which Jehovah has chastised His people, is described as a *great overturning*.² And in the third division, in two passages, the judgment, which Amos has already stated will fall in the form of an invasion, is also figured in the terms of an earthquake. Nor does this exhaust the tremors which that awful convulsion had started; but throughout the second and third divisions there is a constant sense of instability, of the liftableness and breakableness of the very ground of life. Of course, as we shall see, this was due to the prophet's knowledge of the moral explosiveness of society in Israel; but he could hardly have described the results of that in the terms he has used, unless himself and his hearers had recently felt the ground quake under them, and seen

¹ Zech. xiv. 5, and probably Isa. ix. 9, 10 (Eng.).

² iv. 11.

whole cities topple over. If, then, Amos began to prophesy two years before the earthquake, the bulk of his book was spoken, or at least written down, after the earthquake had left all Israel trembling.¹

This proof of progress in the book is confirmed by another feature. In the abstract given above it is easy to see that the judgments of the Lord upon Israel were of a twofold character. Some were physical—famine, drought, blight, locusts, earthquake; and some were political—battle, defeat, invasion, captivity. Now it is significant—and I do not think the point has been previously remarked—that not only are the physical represented as happening first, but that at one time the prophet seems to have understood that no others would be needed, that indeed God did not reveal to him the imminence of political disaster till He had exhausted the discipline of physical calamities. For this we have double evidence. In chapter iv. Amos reports that the Lord has sought to rouse Israel out of the moral lethargy into which their religious services have soothed them, by withholding bread and water;

¹ Of course it is always possible to suspect—and let us by all means exhaust the possibilities of suspicion—that the title has been added by a scribe, who interpreted the forebodings of judgment which Amos expresses in the terms of earthquake as if they were the predictions of a real earthquake, and was anxious to show, by inserting the title, how they were fulfilled in the great convulsion of Uzziah's days. But to such a suspicion we have a complete answer. No later scribe, who understood the book he was dealing with, would have prefixed to it a title, with the motive just suspected, when in chap. iv. he read that an earthquake had just taken place. The very fact that such a title appears over a book, which speaks of the earthquake as past, surely attests the *bona fides* of the title. With that mention in chap. iv. of the earthquake as past, none would have ventured to say that Amos began to prophesy before the earthquake unless they had known this to be the case.

by blighting their orchards; by a pestilence, a thoroughly Egyptian one; and by an earthquake. But these having failed to produce repentance, God must visit the people once more: how, the prophet does not say, leaving the imminent terror unnamed, but we know that the Assyrian overthrow is meant. Now precisely parallel to this is the course of the Visions in chapter vii. The Lord caused Amos to see (whether in fancy or in fact we need not now stop to consider) the plague of locusts. It was so bad as to threaten Israel with destruction. But Amos interceded, and God answered, *It shall not be*. Similarly with a plague of drought. But then the Vision shifts from the realm of nature to that of politics. The Lord sets the plumbline to the fabric of Israel's life: this is found hopelessly bent and unstable. It must be pulled down, and the pulling down shall be political: the family of Jeroboam is to be slain, the people are to go into captivity. The next Vision, therefore, is of the End—the Final Judgment of war and defeat, which is followed only by Silence.

Thus, by a double proof, we see not only that the Divine method in that age was to act first by physical chastisement, and only then by an inevitable, ultimate doom of war and captivity; but that the experience of Amos himself, his own intercourse with the Lord, passed through these two stages. The significance of this for the picture of the prophet's life we shall see in our next chapter. Here we are concerned to ask whether it gives us any clue as to the extant arrangement of his prophecies, or any justification for re-arranging them, as the prophecies of Isaiah have to be re-arranged, according to the various stages of historical development at which they were uttered.

We have just seen that the progress from the physical chastisements to the political doom is reflected in both the last two sections of the book. But the same gradual, cumulative method is attributed to the Divine Providence by the First Section: *for three transgressions, yea, for four, I will not turn it back*; and then follow the same disasters of war and captivity as are threatened in Sections II. and III. But each section does not only thus end similarly; each also begins with the record of an immediate impression made on the prophet by Jehovah (chaps. i. 2; iii. 3-8; vii. 1-9).

To sum up:—The Book of Amos consists of three sections, which seem to have received their present form towards the end of Jeroboam's reign; and which, after emphasising their origin as due to the immediate influence of Jehovah Himself on the prophet, follow pretty much the same course of the Divine dealings with that generation of Israel—a course which began with physical chastisements, that failed to produce repentance, and ended with the irrevocable threat of the Assyrian invasion. Each section, that is to say, starts from the same point, follows much the same direction, and arrives at exactly the same conclusion. Chronologically you cannot put one of them before the other; but from each it is possible to learn the stages of experience through which Amos himself passed—to discover how God taught the prophet, not only by the original intuitions from which all prophecy starts, but by the gradual events of his day both at home and abroad.

¹ Except for the later additions, not by Amos, to be afterwards noted.

This decides our plan for us. We shall first trace the life and experience of Amos, as his book enables us to do; and then we shall examine, in the order in which they lie, the three parallel forms in which, when he was silenced at Bethel, he collected the fruits of that experience, and gave them their final expression.

The style of the book is simple and terse. The fixity of the prophet's aim—upon a few moral principles and the doom they demand—keeps his sentences firm and sharp, and sends his paragraphs rapidly to their climax. That he sees nature only under moral light renders his poetry austere and occasionally savage. His language is very pure. There is no ground for Jerome's charge that he was "*imperitus sermone*": we shall have to notice only a few irregularities in spelling, due perhaps to the dialect of the deserts in which he passed his life.¹

The text of the book is for the most part well-preserved; but there are a number of evident corruptions. Of the Greek Version the same holds good as we have said in more detail of the Greek of Hosea.² It is sometimes correct where the Hebrew text is not, sometimes suggestive of the emendations required, and sometimes hopelessly astray.

¹ Cf. ii. 13; v. 11.; vi. 8, 10; vii. 9, 16; viii. 8 (?).

² See below, p. 221.

CHAPTER VI

THE MAN AND THE PROPHET

THE Book of Amos opens one of the greatest stages in the religious development of mankind. Its originality is due to a few simple ideas, which it propels into religion with an almost unrelieved abruptness. But, like all ideas which ever broke upon the world, these also have flesh and blood behind them. Like every other Reformation, this one in Israel began with the conscience and the protest of an individual. Our review of the book has made this plain. We have found in it, not only a personal adventure of a heroic kind, but a progressive series of visions, with some other proofs of a development both of facts and ideas. In short, behind the book there beats a life, and our first duty is to attempt to trace its spiritual history. The attempt is worth the greatest care. "Amos," says a very critical writer,¹ "is one of the most wonderful appearances in the history of the human spirit."

I. THE MAN AND HIS DISCIPLINE.

AMOS i. 1; iii. 3-8; vii. 14, 15.

When charged at the crisis of his career with being but a hireling-prophet, Amos disclaimed the official

¹ Cornill: *Der Israelitische Prophetismus. Five Lectures for the Educated Laity.* 1894.

name and took his stand upon his work as a man: *No prophet I, nor prophet's son, but a herdsman and a dresser of sycomores. Jehovah took me from behind the flock.*¹ We shall enhance our appreciation of this manhood, and of the new order of prophecy which it asserted, if we look for a little at the soil on which it was so bravely nourished.

Six miles south from Bethlehem, as Bethlehem is six from Jerusalem, there rises on the edge of the Judæan plateau, towards the desert, a commanding hill, the ruins on which are still known by the name of Tekôa'.²

In the time of Amos Tekoa was a place without sanctity and almost without tradition. The name suggests that the site may at first have been that of a camp. Its fortification by Rehoboam, and the mission of its wise woman to David, are its only previous appearances in history. Nor had nature been less grudging to it than fame. The men of Tekoa looked out upon a desolate and haggard world. South, west and north the view is barred by a range of limestone hills, on one of which directly north the grey towers of Jerusalem are hardly to be discerned from the grey mountain lines. Eastward the prospect is still more desolate, but it is open; the land slopes away for nearly eighteen

¹ Amos vii. 14. See further pp. 76 f.

² Khurbet Taḳûa', Hebrew Tekôa', תְּקוֹעַ, from תָּקַע, *to blow a trumpet* (cf. Jer. vi. 1, *Blow the trumpet in Tekoa*) or *to pitch a tent*. The latter seems the more probable derivation of the name, and suggests a nomadic origin, which agrees with the position of Tekoa on the borders of the desert. Tekoa does not occur in the list of the towns taken by Joshua. There are really no reasons for supposing that some other Tekoa is meant. The two that have been alleged are (1) that Amos exclusively refers to the Northern Kingdom, (2) that sycomores do not grow at such levels as Tekoa. These are dealt with on pp. 79 and 77 respectively.

miles to a depth of four thousand feet. Of this long descent, the first step, lying immediately below the hill of Tekoa, is a shelf of stony moorland with the ruins of vineyards. It is the lowest ledge of the settled life of Judæa. The eastern edge drops suddenly by broken rocks to slopes spotted with bushes of "retem," the broom of the desert, and with patches of poor wheat. From the foot of the slopes the land rolls away in a maze of low hills and shallow dales, that flush green in spring, but for the rest of the year are brown with withered grass and scrub. This is the *Wilderness* or *Pastureland of Tekoa*,¹ across which by night the wild beasts howl, and by day the blackened sites of deserted camps, with the loose cairns that mark the nomads' graves, reveal a human life almost as vagabond and nameless as that of the beasts. Beyond the rolling land is Jeshimon, or Devastation—a chaos of hills, none of whose ragged crests are tossed as high as the shelf of Tekoa, while their flanks shudder down some further thousands of feet, by crumbling precipices and corries choked with debris, to the coast of the Dead Sea. The northern half of this is visible, bright blue against the red wall of Moab, and the level top of the wall, broken only by the valley of the Arnon, constitutes the horizon. Except for the blue water—which shines in its gap between the torn hills like a bit of sky through rifted clouds—it is a very dreary world. Yet the sun breaks over it, perhaps all the more gloriously; mists, rising from the sea simmering in its great vat, drape the nakedness of the desert noon; and through the dry desert night the planets ride with a majesty they cannot assume in our more troubled atmospheres.

¹ 2 Chron. xx. 20.

It is also a very empty and a very silent world, yet every stir of life upon it excites, therefore, the greater vigilance, and man's faculties, relieved from the rush and confusion of events, form the instinct of marking, and reflecting upon, every single phenomenon. And it is a very savage world. Across it all, the towers of Jerusalem give the only signal of the spirit, the one token that man has a history.

Upon this unmitigated wilderness, where life is reduced to poverty and danger; where nature starves the imagination, but excites the faculties of perception and curiosity; with the mountain tops and the sunrise in his face, but above all with Jerusalem so near,—Amos did the work which made him a man, heard the voice of God calling him to be a prophet, and gathered those symbols and figures in which his prophet's message still reaches us with so fresh and so austere an air.

Amos was *among the shepherds of Tekoa*. The word for *shepherd* is unusual, and means the herdsman of a peculiar breed of desert sheep, still under the same name prized in Arabia for the excellence of their wool.¹ And he was *a dresser of sycamores*. The tree, which is not our sycamore, is very easily grown in sandy soil with a little water. It reaches a great height and mass of foliage. The fruit is like a small fig, with a sweet but watery taste, and is eaten only by the poor.

¹ נֹקֵד, *nokēd*, is doubtless the same as the Arabic "naḳḳād," or keeper of the "naḳad," defined by Freytag as a short-legged and deformed race of sheep in the Bahrein province of Arabia, from which comes the proverb "viler than a naḳad"; yet the wool is very fine. The king of Moab is called נֹקֵד in 2 Kings iii. 4 (A.V. *sheep-master*). In vii. 14 Amos calls himself בְּנוֹקֵד, *cattleman*, which there is no reason to alter, as some do, to נֹקֵד.

Born not of the fresh twigs, but of the trunk and older branches, the sluggish lumps are provoked to ripen by pinching or bruising, which seems to be the literal meaning of the term that Amos uses of himself—a *pincher of sycomores*.¹ The sycomore does not grow at so high a level as Tekoa ;² and this fact, taken along with the limitation of the ministry of Amos to the Northern Kingdom, has been held to prove that he was originally an Ephraimite, a sycomore-dresser, who had migrated and settled down, as the peculiar phrase of the title says, *among the shepherds of Tekoa*.³ We shall presently see, however, that his familiarity with life in Northern Israel may easily have been won in other ways than through citizenship in that kingdom; while the very general nature of the definition, *among the shepherds of Tekoa*, does not oblige us to place

¹ בֹּלֵס, *bôlès*, probably from a root (found in Æthiopic) *balas*, a *fig*; hence one who *had to do with figs, handled them, ripened them*.

² The Egyptian sycomore, *Ficus sycomorus*, is not found in Syria above one thousand feet above the sea, while Tekoa is more than twice as high as that. Cf. I Kings x. 27, *the sycomores that are in the vale or valley land*, בְּקִיּוֹן; I Chron. xxvii. 28, *the sycomores that are in the low plains*. "The sycamore grows in sand on the edge of the desert as vigorously as in the midst of a well-watered country. Its roots go deep in search of water, which infiltrates as far as the gorges of the hills, and they absorb it freely even where drought seems to reign supreme" (Maspero on the Egyptian sycomore: *The Dawn of Civilization*, translated by McClure, p. 26). "Everywhere on the confines of cultivated ground, and even at some distance from the valley, are fine single sycamores flourishing as though by miracle amid the sand. . . . They drink from water, which has infiltrated from the Nile, and whose existence is nowise betrayed upon the surface of the soil" (*ib.*, 121). Always and still revered by Moslem and Christian.

³ So practically Oort (*Th. Tijdsch.*, 1891, 121 ff.), when compelled to abandon his previous conclusion (*ib.*, 1880, 122 ff.) that the Tekoa of Amos lay in Northern Israel.

either him or his sycomores so high as the village itself. The most easterly township of Judæa, Tekoa commanded the whole of the wilderness beyond, to which indeed it gave its name, *the wilderness of Tekoa*. The shepherds of Tekoa were therefore, in all probability, scattered across the whole region down to the oases on the coast of the Dead Sea, which have generally been owned by one or other of the settled communities in the hill-country above, and may at that time have belonged to Tekoa, just as in Crusading times they belonged to the monks of Hebron, or are to-day cultivated by the Rushaideh Arabs, who pitch their camps not far from Tekoa itself. As you will still find everywhere on the borders of the Syrian desert shepherds nourishing a few fruit-trees round the chief well of their pasture, in order to vary their milk diet, so in some low oasis in the wilderness of Judæa Amos cultivated the poorest, but the most easily grown of fruits, the sycamore.¹ All this pushes Amos and his dwarf sheep deeper into the desert, and emphasises what has been said above, and still remains to be illustrated, of the desert's influence on his discipline as a man and on his speech as a prophet. We ought to remember that in the same desert another prophet was bred, who was also the pioneer of a new dispensation, and whose ministry, both in its strength and its limitations, is much recalled by the ministry of Amos. John the son of Zacharias *grew*

¹ In 1891 we met the Rushaideh, who cultivate Engedi, encamped just below Tekoa. But at other parts of the borders between the hill-country of Judæa and the desert, and between Moab and the desert, we found round most of the herdsmen's central wells a few fig-trees or pomegranates, or even apricots occasionally.

*and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.*¹ Here, too, our Lord was *with the wild beasts.*² How much Amos had been with them may be seen from many of his metaphors. *The lion roareth, who shall not fear? . . . As when the shepherd rescueth from the mouth of the lion two shin-bones or a bit of an ear. . . . It shall be as when one is fleeing from a lion, and a bear cometh upon him; and he entereth a house, and leaneth his hand on the wall, and a serpent biteth him.*

As a wool-grower, however, Amos must have had his yearly journeys among the markets of the land; and to such were probably due his opportunities of familiarity with Northern Israel, the originals of his vivid pictures of her town-life, her commerce and the worship at her great sanctuaries. One hour westward from Tekoa would bring him to the high-road between Hebron and the North, with its troops of pilgrims passing to Beersheba.³ It was but half-an-hour more to the watershed and an open view of the Philistine plain. Bethlehem was only six, Jerusalem twelve miles from Tekoa. Ten miles farther, across the border of Israel, lay Bethel with its temple, seven miles farther Gilgal, and twenty miles farther still Samaria the capital, in all but two days' journey from Tekoa. These had markets as well as shrines;⁴ their annual festivals would be also great fairs. It is certain that Amos visited them; it is even possible that he went to Damascus, in which the Israelites had at the time their own quarters for trading. By road and market he would meet with men of other lands. Phœnician pedlars, or Canaanites as they were called,

Luke i. 80.

² Mark i. 18.

³ v. 5; viii. 14.

⁴ See p. 36.

came up to buy the homespun for which the housewives of Israel were famed¹—hard-faced men who were also willing to purchase slaves, and haunted even the battle-fields of their neighbours for this sinister purpose. Men of Moab, at the time subject to Israel; Aramean hostages; Philistines who held the export trade to Egypt,—these Amos must have met and may have talked with; their dialects scarcely differed from his own. It is no distant, desert echo of life which we hear in his pages, but the thick and noisy rumour of caravan and market-place: how the plague was marching up from Egypt;² ugly stories of the Phœnician slave-trade;³ rumours of the advance of the awful Power, which men were hardly yet accustomed to name, but which had already twice broken from the North upon Damascus. Or it was the progress of some national mourning—how lamentation sprang up in the capital, rolled along the highways, and was re-echoed from the husbandmen and vinedressers on the hillsides.⁴ Or, at closer quarters, we see and hear the bustle of the great festivals and fairs—the *solemn assemblies*, the reeking holocausts, the *noise of songs and viols*;⁵ the brutish religious zeal kindling into drunkenness and lust on the very steps of the altar;⁶ the embezzlement of pledges by the priests, the covetous restlessness of the traders, their false measures, their entanglement of the poor in debt;⁷ the careless luxury of the rich, their *banquets, buckets of wine, ivory couches*, pretentious, preposterous music.⁸ These things are described as by an eyewitness. Amos was not a citizen of the Northern Kingdom, to which he almost

¹ Prov. xxxi. 24.

² vi. 10.

³ i. 9.

⁴ v. 16.

⁵ v. 21 ff.

⁶ ii. 7, 8.

⁷ viii. 4 ff.

⁸ vi. 1, 4-7.

exclusively refers ; but it was because he went up and down in it, using those eyes which the desert air had sharpened, that he so thoroughly learned the wickedness of its people, the corruption of Israel's life in every rank and class of society.¹

But the convictions which he applied to this life Amos learned at home. They came to him over the desert, and without further material signal than was flashed to Tekoa from the towers of Jerusalem. This is placed beyond doubt by the figures in which he describes his call from Jehovah. Contrast his story, so far as he reveals it, with that of another. Some twenty years later, Isaiah of Jerusalem saw the Lord in the Temple, high and lifted up, and all the inaugural vision of this greatest of the prophets was conceived in the figures of the Temple—the altar, the smoke, the burning coals. But to his predecessor *among the shepherds of Tekoa*, although revelation also starts from Jerusalem, it reaches him, not in the sacraments of her sanctuary, but across the bare pastures, and as it were in the roar of a lion. *Jehovah from Zion roareth, and uttereth His voice from Jerusalem.*² We read of no formal process of consecration for this first of the prophets. Through his clear desert air, the word of God breaks upon him without medium or sacrament. And the native vigilance of the man is startled, is convinced by it, beyond all argument or question. *The lion hath roared, who shall not fear? Jehovah hath spoken, who can but prophesy?*

These words are taken from a passage in which Amos illustrates prophecy from other instances of his shepherd life. We have seen what a school of

¹ See pp. 136 f.

² i. 2.

vigilance the desert is. Upon the bare surface all that stirs is ominous. Every shadow, every noise—the shepherd must know what is behind and be warned. Such a vigilance Amos would have Israel apply to his own message, and to the events of their history. Both of these he compares to certain facts of desert life, behind which his shepherdly instincts have taught him to feel an ominous cause. *Do two men walk together except they have trysted?*—except they have made an appointment. Hardly in the desert; for there men meet and take the same road by chance as seldom as ships at sea. *Doth a lion roar in the jungle and have no prey, or a young lion let out his voice in his den except he be taking something?* The hunting lion is silent till his quarry be in sight; when the lonely shepherd hears the roar across the desert, he knows the lion leaps upon his prey, and he shudders as Israel ought to do when they hear God's voice by the prophet, for this also is never loosened but for some grim fact, some leap of doom. Or *doth a little bird fall on the snare earthwards and there be no noose upon her?* The reading may be doubtful, but the meaning is obvious: no one ever saw a bird pulled roughly down to earth when it tried to fly away without knowing there was the loop of a snare about her. Or *does the snare itself rise up from the ground, except indeed it be capturing something?*—except there be in the trap or net something to flutter, struggle and so lift it up. Traps do not move without life in them. Or *is the alarum trumpet¹ blown in a city*—for instance, in high Tekoa up there, when some Arab raid sweeps from the desert

¹ שופר, as has been pointed out, means in early Israel always the trumpet blown as a summons to war; only in later Israel was the name given to the temple trumpet.

on to the fields—and do the people not tremble? Or shall calamity happen in a city and Jehovah not have done it? Yea, the Lord Jehovah doeth nothing but He has revealed His purpose to His servants the prophets. My voice of warning and these events of evil in your midst have the same cause—Jehovah—behind them. *The lion hath roared, who shall not fear? Jehovah hath spoken, who can but prophesy?*¹

We cannot miss the personal note which rings through this triumph in the reality of things unseen. Not only does it proclaim a man of sincerity and conviction: it is resonant with the discipline by which that conviction was won—were won, too, the freedom from illusion and the power of looking at facts in the face, which Amos alone of his contemporaries possessed.

St. Bernard has described the first stage of the Vision of God as the Vision Distributive, in which the eager mind distributes her attention upon common things and common duties in themselves. It was in this elementary school that the earliest of the new prophets passed his apprenticeship and received his gifts. Others excel Amos in the powers of the imagination and the intellect. But by the incorrupt habits of his shepherd's life, by daily wakefulness to its alarms and daily faithfulness to its opportunities, he was trained in that simple power of appreciating facts and causes, which, applied to the great phenomena of the spirit and of history, forms his distinction among his peers. In this we find perhaps the reason why he records of himself no solemn hour of cleansing and initiation. *Jehovah took me from following the flock,*

¹ See further on this important passage pp. 89 ff.

and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel. Amos was of them of whom it is written, "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching." Through all his hard life, this shepherd had kept his mind open and his conscience quick, so that when the word of God came to him he knew it, as fast as he knew the roar of the lion across the moor. Certainly there is no habit, which, so much as this of watching facts with a single eye and a responsible mind, is indispensable alike in the humblest duties and in the highest speculations of life. When Amos gives those naïve illustrations of how real the voice of God is to him, we receive them as the tokens of a man, honest and awake. Little wonder that he refuses to be reckoned among the professional prophets of his day, who found their inspiration in excitement and trance. Upon him the impulses of the Deity come in no artificial and morbid ecstasy, removed as far as possible from real life. They come upon him, as it were, in the open air. They appeal to the senses of his healthy and expert manhood. They convince him of their reality with the same force as do the most startling events of his lonely shepherd watches. *The lion hath roared, who shall not fear? Jehovah hath spoken, who can but prophesy?*

The influence of the same discipline is still visible when Amos passes from the facts of his own consciousness to the facts of his people's life. His day in Israel sweltered with optimism. The glare of wealth, the fulsome love of country, the rank incense of a religion that was without morality—these thickened all the air, and neither the people nor their rulers had any vision. But Amos carried with him his clear desert atmosphere and his desert eyes. He saw the

raw facts: the poverty, the cruel negligence of the rich, the injustice of the rulers, the immorality of the priests. The meaning of these things he questioned with as much persistence as he questioned every suspicious sound or sight upon those pastures of Tekoa. He had no illusions: he knew a mirage when he saw one. Neither the military pride of the people, fostered by recent successes over Syria, nor the dogmas of their religion, which asserted Jehovah's swift triumph upon the heathen, could prevent him from knowing that the immorality of Israel meant Israel's political downfall. He was one of those recruits from common life, by whom religion and the state have at all times been reformed. Springing from the laity and very often from among the working classes, their freedom from dogmas and routine, as well as from the compromising interests of wealth, rank and party, renders them experts in life to a degree that almost no professional priest, statesman or journalist, however honest or sympathetic, can hope to rival. Into politics they bring facts, but into religion they bring vision.

It is of the utmost significance that this reformer, this founder of the highest order of prophecy in Israel, should not only thus begin with facts, but to the very end be occupied with almost nothing else, than the vision and record of them. In Amos there is but one prospect of the Ideal. It does not break till the close of his book, and then in such contrast to the plain and final indictments, which constitute nearly all the rest of his prophesying, that many have not unnaturally denied to him the verses which contain it. Throughout the other chapters we have but the exposure of present facts, material and moral, nor the sight of any future more distant than to-morrow and

the immediate consequences of to-day's deeds. Let us mark this. The new prophecy which Amos started in Israel reached Divine heights of hope, unfolded infinite powers of moral and political regeneration—dared to blot out all the past, dared to believe all things possible in the future. But it started from the truth about the moral situation of the present. Its first prophet not only denied every popular dogma and ideal, but appears not to have substituted for them any others. He spent his gifts of vision on the discovery and appreciation of facts. Now this is necessary, not only in great reformations of religion, but at almost every stage in her development. We are constantly disposed to abuse even the most just and necessary of religious ideals as substitutes for experience or as escapes from duty, and to boast about the future before we have understood or mastered the present. Hence the need of realists like Amos. Though they are destitute of dogma, of comfort, of hope, of the ideal, let us not doubt that they also stand in the succession of the prophets of the Lord.

Nay, this is a stage of prophecy on which may be fulfilled the prayer of Moses: *Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets!* To see the truth and tell it, to be accurate and brave about the moral facts of our day—to this extent the Vision and the Voice are possible for every one of us. Never for us may the doors of heaven open, as they did for him who stood on the threshold of the earthly temple, and he saw the Lord enthroned, while the Seraphim of the Presence sang the glory. Never for us may the skies fill with that tempest of life which Ezekiel beheld from Shinar, and above it the sapphire throne, and on the throne the likeness of a man, the likeness

of the glory of the Lord. Yet let us remember that to see facts as they are and to tell the truth about them—this also is prophecy. We may inhabit a sphere which does not prompt the imagination, but is as destitute of the historic and traditional as was the wilderness of Tekoa. All the more may our unglamoured eyes be true to the facts about us. Every common day leads forth her duties as shining as every night leads forth her stars. The deeds and the fortunes of men are in our sight, and spell, to all who will honestly read, the very Word of the Lord. If only we be loyal, then by him who made the rude sounds and sights of the desert his sacraments, and whose vigilance of things seen and temporal became the vision of things unseen and eternal, we also shall see God, and be sure of His ways with men.

Before we pass from the desert discipline of the prophet, we must notice one of its effects, which, while it greatly enhanced the clearness of his vision, undoubtedly disabled Amos for the highest prophetic rank. He who lives in the desert lives without patriotism—detached and aloof. He may see the throng of men more clearly than those who move among it. He cannot possibly so much feel for them. Unlike Hosea, Isaiah and Jeremiah, Amos was not a citizen of the kingdom against which he prophesied, and indeed no proper citizen of any kingdom, but a nomad herdsman, hovering on the desert borders of Judæa. He saw Israel from the outside. His message to her is achieved with scarcely one sob in his voice. For the sake of the poor and the oppressed among the people he is indignant. But with the erring, staggering nation as a whole he has no real sympathy. His pity for her is exhausted in one elegy and two

brief intercessions ; hardly more than once does he even call her to repentance. His sense of justice, in fact, had almost never to contend with his love. This made Amos the better witness, but the worse prophet. He did not rise so high as his great successors, because he did not so feel himself one with the people whom he was forced to condemn, because he did not bear their fate as his own nor travail for their new birth. "Ihm fehlt die Liebe." Love is the element lacking in his prophecy ; and therefore the words are true of him, which were uttered of his great follower across this same wilderness of Judæa, that mighty as were his voice and his message to prepare the way of the Lord, yet *the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.*

2. THE WORD AND ITS ORIGINS.

AMOS i. 2 ; iii. 3-8 ; and *passim.*

We have seen the preparation of the Man for the Word. We are now to ask, Whence came the Word to the Man?—the Word that made him a prophet. What were its sources and sanctions outside himself? These involve other questions. How much of his message did Amos inherit from the previous religion of his people? And how much did he teach for the first time in Israel? And again, how much of this new element did he owe to the great events of his day? And how much demands some other source of inspiration?

To all these inquiries, outlines of the answers ought by this time to have become visible. We have seen that the contents of the Book of Amos consist almost entirely of two kinds : facts, actual or imminent, in the history of his people ; and certain moral principles of

the most elementary order. Amos appeals to no dogma nor form of law, nor to any religious or national institution. Still more remarkably, he does not rely upon miracle nor any so-called "supernatural sign." To employ the terms of Mazzini's famous formula, Amos draws his materials solely from "conscience and history." Within himself he hears certain moral principles speak in the voice of God, and certain events of his day he recognises as the judicial acts of God. The principles condemn the living generation of Israel as morally corrupt; the events threaten the people with political extinction. From this agreement between inward conviction and outward event Amos draws his full confidence as a prophet, and enforces on the people his message of doom as God's own word.

The passage in which Amos most explicitly illustrates this harmony between event and conviction is one whose metaphors we have already quoted in proof of the desert's influence upon the prophet's life. When Amos asks, *Can two walk together except they have made an appointment?* his figure is drawn, as we have seen, from the wilderness in which two men will hardly meet except they have arranged to do so; but the truth, he would illustrate by the figure, is that two sets of phenomena which coincide must have sprung from a common purpose. Their conjunction forbids mere chance. What kind of phenomena he means, he lets us see in his next instance: *Doth a lion roar in the jungle and have no prey? Doth a young lion let forth his voice from his den except he be catching something?* That is, those ominous sounds never happen without some fell and terrible deed happening along with them. Amos thus plainly hints that the two phenomena on whose coincidence he insists are an utterance on one side, and

on the other side a deed fraught with destruction. The reading of the next metaphor about the bird and the snare is uncertain; at most what it means is that you never see signs of distress or a vain struggle to escape without there being, though out of sight, some real cause for them.¹ But from so general a principle he returns in his fourth metaphor to the special coincidence between utterance and deed. *Is the alarum-trumpet blown in a city and do the people not tremble?* Of course they do; they know such sound is never made without the approach of calamity. But who is the author of every calamity? God Himself: *Shall there be evil in a city and Jehovah not have done it?* Very well then; we have seen that common life has many instances in which, when an ominous sound is heard, it is because it is closely linked with a fatal deed. These happen together, not by mere chance, but because the one is the expression, the warning or the explanation of the other. And we also know that fatal deeds which happen to any community in Israel are from Jehovah. He is behind them. But they, too, are accompanied by a warning voice from the same source as themselves. This is the voice which the prophet hears in his heart—the moral conviction which he feels as the Word of God. *The Lord Jehovah doeth nothing but He hath revealed His counsel to His servants the prophets.* Mark the grammar: the revelation comes first to the prophet's heart; then he sees and recognises the event, and is confident to give his message about it. So Amos,

¹ *Shall a little bird fall on the snare earthwards and there be no noose about her? Shall a snare rise from the ground and not be taking something?* On this see p. 82. Its meaning seems to be equivalent to the Scottish proverb: "There's aye some water whan the stirkie droons."

repeating his metaphor, sums up his argument. *The Lion hath roared, who shall not fear?*—certain that there is more than sound to happen. *The Lord Jehovah hath spoken, who can but prophesy?*—certain that what Jehovah has spoken to him inwardly is likewise no mere sound, but that deeds of judgment are about to happen, as the ominous voice requires they should.¹

The prophet then is made sure of his message by the agreement between the inward convictions of his soul and the outward events of the day. When these walk together, it proves that they have come of a common purpose. He who causes the events—it is Jehovah Himself, *for shall there be evil in a city and Jehovah not have done it?*—must be author also of the inner voice or conviction which agrees with them. *Who then can but prophesy?* Observe again that no support is here derived from miracle; nor is any claim made for the prophet on the ground of his ability to foretell the event. It is the agreement of the idea with the fact, their evident common origin in the purpose of Jehovah, which makes a man sure that he has in him the Word of God. Both are necessary, and together are enough. Are we then to leave the origin of the Word in this coincidence of fact and thought—as it were an electric flash produced by the contact of conviction with event? Hardly: there are questions behind this coincidence. For instance, as to how the two react on each other—the event provoking the conviction, the conviction interpreting the event? The argument of Amos seems to imply that the ethical principles are experienced by the prophet prior to the events which justify them.

¹ There is thus no reason to alter the words *who shall not prophesy* to *who shall not tremble*—as Wellhausen does. To do so is to blunt the point of the argument.

Is this so, or was the shock of the events required to awaken the principles? And if the principles were prior, whence did Amos derive them? These are some questions that will lead us to the very origins of revelation.

The greatest of the events with which Amos and his contemporaries dealt was the Assyrian invasion. In a previous chapter we have tried to estimate the intellectual effects of Assyria on prophecy.¹ Assyria widened the horizon of Israel, put the world to Hebrew eyes into a new perspective, vastly increased the possibilities of history and set to religion a novel order of problems. We can trace the effects upon Israel's conceptions of God, of man and even of nature.² Now it might be plausibly argued that the new prophecy in Israel was first stirred and quickened by all this mental shock and strain, and that even the loftier ethics of the prophets were thus due to the advance of Assyria. For, as the most vigilant watchmen of their day, the prophets observed the rise of that empire, and felt its fatality for Israel. Turning then to inquire the Divine reasons for such a destruction, they found these in Israel's sinfulness, to the full extent of which their hearts were at last awakened. According to such a theory the prophets were politicians first and moralists afterwards: alarmists to begin with, and preachers of repentance only second. Or—to recur to the language employed above—the prophets' experience of the historical event preceded their conviction of the moral principle which agreed with it.

In support of such a theory it is pointed out that after all the most original element in the prophecy of

¹ See Chap. IV.

² See pp. 53 ff.

the eighth century was the announcement of Israel's fall and exile. The Righteousness of Jehovah had often previously been enforced in Israel, but never had any voice drawn from it this awful conclusion that the nation must perish. The first in Israel to dare this was Amos, and surely what enabled him to do so was the imminence of Assyria upon his people. Again, such a theory might plausibly point to the opening verse of the Book of Amos, with its unprefaced, unexplained pronouncement of doom upon Israel:—

*The Lord roareth from Zion,
And giveth voice from Jerusalem;
And the pastures of the shepherds mourn,
And the summit of Carmel is withered!*

Here, it might be averred, is the earliest prophet's earliest utterance. Is it not audibly the voice of a man in a panic—such a panic as, ever on the eve of historic convulsions, seizes the more sensitive minds of a doomed people? The distant Assyrian thunder has reached Amos, on his pastures, unprepared—unable to articulate its exact meaning, and with only faith enough to hear in it the voice of his God. He needs reflection to unfold its contents; and the process of this reflection we find through the rest of his book. There he details for us, with increasing clearness, both the ethical reasons and the political results of that Assyrian terror, by which he was at first so wildly shocked into prophecy.

But the panic-born are always the still-born; and it is simply impossible that prophecy, in all her ethical and religious vigour, can have been the daughter of so fatal a birth. If we look again at the evidence which is quoted from Amos in favour of such a theory, we

shall see how fully it is contradicted by other features of his book.

To begin with, we are not certain that the terror of the opening verse of Amos is the Assyrian terror. Even if it were, the opening of a book does not necessarily represent the writer's earliest feelings. The rest of the chapters contain visions and oracles which obviously date from a time when Amos was not yet startled by Assyria, but believed that the punishment which Israel required might be accomplished through a series of physical calamities—locusts, drought and pestilence.¹ Nay, it was not even these earlier judgments, preceding the Assyrian, which stirred the word of God in the prophet. He introduces them with a *now* and a *therefore*. That is to say, he treats them only as the consequence of certain facts, the conclusion of certain premises. These facts and premises are moral—they are exclusively moral. They are the sins of Israel's life, regarded without illusion and without pity. They are certain simple convictions, which fill the prophet's heart, about the impossibility of the survival of any state which is so perverse and so corrupt.

This origin of prophecy in moral facts and moral intuitions, which are in their beginning independent of political events, may be illustrated by several other points. For instance, the sins which Amos marked in Israel were such as required no "red dawn of judgment" to expose their flagrance and fatality. The abuse of justice, the cruelty of the rich, the shameless immorality of the priests, are not sins which we feel only in the cool of the day, when God Himself draws near to judgment. They are such things as make men

¹ See pp. 69 f.

shiver in the sunshine. And so the Book of Amos, and not less that of Hosea, tremble with the feeling that Israel's social corruption is great enough of itself, without the aid of natural convulsions, to shake the very basis of national life. *Shall not the land tremble for this, Amos says after reciting some sins, and every one that dwelleth therein?*¹ Not drought nor pestilence nor invasion is needed for Israel's doom, but the elemental force of ruin which lies in the people's own wickedness. This is enough to create gloom long before the political skies be overcast—or, as Amos himself puts it, this is enough

*To cause the sun to go down at noon,
And to darken the earth in the clear day.*²

And once more—in spite of Assyria the ruin may be averted, if only the people will repent: *Seek good and not evil, and Jehovah of hosts will be with you, as you say.*³ Assyria, however threatening, becomes irrelevant to Israel's future from the moment that Israel repents.

Such beliefs, then, are obviously not the results of experience, nor of a keen observation of history. They are the primal convictions of the heart, which are deeper than all experience, and themselves contain the sources of historical foresight. With Amos it was not the outward event which inspired the inward conviction, but the conviction which anticipated and interpreted the event, though when the event came there can be no doubt that it confirmed, deepened, and articulated the conviction.⁴

¹ viii. 8.

² viii. 9.

³ v. 14.

⁴ How far Assyria assisted the development of prophecy we have already seen. But we have been made aware, at the same time, that Assyria's service to Israel in this respect presupposed the possession

But when we have thus tracked the stream of prophecy as far back as these elementary convictions we have not reached the fountain-head. Whence did Amos derive his simple and absolute ethics? Were they original to him? Were they new in Israel? Such questions start an argument which touches the very origins of revelation.

It is obvious that Amos not only takes for granted the laws of righteousness which he enforces: he takes for granted also the people's conscience of them. New, indeed, is the doom which sinful Israel deserves, and original to himself is the proclamation of it; but Amos appeals to the moral principles which justify the doom, as if they were not new, and as if Israel ought always to have known them. This attitude of the prophet to his principles has, in our time, suffered a curious judgment. It has been called an anachronism. So absolute a morality, some say, had never before been taught in Israel; nor had righteousness been so exclusively emphasised as the purpose of Jehovah. Amos and the other prophets of his century were the virtual "creators of ethical monotheism": it could only be by a prophetic licence or prophetic fiction that he appealed to his people's conscience of the standards he promulgated, or condemned his generation to death for not having lived up to them.

Let us see how far this criticism is supported by the facts.

To no sane observer can the religious history of

by the prophets of certain beliefs in the character and will of their God, Jehovah. The prophets' faith could never have risen to the magnitude of the new problems set to it by Assyria if there had not been already inherent in it that belief in the sovereignty of a Righteousness of which all things material were but the instruments.

Israel appear as anything but a course of gradual development. Even in the moral standards, in respect to which it is confessedly often most difficult to prove growth, the signs of the nation's progress are very manifest. Practices come to be forbidden in Israel and tempers to be mitigated, which in earlier ages were sanctioned to their extreme by the explicit decrees of religion. In the nation's attitude to the outer world sympathies arise, along with ideals of spiritual service, where previously only war and extermination had been enforced in the name of the Deity. Now in such an evolution it is equally indubitable that the longest and most rapid stage was the prophecy of the eighth century. The prophets of that time condemn acts which had been inspired by their immediate predecessors;¹ they abjure, as impeding morality, a ceremonial which the spiritual leaders of earlier generations had felt to be indispensable to religion; and they unfold ideals of the nation's moral destiny, of which older writings give us only the faintest hints. Yet, while the fact of a religious evolution in Israel is thus certain, we must not fall into the vulgar error which interprets evolution as if it were mere addition, nor forget that even in the most creative periods of religion nothing is brought forth which has not already been promised, and, at some earlier stage, placed, so to speak, within reach of the human mind. After all it is the mind which grows; the moral ideals which become visible to its more matured vision are so Divine that, when they present themselves, the mind cannot but think they were always real and always imperative. If we

¹ Compare, for instance, Hosea's condemnation of Jehu's murder of Joram, with Elisha's command to do it; also 2 Kings iii. 19, 25, with Deut. xx. 19.

remember these commonplaces we shall do justice both to Amos and to his critics.

In the first place it is clear that most of the morality which Amos enforced is of that fundamental order which can never have been recognised as the discovery or invention of any prophet. Whatever be their origin, the conscience of justice, the duty of kindness to the poor, the horror of wanton cruelty towards one's enemies, which form the chief principles of Amos, are discernible in man as far back as history allows us to search for them. Should a generation have lost them, they can be brought back to it, never with the thrill of a new lesson, but only with the shame of an old and an abused memory. To neither man nor people can the righteousness which Amos preached appear as a discovery, but always as a recollection and a remorse. And this is most emphatically true of the people of Moses and of Samuel, of Nathan, of Elijah and of the Book of the Covenant. Ethical elements had been characteristic of Israel's religion from the very first. They were not due to a body of written law, but rather to the character of Israel's God, appreciated by the nation in all the great crises of their history.¹ Jehovah had won for Israel freedom and unity. He had been a spirit of justice to their lawgivers and magistrates.² He had raised up a succession of consecrated personalities,³ who by life and word had purified the ideals of the whole people. The results had appeared in the creation of a strong national conscience, which avenged with horror, as *folly in Israel*, the wanton crimes of any person or section of the commonwealth; in the gradual formation of a legal code, founded indeed

¹ See above, p. 10.

² Isa. xxviii.

³ Amos ii.

in the common custom of the Semites, but greatly more moral than that; and even in the attainment of certain profoundly ethical beliefs about God and His relations, beyond Israel, to all mankind. Now, let us understand once for all, that in the ethics of Amos there is nothing which is not rooted in one or other of these achievements of the previous religion of his people. To this religion Amos felt himself attached in the closest possible way. The word of God comes to him across the desert, as we have seen, yet not out of the air. From the first he hears it rise from that one monument of his people's past which we have found visible on his physical horizon¹—*from Zion, from Jerusalem,*² from the city of David, from the Ark, whose ministers were Moses and Samuel, from the repository of the main tradition of Israel's religion.³ Amos felt himself in the sacred succession; and his feeling is confirmed by the contents of his book. The details of that civic justice which he demands from his generation are found in the Book of the Covenant—the only one of Israel's great codes which appears by this time to have been in existence;⁴ or in those popular proverbs which almost as certainly were found in early Israel.⁵

¹ *Ante*, p. 74.

² i. 2.

³ Therefore we see at a glance how utterly inadequate is Renan's brilliant comparison of Amos to a modern revolutionary journalist (*Histoire du Peuple Israel*, II.). Journalist indeed! How all this would-be cosmopolitan and impartial critic's judgments smack of the boulevards!

⁴ Exod. xx.; incorporated in the JE book of history, and, according to nearly all critics, complete by 750; the contents must have been familiar in Israel long before that. There is no trace in Amos of any influence peculiar to either the Deuteronomic or the Levitical legislation.

⁵ See especially Schultz, *O. T. Theol.*, Eng. Trans. by Paterson, I. 214.

Nor does Amos go elsewhere for the religious sanctions of his ethics. It is by the ancient mercies of God towards Israel that he shames and convicts his generation—by the deeds of grace which made them a nation, by the organs of doctrine and reproof which have inspired them, unailing from age to age. *I destroyed the Amorite before them. . . . Yea, I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and I led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorites. And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazirites. Was it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith Jehovah.*¹ We cannot even say that the belief which Amos expresses in Jehovah as the supreme Providence of the world² was a new thing in Israel, for a belief as universal inspires those portions of the Book of Genesis which, like the Book of the Covenant, were already extant.

We see, therefore, what right Amos had to present his ethical truths to Israel, as if they were not new, but had been within reach of his people from of old.

We could not, however, commit a greater mistake, than to confine the inspiration of our prophet to the past, and interpret his doctrines as mere inferences from the earlier religious ideas of Israel—inferences forced by his own passionate logic, or more naturally ripened for him by the progress of events. A recent writer has thus summarised the work of the prophets of the eighth century: "In fact they laid hold upon that bias towards the ethical, which dwelt in Jahwism from Moses onwards, and they allowed it alone to have

¹ ii. 9-11. On this passage see further p. 137.

² If iv. 13, v. 8 and ix. 6 be genuine, this remark equally applies to belief in Jehovah as Creator.

value as corresponding to the true religion of Jehovah."¹ But this is too abstract to be an adequate statement of the prophets' own consciousness. What overcame Amos was a Personal Influence—the Impression of a Character; and it was this not only as it was revealed in the past of his people. The God who stands behind Amos is indeed the ancient Deity of Israel, and the facts which prove Him God are those which made the nation—the Exodus, the guidance through the wilderness, the overthrow of the Amorites, the gift of the land. *Was it not even thus, O ye children of Israel?* But what beats and burns through the pages of Amos is not the memory of those wonderful works, so much as a fresh vision and understanding of the Living God who worked them. Amos has himself met with Jehovah on the conditions of his own time—on the moral situation provided by the living generation of Israel. By an intercourse conducted, not through the distant signals of the past, but here and now, through the events of the prophet's own day, Amos has received an original and overpowering conviction of his people's God as absolute righteousness. What prophecy had hitherto felt in part, and applied to one or other of the departments of Israel's life, Amos is the first to feel in its fulness, and to every extreme of its consequences upon the worship, the conduct and the fortunes of the nation. To him Jehovah not only commands this and that righteous law, but Jehovah and righteousness are absolutely identical. *Seek Jehovah and ye shall live . . . seek good and ye shall live.*² The absoluteness with which Amos conceived this principle, the courage with which he

¹ Kayser, *Old Testament Theology*.

² v. 6, 14.

applied it, carry him along those two great lines upon which we most clearly trace his originality as a prophet. In the strength of this principle he does what is really new in Israel: he discards the two elements which had hitherto existed alongside the ethical, and had fettered and warped it.

Up till now the ethical spirit of the religion of Jehovah¹ had to struggle with two beliefs which we can trace back to the Semitic origins of the religion—the belief, namely, that, as the national God, Jehovah would always defend their political interests, irrespective of morality; and the belief that a ceremonial of rites and sacrifices was indispensable to religion. These principles were mutual: as the deity was bound to succour the people, so were the people bound to supply the deity with gifts, and the more of these they brought the more they made sure of his favours. Such views were not absolutely devoid of moral benefit. In the formative period of the nation they had contributed both discipline and hope. But of late they had between them engrossed men's hearts, and crushed out of religion both conscience and common-sense. By the first of them, the belief in Jehovah's predestined protection of Israel, the people's eyes were so holden they could not see how threatening were the times; by the other, the confidence in ceremonial, conscience was dulled, and that immorality permitted which they mingled so shamelessly with their religious zeal. Now the conscience of Amos did not merely protest against the predominance of the two, but was so exclusive, so spiritual, that it boldly banished both from religion. Amos denied that Jehovah was bound to save His people;

¹ See above, p. 18.

he affirmed that ritual and sacrifice were no part of the service He demands from men. This is the measure of originality in our prophet. The two religious principles which were inherent in the very fibre of Semitic religion, and which till now had gone unchallenged in Israel, Amos cast forth from religion in the name of a pure and absolute righteousness. On the one hand, Jehovah's peculiar connection with Israel meant no more than jealousy for their holiness: *You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.*¹ And, on the other hand, all their ceremonial was abhorrent to Him: *I hate, I despise your festivals. . . . Though ye offer Me burnt offerings and your meal offerings, I will not accept them. . . . Take thou away from Me the noise of thy songs; I will not hear the music of thy viols. But let justice run down as waters, and righteousness as a perennial stream.*²

It has just been said that emphasis upon morality as the sum of religion, to the exclusion of sacrifice, is the most original element in the prophecies of Amos. He himself, however, does not regard this as proclaimed for the first time in Israel, and the precedent he quotes is so illustrative of the sources of his inspiration that we do well to look at it for a little. In the verse next to the one last quoted he reports these words of God: *Did ye offer unto Me sacrifices and gifts in the wilderness, for forty years, O house of Israel?* An extraordinary challenge! From the present blind routine of sacrifice Jehovah appeals to the beginning of His relations with the nation: did they then perform such services to Him? Of course, a negative answer is expected. No other agrees with the main contention of the passage.

¹ iii. 2.

² v. 21 ff.

In the wilderness Israel had not offered sacrifices and gifts to Jehovah. Jeremiah quotes a still more explicit word of Jehovah: *I spake not unto your fathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices: but this thing I commanded them, saying, Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be My people.*¹

To these Divine statements we shall not be able to do justice if we hold by the traditional view that the Levitical legislation was proclaimed in the wilderness. Discount that legislation, and the statements become clear. It is true, of course, that Israel must have had a ritual of some kind from the first; and that both in the wilderness and in Canaan their spiritual leaders must have performed sacrifices as if these were acceptable to Jehovah. But even so the Divine words which Amos and Jeremiah quote are historically correct; for while the ethical contents of the religion of Jehovah were its original and essential contents—*I commanded them, saying, Obey My voice*—the ritual was but a modification of the ritual common to all Semites; and ever since the occupation of the land, it had, through the infection of the Canaanite rites on the high places, grown more and more Pagan, both in its functions and in the ideas which these were supposed to express.² Amos was right. Sacrifice had never been the Divine, the revealed element in the religion of Jehovah. Nevertheless, before Amos no prophet in Israel appears to have said so. And what enabled this man in the eighth century to offer testimony, so novel but so true, about the far-away beginnings of his people's religion in the fourteenth, was

¹ Jer. vii. 22 f.

² See above, p. 23.

plainly neither tradition nor historical research, but an overwhelming conviction of the spiritual and moral character of God—of Him who had been Israel's God both then and now, and whose righteousness had been, just as much then as now, exalted above all purely national interests and all susceptibility to ritual. When we thus see the prophet's knowledge of the Living God enabling him, not only to proclaim an ideal of religion more spiritual than Israel had yet dreamed, but to perceive that such an ideal had been the essence of the religion of Jehovah from the first, we understand how thoroughly Amos was mastered by that knowledge. If we need any further proof of his "possession" by the character of God, we find it in those phrases in which his own consciousness disappears, and we have no longer the herald's report of the Lord's words, but the very accents of the Lord Himself, fraught with personal feeling of the most intense quality. *I Jehovah hate, I despise your feast days. . . . Take thou away from Me the noise of thy songs; I will not hear the music of thy viols.¹ . . . I abhor the arrogance of Jacob, and hate his palaces.² . . . The eyes of the Lord Jehovah are upon the sinful kingdom.³ . . . Jehovah sweareth, I will never forget any of their works.⁴* Such sentences reveal a Deity who is not only manifest Character, but surgent and importunate Feeling. We have traced the prophet's word to its ultimate source. It springs from the righteousness, the vigilance, the urgency of the Eternal. The intellect, imagination and heart of Amos—the convictions he has inherited from his people's past, his conscience of their evil life to-day, his impressions of current and coming history—

¹ v. 21-23.² vi. 8.³ ix. 8.⁴ viii. 7.

are all enforced and illuminated, all made impetuous and radiant, by the Spirit, that is to say the Purpose and the Energy, of the Living God. Therefore, as he says in the title of his book, or as some one says for him, Amos *saw* his words. They stood out objective to himself. And they were not mere sound. They glowed and burned with God.

When we realise this, we feel how inadequate it is to express prophecy in the terms of evolution. No doubt, as we have seen, the ethics and religion of Amos represent a large and measurable advance upon those of earlier Israel. And yet with Amos we do not seem so much to have arrived at a new stage in a Process, as to have penetrated to the Idea which has been behind the Process from the beginning. The change and growth of Israel's religion are realities—their fruits can be seen, defined, catalogued—but a greater reality is the unseen Purpose which impels them. They have been expressed only now. He has been unchanging from old and for ever—from the first absolute righteousness in Himself, and absolute righteousness in His demands from men.

3. THE PROPHET AND HIS MINISTRY.

AMOS vii., viii. 1-4.

We have seen the preparation of the Man for the Word; we have sought to trace to its source the Word which came to the Man. It now remains for us to follow the Prophet, Man and Word combined, upon his Ministry to the people.

For reasons given in a previous chapter,¹ there must

¹ Chap. V., p. 71.

always be some doubt as to the actual course of the ministry of Amos before his appearance at Bethel. Most authorities, however, agree that the visions recounted in the beginning of the seventh chapter form the substance of his address at Bethel, which was interrupted by the priest Amaziah. These visions furnish a probable summary of the prophet's experience up to that point. While they follow the same course, which we trace in the two series of oracles that now precede them in the book, the ideas in them are less elaborate. At the same time it is evident that Amos must have already spoken upon other points than those which he puts into the first three visions. For instance, Amaziah reports to the king that Amos had explicitly predicted the exile of the whole people¹—a conviction which, as we have seen, the prophet reached only after some length of experience. It is equally certain that Amos must have already exposed the sins of the people in the light of the Divine righteousness. Some of the sections of the book which deal with this subject appear to have been originally spoken; and it is unnatural to suppose that the prophet announced the chastisements of God without having previously justified these to the consciences of men.

If this view be correct, Amos, having preached for some time to Israel concerning the evil state of society, appeared at a great religious festival in Bethel, determined to bring matters to a crisis, and to announce the doom which his preaching threatened and the people's continued impenitence made inevitable. Mark his choice of place and of audience. It was no mere king he aimed at. Nathan had dealt with David,

¹ vii. 11.

Gad with Solomon, Elijah with Ahab and Jezebel. But Amos sought the people, them with whom resided the real forces and responsibilities of life: the wealth, the social fashions, the treatment of the poor, the spirit of worship, the ideals of religion.¹ And Amos sought the people upon what was not only a great popular occasion, but one on which was arrayed, in all pomp and lavishness, the very system he essayed to overthrow. The religion of his time—religion as mere ritual and sacrifice—was what God had sent him to beat down, and he faced it at its headquarters, and upon one of its high days, in the royal and popular sanctuary where it enjoyed at once the patronage of the crown, the lavish gifts of the rich and the thronged devotion of the multitude. As Savonarola at the Duomo in Florence, as Luther at the Diet of Worms, as our Lord Himself at the feast in Jerusalem, so was Amos at the feast in Bethel. Perhaps he was still more lonely. He speaks nowhere of having made a disciple, and in the sea of faces which turned on him when he spoke, it is probable that he could not welcome a single ally. They were officials, or interested traders, or devotees; he was a foreigner and a wild man, with a word that spared the popular dogma as little as the royal prerogative. Well for him was it that over all those serried ranks of authority, those fanatic crowds, that lavish splendour, another vision commanded his eyes. *I saw the Lord standing over the altar, and He said, Smite.*

Amos told the pilgrims at Bethel that the first events of his time in which he felt a purpose of God in

¹ On the ministry of eighth-century prophets to the people see the author's *Isaiah*, I., p. 119.

harmony with his convictions about Israel's need of punishment were certain calamities of a physical kind. Of these, which in chapter iv. he describes as successively drought, blasting, locusts, pestilence and earthquake, he selected at Bethel only two—locusts and drought—and he began with the locusts. It may have been either the same visitation as he specifies in chapter iv., or a previous one; for of all the plagues of Palestine locusts have been the most frequent, occurring every six or seven years. *Thus the Lord Jehovah caused me to see: and, behold, a brood¹ of locusts at the beginning of the coming up of the spring crops.* In the Syrian year there are practically two tides of verdure: one which starts after the early rains of October and continues through the winter, checked by the cold; and one which comes away with greater force under the influence of the latter rains and more genial airs of spring.² Of these it was the later and richer which the locusts had attacked. *And, behold, it was after the king's mowings.* These seem to have been a tribute which the kings of Israel levied on the spring herbage, and which the Roman governors of Syria used annually to impose in the month Nisan.³ *After the king's mowings* would be a phrase to mark the time when everybody else might turn to reap their green

¹ So LXX., followed by Hitzig and Wellhausen, by reading יִצְרָאֵל for יִצְרָאֵל.

² Cf. *Hist. Geography of the Holy Land*, pp. 64 ff. The word translated *spring crop* above is שֶׁלֶקֶט, and from the same root as the name of the latter rain, מִלְקוֹט, which falls in the end of March or beginning of April. Cf. *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, IV. 83; VIII. 62.

³ Cf. 1 Kings xviii. 5 with 1 Sam. vii. 15, 17; 1 Kings iv. 7 ff. See Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 228.

stuff. It was thus the very crisis of the year when the locusts appeared; the April crops devoured, there was no hope of further fodder till December. Still, the calamity had happened before, and had been survived; a nation so vigorous and wealthy as Israel was under Jeroboam II. need not have been frightened to death. But Amos felt it with a conscience. To him it was the beginning of that destruction of his people which the spirit within him knew that their sin had earned. So *it came to pass, when the locusts had made an end of devouring the verdure of the earth, that I said, Remit, I pray Thee, or pardon*—a proof that there already weighed on the prophet's spirit something more awful than loss of grass—*how shall Jacob rise again? for he is little.*¹ The prayer was heard. *Jehovah repented for this: It shall not be, said Jehovah.* The unnameable *it* must be the same as in the frequent phrase of the first chapter: *I will not turn It back*—namely, the final execution of doom on the people's sin. The reserve with which this is mentioned, both while there is still chance for the people to repent and after it has become irrevocable, is very impressive.

The next example which Amos gave at Bethel of his permitted insight into God's purpose was a great drought. *Thus the Lord Jehovah made me to see: and, behold, the Lord Jehovah was calling fire into the quarrel.*² There was, then, already a quarrel between Jehovah

¹ LXX.: *Who shall raise up Jacob again?*

² So Professor A. B. Davidson. But the grammar might equally well afford the rendering *one calling that the Lord will punish with the fire*, the ל of לריב marking the introduction of indirect speech (cf. Ewald, § 338a). But Hitzig for קרא reads קרַי (Deut. xxv. 18), to occur, happen. So similarly Wellhausen, *es nahte sich zu strafen mit Feuer der Herr Jahve*. All these renderings yield practically the same meaning.

and His people—another sign that the prophet's moral conviction of Israel's sin preceded the rise of the events in which he recognised its punishment. *And the fire devoured the Great Deep, yea, it was about to devour the land.*¹ Severe drought in Palestine might well be described as fire, even when it was not accompanied by the flame and smoke of those forest and prairie fires which Joel describes as its consequences.² But to have the full fear of such a drought, we should need to feel beneath us the curious world which the men of those days felt. To them the earth rested in a great deep, from whose stores all her springs and fountains burst. When these failed it meant that the unfathomed floods below were burnt up. But how fierce the flame that could effect this! And how certainly able to devour next the solid land which rested above the deep—the very *Portion*³ assigned by God to His people. Again Amos interceded: *Lord Jehovah, I pray Thee forbear: how shall Jacob rise? for he is little.* And for the second time Jacob was reprieved. *Jehovah repented for this: It also shall not come to pass, said the Lord Jehovah.*

We have treated these visions, not as the imagination or prospect of possible disasters,⁴ but as insight into the meaning of actual plagues. Such a treatment is

¹ A. B. Davidson, *Syntax*, § 57, Rem. 1.

² i. 19 f.

³ Cf. Micah ii. 3. קָלִיל is the word used, and according to the motive given above stands well for the climax of the fire's destructive work. This meets the objection of Wellhausen, who proposes to omit קָלִיל , because the heat does not dry up first the great deep and then the fields (*Ackerflur*). This is to mistake the obvious point of the sentence. The drought was so great that, after the fountains were exhausted, it seemed as if the solid framework of the land, described with very apt pathos as the *Portion*, would be the next to disappear. Some take קָלִיל as *divided*, therefore cultivated, ground.

⁴ So for instance, Von Orelli.

justified, not only by the invariable habit of Amos to deal with real facts, but also by the occurrence of these same plagues among the series by which, as we are told, God had already sought to move the people to repentance.¹ The general question of sympathy between such purely physical disasters and the moral evil of a people we may postpone to another chapter, confining ourselves here to the part played in the events by the prophet himself.

Surely there is something wonderful in the attitude of this shepherd to the fires and plagues that Nature sweeps upon his land. He is ready for them. And he is ready not only by the general feeling of his time that such things happen of the wrath of God. His sovereign and predictive conscience recognises them as her ministers. They are sent to punish a people whom she has already condemned. Yet, unlike Elijah, Amos does not summon the drought, nor even welcome its arrival. How far has prophecy travelled since the violent Tishbite! With all his conscience of Israel's sin, Amos yet prays that their doom may be turned. We have here some evidence of the struggle through which these later prophets passed, before they accepted their awful messages to men. Even Amos, desert-bred and living aloof from Israel, shrank from the judgment which it was his call to publish. For two moments—they would appear to be the only two in his ministry—his heart contended with his conscience, and twice he entreated God to forgive. At Bethel he told the people all this, in order to show how unwillingly he took up his duty against them, and how inevitable he found that duty to be. But still more shall we learn from his tale, if we feel in his words about the smallness of

¹ Chap. iv.

Jacob, not pity only, but sympathy. We shall learn that prophets are never made solely by the bare word of God, but that even the most objective and judicial of them has to earn his title to proclaim judgment by suffering with men the agony of the judgment he proclaims. Never to a people came there a true prophet who had not first prayed for them. To have entreated for men, to have represented them in the highest courts of Being, is to have deserved also supreme judicial rights upon them. And thus it is that our Judge at the Last Day shall be none other than our great Advocate who continually maketh intercession for us. It is prayer, let us repeat, which, while it gives us all power with God, endows us at the same time with moral rights over men. Upon his mission of judgment we shall follow Amos with the greater sympathy that he thus comes forth to it from the mercy-seat and the ministry of intercession.

The first two visions which Amos told at Bethel were of disasters in the sphere of nature, but his third lay in the sphere of politics. The two former were, in their completeness at least, averted; and the language Amos used of them seems to imply that he had not even then faced the possibility of a final overthrow. He took for granted *Jacob was to rise again*: he only feared as to *how* this should be. But the third vision is so final that the prophet does not even try to intercede. Israel is measured, found wanting and doomed. Assyria is not named, but is obviously intended; and the fact that the prophet arrives at certainty with regard to the doom of Israel, just when he thus comes within sight of Assyria, is instructive as to the influence exerted on prophecy by the rise of that empire.¹

¹ See Chap. IV., p. 51.

Thus He gave me to see : and, behold, the Lord had taken His station—'tis a more solemn word than the stood of our versions—upon a city wall built to the plummet,¹ and in His hand a plummet. And Jehovah said unto me, What art thou seeing, Amos? The question surely betrays some astonishment shown by the prophet at the vision or some difficulty he felt in making it out. He evidently does not feel it at once, as the natural result of his own thinking : it is objective and strange to him ; he needs time to see into it. And I said, A plummet. And the Lord said, Behold, I am setting a plummet in the midst of My people Israel. I will not again pass them over. To set a measuring line or a line with weights attached to any building means to devote it to destruction ;² but here it is uncertain whether the plummet threatens destruction, or means that Jehovah will at last clearly prove to the prophet the insufferable obliquity of the fabric of the nation's life, originally set straight by Himself—originally a wall of a plummet. For God's judgments are never arbitrary : by a standard we men can read He shows us their necessity. Conscience itself is no mere voice of authority : it is a convincing plummet, and plainly lets us see why we should be punished. But whichever interpretation we choose, the result is the same. The high places of Israel shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Isaac laid waste ; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword. A declaration of war ! Israel is to be

¹ Literally of the plummet, an obscure expression. It cannot mean plumb-straight, for the wall is condemned.

² 2 Kings xxi. 13 : I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet or weight (מִשְׁקָלָהּ) of the house of Ahab. Isa. xxxiv. 11 : He shall stretch over it the cord of confusion, and the weights (literally stones) of emptiness

invaded, her dynasty overthrown. Every one who heard the prophet would know, though he named them not, that the Assyrians were meant.

It was apparently at this point that Amos was interrupted by Amaziah. The priest, who was conscious of no spiritual power with which to oppose the prophet, gladly grasped the opportunity afforded him by the mention of the king, and fell back on the invariable resource of a barren and envious sacerdotalism: *He speaketh against Cæsar*.¹ There follows one of the great scenes of history—the scene which, however fast the ages and the languages, the ideals and the deities may change, repeats itself with the same two actors. Priest and Man face each other—Priest with King behind, Man with God—and wage that debate in which the whole warfare and progress of religion consist. But the story is only typical by being real. Many subtle traits of human nature prove that we have here an exact narrative of fact. Take Amaziah's report to Jeroboam. He gives to the words of the prophet just that exaggeration and innuendo which betray the wily courtier, who knows how to accentuate a general denunciation till it feels like a personal attack. And yet, like every Caiaphas of his tribe, the priest in his exaggerations expresses a deeper meaning than he is conscious of. *Amos*—note how the mere mention of the name without description proves that the prophet was already known in Israel, perhaps was one on whom the authorities had long kept their eye—*Amos hath conspired against thee*—yet God was his only fellow-conspirator!—*in the midst of the house of Israel*—this royal temple at Bethel. *The land is not able to hold his words*—it

¹ John xix. 12.

must burst; yes, but in another sense than thou meanest, O Caiaphas-Amaziah! *For thus hath Amos said, By the sword shall Jeroboam die*—Amos had spoken only of the dynasty, but the twist which Amaziah lends to the words is calculated—and *Israel going shall go into captivity from off his own land.* This was the one unvarnished spot in the report.

Having fortified himself, as little men will do, by his duty to the powers that be, Amaziah dares to turn upon the prophet; and he does so, it is amusing to observe, with that tone of intellectual and moral superiority which it is extraordinary to see some men derive from a merely official station or touch with royalty. *Visionary,¹ begone! Get thee off to the land of Judah; and earn² thy bread there, and there play the prophet. But at Bethel—mark the rising accent of the voice—thou shalt not again prophesy. The King's Sanctuary it is, and the House of the Kingdom.³* With the official mind this is more conclusive than that it is the House of God! In fact the speech of Amaziah justifies the hardest terms which Amos uses of the religion of his day. In all this priest says there is no trace of the spiritual—only fear, pride and privilege. Divine truth is challenged by human law, and the Word of God silenced in the name of the king.

We have here a conception of religion, which is not merely due to the unspiritual character of the priest who utters it, but has its roots in the far back origins of Israel's religion. The Pagan Semite identified abso-

¹ The word *seer* is here used in a contemptuous sense, and has therefore to be translated by some such word as *visionary*.

² Literally *eat*.

³ עִיר הַמְּמֻלְכָה — that is, a *central* or *capital* sanctuary. Cf. עִיר הַמְּמֻלְכָה (1 Sam. xxvii. 5), *city of the kingdom*, i.e. chief or capital town.

lutely State and Church ; and on that identification was based the religious practice of early Israel. It had many healthy results: it kept religion in touch with public life; order, justice, patriotism, self-sacrifice for the common weal, were devoutly held to be matters of religion. So long, therefore, as the system was inspired by truly spiritual ideals, nothing for those times could be better. But we see in it an almost inevitable tendency to harden to the sheerest officialism. That it was more apt to do so in Israel than in Judah, is intelligible from the political origin of the Northern Schism, and the erection of the national sanctuaries from motives of mere statecraft.¹ Erastianism could hardly be more flagrant or more ludicrous in its opposition to true religion than at Bethel. And yet how often have the ludicrousness and the flagrancy been repeated, with far less temptation! Ever since Christianity became a state religion, she that needed least to use the weapons of this world has done so again and again in a thoroughly Pagan fashion. The attempts of Churches by law established, to stamp out by law all religious dissent; or where such attempts were no longer possible, the charges now of fanaticism and now of sordidness and religious shopkeeping, which have been so frequently made against dissent by little men who fancied their state connection, or their higher social position, to mean an intellectual and moral superiority; the absurd claims which many a minister of religion makes upon the homes and the souls of a parish, by virtue not of his calling in Christ, but of his position as official priest of the parish,—all these are the sins of Amaziah, priest of Bethel. But they are not

¹ 1 Kings xii. 26, 27.

confined to an established Church. The Amaziahs of dissent are also very many. Wherever the official masters the spiritual; wherever mere dogma or tradition is made the standard of preaching; wherever new doctrine is silenced, or programmes of reform condemned, as of late years in Free Churches they have sometimes been, not by spiritual argument, but by the *ipse dixit* of the dogmatist, or by ecclesiastical rule or expediency,—there you have the same spirit. The dissenter who checks the Word of God in the name of some denominational law or dogma is as Erastian as the churchman who would crush it, like Amaziah, by invoking the state. These things in all the Churches are the beggarly rudiments of Paganism; and religious reform is achieved, as it was that day at Bethel, by the abjuring of officialism.

But Amos answered and said unto Amaziah, No prophet I, nor prophet's son. But a herdsman¹ I, and a dresser of sycomores; and Jehovah took me from behind the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel.

On such words we do not comment; we give them homage. The answer of this shepherd to this priest is no mere claim of personal disinterestedness. It is the protest of a new order of prophecy,² the charter of a spiritual religion. As we have seen, the *sons of the prophets* were guilds of men who had taken to prophesying because of certain gifts of temper and natural disposition, and they earned their bread by the

¹ *Prophet* and *prophet's son* are equivalent terms, the latter meaning one of the professional guilds of prophets. There is no need to change herdsman, בוקר, as Wellhausen does, into נוֹקֵר, shepherd, the word used in i. 1.

² Cf. Wellhausen, *Hist.*, Eng. Ed., § 6: "Amos was the founder and the purest type of a new order of prophecy."

exercise of these. Among such abstract craftsmen Amos will not be reckoned. He is a prophet, but not of the kind with which his generation was familiar. An ordinary member of society, he has been suddenly called by Jehovah from his civil occupation for a special purpose and by a call which has not necessarily to do with either gifts or a profession. This was something new, not only in itself, but in its consequences upon the general relations of God to men. What we see in this dialogue at Bethel is, therefore, not merely the triumph of a character, however heroic, but rather a step forward—and that one of the greatest and most indispensable—in the history of religion.

There follows a denunciation of the man who sought to silence this fresh voice of God. *Now therefore hearken to the word of Jehovah thou that sayest, Prophecy not against Israel, nor let drop thy words against the house of Israel; therefore thus saith Jehovah. . . . Thou hast presumed to say; Hear what God will say. Thou hast dared to set thine office and system against His word and purpose. See how they must be swept away. In defiance of its own rules the grammar flings forward to the beginnings of its clauses, each detail of the priest's estate along with the scene of its desecration. Thy wife in the city—shall play the harlot; and thy sons and thy daughters by the sword—shall fall; and thy land by the measuring rope—shall be divided; and thou in an unclean land—shalt die.* Do not let us blame the prophet for a coarse cruelty in the first of these details. He did not invent it. With all the rest it formed an ordinary consequence of defeat in the warfare of the times—an inevitable item of that general overthrow which, with bitter emphasis, the prophet describes in Amaziah's own

words: *Israel going shall go into captivity from off his own land.*

There is added a vision in line with the three which preceded the priest's interruption. We are therefore justified in supposing that Amos spoke it also on this occasion, and in taking it as the close of his address at Bethel. *Then the Lord Jehovah gave me to see: and, behold, a basket of K̄aits, that is, summer fruit. And He said, What art thou seeing, Amos? And I said, A basket of K̄aits. And Jehovah said unto me, The K̄ets—the End—has come upon My people Israel. I will not again pass them over.* This does not carry the prospect beyond the third vision, but it stamps its finality, and there is therefore added a vivid realisation of the result. By four disjointed lamentations, *howls* the prophet calls them, we are made to feel the last shocks of the final collapse, and in the utter end an awful silence. *And the songs of the temple shall be changed into howls in that day, saith the Lord Jehovah. Multitude of corpses! In every place! He hath cast out! Hush!*

These then were probably the last words which Amos spoke to Israel. If so, they form a curious echo of what was enforced upon himself, and he may have meant them as such. He was *cast out*; he was *silenced*. They might almost be the verbal repetition of the priest's orders. In any case the silence is appropriate. But Amaziah little knew what power he had given to prophecy the day he forbade it to speak. The gagged prophet began to write; and those accents which, humanly speaking, might have died out with the songs of the temple of Bethel were clothed upon with the immortality of literature. Amos silenced wrote a book—first of prophets to do so—and this is the book we have now to study.

CHAPTER VII

ATROCITIES AND ATROCITIES

AMOS i. 3—ii.

LIKE all the prophets of Israel, Amos receives oracles for foreign nations. Unlike them, however, he arranges these oracles not after, but before, his indictment of his own people, and so as to lead up to this. His reason is obvious and characteristic. If his aim be to enforce a religion independent of his people's interests and privileges, how can he better do so than by exhibiting its principles at work outside his people, and then, with the impetus drained from many areas, sweep in upon the vested iniquities of Israel herself? This is the course of the first section of his book—chapters i. and ii. One by one the neighbours of Israel are cited and condemned in the name of Jehovah; one by one they are told they must fall before the still unnamed engine of the Divine Justice. But when Amos has stirred his people's conscience and imagination by his judgment of their neighbours' sins, he turns with the same formula on themselves. Are they morally better? Are they more likely to resist Assyria? With greater detail he shows them worse and their doom the heavier for all their privileges. Thus is achieved an oratorical triumph, by tactics in

harmony with the principles of prophecy and remarkably suited to the tempers of that time.

But Amos achieves another feat, which extends far beyond his own day. The sins he condemns in the heathen are at first sight very different from those which he exposes within Israel. Not only are they sins of foreign relations, of treaty and war, while Israel's are all civic and domestic ; but they are what we call the atrocities of Barbarism—wanton war, massacre and sacrilege—while Israel's are rather the sins of Civilisation—the pressure of the rich upon the poor, the bribery of justice, the seduction of the innocent, personal impurity, and other evils of luxury. So great is this difference that a critic more gifted with ingenuity than with insight might plausibly distinguish in the section before us two prophets with two very different views of national sin—a ruder prophet, and of course an earlier, who judged nations only by the flagrant drunkenness of their war, and a more subtle prophet, and of course a later, who exposed the masked corruptions of their religion and their peace. Such a theory would be as false as it would be plausible. For not only is the diversity of the objects of the prophet's judgment explained by this, that Amos had no familiarity with the interior life of other nations, and could only arraign their conduct at those points where it broke into light in their foreign relations, while Israel's civic life he knew to the very core. But Amos had besides a strong and a deliberate aim in placing the sins of civilisation as the climax of a list of the atrocities of barbarism. He would recall what men are always forgetting, that the former are really more cruel and criminal than the latter ; that luxury, bribery and intolerance, the oppression of the poor, the corruption

of the innocent and the silencing of the prophet—what Christ calls offences against His little ones—are even more awful atrocities than the wanton horrors of barbarian warfare. If we keep in mind this moral purpose, we shall study with more interest than we could otherwise do the somewhat foreign details of this section. Horrible as the outrages are which Amos describes, they were repeated only yesterday by Turkey: many of the crimes with which he charges Israel blacken the life of Turkey's chief accuser, Great Britain.

In his survey Amos includes all the six states of Palestine that bordered upon Israel, and lay in the way of the advance of Assyria—Aram of Damascus, Philistia, Tyre (for Phœnicia), Edom, Ammon and Moab. They are not arranged in geographical order. The prophet begins with Aram in the north-east, then leaps to Philistia in the south-west, comes north again to Tyre, crosses to the south-east and Edom, leaps Moab to Ammon, and then comes back to Moab. Nor is any other explanation of his order visible. Damascus heads the list, no doubt, because her cruelties had been most felt by Israel, and perhaps too because she lay most open to Assyria. It was also natural to take next to Aram Philistia,¹ as Israel's other greatest foe; and nearest to Philistia lay Tyre. The three south-eastern principalities come together. But there may have been a chronological reason now unknown to us.

The authenticity of the oracles on Tyre, Edom and Judah has been questioned: it will be best to discuss each case as we come to it.

Each of the oracles is introduced by the formula:

¹ As is done in chap. vi. 2, ix. 7.

Thus saith, or hath said, Jehovah: Because of three crimes of . . . yea, because of four, I will not turn It back. In harmony with the rest of the book,¹ Jehovah is represented as moving to punishment, not for a single sin, but for repeated and cumulative guilt. The unnamed *It* which God will not recall is not the word of judgment, but the anger and the hand stretched forth to smite.² After the formula, an instance of the nation's guilt is given, and then in almost identical terms he decrees the destruction of all by war and captivity. Assyria is not mentioned, but it is the Assyrian fashion of dealing with conquered states which is described. Except in the case of Tyre and Edom, the oracles conclude as they have begun, by asserting themselves to be the *word of Jehovah*, or of *Jehovah the Lord*. It is no abstract righteousness which condemns these foreign peoples, but the God of Israel, and their evil deeds are described by the characteristic Hebrew word for sin—*crimes, revolts or treasons* against Him.³

I. ARAM OF DAMASCUS.—*Thus hath Jehovah said: Because of three crimes of Damascus, yea, because of four, I will not turn It back; for that they threshed Gilead with iron—or basalt threshing-sledges.* The word is *iron*, but the Arabs of to-day call basalt iron; and the threshing-sledges, curved slabs⁴ drawn rapidly by horses over the heaped corn, are studded with sharp basalt teeth that not only thresh out the grain, but chop the straw into little pieces. So cruelly had Gilead been chopped by Hazael and his son Ben-Hadad some fifty

¹ So against Israel in chap. iv.

² So Isa. v. 25: *לֹא שָׁב אִפּוֹ וְעוֹד יָדוֹ נִטּוּיָהּ* Cf. Ezek. xx. 22: *וְהִשְׁבֹּתִי אֶת יָדִי*

פְּשָׁעִים

⁴ Called *lüh*, *i.e.* slab.

or forty years before Amos prophesied.¹ Strongholds were burned, soldiers slain without quarter, children dashed to pieces, and women with child put to a most atrocious end.² But *I shall send fire on the house of Hazael, and it shall devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad*—these names are chosen, not because they were typical of the Damascus dynasty, but because they were the very names of the two heaviest oppressors of Israel.³ *And I will break the bolt⁴ of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from Bik'ath-Aven*—the Valley of Idolatry, so called, perhaps, by a play upon Bik'ath On,⁵ presumably the valley between the Lebanons, still called the Beḳ'a, in which lay Heliopolis⁶—*and him that holdeth the sceptre from Beth-Eden*—some royal Paradise in that region of Damascus, which is still the Paradise of the Arab world—*and the people of Aram shall go captive to Kir*—Kir in the unknown north, from which they had come :⁷ *Jehovah hath said it.*

2. PHILISTIA.—*Thus saith Jehovah : For three crimes of Gaza and for four I will not turn It back, because they led captive a whole captivity, in order to deliver them up to Edom.* It is difficult to see what this means if not the wholesale depopulation of a district in contrast to the enslavement of a few captives of war. By all tribes

¹ These Syrian campaigns in Gilead must have taken place between 839 and 806, the long interval during which Damascus enjoyed freedom from Assyrian invasion.

² 2 Kings viii. 12 ; xiii. 7 : cf. above, p. 31.

³ *He delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Aram, and into the hand of Ben-Hadad the son of Hazael, continually* (2 Kings xiii. 3).

⁴ No need here to render *prince*, as some do.

⁵ So the LXX.

⁶ The present Baalbek (Baal of the Beḳ'a ?). Wellhausen throws doubt on the idea that Heliopolis was at this time an Aramean town.

⁷ ix. 7.

of the ancient world, the captives of their bow and spear were regarded as legitimate property: it was no offence to the public conscience that they should be sold into slavery. But the Philistines seem, without excuse of war, to have descended upon certain districts and swept the whole of the population before them, for purely commercial purposes. It was professional slave-catching. The Philistines were exactly like the Arabs of to-day in Africa—not warriors who win their captives in honourable fight, but slave-traders, pure and simple. In warfare in Arabia itself it is still a matter of conscience with the wildest nomads not to extinguish a hostile tribe, however bitter one be against them.¹ Gaza is chiefly blamed by Amos, for she was the emporium of the trade on the border of the desert, with roads and regular caravans to Petra and Elah on the Gulf of Akaba, both of them places in Edom and depots for the traffic with Arabia.² *But I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and the holder of the sceptre from Askalon, and I will turn My hand upon Ekron—* four of the five great Philistine towns, Gath being already destroyed, and never again to be mentioned with the others³—*and the last of the Philistines shall perish: Jehovah hath said it.*

3. TYRE.—*Thus saith Jehovah: Because of three crimes*

¹ Doughty: *Arabia Deserta*, I. 335.

² On the close connection of Edom and Gaza see *Hist. Geog.*, pp. 182 ff.

³ See *Hist. Geog.*, pp. 194 ff. Wellhausen thinks Gath was not yet destroyed, and quotes vi. 2; Micah i. 10, 14. But we know that Hazael destroyed it, and that fact, taken in conjunction with its being the only omission here from the five Philistine towns, is evidence enough. In the passages quoted by Wellhausen there is nothing to the contrary: vi. 2 implies that Gath has fallen; Micah i. 10 is the repetition of an old proverb.

of Tyre and because of four I will not turn It back; for that they gave up a whole captivity to Edom—the same market as in the previous charge—and did not remember the covenant of brethren. We do not know to what this refers. The alternatives are three: that the captives were Hebrews and the alliance one between Israel and Edom; that the captives were Hebrews and the alliance one between Israel and Tyre;¹ that the captives were Phœnicians and the alliance the natural brotherhood of Tyre and the other Phœnician towns.² But of these three alternatives the first is scarcely possible, for in such a case the blame would have been rather Edom's in buying than Tyre's in selling. The second is possible, for Israel and Tyre had lived in close alliance for more than two centuries; but the phrase *covenant of brethren* is not so well suited to a league between two tribes who felt themselves to belong to fundamentally different races,³ as to the close kinship of the Phœnician communities. And although, in the scrappy records of Phœnician history before this time, we find no instance of so gross an outrage by Tyre on other Phœnicians, it is quite possible that such may have occurred. During next century Tyre twice over basely took sides with Assyria in suppressing the revolts of her sister cities.⁴ Besides, the other Phœnician towns are not included in the charge. We have every reason, therefore, to believe that Amos expresses here not resentment against a

¹ Farrar, 53; Pusey on ver. 9; Pietschmann, *Geschichte der Phönizier*, 298.

² To which Wellhausen inclines.

³ Gen. x.

⁴ Under Asarhaddon, 678—676 B.C., and later under Assurbanipal (Pietschmann, *Gesch.*, pp. 302 f.).

betrayal of Israel, but indignation at an outrage upon natural rights and feelings with which Israel's own interests were not in any way concerned. And this also suits the lofty spirit of the whole prophecy. *But I will send fire upon the wall of Tyre, and it shall devour her palaces. . . .*

This oracle against Tyre has been suspected by Wellhausen,¹ for the following reasons: that it is of Tyre alone, and silence is kept regarding the other Phœnician cities, while in the case of Philistia other towns than Gaza are condemned; that the charge is the same as against Gaza; and that the usual close to the formula is wanting. But it would have been strange if from a list of states threatened by the Assyrian doom we had missed Tyre, Tyre which lay in the avenger's very path. Again, that so acute a critic as Wellhausen should cite the absence of other Phœnician towns from the charge against Tyre is really amazing, when he has just allowed that it was probably against some or all of these cities that Tyre's crime was committed. How could they be included in the blame of an outrage done upon themselves? The absence of the usual formula at the close may perhaps be explained by omission, as indicated above.²

4. EDOM.—*Thus saith Jehovah: Because of three crimes of Edom and because of four I will not turn It back; for that he pursued with the sword his brother, who cannot be any other than Israel, corrupted his natural feelings—literally his bowels of mercies—and*

¹ And he omits it from his translation.

² So far from such an omission proving that the oracle is an insertion, is it not more probable that an insertor would have taken care to make his insertion formally correct?

kept aye fretting¹ his anger, and his passion he watched—like a fire, or paid heed to it—for ever.² But I will send fire upon Teman—the South Region belonging to Edom—and it shall devour the palaces of Boşrah—the Edomite Boşrah, south-east of Petra.³ The Assyrians had already compelled Edom to pay tribute.⁴

The objections to the authenticity of this oracle are more serious than those in the case of the oracle on Tyre. It has been remarked⁵ that before the Jewish Exile so severe a tone could not have been adopted by a Jew against Edom, who had been mostly under the yoke of Judah, and not leniently treated. What were the facts? Joab subdued Edom for David with great cruelty.⁶ Jewish governors were set over the conquered people, and this state of affairs seems to have lasted, in spite of an Edomite attempt against Solomon,⁷ till 850. In Jehoshaphat's reign, 873—850, there was no king of Edom, a deputy was king, who towards 850 joined the kings of Judah and Israel in an invasion of Moab through his territory.⁸ But, soon after this invasion and perhaps in consequence of its failure, Edom revolted from Joram of Judah (849—842),

¹ There seems no occasion to amend with Olshausen to the *kept* of Psalm ciii. 9.

² Read with LXX. שֹׁמֵר לְנִצָּחַ, though throughout the verse the LXX. translation is very vile.

³ In other two passages, Boşrah, the city, is placed in parallel not to another city, but just as here to a whole region: Isa. xxxiv. 6, where the parallel is the *land of Edom*, and lxiii. 1, where it is *Edom*. There is therefore no need to take Teman in our passage as a city, as which it does not appear before Eusebius.

⁴ Under Rimmân-nirari III. (812—783). See Buhl's *Gesch. der Edomiter*, 65: this against Wellhausen.

⁵ Wellhausen, *in loco*.

⁷ 1 Kings xi. 14-25.

⁶ 2 Sam. viii. 13, with 1 Kings xi. 16.

⁸ 2 Kings iii.

who unsuccessfully attempted to put down the revolt.¹ The Edomites appear to have remained independent for fifty years at least. Amaziah of Judah (797—779) smote them,² but not it would seem into subjection; for, according to the Chronicler, Uzziah had to win back Elath for the Jews after Amaziah's death.³ The history, therefore, of the relations of Judah and Edom before the time of Amos was of such a kind as to make credible the existence in Judah at that time of the feeling about Edom which inspires this oracle. Edom had shown just the vigilant, implacable hatred here described. But was the right to blame them for it Judah's, who herself had so persistently waged war, with confessed cruelty, against Edom? Could a Judæan prophet be just in blaming Edom and saying nothing of Judah? It is true that in the fifty years of Edom's independence—the period, we must remember, from which Amos seems to draw the materials of all his other charges—there may have been events to justify this oracle as spoken by him; and our ignorance of that period is ample reason why we should pause before rejecting the oracle so dogmatically as Wellhausen does. But we have at least serious grounds for suspecting it. To charge Edom, whom Judah has conquered and treated cruelly, with restless hate towards Judah seems to fall below that high impartial tone which prevails in the other oracles of this section. The charge was much more justifiable at the time of the Exile, when Edom did behave shamefully towards Israel.⁴ Wellhausen points out that Teman and Boşrah are names which do not occur in

¹ 2 Kings viii. 20-22.

² 2 Chron. xxvi. 2.

³ 2 Kings xiv. 10.

⁴ See, however, Buhl, *op. cit.*, 67.

the Old Testament before the Exile, but this is uncertain and inconclusive. The oracle wants the concluding formula of the rest.¹

5. AMMON.—*Thus saith Jehovah: Because of three crimes of Ammon and because of four I will not turn It back; for that they ripped up Gilead's women with child—in order to enlarge their borders!* For such an end they committed such an atrocity! The crime is one that has been more or less frequent in Semitic warfare. Wellhausen cites several instances in the feuds of Arab tribes about their frontiers. The Turks have been guilty of it in our own day.² It is the same charge which the historian of Israel puts into the mouth of Elisha against Hazael of Aram,³ and probably the war was the same; when Gilead was simultaneously attacked by Arameans from the north and Ammonites from the south. *But I will set fire to the wall of Rabbah—Rabbath-Ammon, literally chief or capital of Ammon—and it shall devour her palaces, with clamour in the day of battle, with tempest in the day of storm.* As we speak of “storming a city,” Amos and Isaiah⁴ use the tempest to describe the overwhelming invasion of Assyria. There follows the characteristic Assyrian conclusion: *And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes⁵ together, saith Jehovah.*

¹ It is, however, no reason against the authenticity of the oracle to say that Edom lay outside the path of Assyria. In answer to that see the Assyrian inscriptions, e.g. Asarhaddon's: cf. above, p. 129, n. 4.

² Notably in the recent Armenian massacres.

³ 2 Kings viii. 12.

⁴ xxviii. 2, xxvii. 7, 8, where the Assyrian and another invasion are both described in terms of tempest.

⁵ The LXX. reading, *their priests and their princes*, must be due to taking Malcam = *their king* as Milcom = the Ammonite god. See Jer. xlix. 3.

6. MOAB.—*Thus saith Jehovah : Because of three crimes of Moab and because of four I will not turn It back ; for that he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.*¹ In the great invasion of Moab, about 850, by Israel, Judah and Edom conjointly, the rage of Moab seems to have been directed chiefly against Edom.² Whether opportunity to appease that rage occurred on the withdrawal of Israel we cannot say. But either then or afterwards, balked of their attempt to secure the king of Edom alive, Moab wreaked their vengeance on his corpse, and burnt his bones to lime. It was, in the religious belief of all antiquity, a sacrilege ; yet it does not seem to have been the desecration of the tomb—or he would have mentioned it—but the wanton meanness of the deed, which Amos felt. *And I will send fire on Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of The-Cities—Kerioth,*³ perhaps the present Kureiyat,⁴ on the Moab plateau where Chemosh had his shrine⁵—*and in tumult shall Moab die*—to Jeremiah⁶ the Moabites were the sons of tumult—*with clamour and with the noise of the war-trumpet. And I will cut off the ruler*—literally judge, probably the vassal king placed by Jeroboam II.—*from her*⁷ *midst, and all his*⁸ *princes will I slay with him : Jehovah hath said it.*

These, then, are the charges which Amos brings against the heathen neighbours of Israel.

¹ "Great Cæsar dead and turned to clay
Might stop a hole to turn the wind away."

² 2 Kings iii. 26. So rightly Pusey.

³ Jer. xlviii. 24 without article, but in 41 with.

⁴ Though this is claimed by most for Kiriathaim.

⁵ Moabite Stone, l. 13.

⁷ The land's.

⁶ xlviii. 45.

⁸ The king's.

If we look as a whole across the details through which we have been working, what we see is a picture of the Semitic world so summary and so vivid that we get the like of it nowhere else—the Semitic world in its characteristic brokenness and turbulence; its factions and ferocities, its causeless raids and quarrels, tribal disputes about boundaries flaring up into the most terrible massacres, vengeance that wreaks itself alike on the embryo and the corpse—*cutting up women with child in Gilead*, and *burning to lime the bones of the king of Edom*. And the one commerce which binds these ferocious tribes together is the slave-trade in its wholesale and most odious form.

Amos treats none of the atrocities subjectively. It is not because they have been inflicted upon Israel that he feels or condemns them. The appeals of Israel against the tyrant become many as the centuries go on; the later parts of the Old Testament are full of the complaints of God's chosen people, conscious of their mission to the world, against the heathen, who prevented them from it. Here we find none of these complaints, but a strictly objective and judicial indictment of the characteristic crimes of heathen men against each other; and though this is made in the name of Jehovah, it is not in the interests of His people or of any of His purposes through them, but solely by the standard of an impartial righteousness which, as we are soon to hear, must descend in equal judgment on Israel.

Again, for the moral principles which Amos enforces no originality can be claimed. He condemns neither war as a whole nor slavery as a whole, but limits his curse to wanton and deliberate aggravations of them: to the slave-trade in cold blood, in violation of treaties

and for purely commercial ends;¹ to war for trifling causes, and that wreaks itself on pregnant women and dead men; to national hatreds, that never will be still. Now against such things there has always been in mankind a strong conscience, of which the word "humanity" is in itself a sufficient proof. We need not here inquire into the origin of such a common sense—whether it be some native impulse of tenderness which asserts itself as soon as the duties of self-defence are exhausted, or some rational notion of the needlessness of excesses, or whether, in committing these, men are visited by fear of retaliation from the wrath they have unnecessarily exasperated. Certain it is, that warriors of all races have hesitated to be wanton in their war, and have foreboded the special judgment of heaven upon every blind extravagance of hate or cruelty. It is well known how "fey" the Greeks felt the insolence of power and immoderate anger; they are the fatal element in many a Greek tragedy.² But the Semites themselves, whose racial ferocity is so notorious, are not without the same feeling. "Even the Beduins' old cruel rancours are often less than the golden piety of the wilderness. The danger past, they can think of the defeated foemen with kindness, . . . putting only their trust in Ullah to obtain the like at need for themselves. It is contrary to the Arabian conscience to extinguish a Kabila."³ Similarly in Israel some of the earliest ethical movements were revolts of the public conscience against horrible outrages, like that, for instance,

¹ See above, p. 126.

² *δυσσεβλας μὲν ὕβρις τέκος* (*Æschylus, Eumen.*, 534): cf. *Odyssey*, xiv. 262; xvii. 431.

³ *I.e.* a tribe; Doughty, *Arabia Deserta*, I. 335.

done by the Benjamites of Gibeah.¹ Therefore in these oracles on his wild Semitic neighbours Amos discloses no new ideal for either tribe or individual. Our view is confirmed that he was intent only upon rousing the natural conscience of his Hebrew hearers in order to engage this upon other vices to which it was less impressionable—that he was describing those deeds of war and slavery, whose atrocity all men admitted, only that he might proceed to bring under the same condemnation the civic and domestic sins of Israel.

We turn with him, then, to Israel. But in his book as it now stands in our Bibles, Israel is not immediately reached. Between her and the foreign nations two verses are bestowed upon Judah: *Thus saith Jehovah: Because of three crimes of Judah and because of four I will not turn It back; for that they despised the Torah of Jehovah, and His statutes they did not observe, and their falsehoods—false gods—led them astray, after which their fathers walked. But I will send fire on Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.* These verses have been suspected as a later insertion,² on the ground that every reference to Judah in the Book of Amos must be late, that the language is very formal, and that the phrases in which the sin of Judah is described sound like echoes of Deuteronomy. The first of these reasons may be dismissed as absurd; it would have been far more strange if Amos had

¹ Judges xix., xx.

² Duhm was the first to publish reasons for rejecting the passage (*Theol. der Propheten*, 1875, p. 119), but Wellhausen had already reached the same conclusion (*Kleine Propheten*, p. 71). Oort and Stade adhere. On the other side see Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, 398, and Kuenen, who adheres to Smith's arguments (*Onderzoek*).

never at all referred to Judah.¹ The charges, however, are not like those which Amos elsewhere makes, and though the phrases may be quite as early as his time,² the reader of the original, and even the reader of the English version, is aware of a certain tameness and vagueness of statement, which contrasts remarkably with the usual pungency of the prophet's style. We are forced to suspect the authenticity of these verses.

We ought to pass, then, straight from the third to the sixth verse of this chapter, from the oracles on foreign nations to that on Northern Israel. It is introduced with the same formula as they are: *Thus saith Jehovah: Because of three crimes of Israel and because of four I will not turn It back.* But there follow a greater number of details, for Amos has come among his own people whom he knows to the heart, and he applies to them a standard more exact and an obligation more heavy than any he could lay to the life of the heathen. Let us run quickly through the items of his charge. *For that they sell an honest man³ for silver, and a needy man for a pair of shoes—proverbial, as we should say "for an old song"—who trample to the dust of the earth the head of the poor—the least improbable rendering of a corrupt passage⁴—and pervert the way of humble men. And a man and*

¹ "It is plain that Amos could not have excepted Judah from the universal ruin which he saw to threaten the whole land; or at all events such exception would have required to be expressly made on special grounds."—Robertson Smith, *Prophets*, 398.

² *Ibid.*

³ צַדִּיק, *righteous*: hardly, as most commentators take it, the *legally* (as distinguished from the *morally*) *righteous*; the rich cruelly used their legal rights to sell respectable and honest members of society into slavery.

⁴ By adapting the LXX. So far as we know Wellhausen is right

his father will go into the maid, the same maid,¹ to desecrate My Holy Name—without doubt some public form of unchastity introduced from the Canaanite worship into the very sanctuary of Jehovah, the holy place where He reveals His Name—and on garments given in pledge they stretch themselves by every altar, and the wine of those who have been fined they drink in the house of their God. A riot of sin: the material of their revels is the miseries of the poor, its stage the house of God! Such is religion to the Israel of Amos' day—indoors, feverish, sensual. By one of the sudden contrasts he loves, Amos sweeps out of it into God's ideal of religion—a great historical movement, told in the language of the open air: national deliverance, guidance on the highways of the world, the inspiration of prophecy, and the pure, ascetic life. But I, I destroyed the Amorite² before you, whose height was as the cedars, and he was strong as oaks, and I destroyed his fruit from above and his roots from below. What a contrast to the previous picture of the temple filled with fumes of wine and hot with lust! We are out on open history; God's gales blow and the forests crash before them. And I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and led you through the wilderness forty years, to inherit the land of the Amorite. Religion is not chambering and wantonness; it is not selfish

in saying that the Massoretic text, which our English version follows, gives no sense. LXX. reads, also without much sense as a whole, *τὰ πατῶντα ἐπὶ τὸν χοῦν τῆς γῆς, καὶ ἐκονδύλιζον εἰς κεφαλὰς πτωχῶν.*

¹ So rightly the LXX. Or the definite article may be here used in conformity with the common Hebrew way of employing it to designate, not a definite individual, but a member of a definite, well-known genus.

² On the use of Amorite for all the inhabitants of Canaan see Driver's *Deut.*, pp. 11 f.

comfort or profiting by the miseries of the poor and the sins of the fallen. But religion is history—the freedom of the people and their education, the winning of the land and the defeat of the heathen foe; and then, when the land is firm and the home secure, it is the raising, upon that stage and shelter, of spiritual guides and examples. *And I raised up of your sons to be prophets, and of your young men to be Nazirites—consecrated and ascetic lives. Is it not so, O children of Israel? (oracle of Jehovah). But ye made the Nazirites drink wine, and the prophets ye charged, saying, Prophecy not!*

Luxury, then, and a very sensual conception of religion, with all their vicious offspring in the abuse of justice, the oppression of the poor, the corrupting of the innocent, and the intolerance of spiritual forces—these are the sins of an enlightened and civilised people, which Amos describes as worse than all the atrocities of barbarism, and as certain of Divine vengeance. How far beyond his own day are his words still warm! Here in the nineteenth century is Great Britain, destroyer of the slave-traffic, and champion of oppressed nationalities—yet this great and Christian people, at the very time they are abolishing slavery, suffer their own children to work in factories and clay-pits for sixteen hours a day, and in mines set women to a labour for which horses are deemed too valuable. Things improve after 1848, but how slowly and against what callousness of Christians Lord Shaftesbury's long and often disappointed labours painfully testify. Even yet our religious public, that curses the Turk, and in an indignation, which can never be too warm, cries out against the Armenian atrocities, is callous, nay, by the avarice of some, the

haste and passion for enjoyment of many more, and the thoughtlessness of all, itself contributes, to conditions of life and fashions of society, which bear with cruelty upon our poor, taint our literature, needlessly increase the temptations of our large towns, and render pure childlife impossible among masses of our population. Along some of the highways of our Christian civilisation we are just as cruel and just as lustful as Kurd or Turk.

Amos closes this prophecy with a vision of immediate judgment. *Behold, I am about to crush or squeeze down upon you, as a waggon crushes¹ that is full*

¹ The verb עוֹק of the Massoretic text is not found elsewhere, and whether we retain it, or take it as a variant of, or mistake for, צוֹק, or adopt some other reading, the whole phrase is more or less uncertain, and the exact shade of meaning has to be guessed, though the general sense remains pretty much the same. The following is a complete note on the subject, with reasons for adopting the above conclusion.

(1) LXX.: *Behold, I roll (κυλλω) under you as a waggon full of straw is rolled.* A.V.: *I am pressed under you as a cart is pressed.* Pusey: *I straiten myself under you, etc.* These versions take עוֹק in the sense of צוֹק, to *press*, and תחת in its usual meaning of *beneath*; and the result is conformable to the well-known figure of the Old Testament by which God is said to be laden and weary with the transgressions of His people. But this does not mean an actual descent of judgment, and yet vv. 14-16 imply that such an intimation has been made in ver. 13; and besides מוֹעֵק and תוֹעֵק are both in the Hiphil, the active, to *press*, or causative, *make to press*. (2) Accordingly some, adopting this sense of the verb, take תחת in an unusual sense of *down upon*. Ewald: *I press down upon you as a cart that is full of sheaves presseth.* Guthe (in Kautzsch's *Bibel*): *Ich will euch quetschen.* Rev. Eng. Ver.: *I will press you in your place.*—But עוֹק has been taken in other senses. (3) Hoffmann (*Z.A.T.W.*, III. 100) renders it *groan* in conformity with Arab. 'āḳ. (4) Wetzstein (*ibid.*, 278 ff.) quotes Arab. 'āḳ, to *stop, hinder*, and suggests *I will bring to a stop*. (5) Buhl (12th Ed. of Gesenius' *Handwört*, sub עוֹק), in view of possibility of עגלה being threshing-roller, recalls Arab.

of sheaves.¹ An alternative reading supplies the same general impression of a crushing judgment: *I will make the ground quake under you, as a waggon makes it quake, or as a waggon itself quakes under its load of sheaves.* This shock is to be War. *Flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not prove his power, nor the mighty man escape with his life. And he that graspeth the bow shall not stand, nor shall the swift of foot escape, nor the horseman escape with his life. And he that thinketh himself strong among the heroes shall flee away naked in that day—'tis the oracle of Jehovah.*

'akḳ, to cut in pieces. (6) Hitzig (*Exeg. Handbuch*) proposed to read מפיִק and תפיִק: *I will make it shake under you, as the laden waggon shakes (the ground).* So rather differently Wellhausen: *I will make the ground quake under you, as a waggon quakes under its load of sheaves.*

I have only to add that, in the Alex. Cod. of LXX., which reads κωλύω for κυλιω, we have an interesting analogy to Wetzstein's proposal; and that in support of the rendering of Ewald, and its unusual interpretation of תחתיכם which seems to me on the whole the most probable, we may compare Job xxxvi. 16, לֹא מוֹצֵק תַּחְתֵּיהָ. This, it is true, suggests rather the choking of a passage than the crushing of the ground; but, by the way, that sense is even more applicable to a harvest waggon laden with sheaves.

¹ *Waggon full of sheaves.*—Wellhausen goes too far when he suggests that Amos would have to go outside Palestine to see such a waggon. That a people who already knew the use of chariots for travelling (cf. Gen. xlv. 5, JE) and waggons for agricultural purposes (1 Sam. vi. 7 ff.) did not use them at least in the lowlands of their country is extremely improbable. Cf. *Hist. Geog.*, Appendix on *Roads and Wheeled Vehicles in Syria.*

CHAPTER VIII

CIVILISATION AND JUDGMENT

Amos iii.—iv. 3.

WE now enter the Second Section of the Book of Amos: chaps. iii.—vi. It is a collection of various oracles of denunciation, grouped partly by the recurrence of the formula *Hear this word*, which stands at the head of our present chapters iii., iv. and v., which are therefore probably due to it; partly by two cries of *Woe* at v. 18 and vi. 1; and also by the fact that each of the groups thus started leads up to an emphatic, though not at first detailed, prediction of the nation's doom (iii. 13-15; iv. 3; iv. 12; v. 16, 17; v. 26, 27; vi. 14). Within these divisions lie a number of short indictments, sentences of judgment and the like, which have no further logical connection than is supplied by their general sameness of subject, and a perceptible increase of articulateness from beginning to end of the Section. The sins of Israel are more detailed, and the judgment of war, coming from the North, advances gradually till we discern the unmistakable ranks of Assyria. But there are various parentheses and interruptions, which cause the student of the text no little difficulty. Some of these, however, may be only apparent: it will always be a question whether their want of immediate connection with what

precedes them is not due to the loss of several words from the text rather than to their own intrusion into it. Of others it is true that they are obviously out of place as they lie ; their removal brings together verses which evidently belong to each other. Even such parentheses, however, may be from Amos himself. It is only where a verse, besides interrupting the argument, seems to reflect a historical situation later than the prophet's day, that we can be sure it is not his own. And in all this textual criticism we must keep in mind, that the obscurity of the present text of a verse, so far from being an adequate proof of its subsequent insertion, may be the very token of its antiquity, scribes or translators of later date having been unable to understand it. To reject a verse, only because *we* do not see the connection, would surely be as arbitrary, as the opposite habit of those who, missing a connection, invent one, and then exhibit their artificial joint as evidence of the integrity of the whole passage. In fact we must avoid all headstrong surgery, for to a great extent we work in the dark.

The general subject of the Section may be indicated by the title: Religion and Civilisation. A vigorous community, wealthy, cultured and honestly religious, are, at a time of settled peace and growing power, threatened, in the name of the God of justice, with their complete political overthrow. Their civilisation is counted for nothing; their religion, on which they base their confidence, is denounced as false and unavailing. These two subjects are not, and could not have been, separated by the prophet in any one of his oracles. But in the first, the briefest and most summary of these, chaps. iii.—iv. 3, it is mainly with the doom of the civil structure of Israel's life that

Amos deals; and it will be more convenient for us to take them first, with all due reference to the echoes of them in later parts of the Section. From iv. 4—vi. it is the Religion and its false peace which he assaults; and we shall take that in the next chapter. *First*, then, Civilisation and Judgment (iii.—iv. 3); *Second*, The False Peace of Ritual (iv. 4—vi.).

These few brief oracles open upon the same note as that in which the previous Section closed—that the crimes of Israel are greater than those of the heathen; and that the people's peculiar relation to God means, not their security, but their greater judgment. It is then affirmed that Israel's wealth and social life are so sapped by luxury and injustice that the nation must perish. And, as in every luxurious community the women deserve especial blame, the last of the group of oracles is reserved for them (iv. 1-3).

Hear this word, which Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt—Judah as well as North Israel, so that we see the vanity of a criticism which would cast out of the Book of Amos as unauthentic every reference to Judah. Only you have I known of all the families of the ground—not world, but ground, purposely chosen to stamp the meanness and mortality of them all—therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.

This famous text has been called by various writers "the keynote," "the licence" and "the charter" of prophecy. But the names are too petty for what is not less than the fulmination of an element. It is a peal of thunder we hear. It is, in a moment, the

explosion and discharge of the full storm of prophecy. As when from a burst cloud the streams immediately below rise suddenly and all their banks are overflowed, so the prophecies that follow surge and rise clear of the old limits of Israel's faith by the unconfined, unmeasured flood of heaven's justice that breaks forth by this single verse. Now, once for all, are submerged the lines of custom and tradition within which the course of religion has hitherto flowed; and, as it were, the surface of the world is altered. It is a crisis which has happened more than once again in history: when helpless man has felt the absolute relentlessness of the moral issues of life; their renunciation of the past, however much they have helped to form it; their sacrifice of every development however costly, and of every hope however pure; their deafness to prayer, their indifference to penitence; when no faith saves a Church, no courage a people, no culture or prestige even the most exalted order of men; but at the bare hands of a judgment, uncouth of voice and often unconscious of a Divine mission, the results of a great civilisation are for its sins swept remorselessly away.

Before the storm bursts, we learn by its lightnings some truths from the old life that is to be destroyed. *You only have I known of all the families of the ground: therefore will I visit your iniquities upon you.* Religion is no insurance against judgment, no mere atonement and escape from consequences. Escape! Religion is only opportunity—the greatest moral opportunity which men have, and which if they violate nothing remains for them but a certain fearful looking forward unto judgment. You only have I known; and because you did not take the moral advantage of My intercourse,

because you felt it only as privilege and pride, pardon for the past and security for the future, therefore doom the more inexorable awaits you.

Then as if the people had interrupted him with the question, What sign do you give us that this judgment is near?—Amos goes aside into that noble digression (vv. 3-8) on the harmony between the prophet's word and the imminent events of the time, which we have already studied.¹ From this apologia, verse 9 returns to the note of verses 1 and 2 and develops it. Not only is Israel's responsibility greater than that of other people's. Her crimes themselves are more heinous. *Make proclamation over the palaces in Ashdod*—if we are not to read Assyria here,² then the name of Ashdod has perhaps been selected from all other heathen names because of its similarity to the Hebrew word for that *violence*³ with which Amos is charging the people—and *over the palaces of the land of Egypt, and say, Gather upon the Mount⁴ of Samaria and see! Confusions manifold in the midst of her; violence to her very core! Yea, they know not how to do uprightness, saith Jehovah, who store up wrong and violence in their palaces.*

“To their crimes,” said the satirist of the Romans “they owe their gardens, palaces, stables and fine old plate.”⁵ And William Langland declared of the rich English of his day:—

“For toke thei on trewly · they tymbred not so heigh,
Ne boughte non burgages · be ye full certayne.”⁶

¹ See above, pp. 82 ff. and pp. 89 ff.

² With the LXX. בַּאֲשׁוּר for בַּאֲשׁוּר.

³ אָשׁ (ver. 10).

⁴ Singular as in LXX., and not plural as in the M.T. and English versions.

⁵ Juvenal, *Satires*, I.

⁶ *Vision of Piers Plowman*. Burgages = tenements.

Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Siege and Blockade of the Land!¹ And they shall bring down from off thee thy fortresses, and plundered shall be thy palaces. Yet this shall be no ordinary tide of Eastern war, to ebb like the Syrian as it flowed, and leave the nation to rally on their land again. For Assyria devours the peoples. Thus saith Jehovah: As the shepherd saveth from the mouth of the lion a pair of shin-bones or a bit of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be saved—they who sit in Samaria in the corner of the diwan and . . . on a couch.² The description, as will be seen from the note below, is obscure. Some think it is intended to satirise a novel and affected fashion of sitting adopted by the rich. Much more probably it means that carnal security in the luxuries of civilisation which

¹ Or *The Enemy, and that right round the Land!*

² *In Damascus on a couch: on a Damascus couch: on a Damascus-cloth couch: or Damascus-fashion on a couch*—alternatives all equally probable and equally beyond proof. The text is very difficult, nor do the versions give help. (1) The consonants of the word before *a couch* spell *in Damascus*, and so the LXX. take it. This would be in exact parallel to the *in Samaria* of the previous half of the clause. But although Jeroboam II. is said to have recovered Damascus (2 Kings xiv. 28), this is not necessarily the town itself, of whose occupation by Israel we have no evidence, while Amos always assumes it to be Aramean, and here he is addressing Israelites. Still retaining the name of the city, we can take it with *couch* as parallel, not to *in Samaria*, but to *on the side of a diwan*; in that case the meaning may have been *a Damascus couch* (though as the two words stand it is impossible to parse them, and Gen. xv. 2 cannot be quoted in support of this, for it is too uncertain itself, being possibly a gloss, though it is curious that as the two passages run the name Damascus should be in the same strange grammatical conjunction in each), or possibly *Damascus-fashion on a couch*, which (if the first half of the clause, as some maintain, refers to some delicate or affected posture then come into fashion) is the most probable rendering. (2) The Massoretes have pointed, not *bedammeseq* = *in Damascus*, but *bedemesheq*, a form not found elsewhere, which some (Ges., Hitz., Ew., Rev. Eng.

Amos threatens more than once in similar phrases.¹ The corner of the diwan is in Eastern houses the seat of honour.² To this desert shepherd, with only the hard ground to rest on, the couches and ivory-mounted diwans of the rich must have seemed the very symbols of extravagance. But the pampered bodies that loll their lazy lengths upon them shall be left like the crumbs of a lion's meal—*two shin-bones and the bit of an ear!* Their whole civilisation shall perish with them. *Hearken and testify against the house of Israel—oracle of the Lord Jehovah, God of Hosts*³—those addressed are still the heathen summoned in ver. 9. *For on the day when I visit the crimes of Israel upon him, I shall then make visitation upon the altars of Bethel, and the horns of the altar, which men grasp in their last despair, shall be smitten and fall to the earth. And I will strike the winter-house upon the summer-house, and the ivory houses shall perish, yea, swept away shall be houses many—oracle of Jehovah.*

But the luxury of no civilisation can be measured

Ver., etc.) take to mean some Damascene stuff (as perhaps our Damask and the Arabic *dimshaq* originally meant, though this is not certain), e.g. silk or velvet or cushions. (3) Others rearrange the text. E.g. Hoffmann (*Z.A.T.W.*, III. 102) takes the whole clause away from ver. 12 and attaches it to ver. 13, reading *O those who sit in Samaria on the edge of the diwan, and in Damascus on a couch, hearken and testify against the house of Jacob.* But, as Wellhausen points out, those addressed in ver. 13 are the same as those addressed in ver. 9. Wellhausen prefers to believe that after the words *children of Israel*, which end a sentence, something has fallen out. The LXX. translator, who makes several blunders in the course of this chapter, instead of translating ערש couch, the last word of the verse, merely transliterates it into *iepeîs!*

¹ Cf. vi. 4: *that lie on ivory diwans and sprawl on their couches.*

² Van Lennep, *Bible Lands and Customs*, p. 460.

³ See p. 205, n. 4.

without its women, and to the women of Samaria Amos now turns with the most scornful of all his words. *Hear this word—this for you—kine of Bashan that are in the mount of Samaria, that oppress the poor, that crush the needy, that say to their lords, Bring, and let us drink. Sworn hath the Lord Jehovah by His holiness, lo, days are coming when there shall be a taking away of you with hooks, and of the last of you with fish-hooks. They put hooks¹ in the nostrils of unruly cattle, and the figure is often applied to human captives;² but so many should these cattle of Samaria be that for the last of them fish-hooks must be used. Yea, by the breaches in the wall of the stormed city shall ye go out, every one headlong, and ye shall be cast . . .³ oracle of Jehovah.* It is a cowherd's rough picture of women: a troop of kine—heavy, heedless animals, trampling in their anxiety for food upon every frail and lowly object in the way. But there is a prophet's insight into character. Not of Jezebels, or Messalinas, or Lady-Macbeths is it spoken, but of the ordinary

¹ The words for hook in Hebrew—the two used above, צְנוּת and סִירוֹת, and a third, הוֹתָה—all mean originally *thorns*, doubtless the first hooks of primitive man; but by this time they would signify metal hooks—a change analogous to the English word *pen*.

² Cf. Isa. xxxvii. 29; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11. On the use of fish-hooks, Job xl. 26 (Heb.), xli. 2 (Eng.); Ezek. xxix. 4.

³ The verb, which in the text is active, must be taken in the passive. The word not translated above is הִרְמוֹנָה, *unto the Harmôn*, which name does not occur elsewhere. LXX. read εἰς τὸ ὄρος τὸ Ῥομμὸν, which Ewald renders *ye shall cast the Rimmon to the mountain* (cf. Isa. ii. 20), and he takes Rimmon to be the Syrian goddess of love. Steiner (quoted by Wellhausen) renders *ye shall be cast out to Hadad Rimmon*, that is, *violated as* קְרִישָׁתָהּ. Hitzig separates הִרְהַר from מוֹנָה, which he takes as contracted from מְעֻנָה, and renders *ye shall fling yourselves out on the mountains as a refuge*. But none of these is satisfactory.

matrons of Samaria. Thoughtlessness and luxury are able to make brutes out of women of gentle nurture, with homes and a religion.¹

Such are these three or four short oracles of Amos. They are probably among his earliest—the first peremptory challenges of prophecy to that great stronghold which before forty years she is to see thrown down in obedience to her word. As yet, however, there seems to be nothing to justify the menaces of Amos. Fair and stable rises the structure of Israel's life. A nation, who know themselves elect, who in politics are prosperous and in religion proof to every doubt, build high their palaces, see the skies above them unclouded, and bask in their pride, heaven's favourites without a fear. This man, solitary and sudden from his desert, springs upon them in the name of God and their poor. Straighter word never came from Deity: *Jehovah hath spoken, who can but prophesy?* The insight of it, the justice of it, are alike convincing. Yet at first it appears as if it were sped on the personal and very human passion of its herald. For Amos not only uses the desert's cruelties—the lion's to the sheep—to figure God's impending judgment upon His people, but he enforces the latter with all a desert-bred man's horror of cities and civilisation. It is their costly furniture, their lavish and complex building, on which he sees the storm break. We seem to hear again that frequent phrase of the previous section: *the fire shall devour the palaces thereof*. The palaces, he says, are

¹ I have already treated this passage in connection with Isaiah's prophecies on women in the volume on Isaiah i.—xxxix. (Expositor's Bible), Chap. XVI.

simply storehouses of oppression; the palaces will be plundered. Here, as throughout his book,¹ couches and diwans draw forth the scorn of a man accustomed to the simple furniture of the tent. But observe his especial hatred of houses. Four times in one verse he smites them: *winter-house on summer-house and the ivory houses shall perish—yea, houses manifold, saith the Lord.* So in another oracle of the same section: *Houses of ashlar ye have built, and ye shall not inhabit them; vineyards of delight have ye planted, and ye shall not drink of their wine.*² And in another: *I loathe the pride of Jacob, and his palaces I hate; and I will give up a city and all that is in it. . . . For, lo, the Lord is about to command, and He will smite the great house into ruins and the small house into splinters.*³ No wonder that such a prophet found war with its breached walls insufficient, and welcomed, as the full ally of his word, the earthquake itself.⁴

Yet all this is no mere desert "razzia" in the name of the Lord, a nomad's hatred of cities and the culture of settled men. It is not a temper; it is a vision of history. In the only argument which these early oracles contain, Amos claims to have events on the side of his word. *Shall the lion roar and not be catching something?* Neither does the prophet speak till he knows that God is ready to act. History accepted this claim. Amos spoke about 755. In 734 Tiglath-Pileser swept Gilead and Galilee; in 724 Shalmaneser overran the rest of Northern Israel: *siege and blockade of the whole land!* For three years the Mount of Samaria was invested, and then taken; the houses overthrown, the rich and the delicate led away captive. It happened

¹ Cf. chap. vi. 4.

³ vi. 8, 11.

² v. 11.

⁴ Cf. what was said on building above, p. 33.

as Amos foretold; for it was not the shepherd's rage within him that spoke. He had *seen the Lord standing, and He said, Smite.*

But this assault of a desert nomad upon the structure of a nation's life raises many echoes in history and some questions in our own minds to-day. Again and again have civilisations far more powerful than Israel's been threatened by the desert in the name of God, and in good faith it has been proclaimed by the prophets of Christianity and other religions that God's kingdom cannot come on earth till the wealth, the culture, the civil order, which men have taken centuries to build, have been swept away by some great political convulsion. To-day Christianity herself suffers the same assaults, and is told by many, the high life and honest intention of whom cannot be doubted, that till the civilisation which she has so much helped to create is destroyed, there is no hope for the purity or the progress of the race. And Christianity, too, has doubts within herself. What is the world which our Master refused in the Mount of Temptation, and so often and so sternly told us that it must perish?—how much of our wealth, of our culture, of our politics, of the whole fabric of our society? No thoughtful and religious man, when confronted with civilisation, not in its ideal, but in one of those forms which give it its very name, the life of a large city, can fail to ask, How much of this deserves the judgment of God? How much must be overthrown, before His will is done on earth? All these questions rise in the ears and the heart of a generation, which more than any other has been brought face to face with the ruins of empires and civilisations, which have endured longer, and in their day seemed more stable, than her own.

In face of the confused thinking and fanatic speech which have risen on all such topics, it seems to me that the Hebrew prophets supply us with four cardinal rules.

First, of course, they insist that it is the moral question upon which the fate of a civilisation is decided. By what means has this system grown? Is justice observed in essence as well as form? Is there freedom, or is the prophet silenced? Does luxury or self-denial prevail? Do the rich make life hard for the poor? Is childhood sheltered and is innocence respected? By these, claim the prophets, a nation stands or falls; and history has proved the claim on wider worlds than they dreamt of.

But by themselves moral reasons are never enough to justify a prediction of speedy doom upon any system or society. None of the prophets began to foretell the fall of Israel till they read, with keener eyes than their contemporaries, the signs of it in current history. And this, I take it, was the point which made a notable difference between them, and one who like them scourged the social wrongs of his civilisation, yet never spoke a word of its fall. Juvenal nowhere calls down judgments, except upon individuals. In his time there were no signs of the decline of the empire, even though, as he marks, there was a flight from the capital of the virtue which was to keep the empire alive. But the prophets had political proof of the nearness of God's judgment, and they spoke in the power of its coincidence with the moral corruption of their people.

Again, if conscience and history (both of them, to the prophets, being witnesses of God) thus combine to announce the early doom of a civilisation, neither the religion that may have helped to build it, nor any

remanent virtue in it, nor its ancient value to God, can avail to save. We are tempted to judge that the long and costly development of ages is cruelly thrown away by the convulsion and collapse of an empire; it feels impious to think that the patience, the providence, the millennial discipline of the Almighty are to be in a moment abandoned to some rude and savage force. But we are wrong. *You only have I known of all the families of the ground, yet I must visit upon you your iniquities.* Nothing is too costly for justice. And God finds some other way of conserving the real results of the past.

Again, it is a corollary of all this, that the sentence upon civilisation must often seem to come by voices that are insane, and its execution by means that are criminal. Of course, when civilisation is arraigned as a whole, and its overthrow demanded, there may be nothing behind the attack but jealousy or greed, the fanaticism of ignorant men or the madness of disordered lives. But this is not necessarily the case. For God has often in history chosen the outsider as the herald of doom, and sent the barbarian as its instrument. By the statesmen and patriots of Israel, Amos must have been regarded as a mere savage, with a savage's hate of civilisation. But we know what he answered when Amaziah called him rebel. And it was not only for its suddenness that the apostles said the *day of the Lord should come as a thief*, but also because of its methods. For over and over again has doom been pronounced, and pronounced truly, by men who in the eyes of civilisation were criminals and monsters.

Now apply these four principles to the question of ourselves. It will scarcely be denied that our civilisa-

tion tolerates, and in part lives by, the existence of vices which, as we all admit, ruined the ancient empires. Are the political possibilities of overthrow also present? That there exist among us means of new historic convulsions is a thing hard for us to admit. But the signs cannot be hid. When we see the jealousies of the Christian peoples, and their enormous preparations for battle; the arsenals of Europe which a few sparks may blow up; the millions of soldiers one man's word may mobilise; when we imagine the opportunities which a general war would furnish to the discontented masses of the European proletariat,—we must surely acknowledge the existence of forces capable of inflicting calamities, so severe as to affect not merely this nationality or that type of culture, but the very vigour and progress of civilisation herself; and all this without our looking beyond Christendom, or taking into account the rise of the yellow races to a consciousness of their approach to equality with ourselves. If, then, in the eyes of the Divine justice Christendom merits judgment,—if life continue to be left so hard to the poor; if innocence be still an impossibility for so much of the childhood of the Christian nations; if with so many of the leaders of civilisation prurience be lifted to the level of an art, and licentiousness followed as a cult; if we continue to pour the evils of our civilisation upon the barbarian, and “the vices of our young nobles,” to paraphrase Juvenal, “are aped in” Hindustan,—then let us know that the means of a judgment more awful than any which has yet scourged a delinquent civilisation are extant and actual among us. And if one should reply, that our Christianity makes all the difference, that God cannot undo the development of nineteen centuries, or cannot over-

throw the peoples of His Son,—let us remember that God does justice at whatever cost; that as He did not spare Israel at the hands of Assyria, so He did not spare Christianity in the East when the barbarians of the desert found her careless and corrupt. *You only have I known of all the families of the ground, therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.*

CHAPTER IX

THE FALSE PEACE OF RITUAL

AMOS iv. 4—vi.

THE next four groups of oracles¹—iv. 4-13, v. 1-17, v. 18-27 and vi.—treat of many different details, and each of them has its own emphasis; but all are alike in this, that they vehemently attack the national worship and the sense of political security which it has engendered. Let us at once make clear that this worship is the worship of Jehovah. It is true that it is mixed with idolatry, but, except possibly in one obscure verse,² Amos does not concern himself with the idols. What he strikes at, what he would sweep away, is his people's form of devotion to their own God. The cult of the national God, at the national sanctuaries, in the national interest and by the whole body of the people, who practise it with a zeal unparalleled by their forefathers—this is what Amos condemns. And he does so absolutely. He has nothing but scorn for the temples and the feasts. The assiduity of attendance, the liberality of gifts, the employment of wealth and art and patriotism in worship—he tells his generation that God loathes it all. Like Jeremiah, he even seems to imply that God never

¹ See p. 141.

² v. 26.

instituted in Israel any sacrifice or offering.¹ It is all this which gives these oracles their interest for us ; and that interest is not merely historical.

It is indeed historical to begin with. When we find, not idolatry, but all religious ceremonial—temples, public worship, tithes, sacrifice, the praise of God by music, in fact every material form in which man has ever been wont to express his devotion to God—scorned and condemned with the same uncompromising passion as idolatry itself, we receive a needed lesson in the history of religion. For when one is asked, What is the distinguishing characteristic of heathenism ? one is always ready to say, Idolatry, which is not true. The distinguishing characteristic of heathenism is the stress which it lays upon ceremonial. To the pagan religions, both of the ancient and of the modern world, rites were the indispensable element in religion. The gifts of the gods, the abundance of fruits, the security of the state, depended upon the full and accurate performance of ritual. In Greek literature we have innumerable illustrations of this : the *Iliad* itself starts from a god's anger, roused by an insult to his priest, whose prayers for vengeance he hears because sacrifices have been assiduously offered to him. And so too with the systems of paganism from which the faith of Israel, though at first it had so much in common with them, broke away to its supreme religious distinction. The Semites laid the stress of their obedience to the gods upon traditional ceremonies ; and no sin was held so heinous by them as the neglect or infringement of a religious rite. By the side of it offences against one's fellow-men or one's own character were deemed mere mis-

¹ v. 25.

demeanours. In the day of Amos this pagan superstition thoroughly penetrated the religion of Jehovah, and so absorbed the attention of men, that without the indignant and complete repudiation of it prophecy could not have started on her task of identifying morality with religion, and of teaching men more spiritual views of God. But even when we are thus aware of ceremonialism as the characteristic quality of the pagan religions, we have not measured the full reason of that uncompromising attack on it, which is the chief feature of this part of the permanent canon of our religion. For idolatries die everywhere ; but everywhere a superstitious ritualism survives. It continues with philosophies that have ceased to believe in the gods who enforced it. Upon ethical movements which have gained their freedom by breaking away from it, in the course of time it makes up, and lays its paralysing weight. With offers of help it flatters religions the most spiritual in theory and intention. The Pharisees, than whom few parties had at first purer ideals of morality, tithed mint, anise and cummin, to the neglect of the essence of the Law ; and even sound Christians, who have assimilated the Gospel of St. John, find it hard and sometimes impossible to believe in salvation apart from their own sacraments, or outside their own denominational forms. Now this is because ritual is a thing which appeals both to the baser and to the nobler instincts of man. To the baser it offers itself as a mechanical atonement for sin, and a substitute for all moral and intellectual effort in connection with faith ; to the nobler it insists on a man's need in religion of order and routine, of sacrament and picture. Plainly then the words of Amos have significance for more than the immediate problems of his day. And if it

seem to some, that Amos goes too far with his cry to sweep away all ceremonial, let them remember, besides the crisis of his times, that the temper he exposes and seeks to dissipate is a rank and obdurate error of the human heart. Our Lord, who recognised the place of ritual in worship, who said, *Thus it behoveth us to fulfil all righteousness*, which righteousness in the dialect of His day was not the moral law, but man's due of rite, sacrifice, tithe and alms,¹ said also, *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*. There is an irreducible minimum of rite and routine in worship; there is an invaluable loyalty to traditional habits; there are holy and spiritual uses in symbol and sacrament. But these are all dispensable; and because they are all constantly abused, the voice of the prophet is ever needed which tells us that God will have none of them; but let justice roll on like water, and righteousness like an unfailing stream.

For the superstition that ritual is the indispensable bond between God and man, Amos substitutes two other aspects of religion. They are history as God's discipline of man; and civic justice, as man's duty to God. The first of them he contrasts with religious ceremonialism in chap. iv. 4-13, and the second in chap. v.; while in chap. vi. he assaults once more the false political peace which the ceremonialism engenders.

I. FOR WORSHIP, CHASTISEMENT.

AMOS iv. 4-13.

In chap. ii. Amos contrasted the popular conception of religion as worship with God's conception of it as history. He placed a picture of the sanctuary, hot

¹ Another proof of how the spirit of ritualism tends to absorb morality.

with religious zeal, but hot too with passion and the fumes of wine, side by side with a great prospect of the national history: God's guidance of Israel from Egypt onwards. That is, as we said at the time, he placed an indoors picture of religion side by side with an open-air one. He repeats that arrangement here. The religious services he sketches are more pure, and the history he takes from his own day; but the contrast is the same. Again we have on the one side the temple worship—artificial, exaggerated, indoors, smoky; but on the other a few movements of God in Nature, which, though they all be calamities, have a great moral majesty upon them. The first opens with a scornful call to worship, which the prophet, letting out his whole heart at the beginning, shows to be equivalent to sin. Note next the impossible caricature of their exaggerated zeal: sacrifices every morning instead of once a year, tithes every three days instead of every three years.¹ To offer leavened bread was a departure from the older fashion of unleavened.² To publish their liberality was like the later Pharisees, who were not dissimilarly mocked by our Lord: *When thou doest alms, cause not a trumpet to be sounded before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men.*³ There is a certain rhythm in the taunt; but the prose style seems to be resumed with fitness when the prophet describes the solemn approach of God in deeds of doom.

¹ Ver. 4: cf. 1 Sam. i.; Deut. xiv. 28. Wellhausen offers another exegesis: Amos is describing exactly what took place at Bethel—sacrifice on the morning, *i.e.* next to the day of their arrival, tithes on the third day thereafter.

² See Wellhausen's note, and compare Lev. vii. 13.

³ Matt. vi. 2.

Come away to Bethel and transgress,
 At Gilgal exaggerate your transgression!
 And bring every morning your sacrifices,
 Every three days your tithes!
 And send up the savour of leavened bread as a
 thank-offering,
 And call out your liberalities—make them to be heard!
 For so ye love to do, O children of Israel:

Oracle of Jehovah.

But I on My side have given you cleanness of teeth in
 all your cities, and want of bread in all your places—yet
 ye did not return to Me: oracle of Jehovah.

But I on My side withheld from you the winter rain,¹
 while it was still three months to the harvest: and I let it
 rain repeatedly on one city, and upon one city I did not let
 it rain: one lot was rained upon, and the lot that was
 not rained upon withered; and two or three cities kept
 straggling to one city to drink water, and were not satisfied
 —yet ye did not return to Me: oracle of Jehovah.

I smote you with blasting and with mildew: many of
 your gardens and your vineyards and your figs and your
 olives the locust devoured—yet ye did not return to Me:
 oracle of Jehovah.

I sent among you a pestilence by way of Egypt:² I slew

¹ דַּשִּׁי: *Hist. Geog.*, p. 64. It is interesting that this year (1895) the same thing was threatened, according to a report in the *Mittheilungen u. Nachrichten des D.P.V.*, p. 44: "Nachdem es im December einigemal recht stark geregnet hatte besonders an der Meeresküste ist seit kurz vor Weihnachten das Wetter immer schön u. mild geblieben, u. wenn nicht weiterer Regen fällt, so wird grosser Wassermangel entstehen denn bis jetzt (16 Febr.) hat Niemand Cisterne voll." The harvest is in April-May.

² Or in the fashion of Egypt, *i.e.* a thoroughly Egyptian plague; so called, not with reference to the plagues of Egypt, but because that country was always the nursery of the pestilence. See *Hist. Geog.*, p. 157 ff. Note how it comes with war.

with the sword your youths—besides the capture of your horses—and I brought up the stench of your camps to your nostrils—yet ye did not return to Me: oracle of Jehovah.

I overturned among you, like God's own overturning of Sodom and Gomorrah, till ye became as a brand plucked from the burning—yet ye did not return to Me: oracle of Jehovah.

This recalls a passage in that English poem of which we are again and again reminded by the Book of Amos, *The Vision of Piers Plowman*. It is the sermon of Reason in Passus V. (Skeat's edition):—

“He preved that thise pestilences · were for pure synne,
 And the southwest wynde · in saterday et evene
 Was pertliche¹ for pure pride · and for no poynt elles.
 Piries and plomtrees · were puffed to the erthe,
 In ensample ze segges² · ze shulden do the bettere.
 Beches and brode okes · were blowen to the grounde.
 Torned upward her tailles · in tokenyng of drede,
 That dedly synne at domesday · shal fordon³ hem alle.”

In the ancient world it was a settled belief that natural calamities like these were the effects of the deity's wrath. When Israel suffers from them the prophets take for granted that they are for the people's punishment. I have elsewhere shown how the climate of Palestine lent itself to these convictions; in this respect the Book of Deuteronomy contrasts it with the climate of Egypt.⁴ And although some, perhaps rightly, have scoffed at the exaggerated form of the belief, that God is angry with the sons of men every time drought or floods happen, yet the instinct is sound which in all ages has led religious people to

¹ Apertly, openly.

² Men,

³ Undo.

⁴ *Hist. Geog.*, Chap. iii., pp. 73 f.

feel that such things are inflicted for moral purposes. In the economy of the universe there may be ends of a purely physical kind served by such disasters, apart altogether from their meaning to man. But man at least learns from them that nature does not exist solely for feeding, clothing and keeping him wealthy; nor is it anything else than his monotheism, his faith in God as the Lord both of his moral life and of nature, which moves him to believe, as Hebrew prophets taught and as our early English seer heard Reason herself preach. Amos had the more need to explain those disasters as the work of the God of righteousness, because his contemporaries, while willing to grant Jehovah leadership in war, were tempted to attribute to the Canaanite gods of the land all power over the seasons.

What, however, more immediately concerns us in this passage is its very effective contrast between men's treatment of God and God's treatment of men. They lavish upon Him gifts and sacrifices. He—*on His side*—sends them cleanness of teeth, drought, blasting of their fruits, pestilence, war and earthquake. That is to say, they regard Him as a being only to be flattered and fed. He regards them as creatures with characters to discipline, even at the expense of their material welfare. Their views of Him, if religious, are sensuous and gross; His views of them, if austere, are moral and ennobling. All this may be grim, but it is exceeding grand; and short as the efforts of Amos are, we begin to perceive in him something already of the greatness of an Isaiah.

And have not those, who have believed as Amos believed, ever been the strong spirits of our race, making the very disasters which crushed them to the earth the tokens that God has great views about them? Laugh

not at the simple peoples, who have their days of humiliation, and their fast-days after floods and stunted harvests. For they take these, not like other men, as the signs of their frailty and helplessness; but as measures of the greatness God sees in them, His provocation of their souls to the infinite possibilities which He has prepared for them.

Israel, however, did not turn even at the fifth call to penitence, and so there remained nothing for her but a fearful looking forward to judgment, all the more terrible that the prophet does not define what the judgment shall be.

Therefore thus shall I do to thee, O Israel: because I am going to do this to thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. For, lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth to man what His thought is, that maketh morning darkness, and marcheth on the high places of earth, Jehovah, God of Hosts, is His Name.¹

2. FOR WORSHIP, JUSTICE.

AMOS v.

In the next of these groups of oracles Amos continues his attack on the national ritual, and now contrasts it with the service of God in public life—the relief of the poor, the discharge of justice. But he does not begin with this. The group opens with an elegy, which bewails the nation as already fallen. It is always difficult to mark where the style of a prophet passes from rhythmical prose into what we may justly call a metrical form. But in this short wail, we catch the well-known measure of the Hebrew dirge; not so

This and similar passages are dealt with by themselves in Chap. XI.

artistic as in later poems, yet with at least the characteristic couplet of a long and a short line.

*Hear this word which I lift up against you—a Dirge,
O house of Israel:—*

*Fallen, no more shall she rise,
Virgin of Israel!
Flung down on her own ground,
No one to raise her!*

The *Virgin*, which with Isaiah is a standing title for Jerusalem and occasionally used of other cities, is here probably the whole nation of Northern Israel. The explanation follows. It is War. *For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: The city that goeth forth a thousand shall have an hundred left; and she that goeth forth an hundred shall have left ten for the house of Israel.*

But judgment is not yet irrevocable. There break forthwith the only two promises which lighten the lowering darkness of the book. Let the people turn to Jehovah Himself—and that means let them turn from the ritual, and instead of it purge their civic life, restore justice in their courts and help the poor. For God and moral good are one. It is *seek Me and ye shall live, and seek good and ye shall live*. Omitting for the present all argument as to whether the interruption of praise to the power of Jehovah be from Amos or another, we read the whole oracle as follows.

Thus saith Jehovah to the house of Israel: Seek Me and live. But seek not Bethel, and come not to Gilgal, and to Beersheba pass not over—to come to Beersheba one had to cross all Judah. For Gilgal shall taste the gall of exile—it is not possible except in this clumsy way to echo the prophet's play upon words, "Ha-Gilgal galoh yigleh"—and Bethel, God's house, shall become an

idolatry. This rendering, however, scarcely gives the rude force of the original; for the word rendered idolatry, Aven, means also falsehood and perdition, so that we should not exaggerate the antithesis if we employed a phrase which once was not vulgar: *And Bethel, house of God, shall go to the devil!*¹ The epigram was the more natural that near Bethel, on a site now uncertain, but close to the edge of the desert to which it gave its name, there lay from ancient times a village actually called Beth-Aven, however the form may have risen. And we shall find Hosea stereotyping this epigram of Amos, and calling the sanctuary Beth-Aven oftener than he calls it Beth-El.² *Seek ye Jehovah and live*, he begins again, *lest He break forth like fire, O house of Joseph, and it consume and there be none to quench at Bethel.*³ . . .⁴ *He that made the Seven Stars and Orion,*⁵

¹ Cf. LXX.: Βαιθὴλ ἔσται ὡς οὐχ ὑπάρχουσα.

² The name Bethel is always printed as one word in our Hebrew texts. See Baer on Gen. xii. 8.

³ Wellhausen thinks *at Bethel* not genuine. But Bethel has been singled out as the place where the people put their false confidence, and is naturally named here. LXX.: τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραὴλ.

⁴ Ver. 7 is plainly out of place here, as the LXX. perceived, and therefore tried to give it another rendering which would make it seem in place: ὁ ποιῶν εἰς ὕψος κρίμα, καὶ δικαιοσύνην εἰς γῆν ἔθηκεν. So Ewald removed it to between vv. 9 and 10. There it begins well another oracle; and it may be that we should insert before it יי, as in vv. 18, vi. 1.

⁵ Literally *the Group* and *the Giant*. כִּמָּה, Kimah, signifies group, or little heap. Here it is rendered by Aq. and at Job ix. 9 by LXX. Ἄρκτουρος; and here by Theod. and in Job xxxviii. 31, *the chain, or cluster, of the group* Πλειάδες. The Targ. and Pesh. always give it as Kima, *i.e.* Pleiades. And this is the rendering of most moderns. But Stern takes it for Sirius with its constellation of the Great Dog, for the reason that this is the brightest of all stars, and therefore a more suitable fellow for Orion than the dimmer Pleiades can be. כִּסִּיל, the Fool or Giant, is the Hebrew name of Ὠρίων, by

that turneth the murk¹ into morning, and day He darkeneth to night, that calleth for the waters of the sea and poureth them out on the face of the earth—Jehovah His Name. He it is that flasheth out ruin² on strength, and bringeth down³ destruction on the fortified. This rendering of the last verse is uncertain, and rightly suspected, but there is no alternative so probable, and it returns to the keynote from which the passage started, that God should break forth like fire.

Ah, they that turn justice to wormwood, and abase⁴ righteousness to the earth! They hate him that reproveth in the gate—in an Eastern city both the law-court and place of the popular council—and him that speaketh sincerely they abhor. So in the English mystic's Vision Peace complains of Wrong:—

“I dar noughte for fere of hym · fyghte ne chyde.”⁵

Wherefore, because ye trample on the weak and take from him a present of corn,⁶ ye have built houses of ashlar,⁷ but ye shall not dwell in them; vineyards for pleasure have ye planted, but ye shall not drink of their wine. For I know how many are your crimes, and how forceful⁸

which the LXX. render it. Targum נִפְלֵא. To the ancient world the constellation looked like the figure of a giant fettered in heaven, “a fool so far as he trusted in his bodily strength” (Dillmann). In later times he was called Nimrod. His early setting came at the time of the early rains. Cf. with the passage Job ix. 9 and xxxviii. 31.

¹ The abstract noun meaning *deep shadow*, LXX. σκιά, and rendered *shadow of death* by many modern versions.

² So LXX., reading שֶׁר for שֶׁר; it improves the rhythm, and escapes the awkward repetition of שֶׁר.

³ So LXX.

⁴ Possible alternative: *make stagnant*.

⁵ *Vision of Piers Plowman*, Passus IV., l. 52. Cf. the whole passage.

⁶ Uncertain; Hitzig takes it as the apodosis of the previous clause: *Ye shall have to take from him a present of corn, i.e. as alms.*

⁷ See above, p. 33.

⁸ Cf. “Pecca fortiter.”

your sins—ye that browbeat the righteous, take bribes, and bring down the poor in the gate! Therefore the prudent in such a time is dumb, for an evil time is it indeed.

Seek good and not evil, that ye may live, and Jehovah God of Hosts be with you, as ye say He is. Hate evil and love good; and in the gate set justice on her feet again—peradventure Jehovah God of Hosts may have pity on the remnant of Joseph. If in the Book of Amos there be any passages, which, to say the least, do not now lie in their proper places, this is one of them. For, firstly, while it regards the nation as still responsible for the duties of government, it recognises them as reduced to a remnant. To find such a state of affairs we have to come down to the years subsequent to 734, when Tiglath-Pileser swept into captivity all Gilead and Galilee—that is, two-thirds, in bulk, of the territory of Northern Israel—but left Ephraim untouched. In answer to this, it may, of course, be pointed out that in thus calling the people to repentance, so that a remnant might be saved, Amos may have been contemplating a disaster still future, from which, though it was inevitable, God might be moved to spare a remnant.¹ That is very true. But it does not meet this further difficulty, that the verses (14, 15) plainly make interruption between the end of ver. 13 and the beginning of ver. 16; and that the initial *therefore* of the latter verse, while it has no meaning in its present sequence, becomes natural and appropriate when made to follow immediately on ver. 13. For all these reasons, then, I take vv. 14 and 15 as a parenthesis, whether from Amos himself or from a later writer who can tell? But it ought to be kept in

¹ As, for instance, the prophet looks forward to in iii. 12.

mind that in other prophetic writings where judgment is very severe, we have some proof of the later insertion of calls to repentance, by way of mitigation.

Ver. 13 had said the time was so evil that the prudent man kept silence. All the more must the Lord Himself speak, as ver. 16 now proclaims. *Therefore thus saith Jehovah, God of Hosts,¹ Lord: On all open ways lamentation, and in all streets they shall be saying, Ah woe! Ah woe! And in all vineyards lamentation,² and they shall call the ploughman to wailing and to lamentation them that are skilful in dirges—town and country, rustic and artist alike—for I shall pass through thy midst, saith Jehovah.* It is the solemn formula of the Great Passover, when Egypt was filled with wailing and there were dead in every house.

The next verse starts another, but a kindred, theme. As blind as was Israel's confidence in ritual, so blind was their confidence in dogma, and the popular dogma was that of the *Day of Jehovah*.

All popular hopes expect their victory to come in a single sharp crisis—a day. And again, the day of any one means either the day he has appointed, or the day of his display and triumph. So Jehovah's day meant to the people the day of His judgment, or of His triumph: His triumph in war over their enemies, His judgment upon the heathen. But Amos, whose keynote has been that judgment begins at home, cries woe upon such hopes, and tells his people that for them the day of Jehovah is not victory, but rather insidious, importunate, inevitable death. And this he describes as a man who has lived, alone with wild beasts, from

¹ *God of Hosts*, perhaps an intrusion (?) between יהוה and אלהים.

² I have ventured to rearrange the order of the clauses, which in the original is evidently dislocated.

the jungles of the Jordan, where the lions lurk, to the huts of the desert infested by snakes.

Woe unto them that long for the day of Jehovah! What have you to do with the day of Jehovah? It is darkness, and not light. As when a man fleeth from the face of a lion, and a bear falls upon him; and he comes into his home,¹ and, breathless, leans his hand upon the wall, and a serpent bites him. And then, as if appealing to Heaven for confirmation: Is it not so? Is it not darkness, the day of Jehovah, and not light? storm darkness, and not a ray of light upon it?

Then Amos returns to the worship, that nurse of their vain hopes, that false prophet of peace, and he hears God speak more strongly than ever of its futility and hatefulness.

I hate, I loathe your feasts, and I will not smell the savour of your gatherings to sacrifice. For with pagan folly they still believed that the smoke of their burnt-offerings went up to heaven and flattered the nostrils of Deity. How ingrained was this belief may be judged by us from the fact that the terms of it had to be adopted by the apostles of a spiritual religion, if they would make themselves understood, and are now the metaphors of the sacrifices of the Christian heart.² Though ye bring to Me burnt-offerings and your meal-offerings I will not be pleased, or your thank-offerings of fatted calves, I will not look at them. Let cease from Me the noise of thy songs; to the playing of thy viols I will not listen. But let justice roll on like water, and righteousness like an unfailing stream.

Then follows the remarkable appeal from the habits of this age to those of the times of Israel's simplicity. *Was it flesh- or meal-offerings that ye brought Me in the*

¹ Lit. the house.

² Eph. v. 2; etc.

wilderness, forty years, O house of Israel?¹ That is to say, at the very time when God made Israel His people, and led them safely to the promised land—the time when of all others He did most for them—He was not moved to such love and deliverance by the propitiatory bribes, which this generation imagine to be so availing and indispensable. Nay, those still shall not avail, for exile from the land shall now as surely come in spite of them, as the possession of the land in old times came without them. This at least seems to be the drift of the very obscure verse which follows, and is the unmistakable statement of the close of the oracle. *But ye shall lift up . . . your king; and . . . your god, images which you have made for yourselves;*² and I will carry you away into exile far

¹ No one doubts that this verse is interrogative. But the Authorised Eng. Ver. puts it in a form—*Have ye brought unto Me?* etc.—which implies blame that they did not do so. Ewald was the first to see that, as rendered above, an appeal to the forty years was the real intention of the verse. So after him nearly all critics, also the Revised Eng. Ver.: *Did ye bring unto Me?* On the whole question of the possibility of such an appeal see above, pp. 100 ff., and cf. Jer. vii. 22, which distinctly declares that in the wilderness God prescribed no ritual to Israel.

² Ver. 26 is very difficult, for both the text and the rendering of all the possible alternatives of it are quite uncertain. (I) As to the *text*, the present division into words must be correct; at least no other is possible. But the present order of the words is obviously wrong. For *your images* is evidently described by the relative clause *which you have made*, and ought to stand next it. What then is to be done with the two words that at present come between—*star of your god?* Are they both a mere gloss, as Robertson Smith holds, and therefore to be struck out? or should they precede the pair of words, *ביון צלמיכם*, which they now follow? This is the order of the text which the LXX. translator had before him, only for *ביון* he misread *בְּיָי* or *בְּיָי*: *καὶ ἀνελάβετε τὴν σκηνὴν τοῦ Μωλὸχ καὶ τὸ ἄστρον τοῦ Θεοῦ ὑμῶν Ῥαιφάν [Ῥεφάν, Q], τοὺς τύπους αὐτῶν [om. AQ] οὓς ἐποίησατε ἑαυτοῖς.* This arrangement has the further evidence in its

beyond Damascus, saith Jehovah—God of Hosts is His Name!¹ So this chapter closes like the previous, with

favour, that it brings *your god* into proper parallel with *your king*. The Hebrew text would then run thus:—

ונשאתם את סכות מלככם ואת [כוכב אלהיכם]
כיון צלמיכם אשר עשיתם לכם

(2) The translation of this text is equally difficult: not in the verb ונשאתם, for both the grammar and the argument oblige us to take it as future, and *ye shall lift up*; but in the two words סכות and כיון. Are these common nouns, or proper names of deities in apposition to *your king* and *your god*? The LXX. takes סכות as = *tabernacle*, and כיון as a proper name (Theodotion takes both as proper names). The Auth. Eng. Ver. follows the LXX. (except that it takes *king* for the name *Moloch*). Schrader (*Stud. u. Krit.*, 1874, 324; *K.A.T.*, 442 f.) takes them as the consonants of Sakkut, a name of the Assyrian god Adar, and of Kewan, the Assyrian name for the planet Saturn: *Ye shall take up Sakkut your king and Kewan your star-god, your images which...* Baethgen goes further and takes both the מלכיכם of מלכיכם and the צלם of צלמיכם as Moloch and Şelam, proper names, in combination with Sakkut and Kewan (*Beitr. z. Sem. Rel.*, 239). Now it is true that the Second Book of Kings implies that the worship of the host of heaven existed in Samaria before its fall (2 Kings xvii. 16), but the introduction into Samaria of Assyrian gods (among them Adar) is placed by it after the fall (2 Kings xvii. 31), and besides, Amos does not elsewhere speak of the worship of foreign gods, nor is the mention of them in any way necessary to the argument here. On the contrary, even if Amos were to mention the worship of idols by Israel, would he have selected at this point the Assyrian ones? (See, however, Tiele, *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, III., p. 211, who makes Koun and the planet Keiwan purely Phœnician deities.) Some critics take סכות and כיון as common nouns in the construct state. So Ewald, and so most recently Robertson Smith (*O.T.J.C.*, 2): *the shrine of your king and the stand of your images*. This is more in harmony with the absence from the rest of Amos of any hint as to the worship of idols, but an objection to it, and a very strong one, is that the alleged common nouns are not found elsewhere in Hebrew. In view of this conflicting evidence it is best therefore to leave the words untranslated, as in the text above. It is just possible that they may themselves be later insertions, for the verse would read very well without them: *And ye shall lift up your king and your images which you have made to yourselves*.

The last clause is peculiar. Two clauses seem to have run into

the marshalling of God's armies. But as there His hosts were the movements of Nature and the Great Stars, so here they are the nations of the world. By His rule of both He is the God of Hosts.

3. "AT EASE IN ZION."

AMOS vi.

The evil of the national worship was the false political confidence which it engendered. Leaving the ritual alone, Amos now proceeds to assault this confidence. We are taken from the public worship of the people to the private banquets of the rich, but again only in order to have their security and extravagance contrasted with the pestilence, the war and the captivity, that are rapidly approaching.

*Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion*¹—it is a proud and overweening ease which the word expresses—and *that trust in the mount of Samaria! Men of mark of the first of the peoples*—ironically, for that is Israel's opinion of itself—and *to them do the house of Israel resort! . . .*²

one—saith Jehovah, God of Hosts, and God of Hosts is His Name. The word *שׁוֹן* = *His Name*, may have been added to give the oracle the same conclusion as the oracle at the end of the preceding chapter; and it is not to be overlooked that *שׁוֹן* at the end of a clause does not occur elsewhere in the book outside the three questioned Doxologies iv. 13, v. 8, ix. 6. Further, see below, pp. 204 f.

¹ *In Zion*: "very suspicious," Cornill. But see pp. 135 f.

² I remove ver. 2 to a note, not that I am certain that it is not by Amos—who can be dogmatic on such a point?—but because the text of it, the place which it occupies, and its relation to the facts of current history, all raise doubts. Moreover it is easily detached from the context, without disturbing the flow of the chapter, which indeed runs more equably without it. The Massoretic text gives: *Pass over to Calneh, and see; and go thence to Hamath Rabbah, and come down to Gath of the Philistines: are they better than these kingdoms, or is their territory larger than yours?* Presumably these

Ye that put off the day of calamity¹ and draw near the sessions of injustice²—an epigram and proverb, for it is the universal way of men to wish and fancy far away the very crisis that their sins are hastening on. Isaiah described this same generation as drawing iniquity with cords of hypocrisy, and sin as it were with a cart-rope! *That lie on ivory diwans and sprawl on their couches*—another luxurious custom, which filled this rude shepherd with contempt—and *eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall³*—

kingdoms are Judah and Israel. But that can only mean that Israel is the best of the peoples, a statement out of harmony with the irony of ver. 1, and impossible in the mouth of Amos. Geiger, therefore, proposes to read: "Are you better than these kingdoms—*i.e.* Calneh, Hamath, Gath—or is your territory larger than theirs?" But this is also unlikely, for Israel's territory was much larger than Gath's. Besides, the question would have force only if Calneh, Hamath and Gath had already fallen. Gath had, but it is at least very questionable whether Hamath had. Therefore Schrader (*K.A.T.*, 444) rejects the whole verse; and Kuenen agrees that if we are to understand Assyrian conquests, it is hardly possible to retain the verses. Bickell's first argument against the verse, that it does not fit into the metrical system of Amos vi. 1-7, is precarious; his second, that it disturbs the grammar, which it makes to jump suddenly from the third person in ver. 1 to the second in ver. 2, and back to the third in ver. 3, is not worth anything, for such a jump occurs within ver. 3 itself.

¹ Davidson, *Syntax*, § 100, R. 5.

² שבת חטם; LXX. σαββάτων ψευδῶν, on which hint Hoffmann renders the verse: "you that daily demand the tribute of evil (cf. Ezek. xvi. 33), and every Sabbath extort by violence." But this is both unnecessary and opposed to viii. 5, which tells us no trade was done on the Sabbath. שבת is to be taken in the common sense of sitting in judgment (rather than with Welihausen), in the sense of the enthronement of wrong-doing.

³ To this day, in some parts of Palestine, the general fold into which the cattle are shut contains a portion railed off for calves and lambs (cf. Dr. M. Blanckenhorn of Erlangen in the *Mittheilungen u. Nachrichten* of the D.P.V., 1895, p. 37, with a sketch). It must be this to which Amos refers.

that is, only the most delicate of meats—*who prate or purr or babble to the sound of the viol, and as if they were David himself invent for them instruments of song;*¹ *who drink wine by ewerfuls—waterpotfuls—and anoint with the finest of oil—yet never do they grieve at the havoc of Joseph!* The havoc is the moral havoc, for the social structure of Israel is obviously still secure.² The rich are indifferent to it; they have wealth, art, patriotism, religion, but neither heart for the poverty nor conscience for the sin of their people. We know their kind! They are always with us, who live well and imagine they are proportionally clever and refined. They have their political zeal, will rally to an election when the interests of their class or their trade is in danger. They have a robust and exuberant patriotism, talk grandly of commerce, empire and the national destiny; but for the real woes and sores of the people, the poverty, the overwork, the drunkenness, the dissoluteness, which more affect a nation's life than anything else, they have no pity and no care.

Therefore now—the double initial of judgment—shall they go into exile at the head of the exiles, and stilled shall be the revelry of the dissolute—literally the sprawlers, as in ver. 4, but used here rather in the moral than in the physical sense. Sworn hath the Lord Jehovah by Himself—'tis the oracle of Jehovah

¹ Or perhaps *melodies, airs.*

² Of course, it is possible that here again, as in v. 15 and 16, we have prophecy later than the disaster of 734, when Tiglath-Pileser made a great *breach* or *havoc* in the body politic of Israel by taking Gilead and Galilee captive. But this is scarcely probable, for Amos almost everywhere lays stress upon the moral corruption of Israel, as her real and essential danger.

God of Hosts: I am loathing¹ the pride of Jacob, and his palaces do I hate, and I will pack up a city and its fulness.² . . . For, behold, Jehovah is commanding, and He will smite the great house into ruins and the small house into splinters. The collapse must come, postpone it as their fancy will, for it has been worked for and is inevitable. How could it be otherwise? *Shall horses run on a cliff, or the sea be ploughed by oxen³—that ye should turn justice to poison and the fruit of righteousness to wormwood! Ye that exult in Lo-Debar and say, By our own strength have we taken to ourselves Karnaim.* So Grätz rightly reads the verse. The Hebrew text and all the versions take these names as if they were common nouns—Lo-Debar, *a thing of nought*; Karnaim, *a pair of horns*—and doubtless it was just because of this possible play upon their names, that Amos selected these two out of all the recent conquests of Israel. Karnaim, in full Ashteroth Karnaim, *Astarte of Horns*, was that immemorial fortress and sanctuary which lay out upon the great plateau of Bashan towards Damascus; so obvious and cardinal a site that it appears in the sacred history both in the earliest recorded campaign in Abraham's time and in one of the latest under the Maccabees.⁴ Lo-Debar was of Gilead, and probably lay on that last rampart of the province northward, overlooking the Yarmuk, a strategical point which must have

¹ מתעב for מתאב

² Some words must have dropped out here. For these and the following verses 9 and 10 on the pestilence see pp. 178 ff.

³ So Michaelis, בקקר ים for בקקרים

⁴ Gen. xiv. 5; I Macc. v. In the days of Eusebius and Jerome (4th century) there were two places of the name: one of them doubtless the present Tell Ashtara south of El-Merkez, the other distant from that fourteen Roman miles.

often been contested by Israel and Aram, and with which no other Old Testament name has been identified.¹ These two fortresses, with many others, Israel had lately taken from Aram; but not, as they boasted, *by their own strength*. It was only Aram's pre-occupation with Assyria now surgent on the northern flank, which allowed Israel these easy victories. And this same northern foe would soon overwhelm themselves. *For, behold, I am to raise up against you, O house of Israel—'tis the oracle of Jehovah God of the hosts²—a Nation, and they shall oppress you from the Entrance of Hamath to the Torrent of the 'Arabah*. Every one knows the former, the Pass between the Lebanons, at whose mouth stands Dan, northern limit of Israel; but it is hard to identify the latter. If Amos means to include Judah, we should have expected the Torrent of Egypt, the present Wady el 'Arish; but the Wady of the 'Arabah may be a corresponding valley in the eastern watershed issuing in the 'Arabah. If Amos threatens only the Northern Kingdom, he intends some wady running down to that Sea of the 'Arabah, the Dead Sea, which is elsewhere given as the limit of Israel.³

¹ Along this ridge ran, and still runs, one of the most important highways to the East, that from Beth-Shan by Gadera to Edrei. About seven miles east from Gadera lies a village, Ibdar, "with a good spring and some ancient remains" (Schumacher, *N. Ajlun*, 101). Lo-Debar is mentioned in 2 Sam. ix. 45; xvii. 27; and doubtless the Lidebir of Josh. xiii. 26 on the north border of Gilead is the same.

² With the article, an unusual form of the title. LXX. here κύριος τῶν δυνάμεων.

³ 2 Kings xiv. 25. The Torrent of the 'Arabah can scarcely be the Torrent of the 'Arabim of Isa. xv. 7, for the latter was outside Israel's territory, and the border between Moab and Edom. The LXX render *Torrent of the West*, τῶν δυσμῶν

The Assyrian flood, then, was about to break, and the oracles close with the hopeless prospect of the whole land submerged beneath it.

4. A FRAGMENT FROM THE PLAGUE.

In the above exposition we have omitted two very curious verses, 9 and 10, which are held by some critics to interrupt the current of the chapter, and to reflect an entirely different kind of calamity from that which it predicts. I do not think these critics right, for reasons I am about to give; but the verses are so remarkable that it is most convenient to treat them by themselves apart from the rest of the chapter. Here they are, with the verse immediately in front of them.

I am loathing the pride of Jacob, and his palaces I hate. And I will give up a city and its fulness to . . . (perhaps siege or pestilence?). And it shall come to pass, if there be left ten men in one house, and they die,¹ . . . that his cousin² and the man to burn him shall lift him to bring the body³ out of the house, and they shall say to one who is in the recesses of the house,⁴ Are there any more with thee? And he shall say, Not one . . . and they shall say, Hush! (for one must not make mention of the name of Jehovah).

This grim fragment is obscure in its relation to the

¹ Here there is evidently a gap in the text. The LXX. insert *καὶ ὑπολειφθήσονται οἱ κατάλοιποι*; perhaps therefore the text originally ran *and the survivors die*.

² Or *uncle*—that is, a distant relative, presumably because all the near ones are dead.

³ Literally *bones*.

LXX. *τοῖς προεστηκόσι*: evidently in ignorance of the reading or the meaning.

context. But the death of even so large a household as ten—the funeral left to a distant relation—the disposal of the bodies by burning instead of the burial customary among the Hebrews¹—sufficiently reflect the kind of calamity. It is a weird little bit of memory, the recollection of an eye-witness, from one of those great pestilences which, during the first half of the eighth century, happened not seldom in Western Asia.² But what does it do here? Wellhausen says that there is nothing to lead up to the incident; that before it the chapter speaks, not of pestilence, but only of political destruction by an enemy. This is not accurate. The phrase immediately preceding may mean either *I will shut up a city and its fulness*, in which case a siege is meant, and a siege was the possibility both of famine and pestilence; or *I will give up the city and its fulness . . .*, in which case a word or two may have been dropped, as words have undoubtedly been dropped at the end of the next verse, and one ought perhaps to add *to the pestilence*.³ The latter alternative is the more probable, and this may be one of the passages, already alluded to,⁴ in which the want of connection with the preceding verses is to be explained, not upon the favourite theory that there has been a violent

¹ The burning of a body was regarded, as we have seen (Amos ii. 1), as a great sacrilege; and was practised, outside times of pestilence only in cases of great criminals: Lev. xx. 14; xxi. 9; Josh. vii. 25. Doughty (*Arabia Deserta*, 68) mentions a case in which, in Medina, a Persian pilgrim was burned to death by an angry crowd for defiling Mohammed's tomb.

² The Assyrian inscriptions record at least three—in 803, 765, 759.

³ As in Psalm lxxviii. 50. הִסְגִּיר, to give up, is so seldom used absolutely (Deut. xxxii. 30 is poetry and elliptic) that we may well believe it was followed by words signifying to what the city was to be given up.

⁴ Pp. 141 f.

intrusion into the text, but upon the too much neglected hypothesis that some words have been lost.

The uncertainty of the text, however, does not weaken the impression of its ghastly realism: the unclean and haunted house; the kinsman and the body-burner afraid to search through the infected rooms, and calling in muffled voice to the single survivor crouching in some far corner of them, *Are there any more with thee?* his reply, *None*—himself the next! Yet these details are not the most weird. Over all hangs a terror darker than the pestilence. *Shall there be evil in a city and Jehovah not have done it?* Such, as we have heard from Amos, was the settled faith of the age. But in times of woe it was held with an awful and a craven superstition. The whole of life was believed to be overhung with loose accumulations of Divine anger. And as in some fatal hollow in the high Alps, where any noise may bring down the impending masses of snow, and the fearful traveller hurries along in silence, so the men of that superstitious age feared, when an evil like the plague was imminent, even to utter the Deity's name, lest it should loosen some avalanche of His wrath. *And he said, Hush! for,* adds the comment, *one must not make mention of the name of Jehovah.*

This reveals another side of the popular religion which Amos has been attacking. We have seen it as the sheer superstition of routine; but we now know that it was a routine broken by panic. The God who in times of peace was propitiated by regular supplies of savoury sacrifice and flattery, is conceived, when His wrath is roused and imminent, as kept quiet only by the silence of its miserable objects. The false peace of ritual is tempered by panic.

CHAPTER X

DOOM OR DISCIPLINE?

AMOS viii. 4—ix.

WE now enter the Third Section of the Book of Amos: chaps. vii.—ix. As we have already treated the first part of it—the group of four visions, which probably formed the prophet's discourse at Bethel, with the interlude of his adventure there (vii.—viii. 3)¹—we may pass at once to what remains: from viii. 4 to the end of the book. This portion consists of groups of oracles more obscure in their relations to each other than any we have yet studied, and probably containing a number of verses which are not from Amos himself. They open in a denunciation of the rich, which echoes previous oracles, and soon pass to judgments of a kind already threatened, but now with greater relentlessness. Then, just as all is at the darkest, lights break; exceptions are made; the inevitable captivity is described no more as doom, but as discipline; and, with only this preparation for a change, we are swept out on a scene, in which, although the land is strewn with the ruins that have been threatened, the sunshine of a new day floods them; the promise of restoration is given; Nature

¹ See Chapter VI., Section 3.

herself will be regenerated, and the whole life of Israel planted on its own ground again.

Whether it was given to Amos himself to behold this day—whether these last verses of the book were his “Nunc Dimittis,” or the hope of a later generation, which found his book intolerably severe, and mingled with its judgments their own new mercies—we shall try to discover further on. Meanwhile there is no doubt that we start with the authentic oracles of the prophet. We know the ring of his voice. To the tyranny of the rich, which he has so often lashed, he now adds the greed and fraud of the traders; and he paints Israel’s doom in those shapes of earthquake, eclipse and famine with which his own generation had recently become familiar. Note that in this first group Amos employs only physical calamities, and says nothing of war and captivity. If the standard which we have already applied to the growth of his doctrine be correct, these ought therefore to be counted among his earlier utterances. War and captivity follow in chap. ix. That is to say, this Third Section follows the same line of development as both the First and the Second.

I. EARTHQUAKE, ECLIPSE AND FAMINE.

Amos viii. 4-14.

Hear this, ye who trample the needy, and would put an end to¹ the lowly of the land, saying, When will the New-Moon be over, that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath, that we may open corn (by making small the measure, but large the weight, and falsifying the fraudulent balances; buying the wretched for silver, and the

¹ The phrase is uncertain.

needy for a pair of shoes !), and that we may sell as grain the refuse of the corn ! The parenthesis puzzles, but is not impossible : in the speed of his scorn, Amos might well interrupt the speech of the merchants by these details of their fraud,¹ flinging these in their teeth as they spoke. The existence at this date of the New-Moon and Sabbath as days of rest from business is interesting ; but even more interesting is the peril to which they lie open. As in the case of the Nazirites and the prophets, we see how the religious institutions and opportunities of the people are threatened by worldliness and greed. And, as in every other relevant passage of the Old Testament, we have the interests of the Sabbath bound up in the same cause with the interests of the poor. The Fourth Commandment enforces the day of rest on behalf of the servants and bondsmen. When a later prophet substitutes for religious fasts the ideals of social service, he weds with the latter the security of the Sabbath from all business.² So here Amos emphasises that the Sabbath is threatened by the same worldliness and love of money which tramples on the helpless. The interests of the Sabbath are the interests of the poor : the enemies of the Sabbath are the enemies of the poor. And all this illustrates our Saviour's saying, that *the Sabbath was made for man*.

¹ Wellhausen thinks that the prophet could not have put the parenthesis in the mouth of the traders, and therefore regards it as an intrusion or gloss. But this is hypercriticism. The last clause, however, may be a mere clerical repetition of ii. 6.

² Isa. lviii. See the exposition of the passage in the writer's *Isaiah* xl.—lxvi. (Expositor's Bible Series), pp. 417 ff. : "Our prophet, while exalting the practical service of man at the expense of certain religious forms, equally exalts the observance of the Sabbath ; . . . he places the keeping of the Sabbath on a level with the practice of love."

But, as in the rest of the book, judgment again follows hard on sin. *Sworn hath Jehovah by the pride of Jacob, Never shall I forget their deeds.* It is as before. The chief spring of the prophet's inspiration is his burning sense of the personal indignation of God against crimes so abominable. God is the God of the poor, and His anger rises, as we see the anger of Christ arise, heavy against their tyrants and oppressors. Such sins are intolerable to Him. But the feeling of their intolerableness is shared by the land itself, the very fabric of nature; the earthquake is the proof of it. *For all this shall not the land tremble and her every inhabitant mourn? and she shall rise like the Nile in mass, and heave and sink like the Nile of Egypt.*¹

To the earthquake is added the eclipse: one had happened in 803, and another in 763, the memory of which probably inspired the form of this passage. *And it shall be in that day—'tis the oracle of the Lord Jehovah—that I shall bring down the sun at noon, and cast darkness on the earth in broad day.*² *And I will turn your festivals into mourning, and all your songs to a dirge. And I will bring up upon all loins sackcloth and on every head baldness, and I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and the end of it as a bitter day.*

But the terrors of earthquake and eclipse are not sufficient for doom, and famine is drawn upon.

Lo, days are coming—'tis the oracle of the Lord Jehovah—that I will send famine on the land, not a famine of bread nor a drouth of water, but of hearing the words of Jehovah. And they shall wander from sea

¹ *She shall rise*, etc.—The clause is almost the same as in ix. 5*b*, and the text differs from the LXX., which omits *and heave*. Is it an insertion?

² Literally *in the day of light*.

to sea, and from the dark North to the Sunrise shall they run to and fro, to seek the word of Jehovah, and they shall not find it; . . . who swear by Samaria's Guilt—the golden calf in the house of the kingdom at Bethel¹—and say, *As liveth thy God, O Dan!* and, *As liveth the way to Beersheba!* and they shall fall and not rise any more. I have omitted ver. 13: *in that day shall the fair maids faint and the youths for thirst*; and I append my reasons in a note. Some part of the received text must go, for while vv. 11 and 12 speak of a spiritual drought, the drought of 13 is physical. And ver. 14 follows 12 better than it follows 13. The oaths mentioned by Bethel, Dan, Beersheba, are not specially those of young men and maidens, but of the whole nation, that run from one end of the land to the other, Dan to Beersheba, seeking for some word of Jehovah.² One of the oaths, *As liveth the way to Beersheba*,³ is so curious that

¹ That is, Samaria is used in the wider sense of the kingdom, not the capital, and there is no need for Wellhausen's substitution of Bethel for it.

² This in answer to Gunning (*De Godspraken van Amos*, 1885), Wellh. *in loco*, and König (*Einleitung*, p. 304, *d*), who reckon vv. 11 and 12 to be the insertion: the latter on the additional ground that the formula of ver. 13, *in that day*, points back to ver. 9; but not to the *Lo, days are coming* of ver. 11. But thus to miss out vv. 11 and 12 leaves us with greater difficulties than before. For without them how are we to explain the *thirst* of ver. 13. It is left un-introduced; there is no hint of a drought in 9 and 10. It seems to me then that, since we must omit some verse, it ought to be ver. 13; and this the rather that if omitted it is not missed. It is just the kind of general statement that would be added by an unthinking scribe; and it does not readily connect with ver. 14, while ver. 12 does do so. For why should youths and maids be specially singled out as swearing by Samaria, Dan and Beersheba? These were the oaths of the whole people, to whom vv. 11 and 12 refer. I see a very clear case, therefore, for omitting ver. 13.

³ LXX. here gives a mere repetition of the preceding oath.

some have doubted if the text be correct. But strange as it may appear to us to speak of the life of the lifeless, this often happens among the Semites. To-day Arabs "swear *wa hyât*, 'by the life of,' even of things inanimate; 'By the life of this fire, or of this coffee.'" ¹ And as Amos here tells us that the Israelite pilgrims swore by the way to Beersheba, so do the Moslems affirm their oaths by the sacred way to Mecca.

Thus Amos returns to the chief target of his shafts—the senseless, corrupt worship of the national sanctuaries. And this time—perhaps in remembrance of how they had silenced the word of God when he brought it home to them at Bethel—he tells Israel that, with all their running to and fro across the land, to shrine after shrine in search of the word, they shall suffer from a famine and drouth of it. Perhaps this is the most effective contrast in which Amos has yet placed the stupid ritualism of his people. With so many things to swear by; with so many holy places that once were the homes of Vision, Abraham's Beersheba, Jacob's Bethel, Joshua's Gilgal—nay, a whole land over which God's voice had broken in past ages, lavish as the rain; with, too, all their assiduity of sacrifice and prayer, they should nevertheless starve and pant for that living word of the Lord, which they had silenced in His prophet.

Thus, men may be devoted to religion, may be loyal to their sacred traditions and institutions, may haunt the holy associations of the past and be very assiduous with their ritual—and yet, because of their worldliness, pride and disobedience, never feel that moral inspiration, that clear call to duty, that comfort

¹ Doughty: *Arabia Deserta* I. 269.

in pain, that hope in adversity, that good conscience at all times, which spring up in the heart like living water. Where these be not experienced, orthodoxy, zeal, lavish ritual, are all in vain.

2. NEMESIS.

AMOS IX. 1-6.

There follows a Vision in Bethel, the opening of which, *I saw the Lord*, immediately recalls the great inauguration of Isaiah. He also *saw the Lord*; but how different the Attitude, how other the Word! To the statesman-prophet the Lord is *enthroned*, surrounded by the court of heaven; and though the temple rocks to the intolerable thunder of their praise, they bring to the contrite man beneath the consciousness of a life-long mission. But to Amos the Lord is *standing* and alone—to this lonely prophet God is always alone—and His message may be summed up in its initial word, *Smite*. There—Government: hierarchies of service, embassies, clemencies, healings, and though at first devastation, thereafter the indestructible hope of a future. Here—Judgment: that Figure of Fate which terror's fascinated eye ever sees alone; one final blow and irreparable ruin. And so, as with Isaiah we saw how constructive prophecy may be, with Amos we behold only the preparatory havoc, the levelling and clearing of the ground of the future.

I have seen the Lord standing over the Altar, and He said, Smite the capital—of the pillar—that the very thresholds¹ quake, and break them on the head of all of them! It is a shock that makes the temple reel

¹ Since it is the capital that has been struck, and the command is

from roof-tree to basement. The vision seems subsequent to the prophet's visit to Bethel; and it gathers his whole attack on the national worship into one decisive and irreparable blow. *The last of them will I slay with the sword: there shall not flee away of them one fugitive: there shall not escape of them a single survivor!* Neither hell nor heaven, mountain-top nor sea-bottom, shall harbour one of them. *If they break through to Sheol, thence shall My hand take them; and if they climb to heaven, thence shall I bring them down. If they hide in Carmel's top, thence will I find them out and fetch them; and if they conceal themselves from before Mine eyes in the bottom of the sea, thence shall I charge the Serpent and he shall bite them; and if they go into captivity before their foes—to Israel as terrible a distance from God's face as Sheol itself!—thence will I charge the sword and it shall slay them; and I will set Mine eye upon them for evil and not for good.*

It is a ruder draft of the Hundred and Thirty-Ninth Psalm; but the Divine Pursuer is Nemesis, and not Conscience.

And the Lord, Jehovah of the Hosts; Who toucheth the earth and it melteth, and all its inhabitants mourn, and it rises like the Nile, all of it together, and sinks like the Nile of Egypt; Who buildeth His stories in the heavens, and His vault on the earth He foundeth; Who calleth to the waters of the sea and poureth them forth on the face of the earth—Jehovah of Hosts is His Name.¹

given to break *the thresholds on the head of all of them*, many translate *lintels* or *architraves* instead of *thresholds* (e.g. Hitzig, and Guthe in Kautzsch's *Bibel*). But the word $\text{D}^{\prime}\text{S}^{\prime}\text{D}$ always means thresholds, and the blow here is fundamental.

¹ LXX. adds *of Hosts*: on the whole passage see next chapter.

3. THE VOICES OF ANOTHER DAWN.

AMOS ix. 7-15.

And now we are come to the part where, as it seems, voices of another day mingle with that of Amos, and silence his judgments in the chorus of their unbroken hope. At first, however, it is himself without doubt who speaks. He takes up the now familiar truth, that when it comes to judgment for sin, Israel is no dearer to Jehovah than any other people of His equal Providence.

Are ye not unto Me, O children of Israel—'tis the oracle of Jehovah—just like the children of Kushites? mere black folk and far away! Did I not bring up Israel from Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and Aram from Kir? Mark again the universal Providence which Amos proclaims: it is the due concomitant of his universal morality. Once for all the religion of Israel breaks from the characteristic Semitic belief that gave a god to every people, and limited both his power and his interests to that people's territory and fortunes. And if we remember how everything spiritual in the religion of Israel, everything in its significance for mankind, was rendered possible only because at this date it broke from and abjured the particularism in which it had been born, we shall feel some of the Titanic force of the prophet, in whom that break was achieved with an absoluteness which leaves nothing to be desired. But let us also emphasise, that it was by no mere method of the intellect or observation of history that Amos was led to assert the unity of the Divine Providence. The inspiration in this was a moral one: Jehovah was ruler and guide of all the

families of mankind, because He was exalted in righteousness; and the field in which that righteousness was proved and made manifest was the life and the fate of Israel. Therefore to this Amos now turns. *Lo, the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the ground.* In other words, Jehovah's sovereignty over the world was not proved by Israel's conquest of the latter, but by His unflinching application of the principles of righteousness, at whatever cost, to Israel herself.

Up to this point, then, the voice of Amos is unmistakable, uttering the doctrine, so original to him, that in the judgment of God Israel shall not be specially favoured, and the sentence, we have heard so often from him, of her removal from her land. Remember, Amos has not yet said a word in mitigation of the sentence: up to this point of his book it has been presented as inexorable and final. But now to a statement of it as absolute as any that has gone before, there is suddenly added a qualification: *nevertheless I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob—'tis the oracle of Jehovah.* And then there is added a new picture of exile changed from doom to discipline, a process of sifting by which only the evil in Israel, *all the sinners of My people*, shall perish, but not a grain of the good. *For, lo, I am giving command, and I will toss the house of Israel among all the nations, like something that is tossed in a sieve, but not a pebble¹ shall fall to earth. By the sword shall die all the sinners of My people, they who say, The calamity shall not reach nor anticipate us.²*

¹ We should have expected *a grain*, but the word קֶרֶב only means small stone: cf. 2 Sam. xvii. 13. The LXX. has here *σύντριμμα*, fracture, ruin. Cf. *Z.A.T.W.*, III. 125.

The text has been disturbed here; the verbs are in forms not

Now as to these qualifications of the hitherto unmitigated judgments of the book, it is to be noted that there is nothing in their language to lead us to take them from Amos himself. On the contrary, the last clause describes what he has always called a characteristic sin of his day. Our only difficulties are that hitherto Amos has never qualified his sentences of doom, and that the change now appears so suddenly that the two halves of the verse in which it does so absolutely contradict each other. Read them again, ver. 8: *Lo, the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are on the sinful nation, and I will destroy it from off the face of the ground—nevertheless destroying I shall not destroy the house of Jacob: 'tis the oracle of Jehovah.* Can we believe the same prophet to have uttered at the same time these two statements? And is it possible to believe that prophet to be the hitherto unwavering, unqualifying Amos? Noting these things, let us pass to the rest of the chapter. We break from all shadows; the verses are verses of pure hope. The judgment on Israel is not averted; but having taken place her ruin is regarded as not irreparable.

In that day—the day Amos has threatened of overthrow and ruin—I will raise again the fallen hut of David and will close up its breaches, and his ruins I will raise, and I will build it up as in the days of old,¹ that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations upon

possible to the sense. For תַּיִשׁ read either תַּיִשׁ with Hitzig or תַּנִּשׁ with Wellhausen. תַּקְדִּים, Hiph., is not impossible in an intransitive sense, but probably Wellhausen is right in reading פִּי, תַּקְדִּם. The reading עֲרִינוּ which the Greek suggests and Hoffmann and Wellhausen adopt is not so appropriate to the preceding verb as בַּעֲרִינוּ of the text.

¹ The text reads *their breaches*, and some accordingly point חֲבָת, *hut*,

whom *My Name has been called*—that is, as once their Possessor—'tis the oracle of Jehovah, *He who is about to do this.*

The *fallen hut of David* undoubtedly means the fall of the kingdom of Judah. It is not language Amos uses, or, as it seems to me, could have used, of the fall of the Northern Kingdom only.¹ Again, it is undoubted that Amos contemplated the fall of Judah: this is implicit in such a phrase as *the whole family that I brought up from Egypt.*² He saw then *the day and the ruins* of which ver. 11 speaks. The only question is, can we attribute to him the prediction of a restoration of these ruins? And this is a question which must be answered in face of the facts that the rest of his book is unrelieved by a single gleam of hope, and that his threat of the nation's destruction is absolute and final. Now it is significant that in face of those facts Cornill (though he has changed his opinion) once believed it was "surely possible for Amos to include restoration in his prospect of ruin," as (he might have added) other prophets undoubtedly do. I confess I cannot so readily get over the rest of the book and its gloom; and am the less inclined to be sure about these verses being Amos' own that it seems to have been not unusual for later generations, for whom the daystar was beginning to rise, to add their own inspired hopes to the unrelieved threats of their predecessors of the midnight. The mention of Edom does not help us much: in the days of Amos after the partial conquest by Uzziah

as if it were the plural *huts* (Hoffmann, *Z.A.T.W.*, 1883, 125; Schwally, *id.*, 1890, 226, n. 1; Guthe in Kautzsch's *Bibel*). The LXX. has the sing., and it is easy to see how the plur. fem. suffix may have risen from confusion with the following conjunction.

¹ This against Cornill, *Einleitung*, 176.

² iii. 1.

the promise of *the rest of Edom* was singularly appropriate. On the other hand, what interest had so purely ethical a prophet in the mere addition of territory? To this point we shall have to return for our final decision. We have still the closing oracle—a very pleasant piece of music, as if the birds had come out after the thunderstorm, and the wet hills were glistening in the sunshine.

Lo, days are coming—'tis the oracle of Jehovah—when the ploughman shall catch up the reaper, and the grape-treader him that streweth the seed. The seasons shall jostle each other, harvest following hard upon seed-time, vintage upon spring. It is that "happy contention of seasons" which Josephus describes as the perpetual blessing of Galilee.¹ And the mountains shall drip with new wine, and all the hills shall flow down. And I will bring back the captivity of My people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities and dwell in them, and plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof, and make gardens and eat their fruits. And I will plant them on their own ground; and they shall not be uprooted any more from their own ground which I have given to them, saith Jehovah thy God.² Again we meet the difficulty: does the voice that speaks here speak with captivity already realised? or is it the voice of one who projects himself forward to a day, which, by the oath of the Lord Himself, is certain to come?

We have now surveyed the whole of this much-

¹ III. *Wars*, x. 8. With the above verses of the Book of Amos Lev. xxvi. 5 has been compared: "your threshing shall reach to the vintage and the vintage to the sowing time." But there is no reason to suppose that either of two so natural passages depends on the other.

² LXX. *God of Hosts*.

doubted, much-defended passage. I have stated fully the arguments on both sides. On the one hand, we have the fact that nothing in the language of the verses, and nothing in their historical allusions, precludes their being by Amos; we have also to admit that, having threatened a day of ruin, it was possible for Amos to realise by his mind's eye its arrival, and standing at that point to see the sunshine flooding the ruins and to prophesy a restoration. In all this there is nothing impossible in itself or inconsistent with the rest of the book. On the other hand, we have the impressive and incommensurable facts: *first*, that this change to hope comes suddenly, without preparation and without statement of reasons, at the very end of a book whose characteristics are not only a final and absolute sentence of ruin upon the people, and an outlook of unrelieved darkness, but scornful discouragement of every popular vision of a prosperous future; and, *second*, that the prophetic books contain numerous signs that later generations wove their own brighter hopes into the abrupt and hopeless conclusions of prophecies of judgment.

To this balance of evidence is there anything to add? I think there is; and that it decides the question. All these prospects of the future restoration of Israel are absolutely without a moral feature. They speak of return from captivity, of political restoration, of supremacy over the Gentiles, and of a revived Nature, hanging with fruit, dripping with must. Such hopes are natural and legitimate to a people who were long separated from their devastated and neglected land, and whose punishment and penitence were accomplished. But they are not natural to a prophet like Amos. Imagine him predicting a future like this! Imagine

him describing the consummation of his people's history, without mentioning one of those moral triumphs to rally his people to which his whole passion and energy had been devoted. To me it is impossible to hear the voice that cried, *Let justice roll on like waters and righteousness like a perennial stream*, in a peroration which is content to tell of mountains dripping with must and of a people satisfied with vineyards and gardens. These are legitimate hopes; but they are the hopes of a generation of other conditions and of other deserts than the generation of Amos.

If then the gloom of this great book is turned into light, such a change is not due to Amos.

CHAPTER XI

COMMON-SENSE AND THE REIGN OF LAW

AMOS iii. 3-8; iv. 6-13; v. 8, 9; vi. 12; viii. 8; ix. 5, 6.

FOOLS, when they face facts, which is seldom, face them one by one, and, as a consequence, either in ignorant contempt or in panic. With this inordinate folly Amos charged the religion of his day. The superstitious people, careful of every point of ritual and very greedy of omens, would not ponder real facts nor set cause to effect. Amos recalled them to common life. *Does a bird fall upon a snare, except there be a loop on her? Does the trap itself rise from the ground, except it be catching something—something alive in it that struggles, and so lifts the trap? Shall the alarum be blown in a city, and the people not tremble?* Daily life is impossible without putting two and two together. But this is just what Israel will not do with the sacred events of their time. To religion they will not add common-sense.

For Amos himself, all things which happen are in sequence and in sympathy. He has seen this in the simple life of the desert; he is sure of it throughout the tangle and hubbub of history. One thing explains another; one makes another inevitable. When he has illustrated the truth in common life, Amos claims it for especially four of the great facts of the time. The sins of society, of which society is careless; the physical

calamities, which they survive and forget; the approach of Assyria, which they ignore; the word of the prophet, which they silence,—all these belong to each other. Drought, Pestilence, Earthquake, Invasion conspire—and the Prophet holds their secret.

Now it is true that for the most part Amos describes this sequence of events as the personal action of Jehovah. *Shall evil befall, and Jehovah not have done it? . . . I have smitten you. . . . I will raise up against you a Nation. . . . Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!*¹ Yet even where the personal impulse of the Deity is thus emphasised, we feel equal stress laid upon the order and the inevitable certainty of the process. Amos nowhere uses Isaiah's great phrase: *a God of Mishpat, a God of Order or Law*. But he means almost the same thing: God works by methods which irresistibly fulfil themselves. Nay more. Sometimes this sequence sweeps upon the prophet's mind with such force as to overwhelm all his sense of the Personal within it. The Will and the Word of the God who causes the thing are crushed out by the "Must Be" of the thing itself. Take even the descriptions of those historical crises, which the prophet most explicitly proclaims as the visitations of the Almighty. In some of the verses all thought of God Himself is lost in the roar and foam with which that tide of necessity bursts up through them. The fountains of the great deep break loose, and while the universe trembles to the shock, it seems that even the voice of the Deity is overwhelmed. In one passage, immediately after describing Israel's ruin as due to Jehovah's word, Amos asks how could it have happened otherwise:—

¹ iii. 6*b*; iv. 9; vi. 14; iv. 12*b*.

*Shall horses run up a cliff, or oxen plough the sea? that ye turn justice into poison, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood.*¹ A moral order exists, which it is as impossible to break without disaster as it would be to break the natural order by driving horses upon a precipice. There is an inherent necessity in the sinners' doom. Again, he says of Israel's sin: *Shall not the Land tremble for this? Yea, it shall rise up together like the Nile, and heave and sink like the Nile of Egypt.*² The crimes of Israel are so intolerable, that in its own might the natural frame of things revolts against them. In these great crises, therefore, as in the simple instances adduced from everyday life, Amos had a sense of what we call law, distinct from, and for moments even overwhelming, that sense of the personal purpose of God, admission to the secrets of which had marked his call to be a prophet.³

These instincts we must not exaggerate into a system. There is no philosophy in Amos, nor need we wish there were. Far more instructive is what we do find—a virgin sense of the sympathy of all things, the thrill rather than the theory of a universe. And this faith, which is not a philosophy, is especially instructive on these two points: that it springs from the moral sense; and that it embraces, not history only, but nature.

It springs from the moral sense. Other races have arrived at a conception of the universe along other lines: some by the observation of physical laws valid to the recesses of space; some by logic and the unity of Reason. But Israel found the universe through the

¹ vi. 12.

² viii. 8.

³ iii. 7: *Jehovah God doeth nothing, but He hath revealed His secret to His servants the prophets.*

conscience. It is a historical fact that the Unity of God, the Unity of History and the Unity of the World, did, in this order, break upon Israel, through conviction and experience of the universal sovereignty of righteousness. We see the beginnings of the process in Amos. To him the sequences which work themselves out through history and across nature are moral. Righteousness is the hinge on which the world hangs; loosen it, and history and nature feel the shock. History punishes the sinful nation. But nature, too, groans beneath the guilt of man; and in the Drought, the Pestilence and the Earthquake provides his scourges. It is a belief which has stamped itself upon the language of mankind. What else is "plague" than "blow" or "scourge"?

This brings us to the second point—our prophet's treatment of Nature.

Apart from the disputed passages (which we shall take afterwards by themselves) we have in the Book of Amos few glimpses of nature, and these always under a moral light. There is not in any chapter a landscape visible in its own beauty. Like all desert-dwellers, who when they would praise the works of God lift their eyes to the heavens, Amos gives us but the outlines of the earth—a mountain range,¹ or the crest of a forest,² or the bare back of the land, bent from sea to sea.³ Nearly all his figures are drawn from the desert—the torrent, the wild beasts, the wormwood.⁴ If he visits the meadows of the shepherds, it is with the terror of the people's doom;⁵ if the vineyards or orchards, it is with the mildew and

¹ i. 2; iii. 9; ix. 3.

² ii. 9.

³ viii. 12.

⁵ i. 2.

⁴ v. 24; 19, 20, etc.; 7; vi. 12.

the locust;¹ if the towns, it is with drought, eclipse and earthquake.² To him, unlike his fellows, unlike especially Hosea, the whole land is one theatre of judgment; but it is a theatre trembling to its foundations with the drama enacted upon it. Nay, land and nature are themselves actors in the drama. Physical forces are inspired with moral purpose, and become the ministers of righteousness. This is the converse of Elijah's vision. To the older prophet the message came that God was not in the fire nor in the earthquake nor in the tempest, but only in the still small voice. But to Amos the fire, the earthquake and the tempest are all in alliance with the Voice, and execute the doom which it utters. The difference will be appreciated by us, if we remember the respective problems set to prophecy in those two periods. To Elijah, prophet of the elements, wild worker by fire and water, by life and death, the spiritual had to be asserted and enforced by itself. Ecstatic as he was, Elijah had to learn that the Word is more Divine than all physical violence and terror. But Amos understood that for his age the question was very different. Not only was the God of Israel dissociated from the powers of nature, which were assigned by the popular mind to the various Ba'alim of the land, so that there was a divorce between His government of the people and the influences that fed the people's life; but morality itself was conceived as provincial. It was narrowed to the national interests; it was summed up in mere rules of police, and these were looked upon as not so important as the observances of the ritual. Therefore Amos was driven to show that nature and morality

¹ iv. 9 ff.

² iv. 6-11; vi. 11; viii. 8 ff.

are one. Morality is not a set of conventions. "Morality is the order of things." Righteousness is on the scale of the universe. All things tremble to the shock of sin; all things work together for good to them that fear God.

With this sense of law, of moral necessity, in Amos we must not fail to connect that absence of all appeal to miracle, which is also conspicuous in his book.

We come now to the three disputed passages:—

iv. 13:—*For, lo! He Who formed the hills,¹ and createth the wind,² and declareth to man what His³ mind is; Who maketh the dawn into darkness, and marcheth on the heights of the land—Jehovah, God of Hosts, is His Name.*

v. 8, 9:—*Maker of the Pleiades and Orion,⁴ turning to morning the murk, and day into night He darkeneth; Who calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them forth on the face of the earth—Jehovah His Name; Who flasheth ruin on the strong, and destruction cometh down on the fortress.⁵*

ix. 5, 6:—*And the Lord Jehovah of the Hosts, Who toucheth the earth and it rocketh, and all mourn that dwell on it, and it riseth like the Nile together, and sinketh like the Nile of Egypt; Who hath builded in the heavens His ascents, and founded His vault upon the earth; Who calleth to the waters of the sea, and poureth them on the face of the earth—Jehovah⁶ His Name.*

These sublime passages it is natural to take as the

¹ LXX. *the thunder.*

² Or *spirit.*

³ *I.e. God's*; a more natural rendering than to take *his* (as Hitzig does) as meaning *man's*.

⁴ See above, pp. 166 f. n.

⁵ LXX. *Jehovah of Hosts.*

⁶ Text of last clause uncertain; see above, p. 167.

triple climax of the doctrine we have traced through the Book of Amos. Are they not the natural leap of the soul to the stars? The same shepherd's eye which has marked sequence and effect unfailing on the desert soil, does it not now sweep the clear heavens above the desert, and find there also all things ordered and arrayed? The same mind which traced the Divine processes down history, which foresaw the hosts of Assyria marshalled for Israel's punishment, which felt the overthrow of justice shock the nation to their ruin, and read the disasters of the husbandman's year as the vindication of a law higher than the physical—does it not now naturally rise beyond such instances of the Divine order, round which the dust of history rolls, to the lofty, undimmed outlines of the Universe as a whole, and, in consummation of its message, declare that "all is Law," and Law intelligible to man?

But in the way of so attractive a conclusion the literary criticism of the book has interposed. It is maintained¹ that, while none of these sublime verses are indispensable to the argument of Amos, some of them actually interrupt it, so that when they are removed it becomes consistent; that such ejaculations in praise of Jehovah's creative power are not elsewhere met with in Hebrew prophecy before the time of the Exile; that they sound very like echoes of the Book of Job; and that in the Septuagint version of Hosea we actually find a similar doxology, wedged into the middle of an authentic verse of the prophet.² To these arguments against the genuineness of the three famous

¹ First in 1875 by Duhm, *Theol. der Proph.*, p. 119; and after him by Oort, *Theol. Tijdschrift*, 1880, pp. 116f.; Wellhausen, *in locis*; Stade *Gesch.*, I. 571; Cornill, *Einleitung*, 176.

² Hosea xiii. 4.

passages, other critics, not less able and not less free, like Robertson Smith and Kuenen,¹ have replied that such ejaculations at critical points of the prophet's discourse "are not surprising under the general conditions of prophetic oratory"; and that, while one of the doxologies does appear to break the argument² of the context, they are all of them thoroughly in the spirit and the style of Amos. To this point the discussion has been carried; it seems to need a closer examination.

We may at once dismiss the argument which has been drawn from that obvious intrusion into the Greek of Hosea xiii. 4. Not only is this verse not so suited to the doctrine of Hosea as the doxologies are to the doctrine of Amos; but while they are definite and sublime, it is formal and flat—"Who made firm the heavens and founded the earth, Whose hands founded all the host of heaven, and He did not display them that thou shouldest walk after them." The passages in Amos are vision; this is a piece of catechism crumbling into homily.

Again—an argument in favour of the authenticity of these passages may be drawn from the character of their subjects. We have seen the part which the desert played in shaping the temper and the style of Amos. But the works of the Creator, to which these passages lift their praise, are just those most fondly dwelt upon by all the poetry of the desert. The Arabian nomad, when he magnifies the power of God, finds his subjects not on the bare earth about him, but in the brilliant heavens and the heavenly processes.

¹ Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, p. 399; Kuenen, *Hist. Krit. Einl.* (Germ. Ed.), II. 347.

² v. 8, 9.

Again, the critic who affirms that the passages in Amos "in every case sensibly disturb the connection,"¹ exaggerates. In the case of the first of them, chap. iv. 13, the disturbance is not at all "sensible"; though it must be admitted that the oracle closes impressively enough without it. The last of them, chap. ix. 5, 6—which repeats a clause already found in the book²—is as much in sympathy with its context as most of the oracles in the somewhat scattered discourse of that last section of the book. The real difficulty is the second doxology, chap. v. 8, 9, which does break the connection, and in a sudden and violent way. Remove it, and the argument is consistent. We cannot read chap. v. without feeling that, whether Amos wrote these verses or not, they did not originally stand where they stand at present.

Now, taken with this dispensableness of two of the passages and this obvious intrusion of one of them, the following additional fact becomes ominous. *Jehovah is His Name* (which occurs in two of the passages),³ or *Jehovah of Hosts is His Name* (which occurs at least in one),⁴ is a construction which does not happen elsewhere in the book, except in a verse where it is awkward and where we have already seen reason to doubt its genuineness.⁵ But still more, the phrase does not occur in any other prophet, till we come down to the oracles which compose Isaiah xl.—lxvi. Here it happens thrice—twice in passages dating from the Exile,⁶ and once in a passage suspected by some to be of still later

¹ Cornill, *Eint.*, 176.

² Cf. viii. 8.

³ v. 8; ix. 6, though here LXX. read *Jehovah of Hosts is His Name*.

⁴ iv. 13. See previous note.

⁵ v. 27. See above, pp. 172 f. n.: cf. Hosea xii. 6.

⁶ xlvii. 4 and liv. 5.

date.¹ In the Book of Jeremiah the phrase is found eight times ; but either in passages already on other grounds judged by many critics to be later than Jeremiah,² or where by itself it is probably an intrusion into the text.³ Now is it a mere coincidence that a phrase, which, outside the Book of Amos, occurs only in writing of the time of the Exile and in passages considered for other reasons to be post-exilic insertions—is it a mere coincidence that within the Book of Amos it should again be found only in suspected verses ?

There appears to be in this more than a coincidence ; and the present writer cannot but feel a very strong case against the traditional belief that these doxologies are original and integral portions of the Book of Amos. At the same time a case which has failed to convince critics like Robertson Smith and Kuenen cannot be considered conclusive, and we are so ignorant of many of the conditions of prophetic oratory at this period that dogmatism is impossible. For instance, the use by Amos of the Divine titles is a matter over which uncertainty still lingers ; and any further argument on the subject must include a fuller discussion than space here allows of the remarkable distribution of those titles throughout the various sections of the book.⁴

¹ xlvi. 2 : cf. Duhm, *in loco*, and Cheyne, *Introduction to the Book of Isaiah*, 301.

² x. 16 ; xxxi. 35 ; xxxii. 18 ; l. 34 (perhaps a quotation from Isa. xlvii. 4) ; li. 19, 57.

³ xlvi. 18, where the words צבאות שמו fail in LXX. ; xlvi. 15 b, where the clause in which it occurs is wanting in the LXX.

⁴ But I have room at least for a bare statement of these remarkable facts :—

The titles for the God of Israel used in the Book of Amos are these : (1) *Thy God, O Israel*, אלהיך ישראל ; (2) *Jehovah*, יהוה ; (3)

But if it be not given to us to prove this kind of authenticity—a question whose data are so obscure, yet whose answer fortunately is of so little significance—let us gladly welcome that greater Authenticity whose undeniable proofs these verses so splendidly exhibit. No one questions their right to the place which some great spirit gave them in this book—their suitability to its grand and ordered theme, their pure vision and their eternal truth. That common-

Lord Jehovah, יהוה אדני; (4) *Lord Jehovah of the Hosts*, יהוה אדני יהוה; (5) *Jehovah God of Hosts or of the Hosts*, יהוה אלהי צבאות or הצבאות.

Now in the First Section, chaps. i., ii., it is interesting that we find none of the variations which are compounded with *Hosts*, צבאות. By itself יהוה (especially in the phrase *Thus saith Jehovah*, כה אמר יהוה) is general; and once only (i. 8) is *Lord Jehovah* employed. The phrase, *oracle of Jehovah*, נאם יהוה, is also rare; it occurs only twice (ii. 11, 16), and then only in the passage dealing with Israel, and not at all in the oracles against foreign nations.

In Sections II. and III. the simple יהוה is again most frequently used. But we find also *Lord Jehovah*, יהוה אדני (iii. 7, 8; iv. 2, 5; v. 3, with יהוה alone in the parallel ver. 4; vi. 8; vii. 1, 2, 4 *bis*, 5, 6; viii. 1, 3, 9, 11), used either indifferently with יהוה; or in verses where it seems more natural to emphasise the sovereignty of Jehovah than His simple Name (as, *e.g.*, where *He swears*, iv. 2, vi. 8, yet when the same phrase occurs in viii. 7 יהוה alone is used); or in the solemn Visions of the Third Section (but not in the Narrative); and sometimes we find in the Visions *Lord*, אדני, alone without יהוה (vii. 7, 8; ix. 1). The titles containing צבאות or אלהי צבאות occur *nine* times. Of these *five* are in passages which we have seen other reasons to suppose are insertions: two of the Doxologies—iv. 13, יהוה אלהי צבאות, and ix. 5, אדני יהוה הצבאות (in addition the LXX. read in ix. 6 יהוה צבאות), and in v. 14, 15 (see p. 168) and 27 (see p. 172), in all three אלהי צבאות. The *four* genuine passages are iii. 13, where we find אלהי הצבאות preceded by אדני; v. 16, where we have יהוה אלהי צבאות followed by אדני; vi. 8, יהוה אלהי צבאות, and vi. 14, יהוה אלהי צבאות. Throughout the last two sections of the book נאם is used with all these forms of the Divine

sense, and that conscience, which, moving among the events of earth and all the tangled processes of history, find everywhere reason and righteousness at work, in these verses claim the Universe for the same powers, and see in stars and clouds and the procession of day and night the One Eternal God Who *declareth to man what His mind is.*

HOSEA

• For leal love have I desired and not sacrifice
And the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings. •

CHAPTER XII

THE BOOK OF HOSEA

THE Book of Hosea consists of two unequal sections, chaps. i.—iii. and chaps. iv.—xiv., which differ in the dates of their standpoints, to a large extent also in the details of their common subjects, but still more largely in their form and style. The First Section is in the main narrative; though the style rises to the pitch of passionate pleading and promise, it is fluent and equable. If one verse be omitted and three others transposed,¹ the argument is continuous. In the Second Section, on the contrary, we have a stream of addresses and reflections, appeals, upbraidings, sarcasms, recollections of earlier history, denunciations and promises, which, with little logical connection and almost no pauses or periods, start impulsively from each other, and for a large part are expressed in elliptic and ejaculatory phrases. In the present restlessness of Biblical Criticism it would have been surprising if this difference of style had not prompted some minds to a difference of authorship. Grätz² has distinguished two Hoseas, separated by a period of fifty years. But if, as we shall see, the First Section reflects the end of the reign of Jeroboam II., who died about 743, then the next few years, with their revolutionary

¹ See below, pp. 213 f.

² *Geschichte*, pp. 93 ff., 214 ff., 439 f.

changes in Israel, are sufficient to account for the altered outlook of the Second Section ; while the altered style is fully explained by difference of occasion and motive. In both sections not only are the religious principles identical, and many of the characteristic expressions,¹ but there breathes throughout the same urgent and jealous temper, which renders Hosea's personality so distinctive among the prophets. Within this unity, of course, we must not be surprised to find, as in the Book of Amos, verses which cannot well be authentic.

FIRST SECTION: HOSEA'S PROPHETIC LIFE.

With the removal of some of the verses the argument becomes clear and consecutive. After the story of the wife and children (i. 2-9), who are symbols of the land and people of Israel in their apostasy from God (2, 4, 6, 9), the Divine voice calls on the living generation to plead with their mother lest destruction come (ii. 2-5, Eng. ; ii. 4-7, Heb.²), but then passes definite sentence of desolation on the land and of exile on the people (6-13, Eng. ; 8-15, Heb.), which however is not final doom, but discipline,³ with the ultimate promise of the return of the nation's youth, their renewed betrothal to Jehovah and the restoration of nature (14-23). Then follows the story of the prophet's restoration of his wife, also with discipline (chap. iii.).

Notice that, although the story of the wife's fall has preceded the declaration of Israel's apostasy, it is

¹ A list of the more obvious is given by Kuenen, p. 324.

² The first chapter in the Hebrew closes with ver. 9.

³ Cf. this with Amos ; above, pp. 192 ff.

Israel's restoration which precedes the wife's. The ethical significance of this order we shall illustrate in the next chapter.

In this section the disturbing verses are i. 7 and the group of three—i. 10, 11, ii. 1 (Eng. ; but ii. 1-3 Heb.). Chap. i. 7 introduces Judah as excepted from the curse passed upon Israel ; it is so obviously intrusive in a prophecy dealing only with Israel, and it so clearly reflects the deliverance of Judah from Sennacherib in 701, that we cannot hold it for anything but an insertion of a date subsequent to that deliverance, and introduced by a pious Jew to signalise Judah's fate in contrast with Israel's.¹

The other three verses (i. 10, 11, ii. 1, Eng. ; ii. 1-3, Heb.) introduce a promise of restoration before the sentence of judgment is detailed, or any ethical conditions of restoration are stated. That is, they break and tangle an argument otherwise consistent and progressive from beginning to end of the Section. Every careful reader must feel them out of place where they lie. Their awkwardness has been so much appreciated that, while in the Hebrew text they have been separated from chap. i., in the Greek they have been separated from chap. ii. That is to say, some have felt they have no connection with what precedes them, others none with what follows them ; while our English version, by distributing them between the two

¹ König's arguments (*Einleitung*, 309) in favour of the possibility of the genuineness of the verse do not seem to me to be conclusive. He thinks the verse admissible because Judah had sinned less than Israel ; the threat in vv. 4-6 is limited to Israel ; the phrase *Jehovah their God* is so peculiar that it is difficult to assign it to a mere expander of the text ; and if it was a later hand that put in the verse, why did he not alter the judgments against Judæa, which occur further on in the book ?

chapters, only makes more sensible their superfluity. If they really belong to the prophecy, their proper place is after the last verse of chap. ii.¹ This is actually the order in which part of it and part of them are quoted by St. Paul.² At the same time, when so arranged, they repeat somewhat awkwardly the language of ii. 23, and scarcely form a climax to the chapter. There is nothing in their language to lead us to doubt that they are Hosea's own; and ver. 11 shows that they must have been written at least before the captivity of Northern Israel.³

The only other suspected clause in this section is that in iii. 5, *and David their king*;⁴ but if it be struck out the verse is rendered awkward, if not impossible, by the immediate repetition of the Divine name, which would not have been required in the absence of the suspected clause.⁵

The text of the rest of the section is remarkably free from obscurities. The Greek version offers few variants, and most of these are due to mistranslation.⁶ In iii. 1 for *loved of a husband* it reads *loving evil*.

Evidently this section was written before the death of Jeroboam II. The house of Jehu still reigns; and as Hosea predicts its fall by war on the classic battleground of Jezreel, the prophecy must have been written

¹ So Cheyne and others, Kuenen adhering. König agrees that they have been removed from their proper place and the text corrupted.

² Rom. ix. 25, 26, which first give the end of Hosea ii. 23 (Heb. 25), and then the end of i. 10 (Heb. ii. 2). See below, p. 249, n. 2.

³ 721 B.C.

⁴ Stade, *Gesch.*, I. 577; Cornill, *Einleitung*, who also would exclude *no king and no prince* in iii. 4.

⁵ This objection, however, does not hold against the removal of merely *and David*, leaving *their king*.

⁶ ii. 7, 11, 14, 17 (Heb.). In i. 4 B-text reads 'Ιούδα for נְיָה, while Q^mq have 'Ιηου.

before the actual fall, which took the form of an internal revolt against Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam. With this agrees the tone of the section. There are the same evils in Israel which Amos exposed in the prosperous years of the same reign; but Hosea appears to realise the threatened exile from a nearer standpoint. It is probable also that part of the reason of his ability to see his way through the captivity to the people's restoration is due to a longer familiarity with the approach of captivity than Amos experienced before he wrote. But, of course, for Hosea's promise of restoration there were, as we shall see, other and greater reasons of a religious kind.¹

SECOND SECTION : CHAPS. iv.—xiv.

When we pass into these chapters we feel that the times are changed. The dynasty of Jehu has passed : kings are falling rapidly : Israel devours its rulers :²

¹ In determining the date of the Book of Hosea the title in chap. i. is of no use to us : *The Word of Jehovah which was to Hosea ben Be'eri in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam ben Joash, king of Israel.* This title is trebly suspicious. First: the given reigns of Judah and Israel do not correspond; Jeroboam was dead before Uzziah. Second: there is no proof either in the First or Second Section of the book that Hosea prophesied after the reign of Jotham. Third: it is curious that in the case of a prophet of Northern Israel kings of Judah should be stated first, and four of them be given while only one king of his own country is placed beside them. On these grounds critics are probably correct who take the title as it stands to be the work of some later Judæan scribe who sought to make it correspond to the titles of the Books of Isaiah and Micah. He may have been the same who added chap. i. 7. The original form of the title probably was *The Word of God which was to Hosea son of Be'eri in the days of Jeroboam ben Joash, king of Israel,* and designed only for the First Section of the book, chaps. i.—iii.

² vii. 7. There are also other passages which, while they may

there is no loyalty to the king ; he is suddenly cut off ;¹ all the princes are revolvers.² Round so despised and so unstable a throne the nation tosses in disorder. Conspiracies are rife. It is not only, as in Amos, the the sins of the luxurious, of them that are at ease in Zion, which are exposed ; but also literal bloodshed : highway robbery with murder, abetted by the priests ;³ the thief breaketh in and the robber-troop maketh a raid.⁴ Amos looked out on foreign nations across a quiet Israel ; his views of the world are wide and clear ; but in the Book of Hosea the dust is up, and into what is happening beyond the frontier we get only glimpses. There is enough, however, to make visible another great change since the days of Jeroboam. Israel's self-reliance is gone. She is as fluttered as a startled bird : *They call unto Egypt, they go unto Assyria.*⁵ Their wealth is carried as a gift to King Jareb,⁶ and they evidently engage in intrigues with Egypt. But everything is hopeless : kings cannot save, for Ephraim is seized by the pangs of a fatal crisis.⁷

This broken description reflects—and all the more faithfully because of its brokenness—the ten years which followed on the death of Jeroboam II. about 743.⁸ His son Zechariah, who succeeded him, was in six months assassinated by Shallum ben Jabesh, who within a month more was himself cut down by

be referred, as they stand, to the whole succession of illegitimate dynasties in Northern Israel from the beginning to the end of that kingdom, more probably reflect the same ten years of special anarchy and disorder after the death of Jeroboam II. See vii. 3 ff. ; viii. 4, where the illegitimate kingmaking is coupled with the idolatry of the Northern Kingdom ; xiii. 10, 11.

¹ x. 3, 7, 8, 15.

² vi. 8, 9.

³ vii. 11.

⁴ xiii. 121.

⁵ ix. 15.

⁶ vii. 1.

⁷ x. 6.

⁸ The chronology of these years is exceedingly uncertain. Jeroboam

Menahem ben Gadi.¹ Menahem held the throne for six or seven years, but only by sending to the King of Assyria an enormous tribute which he exacted from the wealthy magnates of Israel.² Discontent must have followed these measures, such discontent with their rulers as Hosea describes. Pekahiah ben Menahem kept the throne for little over a year after his father's death, and was assassinated by his captain,³ Pekah ben Remaliah, with fifty Gileadites, and Pekah took the throne about 736. This second and bloody usurpation may be one of those on which Hosea dwells; but if so it is the last historical allusion in his book. There is no reference to the war of Pekah and Rezin against Ahaz of Judah which Isaiah describes,⁴ and to which Hosea must have alluded had he been still prophesying.⁵ There is no allusion to its consequence in Tiglath-Pileser's conquest of Gilead

was dead about 743; in 738 Menahem gave tribute to Assyria; in 734 Tiglath-Pileser had conquered Aram, Gilead and Galilee in response to King Ahaz, who had a year or two before been attacked by Rezin of Aram and Pekah of Israel.

¹ 2 Kings xv. 8-16. It may be to this appearance of three kings within one month that there was originally an allusion in the now obscure verse of Hosea, v. 7.

² 2 Kings xv. 17-22.

³ Or prince, שָׂרָא: cf. Hosea's denunciation of the שָׂרִים as rebels.

⁴ Isa. vii.; 2 Kings xv. 37, 38.

⁵ Some have found a later allusion in chap. x. 14: *like unto the destruction of (?) Shalman (of ?) Beth'Arbe'l.* Pusey, p. 5 *b*, and others take this to allude to a destruction of the Galilean Arbela, the modern Irbid, by Salmanassar IV., who ascended the Assyrian throne in 727 and besieged Samaria in 724 ff. But since the construction of the phrase leaves it doubtful whether the name Shalman is that of the agent or object of the destruction, and whether, if the agent, he be one of the Assyrian Salmanassars or a Moabite King Salman *c.* 730 B.C., it is impossible to make use of the verse in fixing the date of the Book of Hosea. See further, p. 289. Wellhausen omits.

and Galilee in 734—733. On the contrary, these provinces are still regarded as part of the body politic of Israel.¹ Nor is there any sign that Israel have broken with Assyria; to the last the book represents them as fawning on the Northern Power.²

In all probability, then, the Book of Hosea was closed before 734 B.C. The Second Section dates from the years behind that and back to the death of Jeroboam II. about 743, while the First Section, as we saw, reflects the period immediately before the latter.

We come now to the general style of chaps. iv.—xiv. The period, as we have seen, was one of the most broken of all the history of Israel; the political outlook, the temper of the people, were constantly changing. Hosea, who watched these kaleidoscopes, had himself an extraordinarily mobile and vibrant mind. There could be no greater contrast to that fixture of conscience which renders the Book of Amos so simple in argument, so firm in style.³ It was a leaden plummet which Amos saw Jehovah setting to the structure of Israel's life.⁴ But Hosea felt his own heart hanging at the end of the line; and this was a heart that could never be still. Amos is the prophet of law; he sees the

¹ v. 1; vi. 8; xii. 12: cf. W. R. Smith, *Prophets*, 156.

² Cf. W. R. Smith, *l.c.*

³ Cf. W. R. Smith, *Prophets*, 157: Hosea's "language and the movement of his thoughts are far removed from the simplicity and self-control which characterise the prophecy of Amos. Indignation and sorrow, tenderness and severity, faith in the sovereignty of Jehovah's love, and a despairing sense of Israel's infidelity are woven together in a sequence which has no logical plan, but is determined by the battle and alternate victory of contending emotions; and the swift transitions, the fragmentary unbalanced utterance, the half-developed allusions, that make his prophecy so difficult to the commentator, express the agony of this inward conflict."

⁴ See above, p. 114.

Divine processes work themselves out, irrespective of the moods and intrigues of the people, with which, after all, he was little familiar. So each of his paragraphs moves steadily forward to a climax, and every climax is Doom—the captivity of the people to Assyria. You can divide his book by these things; it has its periods, strophes and refrains. It marches like the hosts of the Lord of hosts. But Hosea had no such unhampered vision of great laws. He was too familiar with the rapid changes of his fickle people; and his affection for them was too anxious. His style has all the restlessness and irritableness of hunger about it—the hunger of love. Hosea's eyes are never at rest. He seeks, he welcomes, for moments of extraordinary fondness he dwells upon every sign of his people's repentance. But a Divine jealousy succeeds, and he questions the motives of the change. You feel that his love has been overtaken and surprised by his knowledge; and in fact his whole style might be described as a race between the two—a race varying and uncertain up to almost the end. The transitions are very swift. You come upon a passage of exquisite tenderness: the prophet puts the people's penitence in his own words with a sympathy and poetry that are sublime and seem final. But suddenly he remembers how false they are, and there is another light in his eyes. The lustre of their tears dies from his verses, like the dews of a midsummer morning in Ephraim; and all is dry and hard again beneath the brazen sun of his amazement. *What shall I do unto thee, Ephraim? What shall I do unto thee, Judah?* Indeed, this figure of his own is insufficient to express the suddenness with which Hosea lights up some intrigue of the statesmen of the day, or some evil habit of the priests, or

some hidden orgy of the common people. Rather than the sun it is the lightning—the lightning in pursuit of a serpent.

The elusiveness of the style is the greater that many passages do not seem to have been prepared for public delivery. They are more the play of the prophet's mind than his set speech. They are not formally addressed to an audience, and there is no trace in them of oratorical art.

Hence the language of this Second Section of the Book of Hosea is impulsive and abrupt beyond all comparison. There is little rhythm in it, and almost no argument. Few metaphors are elaborated. Even the brief parallelism of Hebrew poetry seems too long for the quick spasms of the writer's heart. "Osee," said Jerome,¹ "commaticus est, et quasi per sententias loquitur." He speaks in little clauses, often broken off; he is impatient even of copulas. And withal he uses a vocabulary full of strange words, which the paucity of parallelism makes much the more difficult.

To this original brokenness and obscurity of the language are due, *first*, the great corruption of the text; *second*, the difficulty of dividing it; *third*, the uncertainty of deciding its genuineness or authenticity.

I. The TEXT of Hosea is one of the most dilapidated in the Old Testament, and in parts beyond possibility of repair. It is probable that glosses were found necessary at an earlier period and to a larger extent than in most other books: there are evident traces of some; yet it is not always possible to disentangle them.² The value of the Greek version is curiously mixed. The authors had before them much the same difficulties as

¹ *Præf. in Duod. Prophetas.*

² Especially in chap. vii.

we have, and they made many more for themselves. Some of their mistranslations are outrageous: they occur not only in obscure passages, where they may be pardoned;¹ but even where there are parallel terms with which the translators show themselves familiar.² Sometimes they have translated word by word, without any attempt to give the general sense; and as a whole their version is devoid both of beauty and compactness. Yet not infrequently they supply us with a better reading than the Massoretic text. Occasionally they divide words properly which the latter misdivides.³ They often give more correctly the easily confused pronominal suffixes;⁴ and the copula.⁵ And they help us to the true readings of many other words.⁶ Here and there an additional clause in the Greek is plethoric, perhaps copied by mistake from a similar verse in the context.⁷ All of these will be noticed separately as we reach them. But, even after these and other aids, we shall find that the text not infrequently remains impracticable.

2. As great as the difficulty of reaching a true text

¹ As in xi. 2*b*.

² This is especially the case in x. 11-13; xi. 4; xiv. 5.

³ *E.g.* vi. 5*b*: M.T. משפטך אור יצא, which is nonsense; LXX. משפטי כאור, *My judgment shall go forth like light.* xi. 2: M.T. כפני הים; LXX. כפני הים.

⁴ iv. 4, עמי for עמך; 8, נפשם for נפ—perhaps; 13, צלה for צלה; v. 2; vi. 2 (possibly); viii. 4, read יכרתו; ix. 2; xi. 2, 3; xi. 5, 6, where for לל read לו; 10, read לה; xii. 9; xiv. 9*a*, לו for לי. On the other hand, they are either improbable or quite wrong, as in v. 2*b*; vi. 2 (but the LXX. may be right here); vii. 1*b*; xi. 1, 4; xii. 5; xiii. 14, 15 (ter.).

⁵ v. 5 (so as to change the tense: *and Judah shall stumble*); xii. 3, etc.

⁶ vi. 3; viii. 10, 13; ix. 2; x. 4, 13*b*, 15 (probably); xii. 2; xiii. 9; xiv. 3. Wrong tense, xii. 11. Cf. also vi. 3.

⁷ *E.g.* viii. 13.

in this Second Section of the book is the difficulty of DIVIDING it. Here and there, it is true, the Greek helps us to improve upon the division into chapters and verses of the Hebrew text, which is that of our own English version. Chap. vi. 1-4 ought to follow immediately on to the end of chap. v., with the connecting word *saying*. The last few words of chap. vi. go with the first two of chap. vii., but perhaps both are gloss. The openings of chaps. xi. and xii. are better arranged in the Hebrew than in the Greek. As regards verses we shall have to make several rearrangements.¹ But beyond this more or less conventional division into chapters and verses our confidence ceases. It is impossible to separate the section, long as it is, into subsections, or into oracles, strophes or periods. The reason of this we have already seen, in the turbulence of the period reflected, in the divided interests and abrupt and emotional style of the author, and in the probability that part at least of the book was not prepared for public speaking. The periods and climaxes, the refrains, the catchwords by which we are helped to divide even the confused Second Section of the Book of Amos, are not found in Hosea. Only twice does the exordium of a spoken address occur: at the beginning of the section (chap. iv. 1), and at what is now the opening of the next chapter (v. 1). The phrase *'tis the oracle of Jehovah*, which occurs so periodically in Amos, and thrice in the second chapter of Hosea, is found only once in chaps. iv.—xiv. Again, the obvious climaxes or perorations, of which we found so many in Amos, are very few,² and even when they occur the next verses start impulsively from them, without a pause.

¹ Cf. the Hebrew and Greek, of *e.g.*, iv. 10, 11, 12; vi. 9, 10; viii. 5, 6; ix. 8, 9.

² viii. 13 (14 must be omitted); ix. 17.

In spite of these difficulties, since the section is so long, attempts at division have been made. Ewald distinguished three parts in three different tempers: *First*, iv.—vi. 11 *a*, God's Complaint against His people; *Second*, vi. 11 *b*—ix. 9, Their Punishment; *Third*, ix. 10—xiv. 10, Retrospect of the earlier history—warning and consolation. Driver also divides into three subsections, but differently: *First*, iv.—viii., in which Israel's Guilt predominates; *Second*, ix.—xi. 11, in which the prevailing thought is their Punishment; *Third*, xi. 12—xiv. 10, in which both lines of thought are continued, but followed by a glance at the brighter future.¹ What is common to both these arrangements is the recognition of a certain progress from feelings about Israel's guilt which prevail in the earlier chapters, to a clear vision of the political destruction awaiting them; and finally more hope of repentance in the people, with a vision of the blessed future that must follow upon it. It is, however, more accurate to say that the emphasis of Hosea's prophesying, instead of changing from the Guilt to the Punishment of Israel, changes about the middle of chap. vii. from their Moral Decay to their Political Decay, and that the description of the latter is modified or interrupted by Two Visions of better things: one of Jehovah's early guidance of the people, with a great outbreak of His Love upon them, in chap. xi.; and one of their future Return to Jehovah and restoration in chap. xiv. It is on these features that the division of the following Exposition is arranged.

3. It will be obvious that with a text so corrupt, with a style so broken and incapable of logical division, questions of AUTHENTICITY are raised to a pitch of the

¹ *Introd.* 284.

greatest difficulty. Allusion has been made to the number of glosses which must have been found necessary from even an early period, and of some of which we can discern the proofs.¹ We will deal with these as they occur. But we may here discuss, as a whole, another class of suspected passages—suspected for the same reason that we saw a number in Amos to be, because of their reference to Judah. In the Book of Hosea (chaps. iv.—xiv.) they are twelve in number. Only one of them is favourable (iv. 15): *Though Israel play the harlot, let not Judah sin.* Kuenen² argues that this is genuine, on the ground that the peculiar verb *to sin* or *take guilt to oneself* is used several other times in the book,³ and that the wish expressed is in consonance with what he understands to be Hosea's favourable feeling towards Judah. Yet Hosea nowhere else makes any distinction between Ephraim and Judah in the matter of sin, but condemns both equally; and as iv. 15 f. are to be suspected on other grounds as well, I cannot hold this reference to Judah to be beyond doubt. Nor is the reference in viii. 14 genuine: *And Israel forgot her Maker and built temples, and Judah multiplied fenced cities, but I will send fire on his cities and it shall devour her palaces.* Kuenen⁴ refuses to reject the reference to Judah, on the ground that without it the rhythm of the verse is spoiled; but the fact is the whole verse must go. Chap. v. 13 forms a climax, which v. 14 only weakens; the style is not like Hosea's own, and indeed is but an echo of verses of

¹ E.g. iv. 15 (?); vi. 11—vii. 1 (?); vii. 4; viii. 2; xii. 6.

² *Eint.*, 323.

³ ׀׀׀׀, v. 15; x. 2; xiii. 1; xiv. 1.

⁴ P. 313.

Amos.¹ Nor can we be quite sure about v. 5: *Israel and Ephraim shall stumble by their iniquities, and (LXX.) stumble also shall Judah with them*; or vi. 10, 11: *In Bethel I have seen horrors: there playest thou the harlot, Ephraim; there Israel defiles himself; also Judah . . .* (the rest of the text is impracticable). In both these passages Judah is the awkward third of a parallelism, and is introduced by an *also*, as if an afterthought. Yet the afterthought may be the prophet's own; for in other passages, to which no doubt attaches, he fully includes Judah in the sinfulness of Israel. Cornill rejects x. 11, *Judah must plough*, but I cannot see on what grounds; as Kuenen says, it has no appearance of being an intrusion.² In xii. 3 Wellhausen reads *Israel* for *Judah*, but the latter is justified if not rendered necessary by the reference to Judah in ver. 1, which Wellhausen admits. Against the other references—v. 10, *The princes of Judah are as removers of boundaries*; v. 12, *I shall be as the moth to Ephraim, and a worm to the house of Judah*; v. 13, *And Ephraim saw his disease, and Judah his sore*; v. 14, *For I am as a roaring lion to Ephraim, and as a young lion to the house of Judah*; vi. 4, *What shall I do to thee, Ephraim? what shall I do to thee, Judah?*—there are no apparent objections; and they are generally admitted by critics. As Kuenen says, it would have been surprising if Hosea had made no reference to the sister kingdom. His judgment of her is amply justified by that of her own citizens, Isaiah and Micah.

Other short passages of doubtful authenticity will be treated as we come to them; but again it may be

¹ viii. 14 is also rejected by Wellhausen and Cornill.

² *Loc. cit.*

emphasised that, in a book of such a style as this, certainty on the subject is impossible.

Finally, there may be given here the only notable addition which the Septuagint makes to the Book of Hosea. It occurs in xiii. 4, after *I am Jehovah thy God*: "That made fast the heavens and founded the earth, whose hands founded all the host of the heaven, and I did not show them to thee that thou shouldest follow after them, and I led thee up"—*from the land of Egypt*.

At first this recalls those apostrophes to Jehovah's power which break forth in the Book of Amos; and the resemblance has been taken to prove that they also are late intrusions. But this both obtrudes itself as they do not, and is manifestly of much lower poetical value. See page 203.

We have now our material clearly before us, and may proceed to the more welcome task of tracing our prophet's life, and expounding his teaching.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PROBLEM THAT AMOS LEFT

AMOS was a preacher of righteousness almost wholly in its judicial and punitive offices. Exposing the moral conditions of society in his day, emphasising on the one hand its obduracy and on the other the intolerableness of it, he asserted that nothing could avert the inevitable doom—neither Israel's devotion to Jehovah nor Jehovah's interest in Israel. *You alone have I known of all the families of the ground: therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.* The visitation was to take place in war and in the captivity of the people. This is practically the whole message of the prophet Amos.

That he added to it the promise of restoration which now closes his book, we have seen to be extremely improbable.¹ Yet even if that promise is his own, Amos does not tell us how the restoration is to be brought about. With wonderful insight and patience he has traced the captivity of Israel to moral causes. But he does not show what moral change in the exiles is to justify their restoration, or by what means such a moral change is to be effected. We are left to infer the conditions and the means of redemption from the principles which Amos enforced while there yet seemed

¹ See above, pp. 193 ff.

time to pray for the doomed people: *Seek the Lord and ye shall live.*¹ According to this, the moral renewal of Israel must precede their restoration; but the prophet seems to make no great effort to effect the renewal. In short Amos illustrates the easily-forgotten truth that a preacher to the conscience is not necessarily a preacher of repentance.

Of the great antitheses between which religion moves, Law and Love, Amos had therefore been the prophet of Law. But we must not imagine that the association of Love with the Deity was strange to him. This could not be to any Israelite who remembered the past of his people—the romance of their origins and early struggles for freedom. Israel had always felt the grace of their God; and, unless we be wrong about the date of the great poem in the end of Deuteronomy, they had lately celebrated that grace in lines of exquisite beauty and tenderness:—

*He found him in a desert land,
In a waste and a howling wilderness.
He compassed him about, cared for him,
Kept him as the apple of His eye.
As an eagle stirreth up his nest,
Fluttereth over his young,
Spreadeth his wings, taketh them,
Beareth them up on his pinions—
So Jehovah alone led him.*²

The patience of the Lord with their waywardness and their stubbornness had been the ethical influence

¹ v. 4.

² Deut. xxxii. 10-12; a song probably earlier than the eighth century. But some put it later.

on Israel's life at a time when they had probably neither code of law nor system of doctrine. *Thy gentleness*, as an early Psalmist says for his people, *Thy gentleness hath made me great.*¹ Amos is not unaware of this ancient grace of Jehovah. But he speaks of it in a fashion which shows that he feels it to be exhausted and without hope for his generation. *I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorites. And I raised up of your sons for prophets and of your young men for Nazirites.*² But this can now only fill the cup of the nation's sin. *You alone have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities.*³ Jehovah's ancient Love but strengthens now the justice and the impetus of His Law.

We perceive, then, the problem which Amos left to prophecy. It was not to discover Love in the Deity whom he had so absolutely identified with Law. The Love of God needed no discovery among a people with the Deliverance, the Exodus, the Wilderness and the Gift of the Land in their memories. But the problem was to prove in God so great and new a mercy as was capable of matching that Law, which the abuse of His millennial gentleness now only the more fully justified. There was needed a prophet to arise with as keen a conscience of Law as Amos himself, and yet affirm that Love was greater still; to admit that Israel were doomed, and yet promise their redemption by processes as reasonable and as ethical as those by which the doom had been rendered inevitable. The prophet of Conscience had to be followed by the prophet of Repentance.

¹ Psalm xviii.² ii. 10 1.³ iii. 2.

Such an one was found in Hosea, the son of Be'eri, a citizen and probably a priest of Northern Israel, whose very name, *Salvation*, the synonym of Joshua and of Jesus, breathed the larger hope, which it was his glory to bear to his people. Before we see how for this task Hosea was equipped with the love and sympathy which Amos lacked, let us do two things. Let us appreciate the magnitude of the task itself, set to him first of prophets; and let us remind ourselves that, greatly as he achieved it, the task was not one which could be achieved even by him once for all, but that it presents itself to religion again and again in the course of her development.

For the first of these duties, it is enough to recall how much all subsequent prophecy derives from Hosea. We shall not exaggerate if we say that there is no truth uttered by later prophets about the Divine Grace, which we do not find in germ in him. Isaiah of Jerusalem was a greater statesman and a more powerful writer, but he had not Hosea's tenderness and insight into motive and character. Hosea's marvellous sympathy both with the people and with God is sufficient to foreshadow every grief, every hope, every gospel, which make the Books of Jeremiah and the great Prophet of the Exile exhaustless in their spiritual value for mankind. These others explored the kingdom of God: it was Hosea who took it by storm.¹ He is the first prophet of Grace, Israel's earliest Evangelist; yet with as keen a sense of law, and of the inevitableness of ethical discipline, as Amos himself.

But the task which Hosea accomplished was not one that could be accomplished once for all. The interest

¹ Matt. xi. 12.

of his book is not merely historical. For so often as a generation is shocked out of its old religious ideals, as Amos shocked Israel, by a realism and a discovery of law, which have no respect for ideals, however ancient and however dear to the human heart, but work their own pitiless way to doom inevitable; so often must the Book of Hosea have a practical value for living men. At such a crisis we stand to-day. The older Evangelical assurance, the older Evangelical ideals have to some extent been rendered impossible by the realism to which the sciences, both physical and historical, have most healthily recalled us, and by their wonderful revelation of Law working through nature and society without respect to our creeds and pious hopes. The question presses: Is it still possible to believe in repentance and conversion, still possible to preach the power of God to save, whether the individual or society, from the forces of heredity and of habit? We can at least learn how Hosea mastered the very similar problem which Amos left to him, and how, with a moral realism no less stern than his predecessor and a moral standard every whit as high, he proclaimed Love to be the ultimate element in religion; not only because it moves man to a repentance and God to a redemption more sovereign than any law; but because if neglected or abused, whether as love of man or love of God, it enforces a doom still more inexorable than that required by violated truth or by outraged justice. Love our Saviour, Love our almighty and unfailing Father, but, just because of this, Love our most awful Judge—we turn to the life and the message in which this eternal theme was first unfolded.

CHAPTER XIV

THE STORY OF THE PRODIGAL WIFE

HOSEA i.—iii.

IT has often been remarked that, unlike the first Doomster of Israel, Israel's first Evangelist was one of themselves, a native and citizen, perhaps even a priest, of the land to which he was sent. This appears even in his treatment of the stage and soil of his ministry. Contrast him in this respect with Amos.

In the Book of Amos we have few glimpses of the scenery of Israel, and these always by flashes of the lightnings of judgment: the towns in drought or earthquake or siege; the vineyards and orchards under locusts or mildew; Carmel itself desolate, or as a hiding-place from God's wrath.

But Hosea's love steals across his whole land like the dew, provoking every separate scent and colour, till all Galilee lies before us, lustrous and fragrant as nowhere else outside the parables of Jesus. The Book of Amos, when it would praise God's works, looks to the stars. But the poetry of Hosea clings about his native soil like its trailing vines. If he appeals to the heavens, it is only that they may speak to the earth, and the earth to the corn and the wine, and the corn and the wine to Jezreel.¹ Even the wild beasts—and Hosea

¹ ii, 23, Heb.

tells us of their cruelty almost as much as Amos—he cannot shut out of the hope of his love: *I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground.*¹ God's love-gifts to His people are corn and wool, flax and oil; while spiritual blessings are figured in the joys of them who sow and reap. With Hosea we feel all the seasons of the Syrian year: early rain and latter rain, the first flush of the young corn, the scent of the vine blossom, the *first ripe fig of the fig-tree in her first season*, the bursting of the lily; the wild vine trailing on the hedge, the field of tares, the beauty of the full olive in sunshine and breeze; the mists and heavy dews of a summer morning in Ephraim, the night winds laden with the air of the mountains, *the scent of Lebanon.*² Or it is the dearer human sights in valley and field: the smoke from the chimney, the chaff from the threshing-floor, the doves startled to their towers, the fowler and his net; the breaking up of the fallow ground, the harrowing of the clods, the reapers, the heifer that treadeth out the corn; the team of draught oxen surmounting the steep road, and at the top the kindly driver setting in food to their jaws.³

Where, I say, do we find anything like this save in the parables of Jesus? For the love of Hosea was as the love of that greater Galilean: however high, however lonely it soared, it was yet rooted in the common life below, and fed with the unfailing grace of a thousand homely sources.

But just as the Love which first showed itself in the

¹ ii. 20, Heb.

² vi. 3, 4; vii. 8; ix. 10; xiv. 6, 7, 8.

³ vii. 11, 12; x. 11; xi. 4, etc.

sunny Parables of Galilee passed onward to Gethsemane and the Cross, so the love of Hosea, that had wakened with the spring lilies and dewy summer mornings of the North, had also, ere his youth was spent, to meet its agony and shame. These came upon the prophet in his home, and in her in whom so loyal and tender a heart had hoped to find his chiefest sanctuary next to God. There are, it is true, some of the ugliest facts of human life about this prophet's experience; but the message is one very suited to our own hearts and times. Let us read this story of the Prodigal Wife as we do that other Galilean tale of the Prodigal Son. There as well as here are harlots; but here as well as there is the clear mirror of the Divine Love. For the Bible never shuns realism when it would expose the exceeding hatefulness of sin or magnify the power of God's love to redeem. To an age which is always treating conjugal infidelity either as a matter of comedy or as a problem of despair, the tale of Hosea and his wife may still become, what it proved to his own generation, a gospel full of love and hope.

The story, and how it led Hosea to understand God's relations to sinful men, is told in the first three chapters of his book. It opens with the very startling sentence: *The beginning of the word of Jehovah to Hosea:—And Jehovah said to Hosea, Go, take thee a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry: for the Land hath committed great harlotry in departing from Jehovah.*¹

The command was obeyed. *And he went and took Gomer, daughter of Diblaim; ² and she conceived, and bare*

¹ Pregnant construction, *hath committed great harlotry from after Jehovah.*

² These personal names do not elsewhere occur. גֹּמֶר; Гомер.

to him a son. And Jehovah said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little and I shall visit the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will bring to an end the kingdom of the house of Israel; and it shall be on that day that I shall break the bow of Israel in the Vale of Jezreel—the classic battle-field of Israel.¹ And she conceived again, and bare a daughter; and He said to him, Call her name Un-Loved, or That-never-knew-a-Father's-Pity;² for I will not again have pity—such pity as a Father hath—on the house of Israel, that I should fully forgive them.³ And she weaned Un-Pitied, and conceived, and bare a son. And He said, Call his name

רִבְלִים; Δεβηλαιμ, B; Δεβηλαειμ, A Q. They have, of course, been interpreted allegorically in the interests of the theory discussed below. גִּמְרָה has been taken to mean "completion," and interpreted as various derivatives of that root: Jerome, "the perfect one"; Raschi, "that fulfilled all evil"; Kimchi, "fulfilment of punishment"; Calvin, "consumptio," and so on. רִבְלִים has been traced to רַבְלָה, Pl. רִבְלִים, cakes of pressed figs, as if a name had been sought to connect the woman at once with the idol-worship and a rich sweetness; or to an Arabic root, رَ بَل, to press, as if it referred either to the plumpness of the body (cf. Ezek. xvi. 7; so Hitzig) or to the woman's habits. But all these are far-fetched and vain. There is no reason to suppose that either of the two names is symbolic. The alternative (allowed by the language) naturally suggests itself that רִבְלִים is the name of Gomer's birthplace. But there is nothing to prove this. No such place-name occurs elsewhere: one cannot adduce the Diblathaim in Moab (Num. xxxiii. 46 ff.; Jer. xlvi. 2).

¹ *Hist. Geog.*, Chap. XVIII.

² לֹא רָחַמָהּ, probably 3rd pers. sing. fem. Pual (in Pause cf. Prov. xxviii. 13); literally, *She is not loved or pitied*. The word means love as pity: "such pity as a father hath unto his children dear" (Psalm ciii.), or God to a penitent man (Psalm xxviii. 13). The Greek versions alternate between love and pity. LXX. οὐκ ἠλεημένη διότι οὐ μὴ προσθήσω ἔτι ἠλεῆσαι, for which the Complutensian has ἀγαπήσαι, the reading followed by Paul (Rom. ix. 25: cf. I Peter ii. 10).

³ Here ver. 7 is to be omitted, as explained above, p. 213.

*Not-My-People; for ye are not My people, and I—I am not yours.*¹

It is not surprising that divers interpretations have been put upon this troubled tale. The words which introduce it are so startling that very many have held it to be an allegory, or parable, invented by the prophet to illustrate, by familiar human figures, what was at that period the still difficult conception of the Love of God for sinful men. But to this well-intended argument there are insuperable objections. It implies that Hosea had first awakened to the relations of Jehovah and Israel—He faithful and full of affection, she unfaithful and thankless—and that then, in order to illustrate the relations, he had invented the story. To that we have an adequate reply. In the first place, though it were possible, it is extremely improbable, that such a man should have invented such a tale about his wife, or, if he was unmarried, about himself. But, in the second place, he says expressly that his domestic experience was the *beginning of Jehovah's word to him*. That is, he passed through it first, and only afterwards, with the sympathy and insight thus acquired, he came to appreciate Jehovah's relation to Israel. Finally, the style betrays narrative rather than parable. The simple facts are told; there is an absence of elaboration; there is no effort to make every detail symbolic; the names Gomer and Diblaim are apparently those of real persons; every attempt to attach a symbolic value to them has failed.

She was, therefore, no dream, this woman, but flesh and blood: the sorrow, the despair, the sphinx of the

¹ Do not belong to you; but the *I am*, אהיה, recalls the *I am that I am* of Exodus.

prophet's life ; yet a sphinx who in the end yielded her riddle to love.

Accordingly a large number of other interpreters have taken the story throughout as the literal account of actual facts. This is the theory of many of the Latin and Greek Fathers,¹ of many of the Puritans and of Dr. Pusey—by one of those agreements into which, from such opposite schools, all these commentators are not infrequently drawn by their common captivity to the letter of Scripture.² When you ask them, How then do you justify that first strange word of God to Hosea,³ if you take it literally and believe that Hosea was charged to marry a woman of public shame ? they answer either that such an evil may be justified by the bare word of God, or that it was well worth the end, the salvation of a lost soul.⁴ And indeed this tragedy would be invested with an even greater pathos if it were true that the human hero had passed through a self-sacrifice so unusual, had incurred such a shame for such an end. The interpretation, however, seems forbidden by the essence of the story. Had not Hosea's wife been pure when he married her she could not have served as a type of the Israel whose earliest relations to Jehovah he describes as innocent. And this is confirmed by other features of the book : by the high ideal which Hosea has of marriage, and by that sense of early goodness

¹ Augustine, Ambrose, Theodoret, Cyril Alex. and Theodore of Mopsuestia.

² It is interesting to read in parallel the interpretations of Matthew Henry and Dr. Pusey. They are very alike, but the latter has the more delicate taste of his age.

³ i. 2.

⁴ The former is Matthew Henry's ; the latter seems to be implied by Pusey.

and early beauty passing away like morning mist, which is so often and so pathetically expressed that we cannot but catch in it the echo of his own experience. As one has said to whom we owe, more than to any other, the exposition of the gospel in Hosea,¹ "The struggle of Hosea's shame and grief when he found his wife unfaithful is altogether inconceivable unless his first love had been pure and full of trust in the purity of its object."

How then are we to reconcile with this the statement of that command to take a wife of the character so frankly described? In this way—and we owe the interpretation to the same lamented scholar.² When, some years after his marriage, Hosea at last began to be aware of the character of her whom he had taken to his home, and while he still brooded upon it, God revealed to him why He who knoweth all things from the beginning had suffered His servant to marry such a woman; and Hosea, by a very natural anticipation, in which he is imitated by other prophets,³ pushed back his own knowledge of God's purpose to the date when that purpose began actually to be fulfilled, the day of his betrothal. This, though he was all unconscious of its fatal future, had been to

¹ Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel*.

² Apparently it was W. R. Smith's interpretation which caused Kuenen to give up the allegorical theory.

³ Two instances are usually quoted. The one is Isaiah vi., where most are agreed that what Isaiah has stated there as his inaugural vision is not only what happened in the earliest moments of his prophetic life, but this spelt out and emphasised by his experience since. See *Isaiah I.—XXXIX.* (Exp. Bible), pp. 57 f. The other instance is Jeremiah xxxii. 8, where the prophet tells us that he became convinced that the Lord spoke to him on a certain occasion only after a subsequent event proved this to be the case.

Hosea the beginning of the word of the Lord. On that uncertain voyage he had sailed with sealed orders.

Now this is true to nature, and may be matched from our own experience. "The beginning of God's word" to any of us—where does it lie? Does it lie in the first time the meaning of our life became articulate, and we were able to utter it to others? Ah no; it always lies far behind that, in facts and in relationships, of the Divine meaning of which we are at the time unconscious, though now we know. How familiar this is in respect to the sorrows and adversities of life: dumb, deadening things that fall on us at the time with no more voice than clods falling on coffins of dead men, we have been able to read them afterwards as the clear call of God to our souls. But what we thus so readily admit about the sorrows of life may be equally true of any of those relations which we enter with light and unawed hearts, conscious only of the novelty and the joy of them. It is most true of the love which meets a man as it met Hosea in his opening manhood.

How long Hosea took to discover his shame he indicates by a few hints which he suffers to break from the delicate reserve of his story. He calls the first child his own; and the boy's name, though ominous of the nation's fate, has no trace of shame upon it. Hosea's Jezreel was as Isaiah's Shear-Jashub or Maher-shalal-hash-baz. But Hosea does not claim the second child; and in the name of this little lass, Lo-Ruhamah, *she-that-never-knew-a-father's-love*, orphan not by death but by her mother's sin, we find proof of the prophet's awakening to the tragedy of his home. Nor does he own the third child, named *Not-my-people*, that could

also mean *No-kin-of-mine*. The three births must have taken at least six years ;¹ and once at least, but probably oftener, Hosea had forgiven the woman, and till the sixth year she stayed in his house. Then either he put her from him, or she went her own way. She sold herself for money, and finally drifted, like all of her class, into slavery.²

Such were the facts of Hosea's grief, and we have now to attempt to understand how that grief became his gospel. We may regard the stages of the process as two : first, when he was led to feel that his sorrow was the sorrow of the whole nation ; and, second, when he comprehended that it was of similar kind to the sorrow of God Himself.

While Hosea brooded upon his pain one of the first things he would remember would be the fact, which he so frequently illustrates, that the case of his home was not singular, but common and characteristic of his day. Take the evidence of his book, and there must have been in Israel many such wives as his own. He describes their sin as the besetting sin of the nation, and the plague of Israel's life. But to lose your own sorrow in the vaster sense of national trouble—that is the first consciousness of a duty and a mission. In the analogous vice of intemperance among ourselves we have seen the same experience operate again and again. How many a man has joined the public warfare against that sin, because he was aroused to its national consequences by the ruin it had brought to his own home ! And one remembers from recent years a more illustrious instance, where a domestic grief—

¹ An Eastern woman seldom weans her child before the end of its second year.

² iii. 2.

it is true of a very different kind—became not dissimilarly the opening of a great career of service to the people :—

“I was in Leamington, and Mr. Cobden called on me. I was then in the depths of grief—I may almost say of despair, for the light and sunshine of my house had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life and a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called on me as his friend, and addressed me, as you may suppose, with words of condolence. After a time he looked up and said: ‘There are thousands and thousands of homes in England at this moment where wives and mothers and children are dying of hunger. Now, when the first paroxysm of your grief is passed, I would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest until the Corn Laws are repealed.’”¹

Not dissimilarly was Hosea’s pain overwhelmed by the pain of his people. He remembered that there were in Israel thousands of homes like his own. Anguish gave way to sympathy. The mystery became the stimulus to a mission.

But, again, Hosea traces this sin of his day to the worship of strange gods. He tells the fathers of Israel, for instance, that they need not be surprised at the corruption of their wives and daughters when they themselves bring home from the heathen rites the infection of light views of love.² That is to say, the many sins against human love in Israel, the wrong done to his own heart in his own home, Hosea connects with the wrong done to the Love of God, by His people’s desertion of Him for foreign and impure rites. Hosea’s own sorrow thus became a key to the sorrow of God. Had he loved this woman, cherished and

¹ From a speech by John Bright.

² iv. 13, 14.

honoured her, borne with and forgiven her, only to find at the last his love spurned and hers turned to sinful men : so also had the Love of God been treated by His chosen people, and they had fallen to the loose worship of idols.

Hosea was the more naturally led to compare his relations to his wife with Jehovah's to Israel, by certain religious beliefs current among the Semitic peoples. It was common to nearly all Semitic religions to express the union of a god with his land or with his people by the figure of marriage. The title which Hosea so often applies to the heathen deities, Ba'al, meant originally not "lord" of his worshippers, but "possessor" and endower of his land, its husband and fertiliser. A fertile land was "a land of Ba'al," or "Be'ulah," that is, "possessed" or "blessed by a Ba'al."¹ Under the fertility was counted not only the increase of field and flock, but the human increase as well ; and thus a nation could speak of themselves as the children of the Land, their mother, and of her Ba'al, their father.² When Hosea, then, called Jehovah the husband of Israel, it was not an entirely new symbol which he invented. Up to his time, however, the marriage of Heaven and Earth, of a god and his people, seems to have been conceived in a physical form which ever tended to become more gross ; and was expressed, as Hosea points out, by rites of a sensual and debasing nature, with the most disastrous effects on the domestic morals of the people. By an inspiration, whose ethical character is very conspicuous, Hosea breaks the physical connection altogether. Jehovah's Bride is not the

¹ Cf. the spiritual use of the term, Isa. lxii. 4.

² For proof and exposition of all this see Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, 92 ff.

Land, but the People, and His marriage with her is conceived wholly as a moral relation. Not that He has no connection with the physical fruits of the land: corn, wine, oil, wool and flax. But these are represented only as the signs and ornaments of the marriage, love-gifts from the husband to the wife.¹ The marriage itself is purely moral: *I will betroth her to Me in righteousness and justice, in leal love and tender mercies.*² From her in return are demanded faithfulness and growing knowledge of her Lord.

It is the re-creation of an Idea. Slain and made carrion by the heathen religions, the figure is restored to life by Hosea. And this is a life everlasting. Prophet and apostle, the Israel of Jehovah, the Church of Christ, have alike found in Hosea's figure an un-failing significance and charm. Here we cannot trace the history of the figure; but at least we ought to emphasise the creative power which its recovery to life proves to have been inherent in prophecy. This is one of those triumphs of which the God of Israel said: *Behold, I make all things new.*³

Having dug his figure from the mire and set it upon the rock, Hosea sends it on its way with all boldness. If Jehovah be thus the husband of Israel, *her first husband, the husband of her youth*, then all her pursuit of the Ba'alim is unfaithfulness to her marriage vows. But she is worse than an adulteress; she is a harlot. She has fallen for gifts. Here the historical facts wonder-

¹ ii. 8.

² So best is rendered חֶסֶד, *hesedh*, which means always not merely an affection, "lovingkindness," as our version puts it, but a relation loyally observed.

³ An expansion of this will be found in the present writer's *Isaiah XL.—LXVI.* (Expositor's Bible Series), pp. 398 ff.

fully assisted the prophet's metaphor. It was a fact that Israel and Jehovah were first wedded in the wilderness upon conditions, which by the very circumstances of desert life could have little or no reference to the fertility of the earth, but were purely personal and moral. And it was also a fact that Israel's declension from Jehovah came after her settlement in Canaan, and was due to her discovery of other deities, in possession of the soil, and adored by the natives as the dispensers of its fertility. Israel fell under these superstitions, and, although she still formally acknowledged her bond to Jehovah, yet in order to get her fields blessed and her flocks made fertile, her orchards protected from blight and her fleeces from scab, she went after the local Ba'alim.¹ With bitter scorn Hosea points out that there was no true love in this: it was the mercenariness of a harlot, selling herself for gifts.² And it had the usual results. The children whom Israel bore were not her husband's.³ The new generation in Israel grew up in ignorance of Jehovah, with characters and lives strange to His Spirit. They were Lo-Ruhamah: He could not feel towards them such pity as a father hath.⁴ They were Lo-Ammi: not at all His people. All was in exact parallel to Hosea's own experience with his wife; and only the real pain of that experience could have made the man brave enough to use it as a figure of his God's treatment by Israel.

Following out the human analogy, the next step should have been for Jehovah to divorce His erring spouse. But Jehovah reveals to the prophet that this is not His way. For He is *God and not man, the Holy*

¹ ii. 13.² ii. 5, 13.³ ii. 5.⁴ See above, p. 235.

One in the midst of thee. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I surrender thee, O Israel? My heart is turned within Me, My compassions are kindled together!

Jehovah will seek, find and bring back the wanderer. Yet the process shall not be easy. The gospel which Hosea here preaches is matched in its great tenderness by its full recognition of the ethical requirements of the case. Israel may not be restored without repentance, and cannot repent without disillusion and chastisement. God will therefore show her that her lovers, the Ba'alim, are unable to assure to her the gifts for which she followed them. These are His corn, His wine, His wool and His flax, and He will take them away for a time. Nay more, as if mere drought and blight might still be regarded as some Ba'al's work, He who has always manifested Himself by great historic deeds will do so again. He will remove herself from the land, and leave it a waste and a desolation. The whole passage runs as follows, introduced by the initial *Therefore* of judgment:—

Therefore, behold, I am going to hedge¹ up her² way with thorns, and build her³ a wall, so that she find not her paths. And she shall pursue her paramours and shall not come upon them, seek them and shall not find them; and she shall say, Let me go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now. She knew not, then, that it was I who gave her the corn and the wine and the oil; yea, silver I heaped upon her and

¹ The participle Qal, used by God of Himself in His proclamations of grace or of punishment, has in this passage (cf. ver. 16) and elsewhere (especially in Deuteronomy) the force of an immediate future.

² So LXX.; Mass. Text, *thy*.

³ The reading הַרְבֵּה is more probable than הַרְבָּה .

gold—they worked it up for the Ba'al!¹ Israel had deserted the religion that was historical and moral for the religion that was physical. But the historical religion was the physical one. Jehovah who had brought Israel to the land was also the God of the Land. He would prove this by taking away its blessings. *Therefore I will turn and take away My corn in its time and My wine in its season, and I will withdraw My wool and My flax that should have covered her nakedness. And now—the other initial of judgment—I will lay bare her shame to the eyes of her lovers, and no man shall rescue her from My hand. And I will make an end of all her joyaunce, her pilgrimages, her New-Moons and her Sabbaths, with every festival; and I will destroy her vines and her figs of which she said, "They are a gift, mine own, which my lovers gave me," and I will turn them to jungle and the wild beast shall devour them. So shall I visit upon her the days of the Ba'alim, when she used to offer incense to them, and decked herself with her rings and her jewels and went after her paramours, but Me she forgot—'tis the oracle of Jehovah.* All this implies something more than such natural disasters as those in which Amos saw the first chastisements of the Lord. Each of the verses suggests, not only a devastation of the land by war,² but the removal of the people into captivity. Evidently, therefore, Hosea, writing about

¹ Or they made it into a Ba'al image. So Ew., Hitz., Nowack. But Wellhausen omits the clause.

² Wellhausen thinks that up to ver. 14 only physical calamities are meant, but the הַצִּלְתָּו of ver. 11, as well as others of the terms used, imply not the blighting of crops before their season, but the carrying of them away in their season, when they had fully ripened, by invaders. The cessation of all worship points to the removal of the people from their land, which is also implied, of course, by the promise that they shall be sown again in ver. 23.

745, had in view a speedy invasion by Assyria, an invasion which was always followed up by the exile of the people subdued.

This is next described, with all plainness, under the figure of Israel's early wanderings in the wilderness, but is emphasised as happening only for the end of the people's penitence and restoration. The new hope is so melodious that it carries the language into metre.

*Therefore, lo ! I am to woo her, and I will bring her to
the wilderness,*

And I will speak home to her heart.

And from there I will give to her her vineyards,

And the Valley of Achor for a doorway of hope.

*And there she shall answer Me as in the days of her
youth,*

*And as the day when she came up from the land of
Miṣraim.*

To us the terms of this passage may seem formal and theological. But to every Israelite some of these terms must have brought back the days of his own wooing. *I will speak home to her heart* is a forcible expression, like the German "an das Herz" or the sweet Scottish "it cam' up roond my heart," and was used in Israel as from man to woman when he won her.¹ But the other terms have an equal charm. The prophet, of course, does not mean that Israel shall be literally taken back to the desert. But he describes her coming Exile under that ancient figure, in order to surround her penitence with the associations of her innocency and her youth. By the grace of God,

¹ Cf. Isa. xl. 1 : which to the same exiled Israel is the fulfilment of the promise made by Hosea. See *Isaiah XL.—LXVI.* (Expositor's Bible), pp. 75 ff.

everything shall begin again as at first. The old terms *wilderness, the giving of vineyards, Valley of Achor*, are, as it were, the wedding ring restored.

As a result of all this (whether the words be by Hosea or another),¹

It shall be in that day—'tis Jehovah's oracle—that thou shalt call Me, My husband,

And thou shalt not again call Me, My Ba'al:

For I will take away the names of the Ba'alim from her mouth,

And they shall no more be remembered by their names.

There follows a picture of the ideal future, in which—how unlike the vision that now closes the Book of Amos!—moral and spiritual beauty, the peace of the land and the redemption of the people, are wonderfully mingled together, in a style so characteristic of Hosea's heart. It is hard to tell where the rhythmical prose passes into actual metre.

And I will make for them a covenant in that day with the wild beasts, and with the birds of the heavens, and with the creeping things of the ground; and the bow and the sword and battle will I break from the land, and I will make you to dwell in safety. And I will betroth thee to Me for ever, and I will betroth thee to Me in righteousness and in justice, in leal love and in tender mercies; and I will betroth thee to Me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know Jehovah.

And it shall be on that day I will speak—'tis the oracle of Jehovah—I will speak to the heavens, and they shall speak to the earth; and the earth shall speak to the corn and the wine and the oil, and they shall speak to Jezreel, the scattered like seed across many lands; but I will sow

¹ Wellhausen calls ver. 18 a gloss to ver. 19.

him¹ for Myself in the land: and I will have a father's pity upon Un-Pitied; and to Not-My-People I will say, My people thou art! and he shall say, My God!²

The circle is thus completed on the terms from which we started. The three names which Hosea gave to the children, evil omens of Israel's fate, are reversed, and the people restored to the favour and love of their God.

We might expect this glory to form the culmination of the prophecy. What fuller prospect could be imagined than that we see in the close of the second chapter? With a wonderful grace, however, the prophecy turns back from this sure vision of the restoration of the people as a whole, to pick up again the individual from whom it had started, and whose unclean rag of a life had fluttered out of sight before the national fortunes sweeping in upon the scene. This was needed to crown the story—this return to the individual.

And Jehovah said unto me, Once more go, love a wife that is loved of a paramour and is an adulteress,³ as Jehovah loveth the children of Israel, the while they are turning to other gods, and love raisin-cakes—probably

¹ Massoretic Text, *her*.

² It is at this point, if at any, that i. 10, 11, ii. 1 (Eng., but ii. 1-3 Heb.) ought to come in. It will be observed, however, that even here they are superfluous: *And the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor counted; and it shall be in the place where it was said to them, No People of Mine are ye! it shall be said to them, Sons of the Living God! And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint themselves one head, and shall go up from the land: for great is the day of Jezreel. Say unto your brothers, My People, and to your sisters (LXX. sister), She-is-Pitied.* On the whole passage see above, p. 213.

³ Or *that is loved of her husband though an adulteress.*

some element in the feasts of the gods of the land, the givers of the grape. *Then I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver and a homer of barley and a lethech of wine.*¹ *And I said to her, For many days shalt thou abide for me alone; thou shalt not play the harlot, thou shalt not be for any husband; and I for my part also shall be so towards thee. For the days are many that the children of Israel shall abide without a king and without a prince, without sacrifice and without maççebah, and without ephod and teraphim.*² *Afterwards the children of Israel shall turn and seek Jehovah their God and David their king, and shall be in awe of Jehovah and towards His goodness in the end of the days.*³

Do not let us miss the fact that the story of the wife's restoration follows that of Israel's, although the story of the wife's unfaithfulness had come before that of Israel's apostasy. For this order means that, while the prophet's private pain preceded his sympathy with God's pain, it was not he who set God, but God who set him, the example of forgiveness. The man learned the God's sorrow out of his own sorrow; but conversely he was taught to forgive and redeem his wife only by seeing God forgive and redeem the people. In other words, the Divine was suggested by the human pain; yet the Divine Grace was not started by any previous human grace, but, on the contrary, was itself the precedent and origin of the latter. This is in harmony with all Hosea's teaching. God forgives because *He is God and not man.*⁴ Our pain with those we love helps

¹ So LXX. The homer was eight bushels. The lethech is a measure not elsewhere mentioned.

² On these see above, Introduction, Chap. III., p. 38.

³ On the text see above, p. 214.

⁴ xi. 9.

us to understand God's pain ; but it is not our love that leads us to believe in His love. On the contrary, all human grace is but the reflex of the Divine. So St. Paul: *Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.* So St. John: *We love Him, and one another, because He first loved us.*

But this return from the nation to the individual has another interest. Gomer's redemption is not the mere formal completion of the parallel between her and her people. It is, as the story says, an impulse of the Divine Love, recognised even then in Israel as seeking the individual. He who followed Hagar into the wilderness, who met Jacob at Bethel and forgot not the slave Joseph in prison,¹ remembers also Hosea's wife. His love is not satisfied with His Nation-Bride : He remembers this single outcast. It is the Shepherd leaving the ninety-and-nine in the fold to seek the one lost sheep.

For Hosea himself his home could never be the same as it was at the first. *And I said to her, For many days shalt thou abide, as far as I am concerned, alone. Thou shalt not play the harlot. Thou shalt not be for a husband: and I on my side also shall be so towards thee.* Discipline was needed there ; and abroad the nation's troubles called the prophet to an anguish and a toil which left no room for the sweet love or hope of his youth. He steps at once to his hard warfare for his people ; and through the rest of his book we never again hear him speak of home, or of children, or of

¹ As the stories all written down before this had made familiar to Israel.

wife. So Arthur passed from Guinevere to his last battle for his land:—

“Lo! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
 Forgives: do thou for thine own soul the rest.
 But how to take last leave of all I loved?

* * * * *

I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine; . . .
 I cannot take thy hand; that too is flesh,
 And in the flesh thou hast sinned; and mine own flesh,
 Here looking down on thine polluted, cries
 ‘I loathe thee’; yet not less, O Guinevere,
 For I was ever virgin save for thee,
 My love thro’ flesh hath wrought into my life
 So far, that my doom is, I love thee still.
 Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
 Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
 And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
 Hereafter in that world where all are pure
 We two may meet before high God, and thou
 Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
 I am thine husband, not a smaller soul. . . .

Leave me that,

I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.
 Thro’ the thick night I hear the trumpet blow.”

CHAPTER XV

THE THICK NIGHT OF ISRAEL

HOSEA iv.—xiv.

IT was indeed a "thick night" into which this Arthur of Israel stepped from his shattered home. The mists drive across Hosea's long agony with his people, and what we see, we see blurred and broken. There is stumbling and clashing; crowds in drift; confused rallies; gangs of assassins breaking across the highways; doors opening upon lurid interiors full of drunken riot. Voices, which other voices mock, cry for a dawn that never comes. God Himself is Laughter, Lightning, a Lion, a Gnawing Worm. Only one clear note breaks over the confusion—the trumpet summoning to war.

Take courage, O great heart! Not thus shall it always be! There wait thee, before the end, of open Visions at least two—one of Memory and one of Hope, one of Childhood and one of Spring. Past this night, past the swamp and jungle of these fetid years, thou shalt see thy land in her beauty, and God shall look on the face of His Bride.

Chaps. iv.—xiv. are almost indivisible. The two Visions just mentioned, chaps. xi. and xiv. 3-9, may

be detached by virtue of contributing the only strains of gospel which rise victorious above the Lord's controversy with His people and the troubled story of their sins. All the rest is the noise of a nation falling to pieces, the crumbling of a splendid past. And as decay has no climax and ruin no rhythm, so we may understand why it is impossible to divide with any certainty Hosea's record of Israel's fall. Some arrangement we must attempt, but it is more or less artificial, and to be undertaken for the sake of our own minds, that cannot grasp so great a collapse all at once. Chap. iv. has a certain unity, and is followed by a new exordium, but as it forms only the theme of which the subsequent chapters are variations, we may take it with them as far as chap. vii., ver. 7; after which there is a slight transition from the moral signs of Israel's dissolution to the political—although Hosea still combines the religious offence of idolatry with the anarchy of the land. These form the chief interest to the end of chap. x. Then breaks the bright Vision of the Past, chap. xi., the temporary victory of the Gospel of the Prophet over his Curse. In chaps. xii.—xiv. 2 we are plunged into the latter once more, and reach in xiv. 3 ff. the second bright Vision, the Vision of the Future. To each of these phases of Israel's Thick Night—we can hardly call them Sections—we may devote a chapter of simple exposition, adding three chapters more of detailed examination of the main doctrines we shall have encountered on our way—the Knowledge of God, Repentance, and the Sin against Love.

CHAPTER XVI

A PEOPLE IN DECAY: I. MORALLY

HOSEA iv.—vii. 7.

PURSUING the plan laid down in the last chapter, we now take the section of Hosea's discourse which lies between chap. iv. 1 and chap. vii. 7. Chap. iv. is the only really separable bit of it; but there are also slight breaks at v. 15 and vii. 2. So we may attempt a division into four periods: 1. Chap. iv., which states God's general charge against the people; 2. Chap. v. 1-14, which discusses the priests and princes; 3. Chaps. v. 15—vii. 2, which abjures the people's attempts at repentance; and 4. Chap. vii. 3-7, which is a lurid spectacle of the drunken and profligate court. All these give symptoms of the moral decay of the people,—the family destroyed by impurity, and society by theft and murder; the corruption of the spiritual guides of the people; the debauchery of the nobles; the sympathy of the throne with evil,—with the despairing judgment that such a people are incapable even of repentance. The keynotes are these: *No truth, leal love, nor knowledge of God in the land. Priest and Prophet stumble. Ephraim and Judah stumble. I am as the moth to Ephraim. What can I make of thee, Ephraim? When I would heal them, their guilt is only the more exposed.* Morally, Israel is

rotten. The prophet, of course, cannot help adding signs of their political incoherence. But these he deals with more especially in the part of his discourse which follows chap. vii. 7.

I. THE LORD'S QUARREL WITH ISRAEL.

HOSEA iv.

*Hear the word of Jehovah, sons of Israel!*¹ *Jehovah hath a quarrel with the inhabitants of the land, for there is no troth nor leal love nor knowledge of God in the land. Perjury*² *and murder and theft and adultery!*³ *They break out, and blood strikes upon blood.*

That stable and well-furnished life, across which, while it was still noon, Amos hurled his alarms—how quickly it has broken up! If there be still *ease in Zion*, there is no more *security in Samaria*.⁴ The great Jeroboam is dead, and society, which in the East depends so much on the individual, is loose and falling to pieces. The sins which are exposed by Amos were those that lurked beneath a still strong government, but Hosea adds outbreaks which set all order at defiance. Later we shall find him describing house-breaking, highway robbery and assassination. *Therefore doth the land wither, and every one of her denizens languisheth, even to the beast of the field and the fowl of the heaven; yea, even the fish of the sea are swept up* in the universal sickness of man and nature: for Hosea feels, like Amos, the liability of nature to the curse upon sin.

¹ ו formally introduces the charge.

² Lit. *swearing and falsehood*.

³ Ninth, sixth, eighth and seventh of the Decalogue.

⁴ Amos vi. 1.

Yet the guilt is not that of the whole people, but of their religious guides. *Let none find fault and none upbraid, for My people are but as their priestlings.*¹ *O Priest, thou hast stumbled to-day: and stumble to-night shall the prophet with thee.* One order of the nation's ministers goes staggering after the other! *And I will destroy thy Mother*, presumably the Nation herself. *Perished are My people for lack of knowledge.* But how? By the sin of their teachers. *Because thou, O Priest, hast rejected knowledge, I reject thee from being priest to Me; and as thou hast forgotten the Torah of thy God, I forget thy children*²—*I on My side.* *As many as they be, so many have sinned against Me.* Every jack-priest of them is culpable. *They have turned*³ *their glory into shame.* *They feed on the sin of My people, and to the guilt of these lift up their appetite!* The more the people sin, the more merrily thrive the priests by fines and sin-offerings. They live upon the vice of the day,

¹ iv. 4. According to the excellent emendation of Beck (quoted by Wünsche, p. 142), who instead of ועמכמריב proposes ועמי כמריי, for the first word of which there is support in the LXX. ὁ λαός μου. The second word, כמר, is used for priest only in a bad sense by Hosea himself, x. 5, and in 2 Kings xxiii. 5 of the calf-worship and in Zech. i. 4 of the Baal priesthood. As Wellhausen remarks, this emendation restores sense to a passage that had none before. "Ver. 4 cannot be directed against the people, but must rather furnish the connection for ver. 5, and effect the transference from the reproof of the people (vv. 1-3) to the reproof of the priests (5 ff.)." The letters יכהן which are left over in ver. 4 by the emendation are then justly improved by Wellhausen (following Zunz) into the vocative הכהן and taken with the following verse.

² The application seems to swerve here. *Thy children* would seem to imply that, for this clause at least, the whole people, and not the priests only, were addressed. But Robertson Smith takes *thy mother* as equivalent, not to the nation, but to the priesthood.

³ A reading current among Jewish writers and adopted by Geiger, *Urschrift*, 316.

and have a vested interest in its crimes. English Langland said the same thing of the friars of his time. The contention is obvious. The priests have given themselves wholly to the ritual; they have forgotten that their office is an intellectual and moral one. We shall return to this when treating of Hosea's doctrine of knowledge and its responsibilities. Priesthood, let us only remember, priesthood is an intellectual trust.

Thus it comes to be—like people like priest: they also have fallen under the ritual, doing from lust what the priests do from greed. But I will visit upon them their ways, and their deeds will I requite to them. For they—those shall eat and not be satisfied, these shall play the harlot and have no increase, because they have left off heeding Jehovah. This absorption in ritual at the expense of the moral and intellectual elements of religion has insensibly led them over into idolatry, with all its unchaste and drunken services. *Harlotry, wine and new wine take away the brains!*¹ The result is seen in the stupidity with which they consult their stocks for guidance. *My people! of its bit of wood it asketh counsel, and its staff telleth to it the oracle! For a spirit of harlotry hath led them astray, and they have played the harlot from their God. Upon the headlands of the hills they sacrifice, and on the heights offer incense, under oak or poplar or terebinth, for the shade of them is pleasant.* On headlands, not summits, for here no trees grow; and the altar was generally built under a tree and near water on some promontory, from which the flight of birds or of clouds might be watched.

¹ Heb. *the heart*, which ancient Israel conceived as the seat of the intellect.

Wherefore—because of this your frequenting of the heathen shrines—*your daughters play the harlot and your daughters-in-law commit adultery. I will not come with punishment upon your daughters because they play the harlot, nor upon your daughters-in-law because they commit adultery.* Why? For *they themselves*, the fathers of Israel—or does he still mean the priests?—*go aside with the harlots and sacrifice with the common women of the shrines!* It is vain for the men of a nation to practise impurity, and fancy that nevertheless they can keep their womankind chaste. *So the stupid people fall to ruin!*

(*Though thou play the harlot, Israel, let not Judah bring guilt on herself. And come not to Gilgal, and go not up to Beth-Aven, and take not your oath at the Well-of-the-Oath, Beer-Sheba,*¹ *By the life of Jehovah!* This obvious parenthesis may be either by Hosea or a later writer; the latter is more probable.²)

Yea, like a wild heifer Israel has gone wild. How now can Jehovah feed them like a lamb in a broad meadow? To treat this clause interrogatively is the only way to get sense out of it.³ *Wedded to idols is Ephraim: leave him alone.* The participle means *mated* or *leagued*. The corresponding noun is used of a wife as the *mate* of her husband⁴ and of an idolater as the *mate* of his idols.⁵ The expression is doubly appropriate here, since Hosea used marriage as the figure of the relation of a deity to his worshippers. *Leave him alone*—he must go from bad to worse. *Their drunkenness over, they take to harlotry: her rulers have*

¹ Wellhausen thinks this third place-name (cf. Amos v. 5) has been dropped. It certainly seems to be understood.

² But see above, p. 224.

⁴ Mal. ii. 4.

So all critics since Hitzig.

⁵ Isa. xlv. 11.

*fallen in love with shame, or they love shame more than their pride.*¹ But in spite of all their servile worship the Assyrian tempest shall sweep them away in its trail. *A wind hath wrapt them up in her skirts; and they shall be put to shame by their sacrifices.*

This brings the passage to such a climax as Amos loved to crown his periods. And the opening of the next chapter offers a new exordium.

2. PRIESTS AND PRINCES FAIL.

HOSEA v. 1-14.

The line followed in this paragraph is almost parallel to that of chap. iv., running out to a prospect of invasion. But the charge is directed solely against the chiefs of the people, and the strictures of chap. vii. 7 ff. upon the political folly of the rulers are anticipated.

Hear this, O Priests, and hearken, House of Israel, and, House of the King, give ear. For on you is the sentence! You, who have hitherto been the judges, this time shall be judged.

*A snare have ye become at Mizpeh, and a net spread out upon Tabor, and a pit have they made deep upon Shittim;*² *but I shall be the scourge of them all. I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from Me—for now hast thou played the harlot, Ephraim, Israel is defiled.* The worship on the high places, whether nominally of

¹ The verse is very uncertain. LXX. read a different and a fuller text from *Ephraim* in the previous verse to *harlotry* in this: "Ephraim hath set up for himself stumbling-blocks and chosen Canaanites." In the first of alternate readings of the latter half of the verse omit *הבן* as probably a repetition of the end of the preceding word; the second alternative is adapted from LXX., which for *מוניניה* must have read *מונאונה*.

² So by slightly altering the consonants. But the text is uncertain.

Jehovah or not, was sheer service of Ba'alim. It was in the interest both of the priesthood and of the rulers to multiply these sanctuaries, but they were only traps for the people. *Their deeds will not let them return to their God; for a harlot spirit is in their midst, and Jehovah, for all their oaths by Him, they have not known. But the pride of Israel shall testify to his face; and Israel and Ephraim shall stumble by their guilt—stumble also shall Judah with them.* By Israel's pride many understand God. But the term is used too opprobriously by Amos to allow us to agree to this. The phrase must mean that Israel's arrogance, or her proud prosperity, by the wounds which it feels in this time of national decay, shall itself testify against the people—a profound ethical symptom to which we shall return when treating of Repentance.¹ Yet the verse may be rendered in harmony with the context: *the pride of Israel shall be humbled to his face. With their sheep and their cattle they go about to seek Jehovah, and shall not find Him; He hath drawn off from them. They have been unfaithful to Jehovah, for they have begotten*

¹ *Note on the Pride of Israel.*—גאון means *grandeur*, and is (1) so used of Jehovah's majesty (Micah v. 3; Isa. ii. 10, 19, 21; xxiv. 14), and (2) of the greatness of human powers (Zech. x. 11; Ezek. xxxii. 12). In Psalm xlvi. 5 it is parallel to the land of Israel (cf. Nahum ii. 3). (3) In a grosser sense the word is used of the rank vegetation of Jordan (Eng. wrongly *swelling*) (Jer. xii. 5; Zech. xi. 3: cf. Job xxxviii. 11). It would appear to be this grosser sense of *rankness, arrogance*, in which Amos vi. 8 takes it as parallel to *the palaces of Israel which Jehovah loathes and will destroy*. In Amos viii. 7 the phrase may be used in scorn; yet some take it even there of God Himself (Buhl, last ed. of Gesenius' *Lexicon*).

Now in Hosea it occurs twice in the phrase given above—ענה ופניו (v. 5, vii. 10). LXX., Targum and some Jewish exegetes take ענה as a ל"ו verb, *to be humbled*, and this suits both contexts. But the word בפניו *to his face* almost compels us to

strange children. A generation has grown up who are not His. *Now may a month devour them with their portions!* Any month may bring the swift invader. Hark! the alarum of war! How it reaches to the back of the land!

*Blow the trumpet in Gibeah, the clarion in Ramah;
Raise the slogan, Beth-Aven: "After thee, Benjamin!"*¹

*Ephraim shall become desolation in the day of rebuke!
Among the tribes of Israel I have made known what is certain!*

At this point, ver. 10, the discourse swerves from the religious to the political leaders of Israel; but as the princes were included with the priests in the exordium (ver. 1), we can hardly count this a new oracle.²

*The princes of Judah are like landmark-removers—commonest of cheats in Israel—upon them will I pour out My wrath like water. Ephraim is oppressed, crushed is his right, for he wilfully went after vanity.*³ *And I am as the moth to Ephraim, and as rottenness to the house of*

take ענה as a ^ול verb, *to witness against* (cf. Job xvi. 8; Jer. xiv. 7). Hence Wellhausen renders "With his arrogance Israel witnesseth against himself," and confirms the plaint of Jehovah—the arrogance being the trust in the ritual and the feeling of no need to turn from that and repent (cf. vii. 10). Orelli quotes Amos vi. 8 and Nahum ii. 3, and says injustice cleaves to all Israel's splendour, so it testifies against him.

But the context, which in both cases speaks of Israel's gradual decay, demands rather the interpretation that Israel's material grandeur shows unmistakable signs of breaking down. For the ethical development of this interpretation, see below, pp. 337 f.

¹ Probably the ancient war-cry of the clan. Cf. Judg. v. 14.

² Yet ver. 9 goes with ver. 8 (so Wellhausen), and not with ver. 10 (so Ewald).

³ For וצ read נשׁו.

Judah. Both kingdoms have begun to fall to pieces, for by this time Uzziah of Judah also is dead, and the weak politicians are in charge whom Isaiah satirised. *And Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah his sore; and Ephraim went to Asshur and¹ sent to King Jareb—King Combative, King Pick-Quarrel,²* a nickname for the Assyrian monarch. The verse probably refers to the tribute which Menahem sent to Assyria in 738. If so, then Israel has drifted full five years into her "thick night." *But He cannot heal you, nor dry up your sore. For I, Myself, am like a lion to Ephraim, and like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, I rend and go My way; I carry off and there is none to deliver.* It is the same truth which Isaiah expressed with even greater grimness.³ God Himself is His people's sore; and not all their statecraft nor alliances may heal what He inflicts. Priests and Princes, then, have alike failed. A greater failure is to follow.

3. REPENTANCE FAILS.

HOSEA v. 15—vii. 2.

Seeing that their leaders are so helpless, and feeling their wounds, the people may themselves turn to God for healing, but that will be with a repentance so shallow as also to be futile. They have no conviction of sin, nor appreciation of how deeply their evils have eaten.

This too facile repentance is expressed in a prayer which the Christian Church has paraphrased into one

¹ Wellhausen inserts *Judah*, with that desire to complete a parallel which seems to me to be overdone by so many critics. If Judah be inserted we should need to bring the date of these verses down to the reign of Ahaz in 734.

² Guthe: "King Fighting-Cock."

³ See *Isaiah I.—XXXIX.* (Expositor's Bible), pp. 242 ff.

of its most beautiful hymns of conversion. Yet the introduction to this prayer, and its own easy assurance of how soon God will heal the wounds He has made, as well as the impatience with which God receives it, oblige us to take the prayer in another sense than the hymn which has been derived from it.¹ It offers but one more symptom of the optimism of this light-hearted people, whom no discipline and no judgment can impress with the reality of their incurable decay. They said of themselves, *The bricks are fallen, let us build with stones,*² and now they say just as easily and airily of their God, *He hath torn only that He may heal: we are fallen, but He will raise us up again in a day or two.* At first it is still God who speaks.

I am going My way, I am returning to My own place,³ until they feel their guilt and seek My face. When trouble comes upon them, they will soon enough seek Me, saying:⁴—

*“Come and let us return to Jehovah :
For He hath rent, that He may heal us,
And hath wounded,⁵ that He may bind us up.
He will bring us to life in a couple of days ;
On the third day He will raise us up again,
That we may live in His presence.*

¹ Cheyne indeed (Introduction to Robertson Smith's *Prophets of Israel*) takes the prayer to be genuine, but an intrusion. His reasons do not persuade me. But at least it is clear that there is a want of connection between the prayer and what follows it, unless the prayer be understood in the sense explained above.

² Isaiah ix. 10.

³ Cf. Isaiah xviii. 4.

⁴ *Saying*: so the LXX. adds, and thereby connects chap. v. with chap. vi

⁵ Read 𐤒.

*Let us know, let us follow up¹ to know, Jehovah;
As soon as we seek Him, we shall find Him.²
And He shall come to us like the winter-rain,
Like the spring-rain, pouring on the land!"*

But how is this fair prayer received by God? With incredulity, with impatience. *What can I make of thee, Ephraim? what can I make of thee, Judah? since your love is like the morning cloud and like the dew so early gone.* Their shallow hearts need deepening. Have they not been deepened enough? *Wherefore I have hewn them by the prophets, I have slain them by the words of My mouth, and My judgment goeth forth like the lightning.³ For leal love have I desired, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.*

That the discourse comes back to the ritual is very intelligible. For what could make repentance seem so easy as the belief that forgiveness can be won by simply offering sacrifices? Then the prophet leaps upon what each new year of that anarchy revealed afresh—the profound sinfulness of the people.

But they in human fashion⁴ have transgressed the covenant! There—he will now point out the very spots—have they betrayed⁵ Me! Gilead is a city of evil-

¹ Literally *hunt, pursue*. It is the same word as is used of the unfaithful Israel's pursuit of the Ba'alim, chap. ii. 9.

² So by a rearrangement of consonants (כִּשְׁחָרְנוּ בֵּן נִמְצָאָהוּ) and the help of the LXX. (εὐρήσομεν αὐτόν) Giesebrecht (*Beiträge*, p. 208) proposes to read the clause, which in the traditional text runs, *like the morn His going forth shall be certain*.

³ Read מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֹרֶן יִצְחָק.

⁴ Or *like Adam*, or (Guthe) *like the heathen*.

⁵ The verb means to prove false to any contract, but especially marriage.

doers: stamped with bloody footprints; assassins¹ in troops; a gang of priests murder on the way to Shechem. Yea, crime² have they done. In the house of Israel I have seen horrors: there Ephraim hath played the harlot: Israel is defiled—Judah as well.³

Truly the sinfulness of Israel is endless. Every effort to redeem them only discovers more of it. *When I would turn, when I would heal Israel, then the guilt of Ephraim displays itself and the evils of Samaria*, these namely: *that they work fraud, and the thief cometh in—*evidently a technical term for housebreaking⁴*—while abroad a crew of highwaymen foray. And they never think in their hearts that all their evil is recorded by Me. Now have their deeds encompassed them: they are constantly before Me.*

Evidently real repentance on the part of such a people is impossible. As Hosea said before, *Their deeds will not let them return.*⁵

4. WICKEDNESS IN HIGH PLACES.

HOSEA vii. 3-7.

There follows now a very difficult passage. The text is corrupt, and we have no means of determining what precise events are intended. The drift of meaning, however, is evident. The disorder and licentiousness of the people are favoured in high places; the throne itself is guilty.

¹ Read מַחֲרִי.

² In several passages of the Old Testament the word means unchastity.

³ Here the LXX. close chap. vi., taking 11 b along with chap. vii. Some think the whole of ver. 11 to be a Judæan gloss.

⁴ Cf. Joel ii. 9, and the New Testament phrase *to come as a thief*.

⁵ v. 4.

*With their evil they make a king glad, and princes with their falsehoods: all of them are adulterers, like an oven heated by the baker, . . .*¹

On the day of our king—some coronation or king's birthday—the princes were sick with fever from wine. He stretched forth his hand with loose fellows,² presumably made them his associates. Like an oven have they made³ their hearts with their intriguing.⁴ All night their anger sleepeth:⁵ in the morning it blazes like a flame of fire. All of them glow like an oven, and devour their rulers: all their kings have fallen, without one of them calling on Me.

An obscure passage upon obscure events; yet so lurid with the passion of that fevered people in the flagrant years 743—735 that we can make out the kind of crimes described. A king surrounded by loose and unscrupulous nobles: adultery, drunkenness, conspiracies, assassinations: every man striking for himself; none appealing to God.

From the court, then, downwards, by princes, priests and prophets, to the common fathers of Israel and their households, immorality prevails. There is

¹ The text is unsound. Heb.: "like an oven kindled by the baker, the stirrer (stoker or kneader?) resteth from kneading the dough until it be leavened." LXX.: ὡς κλίβανος καιόμενος εἰς πέψιν κατακαύματος ἀπὸ τῆς φλογὸς ἀπὸ φυράσεως στέατος ἐὼς τοῦ ξυμωθῆναι αὐτό—i.e. for יִשְׁבֹּת they read יִשְׁבֹּת לַחֲבֵי אֵשׁ. Oort emends Heb. to בּוֹעֵר הֵם אֶפְהוֹ, which gets rid of the difficulty of a feminine participle with תִּנּוֹר. Wellhausen omits whole clause as a gloss on ver. 6. But if there be a gloss it properly commences with יִשְׁבֹּת.

² LXX. μετατοιμῶν??

³ LXX. kindled, בִּעְרָי. So Vollers, Z.A.T.W., III. 250.

⁴ Lit. lurking.

⁵ Massoretic Text with different vowels reads *their baker*. LXX.

no redeeming feature, and no hope of better things. For repentance itself the capacity is gone.

In making so thorough an indictment of the moral condition of Israel, it would have been impossible for Hosea not to speak also of the political stupidity and restlessness which resulted from it. But he has largely reserved these for that part of his discourse which now follows, and which we will take in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVII

A PEOPLE IN DECAY: II. POLITICALLY

HOSEA vii. 8—x.

MORAL decay means political decay. Sins like these are the gangrene of nations. It is part of Hosea's greatness to have traced this, a proof of that versatility which distinguishes him above other prophets. The most spiritual of them all, he is at the same time the most political. We owe him an analysis of repentance to which the New Testament has little to add;¹ but he has also left us a criticism of society and of politics in Israel, unrivalled except by Isaiah. We owe him an intellectual conception of God,² which for the first time in Israel exploded idolatry; yet he also is the first to define Israel's position in the politics of Western Asia. With the simple courage of conscience Amos had said to the people: You are bad, therefore you must perish. But Hosea's is the insight to follow the processes by which sin brings forth death—to trace, for instance, the effects of impurity upon a nation's powers of reproduction, as well as upon its intellectual vigour.

So intimate are these two faculties of Hosea, that in chapters devoted chiefly to the sins of Israel we have already seen him expose the political disasters that

¹ See below, Chap. XXII.

² See Chap. XXI.

follow. But from the point we have now reached—chap. vii. 8—the proportion of his prophesying is reversed: he gives us less of the sin and more of the social decay and political folly of his age.

I. THE CONFUSION OF THE NATION.

HOSEA vii. 8—viii. 3.

Hosea begins by summing up the public aspect of Israel in two epigrams, short but of marvellous adequacy (vii. 8):—

*Ephraim—among the nations he mixeth himself:
Ephraim has become a cake not turned.*

It is a great crisis for any nation to pass from the seclusion of its youth and become a factor in the main history of the world. But for Israel the crisis was trebly great. Their difference from all other tribes about them had struck the Canaanites on their first entry to the land:¹ their own earliest writers had emphasised their seclusion as their strength;² and their first prophets consistently deprecated every overture made by them either to Egypt or to Assyria. We feel the force of the prophets' policy when we remember what happened to the Philistines. These were a people as strong and as distinctive as Israel, with whom at one time they disputed possession of the whole land. But their position as traders in the main line of traffic between Asia and Africa rendered the Philistines peculiarly open to foreign influence. They were now Egyptian vassals, now Assyrian victims; and after the invasion of Alexander the Great their cities became

¹ Numb. xxiii. 9 b; Josh. ii. 8.

² Deut. xxxiii. 27.

centres of Hellenism, while the Jews upon their secluded hills still stubbornly held unmixed their race and their religion. This contrast, so remarkably developed in later centuries, has justified the prophets of the eighth in their anxiety that Israel should not annul the advantages of her geographical seclusion by trade or treaties with the Gentiles. But it was easier for Judæa to take heed to the warning than for Ephraim. The latter lies as open and fertile as her sister-province is barren and aloof. She has many gates into the world, and they open upon many markets. Nobler opportunities there could not be for a nation in the maturity of its genius and loyal to its vocation :—

*Rejoice, O Zebulun, in thine outgoings :
They shall call the nations to the mountain ;
They shall suck of the abundance of the seas,
And of the treasure that is stored in the sands.*¹

But in the time of his outgoings Ephraim was not sure of himself nor true to his God, the one secret and strength of the national distinctiveness. So he met the world weak and unformed, and, instead of impressing it, was by it dissipated and confused. The tides of a lavish commerce scattered abroad the faculties of the people, and swept back upon their life alien fashions and tempers, to subdue which there was neither native strength nor definiteness of national purpose. All this is what Hosea means by the first of his epigrams : *Ephraim—among the nations he lets himself be poured out, or mixed up.* The form of the verb does not elsewhere occur ; but it is reflexive, and the meaning of the root is certain. *Balal* is to *pour out*, or *mingle*, as

¹ Deut. xxxiii. 18, 19.

of oil in the sacrificial flour. Yet it is sometimes used of a mixing which is not sacred, but profane and hopeless. It is applied to the first great confusion of mankind, to which a popular etymology has traced the name Babel, as if for Balbel. Derivatives of the stem bear the additional ideas of staining and impurity. The alternative renderings which have been proposed, *lets himself be soaked* and *scatters himself* abroad like wheat among tares, are not so probable, yet hardly change the meaning.¹ Ephraim wastes and confuses himself among the Gentiles. The nation's character is so disguised that Hosea afterwards nicknames him Canaan ;² their religion so filled with foreign influences that he calls the people the harlot of the Ba'alim.

If the first of Hosea's epigrams satirises Israel's foreign relations, the second, with equal brevity and wit, hits off the temper and constitution of society at home. For the metaphor of which this epigram is composed Hosea has gone to the baker. Among all classes in the East, especially under conditions requiring haste, there is in demand a round flat scone, which is baked by being laid on hot stones or attached to the wall of a heated oven. The whole art of baking consists in turning the scone over at the proper moment. If this be mismanaged, it does not need a baker to tell us that one side may be burnt to a cinder,

¹ יתבלל from בלל. In Phœn. בלל seems to have been used as in Israel of the sacrificial mingling of oil and flour (cf. Robertson Smith, *Religion of Semites*, I. 203); in Arabic *ball* is to weaken a strong liquid with water, while *balbal* is to be confused, disordered. The Syriac *balal* is to mix. Some have taken Hosea's יתבלל as if from בליל (Isa. xxx. 24; Job vi. 5), usually understood as a mixed crop of wheat and inferior vegetables for fodder; but there is reason to believe בליל means rather fresh corn. The derivation from בלה, to grow old, does not seem probable.

² xii. 8.

while the other remains raw. *Ephraim*, says Hosea, is an *unturnd cake*.

By this he may mean one of several things, or all of them together, for they are infectious of each other. There was, for instance, the social condition of the people. What can better be described as an unturnd scone than a community one half of whose number are too rich, and the other too poor? Or Hosea may refer to that unequal distribution of religion through life with which in other parts of his prophecy he reproaches Israel. They keep their religion, as Amos more fully tells us, for their temples, and neglect to carry its spirit into their daily business. Or he may refer to Israel's politics, which were equally in want of thoroughness. They rushed hotly at an enterprise, but having expended so much fire in the beginning of it, they let the end drop cold and dead. Or he may wish to satirise, like Amos, Israel's imperfect culture—the pretentious and overdone arts, stuck excrescence-wise upon the unrefined bulk of the nation, just as in many German principalities last century society took on a few French fashions in rough and exaggerated forms, while at heart still brutal and coarse. Hosea may mean any one of these things, for the figure suits all, and all spring from the same defect. Want of thoroughness and equable effort was Israel's besetting sin, and it told on all sides of his life. How better describe a half-fed people, a half-cultured society, a half-lived religion, a half-hearted policy, than by a half-baked scone?

We who are so proud of our political bakers, we who scorn the rapid revolutions of our neighbours and complacently dwell upon our equable ovens, those slow and cautious centuries of political development which

lie behind us—have we anything better than our neighbours, anything better than Israel, to show in our civilisation? Hosea's epigram fits us to the letter. After all those ages of baking, society is still with us *an unturned score*: one end of the nation with the strength burnt out of it by too much enjoyment of life, the other with not enough of warmth to be quickened into anything like adequate vitality. No man can deny that this is so; we are able to live only by shutting our hearts to the fact. Or is religion equally distributed through the lives of the religious portion of our nation? Of late years religion has spread, and spread wonderfully, but of how many Christians is it still true that they are but half-baked—living a life one side of which is reeking with the smoke of sacrifice, while the other is never warmed by one religious thought. We may have too much religion if we confine it to one day or one department of life: our worship overdone, with the sap and the freshness burnt out of it, cindery, dusty, unattractive, fit only for crumbling; our conduct cold, damp and heavy, like dough the fire has never reached.

Upon the theme of these two epigrams the other verses of this chapter are variations. Has Ephraim mixed himself among the peoples? *Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not*, senselessly congratulating himself upon the increase of his trade and wealth, while he does not feel that these have sucked from him all his distinctive virtue. *Yea, grey hairs are sprinkled upon him, and he knoweth it not*. He makes his energy the measure of his life, as Isaiah also marked,¹ but sees not that it all means waste and

¹ ix. 91.

decay. *The pride of Israel testifieth to his face, yet—* even when the pride of the nation is touched to the quick by such humiliating overtures as they make to both Assyria and Egypt¹—*they do not return to Jehovah their God, nor seek Him for all this.*

With virtue and single-hearted faith have disappeared intellect and the capacity for affairs. *Ephraim is become like a silly dove—a dove without heart,* to the Hebrews the organ of the wits of a man—*they cry to Egypt, they go off to Assyria.* Poor pigeon of a people, fluttering from one refuge to another! *But as they go I will throw over them My net, like a bird of the air I will bring them down. I will punish them as their congregation have heard—*this text as it stands² can only mean “in the manner I have publicly proclaimed in Israel.” *Woe to them that they have strayed from Me! Damnation to them that they have rebelled against Me! While I would have redeemed them, they spoke lies about Me. And they have never cried unto Me with their heart, but they keep howling on their beds for corn and new wine.* No real repentance theirs, but some fear of drought and miscarriage of the harvests, a sensual and servile sorrow in which they wallow. They seek God with no heart, no true appreciation of what He is, but use the senseless means by which the heathen invoke their gods: *they cut themselves,*³ *and so apostatise from Me! And yet it was I who disciplined them, I strengthened their arm, but with regard to Me they kept thinking only evil!* So fickle and sensitive to fear, *they turn indeed, but not upwards;* no Godward conversion theirs. In their repentance *they are like a bow which swerves—*off upon

¹ See above, p. 261, and below, p. 337.

² But the reading is very doubtful.

³ For יתנררו read יתנררו.

some impulse of their ill-balanced natures. *Their princes must fall by the sword because of the bitterness—we should have expected “falseness”—of their tongue: this is their scorn in the land of Egypt!* To the allusion we have no key.

With so false a people nothing can be done. Their doom is inevitable. Sc

“Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war.”

*To thy mouth with the trumpet! The Eagle is down upon the house of Jehovah!*¹ Where the carcass is, there are the eagles gathered together. *For—to sum up the whole crisis—they have transgressed My covenant, and against My law have they rebelled. To Me they cry, My God, we know Thee, we Israel! What does it matter? Israel hath spurned the good:² the Foe must pursue him.*

It is the same climax of inevitable war to which Amos led up his periods; and a new subject is now introduced.

2. ARTIFICIAL KINGS AND ARTIFICIAL GODS.

HOSEA viii. 4-13.

The curse of such a state of dissipation as that to which Israel had fallen is that it produces no men. Had the people had in them “the root of the matter,”

¹ Wellhausen's objection to the first clause, that one does not set a trumpet to one's *gums*, which קָרַן literally means, is beside the mark. קָרַן is more than once used of the mouth as a whole (Job viii. 7; Prov. v. 3). The second clause gives the reason of the trumpet, the alarm trumpet, in the first. Read כִּי נִשְׂרַף (so also Wellhausen).

² Cf. Amos: *Seek Me = Seek the good*; and Jesus: *Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord; but he that doeth the will of My Father in heaven.*

had there been the stalk and the fibre of a national consciousness and purpose, it would have blossomed to a man. In the similar time of her outgoings upon the world Prussia had her Frederick the Great, and Israel, too, would have produced a leader, a heaven-sent king, if the national spirit had not been squandered on foreign trade and fashions. But after the death of Jeroboam every man who rose to eminence in Israel, rose, not on the nation, but only on the fevered and transient impulse of some faction; and through the broken years one party monarch was lifted after another to the brief tenancy of a blood-stained throne. They were not from God, these monarchs; but man-made, and sooner or later man-murdered. With his sharp insight Hosea likens these artificial kings to the artificial gods, also the work of men's hands; and till near the close of his book the idols of the sanctuary and the puppets of the throne form the twin targets of his scorn.

They have made kings, but not from Me; they have made princes, but I knew not. With their silver and their gold they have manufactured themselves idols, only that they¹ may be cut off—king after king, idol upon idol. He loathes thy Calf, O Samaria, the thing of wood and gold which thou callest Jehovah. And God confirms this. Kindled is Mine anger against them! How long will they be incapable of innocence?—unable to clear themselves of guilt! The idol is still in his mind. For from Israel is it also—as much as the puppet-kings; a workman made it, and no god is it. Yea, splinters shall the Calf of Samaria become.² Splinters

¹ So LXX., but Hebrew *it*.

Davidson's *Syntax*, § 136, Rem. 1, and § 71, Rom. 4.

shall everything in Israel become. *For they sow the wind, and the whirlwind shall they reap.* Indeed like a storm Hosea's own language now sweeps along; and his metaphors are torn into shreds upon it. *Stalk it hath none: the sprout brings forth no grain: if it were to bring forth, strangers would swallow it.*¹ Nay, *Israel hath let herself be swallowed up! Already are they become among the nations like a vessel there is no more use for.* Heathen empires have sucked them dry. *They have gone up to Assyria like a runaway wild-ass. Ephraim hath hired lovers.*² It is again the note of their mad dissipation among the foreigners. *But if they thus give themselves away among the nations, I must gather them in, and then shall they have to cease a little from the anointing of a king and princes.*³ This wilful roaming of theirs among the foreigners shall be followed by compulsory exile, and all their unholy artificial politics shall cease. The discourse turns to the other target. *For Ephraim hath multiplied altars—to sin; altars are his own—to sin. Were I to write for him by myriads My laws,*⁴ *as those of a stranger would they be accounted. They slay burnt-offerings for Me and eat flesh.*⁵ *Jehovah hath no delight in them. Now must He remember their*

¹ So by the accents runs the verse, but, as Wellhausen has pointed out, both its sense and its assonance are better expressed by another arrangement: *Hath it grown up? then it hath no shoot, nor bringeth forth fruit.*

ên lo šemach,
b'li ya'aseh qemach.

Yet to this there is a grammatical obstacle.

² Wellhausen's reading *to Egypt with love gifts* scarcely suits the verb *go up*. Notice the play upon P(h)ere', *wild-ass* and Ephra'[im].

³ So LXX. reads. Heb.: *they shall involve themselves with tribute to the king of princes*, presumably the Assyrian monarch.

⁴ So LXX.

⁵ Text obscure.

*guilt and make visitation upon their sin. They—to Egypt—shall return. . .*¹ Back to their ancient servitude must they go, as formerly He said He would withdraw them to the wilderness.²

3. THE EFFECTS OF EXILE.

HOSEA ix. 1-9.

Hosea now turns to describe the effects of exile upon the social and religious habits of the people. It must break up at once the joy and the sacredness of their lives. Every pleasure will be removed, every taste offended. Indeed, even now, with their conscience of having deserted Jehovah, they cannot pretend to enjoy the feasts of the Ba'alim in the same hearty way as the heathen with whom they mix. But, whether or no, the time is near when nature-feasts and all other religious ceremonies—all that makes life glad and regular and solemn—shall be impossible.

*Rejoice not, O Israel, to the pitch of rapture like the heathen, for thou hast played the harlot from thy God; a harlot's hire hast thou loved on all threshing-floors.*³ *Threshing-floor and wine-vat shall ignore*⁴ *them, and the new wine shall play them false. They shall not abide in the land of Jehovah, but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and in Assyria they shall eat what is unclean. They shall not pour libations to Jehovah, nor prepare*⁵ *for Him their sacrifices. Like the bread of sorrows shall their*

¹ LXX. addition here is plainly borrowed from ix. 3. For the reasons for omitting ver. 14 see above, p. 223.

² ii. 16.

³ On this verse see more particularly below, pp. 340 ff.

⁴ So LXX.

⁵ Read יֵרָכּוּ. Cf. with the whole passage iii. 4 f.

bread¹ be; all that eat of it shall be defiled: yea, their bread shall be only for their appetite; they shall not bring it² to the temple of Jehovah. He cannot be worshipped off His own land. They will have to live like animals, divorced from religion, unable to hold communion with their God. *What shall ye do for days³ of festival, or for a day of pilgrimage to Jehovah? For lo, they shall be gone forth from destruction,⁴ the shock and invasion of their land, only that Egypt may gather them in, Memphis give them sepulture, nettles inherit their jewels of silver, thorns come up in their tents.* The threat of exile still wavers between Assyria and Egypt. And in Egypt Memphis is chosen as the destined grave of Israel; for even then her Pyramids and mausoleums were ancient and renowned, her vaults and sepulchres were countless and spacious.

But what need is there to seek the future for Israel's doom, when already this is being fulfilled by the corruption of her spiritual leaders?

The days of visitation have come, have come the days of requital. Israel already experiences⁵ them! A fool is the prophet, raving mad the man of the spirit. The old ecstasy of Saul's day has become delirium and fanaticism.⁶ Why? *For the mass of thy guilt and the multiplied treachery! Ephraim acts the spy with my God* There is probably a play on the name, for with the meaning a *watchman* for God it is elsewhere used as an honourable title of the prophets. *The prophet is a fowler's snare upon all his ways. Treachery—they have*

¹ לחם for להם.

² יביאו.

³ Plural: so LXX.

⁴ Others read *they are gone to Assyria.*

⁵ Literally *knows*. See below, p. 321, n. 9.

⁶ See above, p. 28.

made it profound in the very house of their God.¹ They have done corruptly, as in the days of Gibeah. Their iniquity is remembered; visitation is made on their sin.

These then were the symptoms of the profound political decay which followed on Israel's immorality. The national spirit and unity of the people had disappeared. Society—half of it was raw, half of it was baked to a cinder. The nation, broken into factions, produced no man to lead, no king with the stamp of God upon him. Anarchy prevailed; monarchs were made and murdered. There was no prestige abroad, nothing but contempt among the Gentiles for a people whom they had exhausted. Judgment was inevitable by exile—nay, it had come already in the corruption of the spiritual leaders of the nation.

Hosea now turns to probe a deeper corruption still.

4. "THE CORRUPTION THAT IS THROUGH LUST."

HOSEA ix. 10-17: cf. iv. 11-14.

Those who at the present time are enforcing among us the revival of a Paganism—without the Pagan conscience—and exalting licentiousness to the level of an art, forget how frequently the human race has attempted their experiment, with far more sincerity than they themselves can put into it, and how invariably the result has been recorded by history to be weariness, decay and death. On this occasion we have the story told to us by one who to the experience of the statesman adds the vision of the poet.

¹ So, after the LXX., by taking העמיקו with this verse, 8, instead of with ver. 9.

The generation to which Hosea belonged practised a periodical unchastity under the alleged sanctions of nature and religion. And, although their prophet told them that—like our own apostates from Christianity—they could never do so with the abandon of the Pagans, for they carried within them the conscience and the memory of a higher faith, it appears that even the fathers of Israel resorted openly and without shame to the licentious rites of the sanctuaries. In an earlier passage of his book Hosea insists that all this must impair the people's intellect. *Harlotry takes away the brains.*¹ He has shown also how it confuses the family, and has exposed the old delusion that men may be impure and keep their womankind chaste.² But now he diagnoses another of the inevitable results of this sin. After tracing the sin, and the theory of life which permitted it, to their historical beginnings at the entry of the people into Canaan, he describes how the long practice of it, no matter how pretentious its sanctions, inevitably leads not only to exterminating strifes, but to the decay of the vigour of the nation, to barrenness and a diminishing population.

Like grapes in the wilderness I found Israel, like the first fruit on a fig-tree in her first season I saw your fathers. So had the lusty nation appeared to God in its youth; in that dry wilderness all the sap and promise of spring were in its eyes, because it was still pure. But *they—they came to Ba'al-Peor*—the first of the shrines of Canaan which they touched—and *dedicated themselves to the Shame, and became as abominable as the object of their love.* *Ephraim*—the *Fruitful* name is emphasised—*their glory is flown away like a bird.* *No*

¹ iv. 12.² iv. 13, 14.

*more birth, no more motherhood, no more conception!*¹ *Blasted is Ephraim, withered the root of them, fruit they produce not: yea, even when they beget children I slay the darlings of their womb. Yea, though they bring up their sons I bereave them, till they are poor in men. Yea, woe upon themselves also, when I look away from them!* Ephraim—again the Fruitful name is dragged to the front—for prey, as I have seen, are his sons destined.² Ephraim—he must lead his sons to the slaughter.

And the prophet interrupts with his chorus: *Give them, O LORD—what wilt Thou give them? Give them a miscarrying womb and breasts that are dry!*

All their mischief is in Gilgal—again the Divine voice strikes the connection between the national worship and the national sin—*yea, there do I hate them: for the evil of their doings from My house I will drive them. I will love them no more: all their nobles are rebels.*³

And again the prophet responds: *My God will cast them away, for they have not hearkened to Him, and they shall be vagabonds among the nations.*

Some of the warnings which Hosea enforces with regard to this sin have been instinctively felt by mankind since the beginnings of civilisation, and are found expressed among the proverbs of nearly all the languages.⁴ But I am unaware of any earlier moralist

¹ Here, between vv. 11 and 12, Wellhausen with justice proposes to insert ver. 16.

² So Wellhausen, after LXX.; probably correct.

³ So we may attempt to echo the play on the words.

⁴ Cf., e.g., the *Proverbs of Ptah-Hotep* the Egyptian, circa 2500 B.C. "There is no prudence in taking part in it, and thousands of men destroy themselves in order to enjoy a moment, brief as a dream, while they gain death so as to know it. It is a villainous . . . that

in any literature who traced the effects of national licentiousness in a diminishing population, or who exposed the persistent delusion of libertine men that they themselves may resort to vice, yet keep their woman-kind chaste. Hosea, so far as we know, was the first to do this. History in many periods has confirmed the justice of his observations, and by one strong voice after another enforced his terrible warnings. The experience of ancient Persia and Egypt; the languor of the Greek cities; the "deep weariness and sated lust" which in Imperial Rome "made human life a hell"; the decay which overtook Italy after the renascence of Paganism without the Pagan virtues; the strife and anarchy that have rent every court where, as in the case of Henri Quatre, the king set the example of libertinage; the incompetence, the poltroonery, the treachery, that have corrupted every camp where, as in French Metz in 1870, soldiers and officers gave way so openly to vice; the checks suffered by modern civilisation in face of barbarism because its pioneers mingled in vice with the savage races they were subduing; the number of great statesmen falling by their passion, and in their fall frustrating the hopes of nations; the great families worn out by indulgence; the homes broken up by infidelities; the tainting of the blood of a new generation by the poisonous practices of the old,—have not all these things been in every age, and do they not still happen near enough to ourselves to give us a great fear of the sin which causes them all? Alas! how slow men are to listen

of a man who excites himself (?); if he goes on to carry it out, his mind abandons him. For as for him who is without repugnance for such an [act], there is no good sense at all in him."—From the translation in *Records of the Past*, Second Series, Vol. III., p. 24.

and to lay to heart! Is it possible that we can gild by the names of frivolity and piquancy habits the wages of which are death? Is it possible that we can enjoy comedies which make such things their jest? We have among us many who find their business in the theatre, or in some of the periodical literature of our time, in writing and speaking and exhibiting as closely as they dare to limits of public decency. When will they learn that it is not upon the easy edge of mere conventions that they are capering, but upon the brink of those eternal laws whose further side is death and hell—that it is not the tolerance of their fellow-men they are testing, but the patience of God Himself? As for those loud few who claim licence in the name of art and literature, let us not shrink from them as if they were strong or their high words true. They are not strong, they are only reckless; their claims are lies. All history, the poets and the prophets, whether Christian or Pagan, are against them. They are traitors alike to art, to love, and to every other high interest of mankind.

It may be said that a large part of the art of the day, which takes great licence in dealing with these subjects, is exercised only by the ambition to expose that ruin and decay which Hosea himself affirms. This is true. Some of the ablest and most popular writers of our time have pictured the facts, which Hosea describes, with so vivid a realism that we cannot but judge them to be inspired to confirm his ancient warnings, and to excite a disgust of vice in a generation which otherwise treats vice so lightly. But if so, their ministry is exceeding narrow, and it is by their side that we best estimate the greatness of the ancient prophet. Their transcript of human life may be true to

his land, the more goodly he made his maçceboth, or sacred pillars. False is the heart of them: now must they atone for it. He shall break the neck of their altars; He shall ruin their pillars. For already they are saying, No king have we, for we have not feared Jehovah, and the king—what could he do for us? Speaking¹ of words, swearing of false oaths, making of bargains—till law² breaks out like weeds in the furrows of the field.

For the Calf of Beth-Aven the inhabitants³ of Samaria shall be anxious: yea, mourn for him shall his people, and his priestlings shall writhe for him—for his glory that it is banished from him. In these days of heavy tribute shall the gold of the golden calf be safe? Yea, himself shall they pack⁴ to Assyria; he shall be offered as tribute to King Pick-Quarrel.⁵ Ephraim shall take disgrace, and Israel be ashamed because of his counsel.⁶ Undone Samaria! Her king like a chip⁷ on the face of the waters! This may refer to one of the revolutions in which the king was murdered. But it seems more appropriate to the final catastrophe of 724-1: the fall of the kingdom, and the king's banishment to Assyria. If the latter, the verse has been inserted; but the following verse would lead us to take these disasters as still future. *And the high places of idolatry shall be destroyed, the sin of Israel; thorn and thistle shall come up on their altars. And they shall say to the mountains, Cover us, and to the hills, Fall on us.* It

¹ After LXX.

⁴ LXX. supplies.

² Doubtful. Lawsuits?

⁵ See above, p. 263.

³ "Calf," "inhabitants"—so LXX.

⁶ Very uncertain. Wellhausen reads *from his idol*, מעצבו.

⁷ קצף: compare Arabic qṣf, "to break"; but there is also the assonant Arabic qṣb, "reed." The Rabbis translate *foam*: cf. the other meaning of קצף = outbreak of anger, which suggests *bubble*.

cannot be too often repeated: these handmade gods, these chips of kings, shall be swept away together.

Once more the prophet returns to the ancient origins of Israel's present sins, and once more to their shirking of the discipline necessary for spiritual results, but only that he may lead up as before to the inevitable doom. *From¹ the days of Gibeah thou hast sinned, O Israel. There have they remained—never progressed beyond their position there—and this without war overtaking them in Gibeah against the dastards.² As soon as I please, I can chastise them, and peoples shall be gathered against them in chastisement for their double sin.* This can scarcely be, as some suggest, the two calves at Bethel and Dan. More probably it is still the idols and the man-made kings. Now he returns to the ambition of the people for spiritual results without a spiritual discipline.

And Ephraim is a broken-in heifer, that loveth to thresh.³ But I have come on her fair neck. I will yoke Ephraim; Judah must plough; Jacob must harrow for himself. It is all very well for the unmuzzled beast⁴ to love the threshing, but harder and unrewarded labours of ploughing and harrowing have to come before the floor be heaped with sheaves. Israel must not expect religious festival without religious discipline. *Sow for yourselves righteousness; then shall ye reap the*

¹ Rosenmüller: *more than in*. These days are evidently not the beginning of the kingship under Saul (so Wellhausen), for with that Hosea has no quarrel, but either the idolatry of Micah (Judg xvii. 3 ff.), or more probably the crime of Benjamin (Judg. xix. 22).

² Obscure; text corrupt, and in next verse uncertain.

³ For the sense of the verse both participles are surely needed. Wellhausen thinks two redundant.

⁴ Deut. xxv. 4; 1 Cor. ix. 9; 1 Tim. v. 18.

fruit of God's leal love.¹ Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek Jehovah, till He come and shower salvation² upon you.³ Ye have ploughed wickedness; disaster have ye reaped: ye have eaten the fruit of falsehood; for thou didst trust in thy chariots,⁴ in the multitude of thy warriors. For the tumult of war shall arise among thy tribes,⁵ and all thy fenced cities shall be ruined, as Salman beat to ruin Beth-Arbel⁶ in the day of war: the mother shall be broken on the children—presumably the land shall fall with the falling of her cities. Thus shall I do to you, O house of Israel,⁷ because of the evil of your evil: soon shall the king of Israel be undone—undone.

The political decay of Israel, then, so deeply figured in all these chapters, must end in utter collapse. Let us sum up the gradual features of this decay: the substance of the people scattered abroad; the national spirit dissipated; the national prestige humbled; the kings mere puppets; the prophets corrupted; the national vigour sapped by impurity; the idolatry conscious of its impotence.

¹ LXX. : *fruit of life.*

² פֵּרִי surely in the sense in which we find it in Isa. xl. ff. LXX. : *the fruits of righteousness shall be yours.*

³ We shall return to this passage in dealing with Repentance; see p. 345.

⁴ So LXX. Wellhausen suspects authenticity of the whole clause.

⁵ Wellhausen proposes to read בַּעֲרִיךָ for בַּעֲמִיךָ, but there is no need. ⁶ See above, p. 216, n. 5. ⁷ So LXX.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FATHERHOOD AND HUMANITY OF GOD

HOSEA xi.

FROM the thick jungle of Hosea's travail, the eleventh chapter breaks like a high and open mound. The prophet enjoys the first of his two clear visions—that of the Past.¹ Judgment continues to descend. Israel's Sun is near his setting, but before he sinks—

“A lingering light he fondly throws
On the dear hills, whence first he rose.”

Across these confused and vicious years, through which he has painfully made his way, Hosea sees the tenderness and the romance of the early history of his people. And although he must strike the old despairing note—that, by the insincerity of the present generation, all the ancient guidance of their God must end in this!—yet for some moments the blessed memory shines by itself, and God's mercy appears to triumph over Israel's ingratitude. Surely their sun will not set; Love must prevail. To which assurance a later voice from the Exile has added, in verses 10 and 11, a confirmation suitable to its own circumstances.

*When Israel was a child, then I loved him,
And from Egypt I called him to be My son.*

¹ See above, p. 253.

The early history of Israel was a romance. Think of it historically. Before the Most High there spread an array of kingdoms and peoples. At their head were three strong princes—sons indeed of God, if all the heritage of the past, the power of the present and the promise of the future be tokens. Egypt, wrapt in the rich and jewelled web of centuries, basked by Nile and Pyramid, all the wonder of the world's art in his dreamy eyes. Opposite him Assyria, with barer but more massive limbs, stood erect upon his highlands, grasping in his sword the promise of the world's power. Between the two, and using both of them, yet with his eyes westward on an empire of which neither dreamed, the Phœnician on his sea-coast built his storehouses and sped his navies, the promise of the world's wealth. It must ever remain the supreme romance of history, that the true son of God, bearer of His love and righteousness to all mankind, should be found, not only outside this powerful trinity, but in the puny and despised captive of one of them—in a people that was not a state, that had not a country, that was without a history, and, if appearances be true, was as yet devoid of even the rudiments of civilisation—a child people and a slave.

That was the Romance, and Hosea gives us the Grace which made it. *When Israel was a child, then I loved him.* The verb is a distinct impulse: *I began, I learned, to love him.* God's eyes, that passed unheeding the adult princes of the world, fell upon this little slave boy, and He loved him and gave him a career: *from Egypt I called him to be My son.*

Now, historically, it was the persuasion of this which made Israel. All their distinctiveness and character, their progress from a level with other nomadic tribes

to the rank of the greatest religious teachers of humanity, started from the memory of these two facts—that God loved them, and that God called them. This was an unflinching conscience—the obligation that they were not their own, the irresistible motive to repentance even in their utmost backsliding, the unquenchable hope of a destiny in their direst days of defeat and scattering.

Some, of course, may cavil at the narrow, national scale on which such a belief was held, but let them remember that it was held in trust for all mankind. To snarl that Israel felt this sonship to God only for themselves, is to forget that it is they who have persuaded humanity that this is the only kind of sonship worth claiming. Almost every other nation of antiquity imagined a filial relation to the deity, but it was either through some fabulous physical descent, and then often confined only to kings and heroes, or by some mystical mingling of the Divine with the human, which was just as gross and sensuous. Israel alone defined the connection as a historical and a moral one. *The sons of God are begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*¹ Sonship to God is something not physical, but moral and historical, into which men are carried by a supreme awakening to the Divine love and authority. Israel, it is true, felt this only in a general way for the nation as a whole;² but their conception of it embraced just those moral contents which form the glory of Christ's doctrine of the Divine sonship of the individual. The belief that God is our Father does not come to us with our carnal birth—except in possibility: the persuasion of it is not

¹ St. John's Gospel, i. 12, 13.

² Or occasionally for the king as the nation's representative.

conferred by our baptism except in so far as that is Christ's own seal to the fact that God Almighty loves us and has marked us for His own. To us sonship is a becoming, not a being—the awakening of our adult minds into the surprise of a Father's undeserved mercy, into the constraint of His authority and the assurance of the destiny He has laid up for us. It is conferred by love, and confirmed by duty. Neither has power brought it, nor wisdom, nor wealth, but it has come solely with the wonder of the knowledge that God loves us, and has always loved us, as well as in the sense, immediately following, of a true vocation to serve Him. Sonship which is less than this is no sonship at all. But so much as this is possible to every man through Jesus Christ. His constant message is that the Father loves every one of us, and that if we *know*¹ that love, we are God's sons indeed. To them who feel it, adoption into the number and privileges of the sons of God comes with the amazement and the romance which glorified God's choice of the child-slave Israel. *Behold, they cry, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.*²

But we cannot be loved by God and left where we are. Beyond the grace there lies the long discipline and destiny. We are called from servitude to freedom, from the world to God—each of us to run a course, and do a work, which can be done by no one else. That Israel did not perceive this was God's sore sorrow with them.

*The more I*³ *called to them, the farther they went from Me.*⁴ *They to the Ba'alim kept sacrificing, and to images*

¹ See below, pp. 321-3. ² 1 John iii. ³ So rightly the LXX.

LXX., rightly separating $\text{לֹא־יָדַעְתִּי אֱלֹהִים}$ into לֹא־יָדַעְתִּי and אֱלֹהִים , which latter is the nominative to the next clause.

offering incense. But God persevered with grace, and the story is at first continued in the figure of Fatherhood with which it commenced ; then it changes to the metaphor of a humane man's goodness to his beasts. *Yet I taught Ephraim to walk, holding them on Mine arms,¹ but they knew not that I healed them*—presumably when they fell and hurt themselves. *With the cords of a man I would draw them, with bands of love ; and I was to them as those who lift up the yoke on their jaws, and gently would I give them to eat.²* It is the picture of a team of bullocks, in charge of a kind driver. Israel are no longer the wanton young cattle of the previous chapter, which need the yoke firmly fastened on their neck,³ but a team of toiling oxen mounting some steep road. There is no use now for the rough ropes, by which frisky animals are kept to their work ; but the driver, coming to his beasts' heads, by the gentle touch of his hand at their mouths and by words of sympathy *draws* them after him. *I drew them with cords of a man, and with bands of love.* Yet there is the yoke, and it would seem that certain forms of this, when beasts were working upwards, as we should say *against the collar*, pressed and rubbed upon them, so that the humane driver, when he came to their heads, eased the yoke with his hands. *I was as they that take the yoke off their jaws ;⁴* and then, when they got to the top of the hill, he would rest and feed them. That is the picture, and however uncertain we may feel as to some of its details, it is obviously a passage

¹ So again rightly the LXX.

² The reading is uncertain. The \aleph of the following verse (6) must be read as the Greek reads it, as \aleph , and taken with ver. 5.

³ x. 11.

⁴ Or lifted forward from the neck to the jaws.

—Ewald says “the earliest of all passages”—in which “human means precisely the same as love.” It ought to be taken along with that other passage in the great Prophecy of the Exile, where God is described as He that led them through *the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble: as a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord gave him rest.*¹

Thus then the figure of the fatherliness of God changes into that of His gentleness or humanity. Do not let us think that there is here either any descent of the poetry or want of connection between the two figures. The change is true, not only to Israel’s, but to our own experience. Men are all either the eager children of happy, irresponsible days, or the bounden, plodding draught-cattle of life’s serious burdens and charges. Hosea’s double figure reflects human life in its whole range. Which of us has not known this fatherliness of the Most High, exercised upon us, as upon Israel, throughout our years of carelessness and disregard? It was God Himself who taught and trained us then;—

“When through the slippery paths of youth
 With heedless steps I ran,
 Thine arm unseen conveyed me safe,
 And led me up to man.”

Those speedy recoveries from the blunders of early wilfulness, those redemptions from the sins of youth—happy were we if we knew that it was *He who healed us*. But there comes a time when men pass from leading-strings to harness—when we feel faith less and duty more—when our work touches us more closely than our God. Death must be a strange transformer of the

¹ Isa. lxiii. 13, 14.

spirit, yet surely not more strange than life, which out of the eager buoyant child makes in time the slow automaton of duty. It is such a stage which the fourth of these verses suits, when we look up, not so much for the fatherliness as for the gentleness and humanity of our God. A man has a mystic power of a very wonderful kind upon the animals over whom he is placed. On any of these wintry roads of ours we may see it, when a kind carter gets down at a hill, and, throwing the reins on his beast's back, will come to its head and touch it with his bare hands, and speak to it as if it were his fellow ; till the deep eyes fill with light, and out of these things, so much weaker than itself, a touch, a glance, a word, there will come to it new strength to pull the stranded waggon onward. The man is as a god to the beast, coming down to help it, and it almost makes the beast human that he does so. Not otherwise does Hosea feel the help which God gives His own on the weary hills of life. We need not discipline, for our work is discipline enough, and the cares we carry of themselves keep us straight and steady. But we need sympathy and gentleness—this very humanity which the prophet attributes to our God. God comes and takes us by the head ; through the mystic power which is above us, but which makes us like itself, we are lifted to our task. Let no one judge this incredible. The incredible would be that our God should prove any less to us than the merciful man is to his beast. But we are saved from argument by experience. When we remember how, as life has become steep and our strength exhausted, there has visited us a thought which has sharpened to a word, a word which has warmed to a touch, and we have drawn ourselves together and leapt up new men, can we feel

that God was any less in these things, than in the voice of conscience or the message of forgiveness, or the restraints of His discipline? Nay, though the reins be no longer felt, God is at our head, that we should not stumble nor stand still.

Upon this gracious passage there follows one of those swift revulsions of feeling, which we have learned almost to expect in Hosea. His insight again overtakes his love. The people will not respond to the goodness of their God; it is impossible to work upon minds so fickle and insincere. Discipline is what they need. *He shall return to the land of Egypt, or Asshur shall be his king* (it is still an alternative), *for they have refused to return to Me. . . .*¹ 'Tis but one more instance of the age-long apostasy of the people. *My people have a bias*² *to turn from Me; and though they (the prophets) call them upwards, none of them can lift them.*³

Yet God is God, and though prophecy fail He will attempt His Love once more. There follows the greatest passage in Hosea—deepest if not highest of his book—the breaking forth of that exhaustless mercy of the Most High which no sin of man can bar back nor wear out.

*How am I to give thee up, O Ephraim?
How am I to let thee go, O Israel?
How am I to give thee up?
Am I to make an Admah of thee—a Şeboim?
My heart is turned upon Me,*

¹ Ver. 6 has an obviously corrupt text, and, weakening as it does the climax of ver. 5, may be an insertion.

² *Are hung* or *swung towards turning away from Me.*

³ This verse is also uncertain.

*My compassions begin to boil :
I will not perform the fierceness of Mine anger,
I will not turn to destroy Ephraim ;
For God am I and not man,
The Holy One in the midst of thee, yet I come
not to consume !¹*

Such a love has been the secret of Hosea's persistence through so many years with so faithless a people, and now, when he has failed, it takes voice to itself and in its irresistible fulness makes this last appeal. Once more before the end let Israel hear God in the utterness of His Love!

The verses are a climax, and obviously to be succeeded by a pause. On the brink of his doom, will Israel turn to such a God, at such a call? The next verse, though dependent for its promise on this same exhaustless Love, is from an entirely different circumstance, and cannot have been put by Hosea here.²

¹ For בעיר, which makes nonsense, read לבעור, *to consume*, or with Wellhausen amend further לא אוכה לבער, *I am not willing to consume*.

² *They will follow Jehovah ; like a lion He will roar, and they shall hurry trembling from the west. Like birds shall they hurry trembling from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria, and I will bring them to their homes—'tis the oracle of Jehovah.* Not only does this verse contain expressions which are unusual to Hosea, and a very strange metaphor, but it is not connected either historically or logically with the previous verse. The latter deals with the people before God has scattered them—offers them one more chance before exile comes on them. But in this verse they are already scattered, and just about to be brought back. It is such a promise as both in language and metaphor was common among the prophets of the Exile. In the LXX. the verse is taken from chap. xi. and put with chap. xii.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FINAL ARGUMENT

HOSEA xii.—xiv. 1.

THE impassioned call with which last chapter closed was by no means an assurance of salvation: *How am I to give thee up, Ephraim? how am I to let thee go, Israel?* On the contrary, it was the anguish of Love, when it hovers over its own on the brink of the destruction to which their wilfulness has led them, and before relinquishing them would seek, if possible, some last way to redeem. Surely that fatal morrow and the people's mad leap into it are not inevitable! At least, before they take the leap, let the prophet go back once more upon the moral situation of to-day, go back once more upon the past of the people, and see if he can find anything else to explain that bias to apostasy¹ which has brought them to this fatal brink—anything else which may move them to repentance even there. So in chaps. xii. and xiii. Hosea turns upon the now familiar trail of his argument, full of the Divine jealousy, determined to give the people one other chance to turn; but if they will not, he at least will justify God's relinquishment of them. The chapters throw even a brighter light upon the temper and habits of that

¹ xi. 7

generation. They again explore Israel's ancient history for causes of the present decline; and, in especial, they cite the spiritual experience of the Father of the nation, as if to show that what of repentance was possible for him is possible for his posterity also. But once more all hope is seen to be vain; and Hosea's last travail with his obstinate people closes in a doom even more awful than its predecessors.

The division into chapters is probably correct; but while chap. xiii. is well-ordered and clear, the arrangement, and in parts the meaning, of chap. xii. are very obscure.

I. THE PEOPLE AND THEIR FATHER JACOB.

HOSEA xii.

In no part even of the difficult Book of Hosea does the sacred text bristle with more problems. It may well be doubted whether the verses lie in their proper order, or, if they do, whether we have them entire as they came from the prophet, for the connection is not always perceptible.¹ We cannot believe, however, that the chapter is a bundle of isolated oracles, for the analogy between Jacob and his living posterity runs through the whole of it,² and the refrain that God must requite upon the nation their deeds is found both near the beginning and at the end of the chapter.³ One is tempted to take the two fragments about the Patriarch (vv. 4, 5, and 13 f.) by themselves, and the more so that ver. 8 would follow so suitably on either ver. 2 or

¹ This is especially true of vv. 11 and 12.

² Even in the most detachable portion, vv. 8-10, where the וְנִסְתָּ of ver. 9 seems to refer to the וְנִסְתָּ of ver. 4.

³ Viz. in vv. 3 and 15.

ver. 3. But this clue is not sufficient; and till one more evident is discovered, it is perhaps best to keep to the extant arrangement.¹

As before, the argument starts from the falseness of Israel, which is illustrated in the faithlessness of their foreign relations. *Ephraim hath compassed Me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit, and Judah . . .² Ephraim herds the wind,³ and hunts the sirocco. All day long they heap up falsehood and fraud:⁴ they strike a bargain with Assyria, and carry oil to Egypt, as Isaiah also complained.⁵*

Jehovah hath a quarrel with Israel,⁶ and is about to visit upon Jacob his ways; according to his deeds will

¹ Beer indeed, at the close of a very ingenious analysis of the chapter (*Z.A.T.W.*, 1893, pp. 281 ff.), claims to have proved that it contains "eine wohlgegliederte Rede des Propheten" (p. 292). But he reaches this conclusion only by several forced and precarious arguments. Especially unsound do his pleas appear that in *לעשק* 8b is a play upon the root-meaning of *כנען*, "lowly"; that *כנען*, in analogy to the *בבטן* of ver. 4, is the crude original, the raw material, of the Ephraim of ver. 9; and that *כימי מועד* is "the determined time" of the coming judgment on Israel.

² Something is written about Judah (remember what was said above about Hosea's treble parallels), but the text is too obscure for translation. The theory that it has been altered by a later Judæan writer in favour of his own people is probably correct: the Authorised Version translates in favour of Judah; so too Guthe in Kautzsch's *Bibel*. But an adverse statement is required by the parallel clauses, and the Hebrew text allows this: *Judah is still wayward with God, and with the Holy One who is faithful*. So virtually Ewald, Hitzig, Wünsche, Nowack and Cheyne. But Cornill and Wellhausen read the second half of the clause as *עם־יקרשים נצמר*, *profanes himself with Qedeshim* (*Z.A.T.W.*, 1887, pp. 286 ff.).

³ Why should not Hosea, the master of many forced phrases, have also uttered this one? This in answer to Wellhausen.

⁴ So LXX., reading *שוא* for *שד*.

⁵ Isa. xxx. 6.

⁶ Heb. *Judah*, but surely Israel is required by the next verse, which is a play upon the two names Israel and Jacob.

*He requite him. In the womb he supplanted his brother, and in his man's strength he wrestled with God.¹ Yea, he wrestled with the Angel and prevailed; he wept and besought of Him mercy. At Bethel he met with Him, and there He spake with him² (or with us—that is, in the person of our father). . . .³ So thou by thy God—by His help,⁴ for no other way is possible except, like thy father, through wrestling with Him—*shouldst return: keep leal love and justice, and wait on thy God without ceasing.*⁵ To this passage we shall return in dealing with Hosea's doctrine of Repentance.*

In characteristic fashion the discourse now swerves from the ideal to the real state of the people.

Canaan! So the prophet nicknames his mercenary generation.⁶ *With false balances in his hand, he loves to defraud. For Ephraim said, Ah but I have grown rich, I have won myself wealth.⁷ None of my gains can touch me with guilt which is sin.⁸ But I, Jehovah thy God*

¹ *Supplanted* is 'aqab, the presumable root of Ja'aqab (Jacob). *Wrestled with God* is Sarah eth Elohim, the presumable origin of Yisra'el (Israel).

² Heb. *us*, LXX. *them*.

³ Ver. 6—*And Jehovah God of Hosts, Jehovah is His memorial, s.e. name*—is probably an insertion for the reasons mentioned above, pp. 204 f.

⁴ This, the most natural rendering of the Hebrew phrase, has been curiously omitted by Beer, who says that יהללני can only mean *to thy God*. Hitzig: "durch deinen Gott."

⁵ Some take these words as addressed by Jehovah at Bethel to the Patriarch.

⁶ So nearly all interpreters. Hitzig aptly quotes Polybius, *De Virtute*, L. ix.: διὰ τὴν ἐμφυτον Φοίνιξι πλεονεξίαν, κ.τ.λ. One might also refer to the Romans' idea of the "Punica fides."

⁷ Or, full man's strength: cf. ver. 4.

⁸ But the LXX. reads: *All his gains shall not be found of him because of the iniquity which he has sinned*; and Wellhausen emends this to: *All his gain sufficeth not for the guilt which it has incurred*.

from the land of Egypt—I could make thee dwell in tents again, as in the days of the Assembly in Horeb—I could destroy all this commercial civilisation of thine, and reduce thee to thine ancient level of nomadic life—and I spake to the prophets: it was I who multiplied vision, and by the hand of the prophets gave parables. If Gilead be for idolatry, then shall it become vanity! If in Gilgal—Stone-Circle—they sacrifice bullocks,¹ stone-heaps shall their altars become among the furrows of the field. One does not see the connection of these verses with the preceding. But now the discourse oscillates once more to the national father, and the parallel between his own and his people's experience.

And Jacob fled to the land² of Aram, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he herded sheep. And by a prophet Jehovah brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he was shepherded. And Ephraim hath given bitter provocation; but his blood-guiltiness shall be upon him, and his Lord shall return it to him.

I cannot trace the argument here.

2 THE LAST JUDGMENT.

HOSEA xiii.—xiv. 1.

The crisis draws on. On the one hand Israel's sin, accumulating, bulks ripe for judgment. On the other the times grow more fatal, or the prophet more than ever feels them so. He will gather once again the old truths on the old lines—the great past when Jehovah was God alone, the descent to the idols and the mushroom monarchs of to-day, the people, who once had been strong, sapped by luxury, forgetful,

¹ Others to demons.

² Field, but here in sense of territory. See *Hist. Geog.*, pp. 79 f.

stupid, not to be roused. The discourse has every mark of being Hosea's latest. There is clearness and definiteness beyond anything since chap. iv. There are ease and lightness of treatment, a playful sarcasm, as if the themes were now familiar both to the prophet and his audience. But, chiefly, there is the passion—so suitable to last words—of how different it all might have been, if to this crisis Israel had come with store of strength instead of guilt. How these years, with their opening into the great history of the world, might have meant a birth for the nation, which instead was lying upon them like a miscarried child in the mouth of the womb! It was a fatality God Himself could not help in. Only death and hell remained. Let them, then, have their way! Samaria must expiate her guilt in the worst horrors of war.

Instead of with one definite historical event, this last effort of Hosea opens more naturally with a summary of all Ephraim's previous history. The tribe had been the first in Israel till they took to idols.

Whenever Ephraim spake there was trembling.¹ Prince² was he in Israel; but he fell into guilt through the Ba'al, and so—died. Even now they continue to sin and make them a smelting of their silver, idols after their own model,³ smith's work all of it. To them—to such things—they speak! Sacrificing men kiss calves! In such unreason have they sunk. They cannot endure. Therefore shall they be like the morning cloud and like the dew that early vanisheth, like chaff which whirleth up from the floor and like smoke from the window. And

¹ Uncertain.

² נשיא for נשיא.

³ Read with Ewald כתבנתם. LXX. read בתמונת.

I was thy God¹ from the land of Egypt; and god besides Me thou knowest not, nor saviour has there been any but Myself. I shepherded² thee in the wilderness, in the land of droughts—long before they came among the gods of fertile Canaan. But once they came hither, the more pasture they had, the more they ate themselves full, and the more they ate themselves full, the more was their heart uplifted, so they forgot Me. So that I must be³ to them like a lion, like a leopard on the way I must leap.⁴ I will fall on them like a bear robbed of its young, and will tear the caul of their hearts, and will devour them like a lion—wild beasts shall rend them.⁵

When *He hath destroyed thee, O Israel—who then may help thee?*⁶ *Where is thy king now? that he may save thee, or all thy princes? that they may rule thee;*⁷ *those of whom thou hast said, Give me a king and princes. Aye, I give thee a king in Mine anger, and I take him away in My wrath!* Fit summary of the short and bloody reigns of these last years.

Gathered is Ephraim's guilt, stored up is his sin. The nation is pregnant—but with guilt! *Birth pangs seize him, but—the figure changes, with Hosea's own swiftness, from mother to child—he is an impracticable son;*⁸

¹ Here the LXX. makes the insertion noted on pp. 203, 226.

² So LXX., רעיתך.

³ Read אָהִי.

⁴ אִשׁוּר, usually taken as first fut. of שׁוּר, to lurk. But there is a root of common use in Arabic, sar, to spring up suddenly, of wine into the head or of a lion on its prey; sawâr, "the springer," is one of the Arabic names for lion.

⁵ We shall treat this passage later in connection with Hosea's doctrine of the knowledge of God: see pp. 330 f.

⁶ After the LXX.

⁷ Read with Houtsma וְכֹל שְׂרִיךְ וַיִּשְׁפֹּטוּךְ.

⁸ Literally a *son not wise*, perhaps a name given to children whose birth was difficult.

for this is no time to stand in the mouth of the womb. The years that might have been the nation's birth are by their own folly to prove their death. Israel lies in the way of its own redemption—how truly this has been forced home upon them in one chapter after another! Shall God then step in and work a deliverance on the brink of death? *From the hand of Sheol shall I deliver them? from death shall I redeem them?* Nay, let death and Sheol have their way. *Where are thy plagues, O death? where thy destruction, Sheol?* Here with them. *Compassion is hid from Mine eyes.*

This great verse has been very variously rendered. Some have taken it as a promise: *I will deliver . . . I will redeem . . .* So the Septuagint translated, and St. Paul borrowed, not the whole Greek verse, but its spirit and one or two of its terms, for his triumphant challenge to death in the power of the Resurrection of Christ.¹ As it stands in Hosea, however, the verse must be a threat. The last clause unambiguously abjures mercy, and the statement that His people will not be saved, for God cannot save them, is one in thorough harmony with all Hosea's teaching.²

An appendix follows with the illustration of the

¹ The LXX. reads: Που ἡ δίκη σου, θάνατε; που τὸ κέντρον σου, ᾄδη; But Paul says: Που σου, θάνατε, τὸ νίκος; που σου, θάνατε, τὸ κέντρον; 1 Cor. xv. 55 (Westcott and Hort's Ed.).

² The following is a list of the interpretations of verse 14.

A. Taken as a threat. 1. "It is I who redeemed you from the grip of the grave, and who delivered you from death—but now I will call up the words (*sic*) of death against you; for repentance is hid from My eyes." So Raschi. 2. "I would have redeemed them from the grip of Sheol, etc., if they had been wise, but being foolish I will bring on them the plagues of death." So Kimchi, Eichhorn, Simson, etc. 3. "Should I" or "shall I deliver them from the hand of Sheol,

exact form which doom shall take. As so frequently with Hosea, it opens with a play upon the people's name, which at the same time faintly echoes the opening of the chapter.

Although he among his brethren¹ is the fruit-bearer—yaphri, he Ephraim—there shall come an east wind, a wind of Jehovah rising from the wilderness, so that his fountain dry up and his spring be parched. He—himself, not the Assyrian, but Menahem, who had to send gold to the Assyrian—shall strip the treasury of all its precious jewels. Samaria must bear her guilt: for she hath rebelled against her God. To this simple issue has the impenitence of the people finally reduced the many possibilities of those momentous years; and their last prophet leaves them looking forward to the crash which came some dozen years later in the invasion and captivity of the land. They shall fall by the sword; their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child ripped up. Horrible details, but at that period certain to follow every defeat in war.

redeem them from death?" etc., as in the text above. So Wünsche, Wellhausen, Guthe in Kautzsch's *Bibel*, etc.

B. Taken as a promise. "From the hand of Sheol I will deliver them, from death redeem them," etc. So Umbreit, Ewald, Hitzig and Authorised and Revised English Versions. In this case repentance in the last clause must be taken as *resentment* (Ewald). But, as Ewald sees, the whole verse must then be put in a parenthesis, as an ejaculation of promise in the midst of a context that only threatens. Some without change of word render: "I will be thy plagues, O death? I will be thy sting, O hell." So the Authorised English Version.

¹ Text doubtful.

CHAPTER XX

"I WILL BE AS THE DEW"

HOSEA xiv. 2-10.

LIKE the Book of Amos, the Book of Hosea, after proclaiming the people's inevitable doom, turns to a blessed prospect of their restoration to favour with God. It will be remembered that we decided against the authenticity of such an epilogue in the Book of Amos ; and it may now be asked, how can we come to any other conclusion with regard to the similar peroration in the Book of Hosea ? For the following reasons.

We decided against the genuineness of the closing verses of Amos, because their sanguine temper is opposed to the temper of the whole of the rest of the book, and because they neither propose any ethical conditions for the attainment of the blessed future, nor in their picture of the latter do they emphasise one single trace of the justice, or the purity, or the social kindness, on which Amos has so exclusively insisted as the ideal relations of Israel to Jehovah. It seemed impossible to us that Amos could imagine the perfect restoration of his people in the terms only of requickened nature, and say nothing about righteousness, truth and mercy towards the poor. The prospect which now closes his book is psychologically alien to him, and,

being painted in the terms of later prophecy, may be judged to have been added by some prophet of the Exile, speaking from the standpoint, and with the legitimate desires, of his own day.

But the case is very different for this epilogue in Hosea. In the first place, Hosea has not only continually preached repentance, and been, from his whole affectionate temper of mind, unable to believe repentance impossible; but he has actually predicted the restoration of his people upon certain well-defined and ethical conditions. In chap. ii. he has drawn for us in detail the whole prospect of God's successful treatment of his erring spouse. Israel should be weaned from their sensuousness and its accompanying trust in idols by a severe discipline, which the prophet describes in terms of their ancient wanderings in the wilderness. They should be reduced, as at the beginning of their history, to moral converse with their God; and abjuring the Ba'alim (later chapters imply also their foreign allies and foolish kings and princes) should return to Jehovah, when He, having proved that these could not give them the fruits of the land they sought after, should Himself quicken the whole course of nature to bless them with the fertility of the soil and the friendliness even of the wild beasts.

Now in the epilogue and its prospect of Israel's repentance we find no feature, physical or moral, which has not already been furnished by these previous promises of the book. All their ethical conditions are provided; nothing but what they have conceived of blessing is again conceived. Israel is to abjure senseless sacrifice and come to Jehovah with rational and contrite confession.¹ She is to abjure her foreign

¹ Cf. vi. 6, etc.

alliances.¹ She is to trust in the fatherly love of her God.² He is to heal her,³ and His anger is to turn away.⁴ He is to restore nature, just as described in chap. ii., and the scenery of the restoration is borrowed from Hosea's own Galilee. There is, in short, no phrase or allusion of which we can say that it is alien to the prophet's style or environment, while the very keynotes of his book—*return, backsliding, idols the work of our hands, such pity as a father hath*, and perhaps even the *answer or converse* of verse 9—are all struck once more.

The epilogue then is absolutely different from the epilogue to the Book of Amos, nor can the present expositor conceive of the possibility of a stronger case for the genuineness of any passage of Scripture. The sole difficulty seems to be the place in which we find it—a place where its contradiction to the immediately preceding sentence of doom is brought out into relief. We need not suppose, however, that it was uttered by Hosea in immediate proximity to the latter, nor even that it formed his last word to Israel. But granting only (as the above evidence obliges us to do) that it is the prophet's own, this fourteenth chapter may have been a discourse addressed by him at one of those many points when, as we know, he had some hope of the people's return. Personally, I should think it extremely likely that Hosea's ministry closed with that final, hopeless proclamation in chap. xiii.: no other conclusion was possible so near the fall of Samaria, and the absolute destruction of the Northern Kingdom. But Hosea had already in chap. ii. painted the very

¹ Cf. xii. 2, etc.

² Cf. i. 7; ii. 22, 25.

³ Cf. xi. 4.

⁴ Cf. xi. 8, 9.

opposite issue as a possible ideal for his people; and during some break in those years when their insincerity was less obtrusive, and the final doom still uncertain, the prophet's heart swung to its natural pole in the exhaustless and steadfast love of God, and he uttered his unmingled gospel. That either himself or the unknown editor of his prophecies should have placed it at the very end of his book is not less than what we might have expected. For if the book were to have validity beyond the circumstances of its origin, beyond the judgment which was so near and so inevitable, was it not right to let something else than the proclamation of this latter be its last word to men? was it not right to put as the conclusion of the whole matter the ideal eternally valid for Israel—the gospel which is ever God's last word to His people?¹

At some point or other, then, in the course of his ministry, there was granted to Hosea an open vision like to the vision which he has recounted in the second chapter. He called on the people to repent. For

¹ Since preparing the above for the press there has come into my hands Professor Cheyne's "Introduction" to the new edition of Robertson Smith's *The Prophets of Israel*, in which (p. xix.) he reaches with regard to Hosea xiv. 2-10 conclusions entirely opposite to those reached above. Professor Cheyne denies the passage to Hosea on the grounds that it is akin in language and imagery and ideas to writings of the age which begins with Jeremiah, and which among other works includes the Song of Songs. But, as has been shown above, the "language, imagery and ideas" are all akin to what Professor Cheyne admits to be genuine prophecies of Hosea; and the likeness to them of, e.g., Jer. xxxi. 10-20 may be explained on the same ground as so much else in Jeremiah, by the influence of Hosea. The allusion in ver. 3 suits Hosea's own day more than Jeremiah's. Nor can I understand what Professor Cheyne means by this: "The spirituality of the tone of vers. 1-3 is indeed surprising (contrast the picture in Hos. v. 6)." Spirituality surprising in the

once, and in the power of that Love to which he had already said all things are possible, it seemed to him as if repentance came. The tangle and intrigue of his generation fell away; fell away the reeking sacrifices and the vain show of worship. The people turned from their idols and puppet-kings, from Assyria and from Egypt, and with contrite hearts came to God Himself, who, healing and loving, opened to them wide the gates of the future. It is not strange that down this spiritual vista the prophet should see the same scenery as daily filled his bodily vision. Throughout Galilee Lebanon¹ dominates the landscape. You cannot lift your eyes from any spot of Northern Israel without resting them upon the vast mountain. From the unhealthy jungles of the Upper Jordan, the pilgrim lifts his heart to the cool hill air above, to the ever-green cedars and firs, to the streams and waterfalls that drop like silver chains off the great breastplate of snow. From Esdraelon and every plain the peasants look to Lebanon to store the clouds and scatter the rain; it is not from heaven but from Hermon that they expect the dew,

book that contains "I will have love and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings"! The verse, v. 6, he would contrast with xiv. 1-3 is actually one in which Hosea says that when they go "with flocks and herds" Israel shall not find God! He says that "to understand Hosea aright we must omit it" (*i.e.* the whole epilogue). But after the argument I have given above it will be plain that if we "understand Hosea aright" we have every reason *not* "to omit it." His last contention, that "to have added anything to the stern warning in xiii. 16 would have robbed it of half its force," is fully met by the considerations stated above on p. 310.

¹ By Lebanon in the fourteenth chapter and almost always in the Old Testament we must understand not the western range now called Lebanon, for that makes no impression on the Holy Land, its bulk lying too far to the north, but Hermon, the southmost and highest summits of Anti-Lebanon. See *Hist. Geog.*, pp. 417 f.

their only hope in the long drought of summer. Across Galilee and in Northern Ephraim, across Bashan and in Northern Gilead, across Hauran and on the borders of the desert, the mountain casts its spell of power, its lavish promise of life.¹ Lebanon is everywhere the summit of the land, and there are points from which it is as dominant as heaven.

No wonder then that our northern prophet painted the blessed future in the poetry of the Mountain—its air, its dew and its trees. Other seers were to behold, in the same latter days, the mountain of the Lord above the tops of the mountains; the ordered city, her steadfast walls salvation, and her open gates praise; the wealth of the Gentiles flowing into her, profusion of flocks for sacrifice, profusion of pilgrims; the great Temple and its solemn services; and *the glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, fir-tree and pine and box-tree together, to beautify the place of My Sanctuary.*² But, with his home in the north, and weary of sacrifice and ritual, weary of everything artificial whether it were idols or puppet-kings, Hosea turns to the *glory of Lebanon* as it lies, untouched by human tool or art, fresh and full of peace from God's own hand. Like that other seer of Galilee, Hosea in his vision of the future *saw no temple therein.*³ His sacraments are the open air, the mountain breeze, the dew, the vine, the lilies, the pines; and what God asks of men are not rites nor sacrifices, but life and health, fragrance and fruitfulness, beneath the shadow and the Dew of His Presence.

¹ Full sixty miles off, in the Jebel Druze, the ancient Greek amphitheatres were so arranged that Hermon might fill the horizon of the spectators.

² Isa. lx. 13.

³ Revelation of St. John xxi. 22.

Return, O Israel, to Jehovah thy God, for thou hast stumbled by thine iniquity. Take with you words¹ and return unto Jehovah. Say unto Him, Remove iniquity altogether, and take good, so will we render the calves² of our lips; confessions, vows, these are the sacrificial offerings God delights in. Which vows are now registered:—

*Asshur shall not save us;
We will not ride upon horses (from Egypt);
And we will say no more, "O our God," to the
work of our hands:
For in Thee the fatherless findeth a father's pity.*

Alien help, whether in the protection of Assyria or the cavalry which Pharaoh sends in return for Israel's homage; alien gods, whose idols we have ourselves made,—we abjure them all, for we remember how Thou didst promise to show a father's love to the people whom Thou didst name, for their mother's sins, Lo-Ruhamah, the Unfathered. Then God replies:—

*I will heal their backsliding,
I will love them freely:
For Mine anger is turned away from them.
I will be as the dew unto Israel:
He shall blossom as the lily,
And strike his roots deep as Lebanon;
His branches shall spread,
And his beauty shall be as the olive-tree,
And his smell as Lebanon—*

smell of clear mountain air with the scent of the

¹ On all this exhortation see below, p. 343.

² LXX. *fruit*, פֵּרִי for פְּרִים; the whole verse is obscure.

pinus upon it. The figure in the end of ver. 6 seems forced to some critics, who have proposed various emendations, such as "like the fast-rooted trees of Lebanon,"¹ but any one who has seen how the mountain himself rises from great roots, cast out across the land like those of some giant oak, will not feel it necessary to mitigate the metaphor.

The prophet now speaks:—

*They shall return and dwell in His shadow,
They shall live well-watered as a garden,
Till they flourish like the vine,
And be fragrant like the wine of Lebanon.*²

God speaks:—

¹ So Guthe; some other plant Wellhausen, who for ךי reads וילכו .

² Ver. 8 obviously needs emendation. The Hebrew text contains at least one questionable construction, and gives no sense: "They that dwell in his shadow shall turn, and revive corn and flourish like the vine, and his fame," etc. To cultivate corn and be themselves like a vine is somewhat mixed. The LXX. reads: *ἐπιστρέψουσιν καὶ καθιόνται ὑπὸ τὴν σκέπην αὐτοῦ, ζήσονται καὶ μεθυσθήσονται σίτω· καὶ ἐξανθήσει ἀμπέλος μνημβουσιν αὐτοῦ ὡς οἶνος Λιβάνου.* It removes the grammatical difficulty from clause 1, which then reads $\text{וַיָּשׁוּבוּ וַיִּשְׁבּוּ וַיִּפְרֹחוּ}$; the supplied *vau* may easily have dropped after the final *vau* of the previous word. In the 2nd clause the LXX. takes ויהיו as an intransitive, which is better suited to the other verbs, and adds *καὶ μεθυσθήσονται, ורוי* (a form that may have easily slipped from the Hebrew text, through its likeness to the preceding ויהיו). *And they shall be well-watered.* After this it is probable that רנן should read רנן . In the 3rd clause the Hebrew text may stand. In the 4th זכר may not, as many propose, be taken for זכרם and translated *their perfume*; but the parallelism makes it now probable that we have a verb here; and if זכר in the Hiph. has the sense *to make a perfume* (cf. Isa. lxi. 3), there is no reason against the Kal being used in the intransitive sense here. In the LXX. for *μεθυσθήσονται* Q^a reads *στηριχθήσονται*.

*Ephraim, what has he¹ to do any more with idols!
I have spoken for him, and I will look after him.
I am like an ever-green fir;
From Me is thy fruit found.*

This version is not without its difficulties; but the alternative that God is addressed and Ephraim is the speaker—*Ephraim* says, *What have I to do any more with idols? I answer and look to Him: I am like a green fir-tree; from me is Thy fruit found*—has even greater difficulties,² although it avoids the unusual comparison of the Deity with a tree. The difficulties of both interpretations may be overcome by dividing the verse between God and the people:—

*Ephraim! what has he to do any more with idols:
I have spoken for him, and will look after him.*

In this case the *speaking* would be intended in the same sense as the *speaking* in chap. ii. to the heavens and earth, that they might *speak* to the *corn and wine*.³ Then Ephraim replies:—

*I am like an ever-green fir-tree;
From me is Thy fruit found.*

¹ LXX.

² This alternative, which Robertson Smith adopted, "though not without some hesitation" (*Prophets*, 413) is that which follows the Hebrew text, reading in the first clause לֵךְ, and not, like LXX., לוֹ, and avoids the unusual figure of comparing Jehovah to a tree. But it does not account for the singular emphasis laid in the second clause on the first personal pronoun, and implies that God, whose name has not for several verses been mentioned, is meant by the mere personal suffix, "I will look to Him." Wellhausen suggests changing the second clause to *I am his Anat and his Aschera*.

³ ענה, ii. 23.

But the division appears artificial, and the text does not suggest that the two *I*'s belong to different speakers. The first version therefore is the preferable.

Some one has added a summons to later generations to lay this book to heart in face of their own problems and sins. May we do so for ourselves!

Who is wise, that he understands these things?

Intelligent, that he knows them?

Yea, straight are the ways of Jehovah,

*And the righteous shall walk therein, but sinners
shall stumble upon them.*

CHAPTER XXI

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

HOSEA *passim*.

WE have now finished the translation and detailed exposition of Hosea's prophecies. We have followed his minute examination of his people's character; his criticism of his fickle generation's attempts to repent; and his presentation of true religion in contrast to their shallow optimism and sensual superstitions. We have seen an inwardness and spirituality of the highest kind—a love not only warm and mobile, but nobly jealous, and in its jealousy assisted by an extraordinary insight and expertness in character. Why Hosea should be distinguished above all prophets for inwardness and spirituality must by this time be obvious to us. From his remote watchfulness, Amos had seen the nations move across the world as the stars across heaven; had seen, within Israel, class distinct from class, and given types of all: rich and poor; priest, merchant and judge; the panic-stricken, the bully; the fraudulent and the unclean. The observatory of Amos was the world, and the nation. But Hosea's was the home; and there he had watched a human soul decay through every stage from innocence to corruption. It was a husband's study of a wife which made Hosea the most inward of all the prophets. This was *the beginning of God's word by him*.¹

¹ i. 2.

Among the subjects in the subtle treatment of which Hosea's service to religion is most original and conspicuous, there are especially three that deserve a more detailed treatment than we have been able to give them. These are the Knowledge of God, Repentance and the Sin against Love. We may devote a chapter to each of them, beginning in this with the most characteristic and fundamental truth Hosea gave to religion—the Knowledge of God.

If to the heart there be one pain more fatal than another, it is the pain of not being understood. That prevents argument: how can you reason with one who will not come to quarters with your real self? It paralyses influence: how can you do your best with one who is blind to your best? It stifles Love; for how dare she continue to speak when she is mistaken for something else? Here as elsewhere "against stupidity the gods themselves fight in vain."

This anguish Hosea had suffered. As closely as two souls may live on earth, he had lived with Gomer. Yet she had never wakened to his worth. She must have been a woman with a power of love, or such a heart had hardly wooed her. He was a man of deep tenderness and exquisite powers of expression. His tact, his delicacy, his enthusiasm are sensible in every chapter of his book. Gomer must have tasted them all before Israel did. Yet she never knew him. It was her curse that, being married, she was not awake to the meaning of marriage, and, being married to Hosea, she never appreciated the holy tenderness and heroic patience which were deemed by God not unworthy of becoming a parable of His own.

Now I think we do not go far wrong if we conclude that it was partly this long experience of a soul that loved, but had neither conscience nor ideal in her love, which made Hosea lay such frequent and pathetic emphasis upon Israel's *ignorance* of Jehovah. To have his character ignored, his purposes baffled, his gifts unappreciated, his patience mistaken—this was what drew Hosea into that wonderful sympathy with the heart of God towards Israel which comes out in such passionate words as these: *My people perish for lack of knowledge.*¹ *There is no truth, nor leal love, nor knowledge of God in the land.*² *They have not known the Lord.*³ *She did not know that I gave her corn and wine.*⁴ *They knew not that I healed them.*⁵ *For now, because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will reject thee.*⁶ *I will have leal love and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings.*⁷ Repentance consists in change of knowledge. And the climax of the new life which follows is again knowledge: *I will betroth thee to Me, and thou shalt know the Lord.*⁸ *Israel shall cry, My God, we know Thee.*⁹

To understand what Hosea meant by knowledge we must examine the singularly supple word which his language lent him to express it. The Hebrew root "Yadh'a,"¹⁰ almost exclusively rendered in the Old Testament by the English verb to know, is employed of the many processes of knowledge, for which richer languages have separate terms. It is by turns to perceive, be aware of, recognise, understand or conceive,

¹ iv. 6.² iv. 1.³ v. 4.⁴ ii. 10.⁵ xi. 3.⁶ iv. 6.⁷ vi. 6.⁸ ii. 22.⁹ viii. 2.¹⁰ יָדָע.

experience and be expert in.¹ But there is besides nearly always a practical effectiveness, and in connection with religious objects a moral consciousness.

The barest meaning is to be aware that something is present or has happened, and perhaps the root meant simply to see.² But it was the frequent duty of the prophets to mark the difference between perceiving a thing and laying it to heart. Isaiah speaks of the people *seeing*, but not so as *to know*; ³ and Deuteronomy renders the latter sense by adding *with the heart*, which to the Hebrews was the seat, not of the feeling, but of the practical intellect: ⁴ *And thou knowest with thy heart that as a man chastiseth his son, so the Lord your God chastiseth you.*⁵ Usually, however, the word *know* suffices by itself. This practical vigour naturally developed in such directions as *intimacy, conviction, experience* and *wisdom*. Job calls his familiars *my knowers*; ⁶ of a strong conviction he says, *I know that my Redeemer liveth*,⁷ and referring to wisdom, *We are of yesterday and know not*; ⁸ while Ecclesiastes says, *Whoso keepeth the commandment shall know—that is, experience, or suffer—no evil.*⁹ But the verb rises into a practical sense—to the knowledge that leads a man to regard or care for its object. Job uses the verb *know* when he would say, *I do not care for my life*; ¹⁰ and in

¹ The Latin *videre, scire, noscere, cognoscere, intelligere, sapere* and *peritus esse*.

² Cf. the Greek *οἶδα* from *εἶδεν*.

³ vi. 9.

⁴ See above, pp. 258, 275; and below, p. 323.

⁵ viii. 5: cf. xxix. 3 (Eng. 4), *Jehovah did not give you a heart to know*.

⁶ Job xix. 13: still more close, of course, the intimacy between the sexes for which the verb is so often used in the Old Testament.

⁷ xix. 25: cf. Gen. xx. 6.

⁸ viii. 9.

⁹ viii. 5 cf. Hosea ix. 7.

¹⁰ ix. 21.

the description of the sons of Eli, that *they were sons of Belial, and did not know God*, it means that they did not have any regard for Him.¹ Finally, there is a moral use of the word in which it approaches the meaning of conscience: *Their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked.*² They were aware of this before, but they felt it now with a new sense. Also it is the mark of the awakened and the fullgrown to know, or to feel, the difference between good and evil.³

Here, then, we have a word for *knowing*, the utterance of which almost invariably starts a moral echo, whose very sound, as it were, is haunted by sympathy and by duty. It is knowledge, not as an effort of, so much as an effect upon, the mind. It is not *to know* so as to see the fact of, but *to know* so as to feel the force of; knowledge, not as acquisition and mastery, but as impression, passion. To quote Paul's distinction, it is not so much the apprehending as the being apprehended. It leads to a vivid result—either warm appreciation or change of mind or practical effort. It is sometimes the talent conceived as the trust, sometimes the enlistment of all the affections. It is knowledge that is followed by shame, or by love, or by reverence, or by the sense of a duty. One sees that it closely approaches the meaning of our "conscience," and understands how easily there was developed from it the evangelical name for repentance, *Metanoia*—that is, change of mind under a new impression of facts.

¹ 1 Sam. ii. 12. A similar meaning is probably to be attached to the word in Gen. xxxix. 6: Potiphar *had no thought or care for anything* that was in Joseph's hand. Cf. Prov. ix. 13; xxvii. 23 Job xxxv. 15.

² Gen. iii. 7.

³ Gen. iii. 5; Isa. vii. 15, etc.

There are three writers who thus use knowledge as the key to the Divine life—in the Old Testament Hosea and the author of Deuteronomy, in the New Testament St. John. We likened Amos to St. John the Baptist: it is not only upon his similar temperament, but far more upon his use of the word knowledge for spiritual purposes, that we may compare Hosea to St. John the Evangelist.

Hosea's chief charge against the people is one of stupidity. High and low they are *a people without intelligence*.¹ Once he defines this as want of political wisdom: *Ephraim is a silly dove without heart*, or, as we should say, *without brains*;² and again, as insensibility to every ominous fact: *Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, grey hairs are scattered upon him, and he knoweth it not*,³ or, as we should say, *lays it not to heart*.

But Israel's most fatal ignorance is of God Himself. This is the sign and the cause of every one of their defects. *There is no truth, nor leal love, nor knowledge of God in the land*.⁴ *They have not known the LORD*.⁵ *They have not known Me*.

With the causes of this ignorance the prophet has dealt most explicitly in the fourth chapter.⁶ They are two: the people's own vice and the negligence of their priests. Habitual vice destroys a people's brains. *Harlotry, wine and new wine take away the heart of My people*.⁷ Lust, for instance, blinds them to the domestic

¹ iv. 14, עַם לֹא-יָבִין : if the original meaning of בִּין be to *get between*, see *through* or *into*, so *discriminate*, *understand*, then intelligence is its etymological equivalent. ³ vii. 9. ⁶ v. 4.

² vii. 11. See above, p. 321, *n.* 4. ⁴ iv. 1.

⁶ For exposition of this chapter see above, pp. 256 ff.

⁷ iv. 11, 12, LXX.

consequences of their indulgence in the heathen worship, *and so the stupid people come to their end.*¹ Again, their want of political wisdom is due to their impurity, drunkenness and greed to be rich.² Let those take heed who among ourselves insist that art is independent of moral conditions—that wit and fancy reach their best and bravest when breaking from any law of decency. They lie: such licence corrupts the natural intelligence of a people, and robs them of insight and imagination.

Yet Hosea sees that all the fault does not lie with the common people. Their teachers are to blame, priest and prophet alike, for both *stumble*, and it is true that a people shall be like its priests.³ *The priests have rejected knowledge and forgotten the Torah* of their God; they think only of the ritual of sacrifice and the fines by which they fill their mouths. It was, as we have seen, *the sin of Israel's religion in the eighth century.* To the priests religion was a mass of ceremonies which satisfied the people's superstitions and kept themselves in bread. To the prophets it was an equally sensuous, an equally mercenary ecstasy. But to Hosea religion is above all a thing of the intellect and conscience: it is that *knowing* which is at once common-sense, plain morality and the recognition by a pure heart of what God has done and is doing in history. Of such a knowledge the priests and prophets are the stewards, and it is because they have ignored their trust that the people have been provided with no antidote to the vices that corrupt their natural intelligence and make them incapable of seeing God.

¹ iv. 14 f. See above, pp. 258 f. ² vii. *passim*.

³ iv. 4-9. Above, pp. 257 f.

In contrast to such ignorance Hosea describes the essential temper and contents of a true understanding of God. Using the word *knowledge*, in the passive sense characteristic of his language, not so much the acquisition as the impression of facts, an impression which masters not only a man's thoughts but his heart and will, Hosea describes the *knowledge of God* as feeling, character and conscience. Again and again he makes it parallel to loyalty, repentance, love and service. Again and again he emphasises that it comes from God Himself. It is not something which men can reach by their own endeavours, or by the mere easy turning of their fickle hearts. For it requires God Himself to speak, and discipline to chasten. The only passage in which the knowledge of God is described as the immediate prize of man's own pursuit is that prayer of the people on whose facile religiousness Hosea pours his scorn.¹ *Let us know, let us follow on to know the Lord*, he heard them say, and promise themselves, *As soon as we seek Him we shall find Him*. But God replies that He can make nothing of such ambitions; they will pass away like the morning cloud and the early dew.² This discarded prayer, then, is the only passage in the book in which the knowledge of God is described as man's acquisition. Elsewhere, in strict conformity to the temper of the Hebrew word to know, Hosea presents the knowledge of the Most High, not as something man finds out for himself, but something which comes down on him from above.

The means which God took to impress Himself upon the heart of His people were, according to Hosea, the

¹ vi. 1 ff. See above, pp. 263 ff.

² vi. 4.

events of their history. Hosea, indeed, also points to another means. *The Torah of thy God*, which in one passage¹ he makes parallel to *knowledge*, is evidently the body of instruction, judicial, ceremonial and social, which has come down by the tradition of the priests. This was not all oral; part of it at least was already codified in the form we now know as the Book of the Covenant.² But Hosea treats of the Torah only in connection with the priests. And the far more frequent and direct means by which God has sought to reveal Himself to the people are the great events of their past. These Hosea never tires of recalling. More than any other prophet, he recites the deeds done by God in the origins and making of Israel. So numerous are his references that from them alone we could almost rebuild the early history. Let us gather them together. The nation's father Jacob *in the womb overreached his brother, and in his manhood strove with God; yea, he strove with the Angel and he overcame,*³ *he wept and supplicated Him; at Bethel he found Him, and there He spake with us—Jehovah God of Hosts, Jehovah is His name.*⁴

¹ iv. 6. See above, p. 257.

² See above, pp. 97 f. On the other doubtful phrase, viii. 12—literally *I write multitudes of My Torah, as a stranger they have reckoned it*—no argument can be built; for even if we take the first clause as conditional and render, *Though I wrote multitudes of My Torôth, yet as those of a stranger they would regard them*, that would not necessarily mean that no Torôth of Jehovah were yet written, but, on the contrary, might equally well imply that some at least had been written.

³ Or *was overcome*.

⁴ xii. 4-6. See above, p. 302. LXX. reads *they supplicated Me . . . they found Me . . . He spake with them*. Many propose to read the last clause *with him*. The passage is obscure. Note the order of the events—the wrestling at Peniel, the revelation at Bethel, then in

. . . And Jacob fled to the territory¹ of Aram, and he served for a wife, and for a wife he tended sheep. And by a prophet Jehovah brought Israel up out of Egypt, and by a prophet he was tended.² When Israel was young,³ then I came to love him, and out of Egypt I called My son.⁴ As often as I called to them, so often did they go from Me:⁵ they to the Ba'alim kept sacrificing, and to images offering incense. But I taught Ephraim to walk, taking him upon Mine⁶ arms, and they did not know that I nursed them.⁷ . . . Like grapes in the wilderness I found Israel, like the firstfruits on an early fig-tree I saw your fathers; but they went to Ba'al-Peor, and consecrated themselves to the Shame.⁸ . . . But I am Jehovah thy God from the land of Egypt, and gods besides Me thou knowest not, and Saviour there is none but Me. I knew thee in the wilderness, in the land of burning heats. But the more pasture they had, the more they fed themselves full; as they fed themselves full their heart was lifted up: therefore they forgot Me.⁹ . . . I Jehovah thy God from the land of Egypt.¹⁰ And all this revelation of God was not only in that marvellous

the subsequent passage the flight to Aram. This however does not prove that in Hosea's information the last happened after the two first.

¹ אֲרָם, *field*, here used in its political sense: cf. *Hist. Geog.*, p. 79. Our word *country*, now meaning territory and now the rural as opposed to the urban districts, is strictly analogous to the Hebrew *field*.

² xii. 13, 14.

³ *A youth*.

⁴ LXX., followed by many critics, *his sons*. But *My son* is a better parallel to *young* in the preceding clause. Or trans.: *to be My son*.

⁵ So LXX. See p. 293.

⁷ xi. 1-3.

⁶ So rightly LXX.

⁸ ix. 10.

⁹ xiii. 4-6.

¹⁰ xii. 10. Other references to the ancient history are the story of Gibeah and the Valley of Achor.

history, but in the yearly gifts of nature and even in the success of the people's commerce : *She knew not that it was I who have given her the corn and the wine and the oil, and silver have I multiplied to her.*¹

This, then, is how God gave Israel knowledge of Himself. *First* it broke upon the Individual, the Nation's Father. And to him it had not come by miracle, but just in the same fashion as it has broken upon men from then until now. He woke to find God no tradition, but an experience. Amid the strife with others of which life for all so largely consists, Jacob became aware that God also has to be reckoned with, and that, hard as is the struggle for bread and love and justice with one's brethren and fellow-men, with the Esaus and with the Labans, a more inevitable wrestle awaits the soul when it is left alone in the darkness with the Unseen. Oh, this is our sympathy with those early patriarchs, not that they saw the sea dry up before them or the bush ablaze with God, but that upon some lonely battle-field of the heart they also endured those moments of agony, which imply a more real Foe than we ever met in flesh and blood, and which leave upon us marks deeper than the waste of toil or the rivalry of the world can inflict. So the Father of the Nation came to *find* God at Bethel, and there, adds Hosea, where the Nation still worship, God *spake with us*² in the person of our Father.

The *second* stage of the knowledge of God was when the Nation awoke to His leading, and *through a prophet, Moses, were brought up out of Egypt.* Here again no miracle is adduced by Hosea, but with full heart he appeals to the grace and the tenderness of the whole

¹ ii. 10.

² See above, p. 302.

story. To him it is a wonderful romance. Passing by all the empires of earth, the Almighty chose for Himself this people that was no people, this tribe that were the slaves of Egypt. And the choice was of love only : *When Israel was young I came to love him, and out of Egypt I called My son.* It was the adoption of a little slave-boy, adoption by the heart ; and the fatherly figure continues, *I taught Ephraim to walk, taking him upon Mine arms.* It is just the same charm, seen from another point of view, when Hosea hears God say that He had *found Israel like grapes in the wilderness, like the firstfruits on an early fig-tree I saw your fathers.*

Now these may seem very imperfect figures of the relation of God to this one people, and the ideas they present may be felt to start more difficulties than ever their poetry could soothe to rest : as, for instance, why Israel alone was chosen—why this of all tribes was given such an opportunity to know the Most High. With these questions prophecy does not deal, and for Israel's sake had no need to deal. What alone Hosea is concerned with is the Character discernible in the origin and the liberation of his people. He hears that Character speak for itself ; and it speaks of a love and of a joy, to find figures for which it goes to childhood and to spring—to the love a man feels for a child, to the joy a man feels at the sight of the firstfruits of the year. As the human heart feels in those two great dawns, when nothing is yet impossible, but all is full of hope and promise, so humanly, so tenderly, so joyfully had God felt towards His people. Never again say that the gods of Greece were painted more living or more fair ! The God of Israel is Love and Springtime to His people. Grace, patience, pure joy of hope and possibility—these are the Divine elements which this

spiritual man, Hosea, sees in the early history of his people, and not the miraculous, about which, from end to end of his book, he is utterly silent.

It is ignorance, then, of such a Character, so evident in these facts of their history, with which Hosea charges his people—not ignorance of the facts themselves, not want of devotion to their memory, for they are a people who crowd the sacred scenes of the past, at Bethel, at Gilgal, at Beersheba, but ignorance of the Character which shines through the facts. Hosea also calls it forgetfulness, for the people once had knowledge.¹ The cause of their losing it has been their prosperity in Canaan: *As their pastures were increased they grew satisfied; as they grew satisfied their heart was lifted up, and therefore they forgot Me.*²

Equally instructive is the method by which Hosea seeks to move Israel from this oblivion and bring them to a true knowledge of God. He insists that their recovery can only be the work of God Himself—the living God working in their lives to-day as He did in the past of the nation. To those past deeds it is useless for this generation to go back, and seek again the memory of which they have disinherited themselves. Let them rather realise that the same God still lives. The knowledge of Him may be recovered by appreciating His deeds in the life of to-day. And these deeds must first of all be violence and terror, if only to rouse them from their sensuous sloth. The last verse we have quoted, about Israel's complacency and pride, is followed by this terrible one: *I shall be*³ *to them like a lion, like a*

¹ iv. 6.

² xiii. 5.

³ With Wellhausen read וְאֶהְיֶה for וְאֶהְיֶה.

leopard I shall leap¹ upon the way. I will meet them as a bear bereft of her cubs, that I may tear the caul of their heart, that I may devour them there like a lion: the wild beast shall rend them.² This means that into Israel's insensibility to Himself God must break with facts, with wounds, with horrors they cannot evade. Till He so acts, their own efforts, *then shall we know if we hunt up to know,³* and their assurance, *My God, we do know Thee,⁴* are very vain. Hosea did not speak for nothing. Events were about to happen more momentous than even the Exodus and the Conquest of the Land. By 734 the Assyrians had depopulated Gilead and Galilee; in 725 the capital itself was invested, and by 721 the whole nation carried into captivity. God had made Himself known.

We are already aware, however, that Hosea did not count this as God's final revelation to His people. Doom is not doom to him, as it was to Amos, but discipline; and God withdraws His people from their fascinating land only that He may have them more closely to Himself. He will bring His Bride into the wilderness again, the wilderness where they first met, and there, when her soul is tender and her stupid heart broken, He will plant in her again the seeds of His knowledge and His love. The passages which describe this are among the most beautiful of the book. They tell us of no arbitrary conquest of Israel by Jehovah, of no magic and sudden transformation. They describe a process as natural and gentle as a human wooing; they use, as we have seen, the very terms of this: *I will woo her, bring her into the wilder-*

¹ See above, p. 305, n. 4.

² xiii. 7 ff.

³ vi. 3.

⁴ viii. 2.

ness, and speak home to her heart. . . . And it shall be in that day that thou shalt call Me, My husband, . . . and I will betroth thee to Me for ever in righteousness and in justice, and in leal love and in mercies and in faithfulness; and thou shalt know Jehovah.¹

¹ i. 16, 18, 21, 22.

CHAPTER XXII

REPENTANCE

HOSEA *passim*.

IF we keep in mind what Hosea meant by knowledge—a new impression of facts implying a change both of temper and of conduct—we shall feel how natural it is to pass at once from his doctrine of knowledge to his doctrine of repentance. Hosea may be accurately styled the first preacher of repentance yet so thoroughly did he deal with this subject of eternal interest to the human heart, that between him and ourselves almost no teacher has increased the insight with which it has been examined, or the passion with which it ought to be enforced.

One thing we must hold clear from the outset. To us repentance is intelligible only in the individual. There is no motion of the heart which more clearly derives its validity from its personal character. Repentance is the conscience, the feeling, the resolution of a man by himself and for himself—"I will arise and go to my Father." Yet it is not to the individual that Hosea directs his passionate appeals. For him and his age the religious unit was not the Israelite but Israel. God had called and covenanted with the nation as a whole; He had revealed Himself through their historical fortunes and institutions. His grace

was shown in their succour and guidance as a people ; His last judgment was threatened in their destruction as a state. So similarly, when by Hosea God calls to repentance, it is the whole nation whom He addresses.

At the same time we must remember those qualifications which we adduced with regard to Hosea's doctrine of the nation's knowledge of God.¹ They affect also his doctrine of the national repentance. Hosea's experience of Israel had been preceded by his experience of an Israelite. For years the prophet had carried on his anxious heart a single human character—lived with her, travailed for her, pardoned and redeemed her. As we felt that this long cure of a soul must have helped Hosea to his very spiritual sense of the knowledge of God, so now we may justly assume that the same cannot have been without effect upon his very personal teaching about repentance. But with his experience of Gomer, there conspired also his intense love for Israel. A warm patriotism necessarily personifies its object. To the passionate lover of his people, their figure rises up one and individual—his mother, his lover, his wife. Now no man ever loved his people more intimately or more tenderly than Hosea loved Israel. The people were not only dear to him, because he was their son, but dear and vivid also for their loneliness and their distinction among the peoples of the earth, and for their long experience as the intimate of the God of grace and lovingkindness. God had chosen this Israel as His Bride ; and the remembrance of the unique endowment and lonely destiny stimulated Hosea's imagination in the work of personifying and individualising his people. He treats

¹ See above, p. 320.

Israel with the tenderness and particularity with which the Shepherd, leaving the ninety and nine in the wilderness, seeks till He find it the one lost lamb. His analysis of his fickle generation's efforts to repent, of their motives in turning to God, and of their failures, is as inward and definite as if it were a single heart he were dissecting. Centuries have passed; the individual has displaced the nation; the experience of the human heart has been infinitely increased, and prophecy and all preaching has grown more and more personal. Yet it has scarcely ever been found either necessary to add to the terms which Hosea used for repentance, or possible to go deeper in analysing the processes which these denote.

Hosea's most simple definition of repentance is that of *returning unto God*. For *turning* and *re-turning* the Hebrew language has only one verb—*shûbh*. In the Book of Hosea there are instances in which it is employed in the former sense;¹ but, even apart from its use for repentance, the verb usually means to return. Thus the wandering wife in the second chapter says, *I will return to my former husband*;² and in the threat of judgment it is said, *Ephraim will return to Egypt*.³ Similar is the sense in the phrases *His deeds will I turn back upon him*⁴ and *I will not turn back to destroy Ephraim*.⁵ The usual meaning of the verb is therefore, not merely to turn or change, but to turn right round,

¹ vii. 16, *They turn, but not upwards*; xiv. 5, *Mine anger is turned away*.

² ii. 9.

⁴ iv. 9: cf. xii. 3, 15.

³ viii. 13; ix. 3; xi. 5.

⁵ xi. 9: cf. ii. 11.

to turn back and home.¹ This is obviously the force of its employment to express repentance. For this purpose Hosea very seldom uses it alone.² He generally adds either the name by which God had always been known, Jehovah,³ or the designation of Him, as *their own God*.⁴

We must emphasise this point if we would appreciate the thoroughness of our prophet's doctrine, and its harmony with the preaching of the New Testament. To Hosea repentance is no mere change in the direction of one's life. It is a turning back upon one's self, a retracing of one's footsteps, a confession and acknowledgment of what one has abandoned. It is a coming back and a coming home to God, exactly as Jesus Himself has described in the Parable of the Prodigal. As Hosea again and again affirms, the Return to God, like the New Testament Metanoia, is the effect of new knowledge; but the new knowledge is not of new facts—it is of facts which have been present for a long time and which ought to have been appreciated before.

Of these facts Hosea describes three kinds: the nation's misery, the unspeakable grace of their God, and their great guilt in turning from Him. Again it is as in the case of the prodigal: his hunger, his father,

¹ This may be further seen in the very common phrase שׁוּב שְׁבוּת עִמִּי, *to turn again* the captivity of My people (see Hosea vi. 11); or in the use of שׁוּב in xiv. 8, where it has the force, auxiliary to the other verb in the clause, of repeating or coming back to do a thing. But the text here needs emendation: cf. above, p. 315. Cf. Amos' use of the Hiphil form to *draw back, withdraw*, i. 3, 6, 9, 11, 13; ii. 1, 4, 6.

² Cf. xi. 5, *they refused to return*.

³ vi. 1, *Come and let us return to Jehovah*; vii. 10, *They did not return to Jehovah*; xiv. 2, 3, *Return, O Israel, to Jehovah*.

⁴ iii. 5, *They shall return and seek Jehovah their God*; v. 4, *Their deeds do not allow them to return to their God*.

and his cry, "I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight."

We have already felt the pathos of those passages in which Hosea describes the misery and the decay of Israel, the unprofitableness and shame of all their restless traffic with other gods and alien empires. The state is rotten;¹ anarchy prevails.² The national vitality is lessened: *Ephraim hath grey hairs.*³ Power of birth and begetting have gone; the universal unchastity causes the population to diminish: *their glory flieth away like a bird.*⁴ The presents to Egypt,⁵ the tribute to Assyria, drain the wealth of the people: *strangers devour his strength.*⁶ The prodigal Israel has his far-off country where he spends his substance among strangers. It is in this connection that we must take the repeated verse: *the pride of Israel testi-fieth to his face.*⁷ We have seen⁸ the impossibility of the usual exegesis of these words, that by *the Pride of Israel* Hosea means Jehovah; the word "pride" is probably to be taken in the sense in which Amos employs it of the exuberance and arrogance of Israel's civilisation. If we are right, then Hosea describes a very subtle symptom of the moral awakening whether of the individual or of a community. The conscience of many a man, of many a kingdom, has been reached only through their pride. Pride is the last nerve which comfort and habit leave quick; and when summons to a man's better nature fail, it is still possible in most cases to touch his pride with the presentation of the facts of his decadence. This is probably what Hosea means. Israel's prestige suffers. The civilisation of

¹ v. 12, etc.² iv. 2 ff.; vi. 7 ff., etc.³ vii. 7.⁴ ix. 11 ff.⁵ xii. 2.⁶ vii. 7.⁷ v. 5; vii. 10.⁸ See above, p. 261.

which they are proud has its open wounds. Their politicians are the sport of Egypt;¹ their wealth, the very gold of their Temple, is lifted by Assyria.² The nerve of pride was also touched in the prodigal: "How many hired servants of my father have enough and to spare, while I perish with hunger." Yet, unlike him, this prodigal son of God will not therefore return. Though there are grey hairs upon him, though strangers devour his strength, *he knoweth it not*; of him it cannot be said that "he has come to himself." And that is why the prophet threatens the further discipline of actual exile from the land and its fruits,⁴ of bitter bread⁵ and poverty⁶ on an unclean soil. Israel must also eat husks and feed with swine before he arises and *returns to his God*.

But misery alone never led either man or nation to repentance: the sorrow of this world worketh only death. Repentance is the return to God; and it is the awakening to the truth about God, to the facts of His nature and His grace, which alone makes repentance possible. No man's doctrine of repentance is intelligible without his doctrine of God; and it is because Hosea's doctrine of God is so rich, so fair and so tender, that his doctrine of repentance is so full and gracious. Here we see the difference between him and Amos. Amos had also used the phrase with frequency; again and again he had appealed to the people to seek God and to return to God.⁷ But from Amos it went forth only as a pursuing voice, a voice crying in the wilderness. Hosea lets loose behind it a heart, plies the people with gracious

¹ vii. 16.⁴ ii. 16, etc.; ix. 2 ff., etc.⁶ xii. 10.² x. 5.⁵ ix. 4.⁷ iv. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11.³ vii. 10.

thoughts of God, and brings about them, not the voices only, but the atmosphere, of love. *I will be as the dew unto Israel*, promises the Most High; but He is before His promise. The chapters of Hosea are drenched with the dew of God's mercy, of which no drop falls on those of Amos, but there God is rather the roar as of a lion, the flash as of lightning. Both prophets bid Israel turn to God; but Amos means by that, to justice, truth and purity, while Hosea describes a husband, a father, long-suffering and full of mercy. "I bid you come back," cries Amos. But Hosea pleads, "If only you were aware of what God is, you would come back." "Come back to God and live," cries Amos; but Hosea, "Come back to God, for He is Love." Amos calls, "Come back at once, for there is but little time left till God must visit you in judgment"; but Hosea, "Come back at once, for God has loved you so long and so kindly." Amos cries, "Turn, for in front of you is destruction"; but Hosea, "Turn, for behind you is God." And that is why all Hosea's preaching of repentance is so evangelical. "I will arise and go to my Father."

But the *third* element of the new knowledge which means repentance is the conscience of guilt. *My Father, I have sinned*. On this point it might be averred that the teaching of Hosea is less spiritual than that of later prophets in Israel, and that here at last he comes short of the evangelical inwardness of the New Testament. There is truth in the charge; and here perhaps we feel most the defects of his standpoint, as one who appeals, not to the individual, but to the nation as a whole. Hosea's treatment of the sense of guilt cannot be so spiritual as that, say, of the fifty-first Psalm. But, at least, he is not satisfied to exhaust

it by the very thorough exposure which he gives us of the social sins of his day, and of their terrible results. He, too, understands what is meant by a conscience of sin. He has called Israel's iniquity harlotry, unfaithfulness to God; and in a passage of equal insight and beauty of expression he points out that in the service of the Ba'alim Jehovah's people can never feel anything but a harlot's shame and bitter memories of the better past.

*Rejoice not, O Israel, to the pitch of rapture like the heathen: for thou hast played the harlot from thine own God; 'tis hire thou hast loved on all threshing-floors. Floor and vat shall not acknowledge them; the new wine shall play them false.*¹ Mere children of nature may abandon themselves to the riotous joy of harvest and vintage festivals, for they have never known other gods than are suitably worshipped by these orgies. But Israel has a past—the memory of a holier God, the conscience of having deserted Him for material gifts. With such a conscience she can never enjoy the latter; as Hosea puts it, they will not *acknowledge* or *take to*² her. Here there is an instinct of the profound truth, that even in the fulness of life conscience is punishment; by itself the sense of guilt is judgment.

But Hosea does not attack the service of strange gods only because it is unfaithfulness to Jehovah, but also because, as the worship of images, it is a senseless stupidity utterly inconsistent with that spiritual discernment of which repentance so largely consists. And with the worship of heathen idols Hosea equally condemns the worship of Jehovah under the form of images.

¹ ix. 1. See above, p. 279.

² See above, p. 279, n. 4.

Hosea was the first in Israel to lead the attack upon the idols. Elijah had assaulted the worship of a foreign god, but neither he nor Elisha nor Amos condemned the worship of Israel's own God under the form of a calf. Indeed Amos, except in one doubtful passage,¹ never at all attacks idols or false gods. The reason is very obvious. Amos and Elijah were concerned only with the proclamation of God as justice and purity: and to the moral aspects of religion the question of idolatry is not relevant; the two things do not come directly into collision. But Hosea had deeper and more wide views of God, with which idolatry came into conflict at a hundred points. We know what Hosea's *knowledge of God* was—how spiritual, how extensive—and we can appreciate how incongruous idolatry must have appeared against it. We are prepared to find him treating the images, whether of the Ba'alim or of Jehovah, with that fine scorn which a passionate monotheism, justly conscious of its intellectual superiority, has ever passed upon the idolatry even of civilisations in other respects higher than its own. To Hosea the idol is an *'eseb, a made thing*.² It is made of the very silver and gold with which Jehovah Himself had endowed the people.³ It is made only *to be cut off*⁴ by the first invader! Chiefly, however, does Hosea's scorn fall upon the image under which Jehovah Himself was worshipped. *Thy Calf, O Samaria!*⁵ he contemptuously calls it. *From Israel is it also*, as much as the Ba'alim. *A workman made it, and no god is it: chips shall the Calf of Samaria become!* In another place he mimics the *anxiety of Samaria for*

¹ v. 26.

² עֵשֶׁב from עָצֵב, which in Job x. 8 is parallel to עֵשֶׂה.

³ ii. 8.

⁴ viii. 4.

⁵ viii. 5.

*their Calf; his people mourn for him, and his priestlings writhe for his glory, why?—because it is going into exile:*¹ the gold that covers him shall be stripped for the tribute to Assyria. And once more: *They continue to sin; they make them a smelting of their silver, idols after their own modelling, smith's work all of it. To these things they speak! Sacrificing men actually kiss calves!*² All this is in the same vein of satire which we find grown to such brilliance in the great Prophet of the Exile.³ Hosea was the first in whom it sparkled; and it was due to his conception of *the knowledge of God*. Its relevancy to his doctrine of repentance is this, that so spiritual an apprehension of God as repentance implies, so complete a *metanoia* or *change of mind*, is intellectually incompatible with idolatry. You cannot speak of repentance to men who *kiss calves* and worship blocks of wood. Hence he says: *Ephraim is wedded to idols: leave him alone.*⁴

There was more than idolatry, however, in the way of Israel's repentance. The whole of the national worship was an obstacle. Its formalism and its easy and mechanical methods of *turning to God* disguised the need of that moral discipline and change of heart, without which no repentance can be genuine. Amos had contrasted the ritualism of the time with the duty of civic justice and the service of the poor:⁵ Hosea opposes to it *leal love* and the knowledge of God. *I will have leal love and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings.*⁶ It is characteristic of Hosea to class sacrifices with idols. Both are senseless and inarticulate, incapable of expressing or

¹ x. 5.² xiii. 2.³ Isa. xli. ff.⁴ iv. 17.⁵ Amos v.⁶ vi. 6.

of answering the deep feelings of the heart. True repentance, on the contrary, is rational, articulate, definite. *Take with you words*, says Hosea, *and so return to Jehovah*.¹

To us who, after twenty-five more centuries of talk, know painfully how words may be abused, it is strange to find them enforced as the tokens of sincerity. But let us consider against what the prophet enforces them. Against the *kissing of calves* and such mummery—worship of images that neither hear nor speak. Let us remember the inarticulateness of ritualism, how it stifles rather than utters the feelings of the heart. Let us imagine the dead routine of the legal sacrifices, their original symbolism worn bare, bringing forward to the young hearts of new generations no interpretation of their ancient and distorted details, reducing those who perform them to irrational machines like themselves. Then let us remember how our own Reformers had to grapple with the same hard mechanism in the worship of their time, and how they bade the heart of every worshipper *speak*—speak for itself to God with rational and sincere words. So in place of the frozen ritualism of the Church there broke forth from all lands of the Reformation, as though it were birds in springtime, a great burst of hymns and prayers, with the clear notes of the Gospel in the common tongue. So intolerable was the memory of what had been, that it was even enacted that henceforth no sacrament should be dispensed but the Word should be given to

¹ **xiv. 2.** Perhaps the curious expression at the close of the verse, *so will we render the calves of our lips*, or (as a variant reading gives) *fruit of our lips*, has the same intention. Articulate confession (or vows), these are the sacrifices, *the calves*, which are acceptable to God.

the people along with it. If we keep all these things in mind, we shall know what Hosea means when he says to Israel in their penitence, *Take with you words.*

No one, however, was more conscious of the danger of words. Upon the lips of the people Hosea has placed a confession of repentance, which, so far as the words go, could not be more musical or pathetic.¹ In every Christian language it has been paraphrased to an exquisite confessional hymn. But Hosea describes it as rejected. Its words are too easy; its thoughts of God and of His power to save are too facile. Repentance, it is true, starts from faith in the mercy of God, for without this there were only despair. Nevertheless in all true penitence there is despair. Genuine sorrow for sin includes a feeling of the irreparableness of the past, and the true penitent as he casts himself upon God does not dare to feel that he ever can be the same again. *I am no more worthy to be called Thy son: make me as one of Thy hired servants.* Such necessary thoughts as these Israel does not mingle with her prayer. *Come and let us return to Jehovah, for He hath torn only that He may heal, and smitten only that He may bind up. He will revive us again in a couple of days, on the third day raise us up, that we may live before Him. Then shall we know if we hunt up to know the Lord. As soon as we seek Him we shall find Him: and He shall come upon us like winter-rain, and like the spring-rain pouring on the land.* This is too facile, too shallow. No wonder that God despairs of such a people. *What am I to make of thee, Ephraim?*²

Another familiar passage, the Parable of the Heifer,

¹ vi. 1-4.

² For the reasons for this interpretation see above, pp. 263 ff.

describes the same ambition to reach spiritual results without spiritual processes. *Ephraim is a broken-in heifer—one that loveth to tread out the corn. But I will pass upon her goodly neck. I will give Ephraim a yoke. Judah must plough. Jacob must harrow for himself.*¹ Cattle, being unmuzzled by law² at threshing time, loved this best of all their year's work. Yet to reach it they must first go through the harder and unrewarded trials of ploughing and harrowing. Like a heifer, then, which loved harvest only, Israel would spring at the rewards of penitence, the peaceable fruits of righteousness, without going through the discipline and chastisement which alone yield them. Repentance is no mere turning or even re-turning. It is a deep and an ethical process—the breaking up of fallow ground, the labour and long expectation of the sower, the seeking and waiting for Jehovah till Himself send the rain. *Sow to yourselves in righteousness; reap in proportion to love (the love you have sown), break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek Jehovah, until He come and rain righteousness upon us.*³

A repentance so thorough as this cannot but result in the most clear and steadfast manner of life. Truly it is a returning not by oneself, but *a returning by God*, and it leads to the *keeping of leal love and justice, and waiting upon God continually.*⁴

¹ x. 11.² See above, p. 288.³ x. 12.⁴ xii. 7.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SIN AGAINST LOVE

HOSEA i.—iii. ; iv. 11 ff. ; ix. 10 ff. ; xi. 8 f.

THE Love of God is a terrible thing—that is the last lesson of the Book of Hosea. *My God will cast them away.*¹

My God—let us remember the right which Hosea had to use these words. Of all prophets he was the first to break into the full aspect of the Divine Mercy—to learn and to proclaim that God is Love. But he was worthy to do so, by the patient love of his own heart towards another who for years had outraged all his trust and tenderness. He had loved, believed and been betrayed ; pardoned and waited and yearned, and sorrowed and pardoned again. It is in this long-suffering that his breast beats upon the breast of God with the cry *My God*. As he had loved Gomer, so had God loved Israel, past hope, against hate, through ages of ingratitude and apostasy. Quivering with his own pain, Hosea has exhausted all human care and affection for figures to express the Divine tenderness, and he declares God's love to be deeper than all the passion of men, and broader than all their patience : *How can I give thee up, Ephraim ? How can I let thee go, Israel ? I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger.*

¹ x. 17.

For I am God, and not man. And yet, like poor human affection, this Love of God, too, confesses its failure—*My God shall cast them away.* It is God's sentence of relinquishment upon those who sin against His Love, but the poor human lips which deliver it quiver with an agony of their own, and here, as more explicitly in twenty other passages of the book, declare it to be equally the doom of those who outrage the love of their fellow men and women.

We have heard it said : "The lives of men are never the same after they have loved ; if they are not better they must be worse." "Be afraid of the love that loves you : it is either your heaven or your hell." "All the discipline of men springs from their love—if they take it not so, then all their sorrow must spring from the same source." "There is a depth of sorrow, which can only be known to a soul that has loved the most perfect thing and beholds itself fallen." These things are true of the Love, both of our brother and of our God. And the eternal interest of the life of Hosea is that he learned how, for strength and weakness, for better for worse, our human and our Divine loves are inseparably joined.

I.

Most men learn that love is inseparable from pain where Hosea learned it—at home. There it is that we are all reminded that when love is strongest she feels her weakness most. For the anguish which love must bear, as it were from the foundation of the world, is the contradiction at her heart between the largeness of her wishes and the littleness of her power to realise them. A mother feels it, bending over the bed of her child, when its body is racked with pain or its breath

spent with coughing. So great is the feeling of her love that it ought to do something, that she will actually feel herself cruel because nothing can be done. Let the sick-bed become the beach of death, and she must feel the helplessness and the anguish still more as the dear life is now plucked from her and now tossed back by the mocking waves, and then drawn slowly out to sea upon the ebb from which there is no returning.

But the pain which disease and death thus cause to love is nothing to the agony that Sin inflicts when he takes the game into his unclean hands. We know what pain love brings, if our love be a fair face and fresh body in which Death brands his sores while we stand by, as if with arms bound. But what if our love be a childlike heart, and a frank expression and honest eyes, and a clean and clever mind. Our powerlessness is just as great and infinitely more tormented when Sin comes by and casts his shadow over these. Ah, that is Love's greatest torment when her children, who have run from her to the bosom of sin, look back and their eyes are changed! That is the greatest torment of Love—to pour herself without avail into one of those careless natures which seem capacious and receptive, yet never fill with love, for there is a crack and a leak at the bottom of them. The fields where Love suffers her sorest defeats are not the sick-bed and not death's margin, not the cold lips and sealed eyes kissed without response; but the changed eyes of children, and the breaking of "the full-orbed face," and the darkening look of growing sons and daughters, and the home the first time the unclean laugh breaks across it. To watch, though unable to soothe, a dear body racked with pain, is peace beside the awful vigil

of watching a soul shrink and blacken with vice, and your love unable to redeem it.

Such a clinical study Hosea endured for years. The prophet of God, we are told, brought a dead child to life by taking him in his arms and kissing him. But Hosea with all his love could not make Gomer a true whole wife again. Love had no power on this woman—no power even at the merciful call to make all things new. Hosea, who had once placed all hope in tenderness, had to admit that Love's moral power is not absolute. Love may retire defeated from the highest issues of life. Sin may conquer Love.

Yet it is in this his triumph that Sin must feel the ultimate revenge. When a man has conquered this weak thing and beaten her down beneath his feet, God speaks the sentence of abandonment.

There is enough of the whipped dog in all of us to make us dread penalty when we come into conflict with the strong things of life. But it takes us all our days to learn that there is far more condemnation to them who offend the weak things of life, and particularly the weakest of all, its love. It was on sins against the weak that Christ passed His sternest judgments: *Woe unto him that offends one of these little ones; it were better for him that he had never been born.* God's little ones are not only little children, but all things which, like little children, have only love for their strength. They are pure and loving men and women—men with no weapon but their love, women with no shield but their trust. They are the innocent affections of our own hearts—the memories of our childhood, the ideals of our youth, the prayers of our parents, the faith in us of our friends. These are the little ones of whom Christ spake, that he who sins against them had

better never have been born. Often may the dear solitudes of home, a father's counsels, a mother's prayers, seem foolish things against the challenges of a world, calling us to play the man and do as it does; often may the vows and enthusiasms of boyhood seem impertinent against the temptations which are so necessary to manhood: yet let us be true to the weak, for if we betray them, we betray our own souls. We may sin against law and maim or mutilate ourselves, but to sin against love is to be cast out of life altogether. He who violates the purity of the love with which God has filled his heart, he who abuses the love God has sent to meet him in his opening manhood, he who slights any of the affections, whether they be of man or woman, of young or of old, which God lays upon us as the most powerful redemptive forces of our life, next to that of His dear Son—he sinneth against his own soul, and it is of such that Hosea spake: *My God will cast them away.*

We talk of breaking law: we can only break ourselves against it. But if we sin against Love, we do destroy her; we take from her the power to redeem and sanctify us. Though in their youth men think Love a quick and careless thing—a servant always at their side, a winged messenger easy of despatch—let them know that every time they send her on an evil errand she returns with heavier feet and broken wings. When they make her a pander they kill her outright. When she is no more they waken to that which Gomer came to know, that love abused is love lost, and love lost means Hell.

II.

This, however, is only the margin from which Hosea

beholds an abandonment still deeper. All that has been said of human love and the penalty of outraging it is equally true of the Divine love and the sin against that.

The love of God has the same weakness which we have seen in the love of man. It, too, may fail to redeem; it, too, has stood defeated on some of the highest moral battle-fields of life. God Himself has suffered anguish and rejection from sinful men. "Herein," says a theologian, "is the mystery of this love, . . . that God can never by His Almighty Power compel that which is the very highest gift in the life of His creatures—love to Himself, but that He receives it as the free gift of His creatures, and that He is only able to allow men to give it to Him in a free act of their own will." So Hosea also has told us how God does not compel, but allure or *woo*, the sinful back to Himself. And it is the deepest anguish of the prophet's heart, that this free grace of God may fail through man's apathy or insincerity. The anguish appears in those frequent antitheses in which his torn heart reflects herself in the style of his discourse. *I have redeemed them—yet have they spoken lies against Me.*¹ *I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness—they went to Ba'al-Peor.*² *When Israel was a child, then I loved him . . . but they sacrificed to Ba'alim.*³ *I taught Ephraim to walk, but they knew not that I healed them.*⁴ *How can I give thee up, Ephraim? how can I let thee go, O Israel? . . . Ephraim compasseth Me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit.*⁵

We fear to apply all that we know of the weakness

¹ vii. 13.

² ix. 10.

³ xi. 1, 2.

⁴ xi. 4.

xi. 8; xii. 1.

of human love to the love of God. Yet though He be God and not man, it was as man He commended His love to us. He came nearest us, not in the thunders of Sinai, but in Him Who presented Himself to the world with the caresses of a little child; Who met men with no angelic majesty or heavenly aureole, but whom when we saw we found nothing that we should desire Him, His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form than the sons of men; Who came to His own and His own received Him not; Who, having loved His own that were in the world, loved them up to the end, and yet at the end was by them deserted and betrayed,—it is of Him that Hosea prophetically says: *I drew them with cords of a man and with bands of love.*

We are not bound to God by any unbreakable chain. The strands which draw us upwards to God, to holiness and everlasting life, have the weakness of those which bind us to the earthly souls we love. It is possible for us to break them. We love Christ, not because He has compelled us by any magic, irresistible influence to do so; but, as John in his great simplicity says, *We love Him because He first loved us.*

Now this is surely the terror of God's love—that it can be resisted; that even as it is manifest in Jesus Christ we men have the power, not only to remain, as so many do, outside its scope, feeling it to be far-off and vague, but having tasted it to fall away from it, having realised it to refuse it, having allowed it to begin its moral purposes in our lives to baffle and nullify these; to make the glory of Heaven absolutely ineffectual in our own characters; and to give our Saviour the anguish of rejection.

Give Him the anguish, yet pass upon ourselves the

doom! For, as I read the New Testament, the one unpardonable sin is the sin against our Blessed Redeemer's Love as it is brought home to the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. Every other sin is forgiven to men but to crucify afresh Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. The most terrible of His judgments is "the wail of a heart wounded because its love has been despised": *Jerusalem, Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!*

Men say they cannot believe in hell, because they cannot conceive how God may sentence men to misery for the breaking of laws they were born without power to keep. And one would agree with the inference, if God had done any such thing. But for them which are under the law and the sentence of death, Christ died once for all, that He might redeem them. Yet this does not make a hell less believable. When we see how Almighty was that Love of God in Christ Jesus, lifting our whole race and sending them forward with a freedom and a power of growth nothing else in history has won for them; when we prove again how weak it is, so that it is possible for millions of characters that have felt it to refuse its eternal influence for the sake of some base and transient passion; nay, when *I myself* know this power and this weakness of Christ's love, so that one day being loyal I am raised beyond the reach of fear and of doubt, beyond the desire of sin and the habit of evil, and the next day finds me capable of putting it aside in preference for some slight enjoyment or ambition—then I know the peril and the terror of this love, that it may be to a man either Heaven or Hell.

Believe then in hell, because you believe in the Love of God—not in a hell to which God condemns men of His will and pleasure, but a hell into which men cast themselves from the very face of His love in Jesus Christ. The place has been painted as a place of fires. But when we contemplate that men come to it with the holiest flames in their nature quenched, we shall justly feel that it is rather a dreary waste of ash and cinder, strewn with snow—some ribbed and frosted Arctic zone, silent in death, for there is no life there, and there is no life there because there is no Love, and no Love because men in rejecting or abusing her have slain their own power ever again to feel her presence.

MICAE

“But I am full of power by the Spirit of Jehovah
To declare to Jacob his transgressions, and to Israel his sin.”

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BOOK OF MICAH

THE Book of Micah lies sixth of the Twelve Prophets in the Hebrew Canon, but in the order of the Septuagint third, following Amos and Hosea. The latter arrangement was doubtless directed by the size of the respective books ;¹ in the case of Micah it has coincided with the prophet's proper chronological position. Though his exact date be not certain, he appears to have been a younger contemporary of Hosea, as Hosea was of Amos.

The book is not two-thirds the size of that of Amos, and about half that of Hosea. It has been arranged in seven chapters, which follow, more or less, a natural method of division.² They are usually grouped in three sections, distinguishable from each other by their subject-matter, by their temper and standpoint, and to a less degree by their literary form. They are A. Chaps. i.—iii. ; B. Chaps. iv., v. ; C. Chaps. vi., vii.

There is no book of the Bible, as to the date of whose different parts there has been more discussion,

¹ See above, pp. 64.

² Note that the Hebrew and English divisions do not coincide between chaps. iv. and v. In the Hebrew chap. iv. includes a fourteenth verse, which in the English stands as the first verse of chap. v. In this the English agrees with the Septuagint.

especially within recent years. The history of this is shortly as follows:—

Tradition and the criticism of the early years of this century accepted the statement of the title, that the book was composed in the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah—that is, between 740 and 700 B.C. It was generally agreed that there were in it only traces of the first two reigns, but that the whole was put together before the fall of Samaria in 721.¹ Then Hitzig and Steiner dated chaps. iii.—vi. after 721; and Ewald denied that Micah could have given us chaps. vi., vii., and placed them under King Manasseh, *circa* 690—640. Next Wellhausen² sought to prove that vii. 7-20 must be post-exilic. Stade³ took a further step, and, on the ground that Micah himself could not have blunted or annulled his sharp pronouncements of doom, by the promises which chaps. iv. and v. contain, he withdrew these from the prophet and assigned them to the time of the Exile.⁴ But the sufficiency of this argument was denied by Vatke.⁵ Also in opposition to Stade, Kuenen⁶ refused to believe that Micah could have been content with the announcement of the fall of Jerusalem as his last word, that therefore much of chaps. iv. and v. is probably from himself, but since their argument is obviously broken and confused, we must look in them for interpolations, and he decides that such are iv. 6-8, 11-13, and the working up of v. 9-14. The famous passage in iv. 1-4 may have been Micah's, but was probably added by another. Chaps. vi. and vii. were written under Manasseh by some of the persecuted adherents of Jehovah.

We may next notice two critics who adopt an extremely

¹ Caspari.

² In the fourth edition of Bleek's *Introduction*.

³ *Z.A.T.W.*, Vols. I., III., IV.

⁴ See also Cornill, *Einleitung*, 183 f. Stade takes iv. 1-4, iv. 11—v. 3, v. 6-14, as originally one prophecy (distinguished by certain catchwords and an outlook similar to that of Ezekiel and the great Prophet of the Exile), in which the two pieces iv. 5-10 and v. 4, 5, were afterwards inserted by the author of ii. 12, 13.

⁵ *Einleitung in das A.T.*, pp. 690 ff.

⁶ *Einleitung*

conservative position. Von Ryssel,¹ as the result of a very thorough examination, declared that all the chapters were Micah's, even the much doubted ii. 12, 13, which have been placed by an editor of the book in the wrong position, and chap. vii. 7-20, which he agrees with Ewald can only date from the reign of Manasseh, Micah himself having lived long enough into that reign to write them himself. Another careful analysis by Elhorst² also reached the conclusion that the bulk of the book was authentic, but for his proof of this Elhorst requires a radical rearrangement of the verses, and that on grounds which do not always commend themselves. He holds chap. iv. 9-14 and v. 8 for post-exilic insertions. Driver³ contributes a thorough examination of the book, and reaches the conclusions that ii. 12, 13, though obviously in their wrong place, need not be denied to Micah; that the difficulties of ascribing chaps. iv., v., to the prophet are not insuperable, nor is it even necessary to suppose in them interpolations. He agrees with Ewald as to the date of vi.—vii. 6, and, while holding that it is quite possible for Micah to have written them, thinks they are more probably due to another, though a confident conclusion is not to be achieved. As to vii. 7-20, he judges Wellhausen's inferences to be unnecessary. A prophet in Micah's or Manasseh's time may have thought destruction nearer than it actually proved to be, and, imagining it as already arrived, have put into the mouth of the people a confession suited to its circumstance. Wildeboer⁴ goes further than Driver. He replies in detail to the arguments of Stade and Cornill, denies that the reasons for withdrawing so much from Micah are conclusive, and assigns to the prophet the whole book, with the exception of several interpolations.

We see, then, that all critics are practically agreed as to the presence of interpolations in the text, as well as to the occurrence of certain verses of the prophet

¹ *Untersuchungen über die Textgestalt u. die Echtheit des Buches Micha*, 1887.

² *De Profetie van Micha*, 1891, which I have not seen. It is summarised in Wildeboer's *Litteratur des A.T.*, 1895.

³ *Introduction*, 1892.

⁴ *Litteratur des A.T.*, pp. 148 ff.

out of their proper order. This indeed must be obvious to every careful reader as he notes the somewhat frequent break in the logical sequence, especially of chaps. iv. and v. All critics, too, admit the authenticity of chaps. i.—iii., with the possible exception of ii. 12, 13; while a majority hold that chaps. vi. and vii., whether by Micah or not, must be assigned to the reign of Manasseh. On the authenticity of chaps. iv. and v.—*minus* interpolations—and of chaps. vi. and vii., opinion is divided; but we ought not to overlook the remarkable fact that those who have recently written the fullest monographs on Micah¹ incline to believe in the genuineness of the book as a whole.² We may now enter for ourselves upon the discussion of the various sections, but before we do so let us note how much of the controversy turns upon the general question, whether after decisively predicting the overthrow of Jerusalem it was possible for Micah to add prophecies of her restoration. It will be remembered that we have had to discuss this same point with regard both to Amos and Hosea. In the case of the former we decided against the authenticity of visions of a blessed future which now close his book; in the case of the latter we decided for the authenticity. What were our reasons for this difference? They were, that the closing vision of the Book of Amos is not at all in harmony with the exclusively ethical spirit of the authentic prophecies; while the closing vision of the Book of

¹ Wildeboer (*De Profet Micha*), Von Ryssel and Elhorst.

² Cheyne, therefore, is not correct when he says ("Introduction" to second edition of Robertson Smith's *Prophets*, p. xxiii.) that it is "becoming more and more doubtful whether more than two or three fragments of the heterogeneous collection of fragments in chaps. iv.—vii. can have come from that prophet."

Hosea is not only in language and in ethical temper thoroughly in harmony with the chapters which precede it, but in certain details has been actually anticipated by these. Hosea, therefore, furnishes us with the case of a prophet who, though he predicted the ruin of his impenitent people (and that ruin was verified by events), also spoke of the possibility of their restoration upon conditions in harmony with his reasons for the inevitableness of their fall. And we saw, too, that the hopeful visions of the future, though placed last in the collection of his prophecies, need not necessarily have been spoken last by the prophet, but stand where they do because they have an eternal spiritual validity for the remnant of Israel.¹ What was possible for Hosea is surely possible for Micah. That promises come in his book, and closely after the conclusive threats which he gave of the fall of Jerusalem, does not imply that originally he uttered them all in such close proximity. That indeed would have been impossible. But considering how often the political prospect in Israel changed during Micah's time, and how far the city was in his day from her actual destruction—more than a century distant—it seems to be improbable that he should not (in whatever order) have uttered both threat and promise. And naturally, when his prophecies were arranged in permanent order, the promises would be placed after the threats.²

¹ See above, p. 311.

² Wildeboer seems to me to have good grounds for his reply to Stade's assertion that the occurrence of promises after the threats only blunts and nullifies the latter. "These objections," says Wildeboer, "raise themselves only against *the spoken*, but not against the *written word*." See, too, the admirable remarks he quotes from De Goeje.

FIRST SECTION : CHAPS. I.—III.

No critic doubts the authenticity of the bulk of these chapters. The sole question at issue is the date or (possibly) the dates of them. Only chap. ii. 12, 13, are generally regarded as out of place, where they now stand.

Chap. i. trembles with the destruction of both Northern Israel and Judah—a destruction either very imminent or actually in the process of happening. The verses which deal with Samaria, 6 ff., do not simply announce her inevitable ruin. They throb with the sense either that this is immediate, or that it is going on, or that it has just been accomplished. The verbs suit each of these alternatives : *And I shall set*, or *am setting*, or *have set*, *Samaria for a ruin of the field*, and so on. We may assign them to any time between 725 B.C., the beginning of the siege of Samaria by Shalmaneser, and a year or two after its destruction by Sargon in 721. Their intense feeling seems to preclude the possibility of their having been written in the years to which some assign them, 705—700, or twenty years after Samaria was actually overthrown.

In the next verses the prophet goes on to mourn the fact that the affliction of Samaria reaches even to the gate of Jerusalem, and he especially singles out as partakers in the danger of Jerusalem a number of towns, most of which (so far as we can discern) lie not between Jerusalem and Samaria, but at the other corner of Judah, in the Shephelah or out upon the Philistine plain.¹ This was the region which Sennacherib invaded in 701, simultaneously with his detachment of a corps to attack

¹ See below, pp. 383 ff.

the capital; and accordingly we might be shut up to affirm that this end of chap. i. dates from that invasion, if no other explanation of the place-names were possible. But another is possible. Micah himself belonged to one of these Shephelah towns, Moresheth-Gath, and it is natural that, anticipating the invasion of all Judah, after the fall of Samaria (as Isaiah¹ also did), he should single out for mourning his own district of the country. This appears to be the most probable solution of a very doubtful problem, and accordingly we may date the whole of chap. i. somewhere between 725 and 720 or 718. Let us remember that in 719 Sargon marched past this very district of the Shephelah in his campaign against Egypt, whom he defeated at Raphia.²

Our conclusion is supported by chap. ii. Judah, though Jehovah be planning evil against her, is in the full course of her ordinary social activities. The rich are absorbing the lands of the poor (vv. i. ff.): note the phrase *upon their beds*; it alone signifies a time of security. The enemies of Israel are internal (8). The public peace is broken by the lords of the land and men and women, disposed to live quietly, are robbed (8 ff.). The false prophets have sufficient signs of the times in their favour to regard Micah's threats of destruction as calumnies (6). And although he regards

¹ x. 18.

² Smend assigns the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem in iii. 14, along with Isaiah xxviii.—xxxii., to 704—701, and suggests that the end of chap. i. refers to Sennacherib's campaign in Philistia in 701 (*A. T. Religionsgeschichte*, p. 225, n.). The former is possible, but the latter passage, following so closely on i. 6, which implies the fall of Samaria to be still recent, if not in actual course, is more suitably placed in the time of the campaign of Sargon over pretty much the same ground.

destruction as inevitable, it is not to be to-day; but *in that day* (4), viz. some still indefinite date in the future, the blow will fall and the nation's elegy be sung. On this chapter, then, there is no shadow of a foreign invader. We might assign it to the years of Jotham and Ahaz (under whose reigns the title of the book places part of the prophesying of Micah), but since there is no sense of a double kingdom, no distinction between Judah and Israel, it belongs more probably to the years when all immediate danger from Assyria had passed away, between Sargon's withdrawal from Raphia in 719 and his invasion of Ashdod in 710, or between the latter date and Sennacherib's accession in 705.

Chap. iii. contains three separate oracles, which exhibit a similar state of affairs: the abuse of the common people by their chiefs and rulers, who are implied to be in full sense of power and security. They have time to aggravate their doings (4); their doom is still future—*then at that time (ib.)*. The bulk of the prophets determine their oracles by the amount men give them (5), another sign of security. Their doom is also future (6 f.). In the third of the oracles the authorities of the land are in the undisturbed exercise of their judicial offices (9 f.), and the priests and prophets of their oracles (10), though all these professions practise only for bribe and reward. Jerusalem is still being built and embellished (9). But the prophet, not because there are political omens pointing to this, but simply in the force of his indignation at the sins of the upper classes, prophesies the destruction of the capital (10). It is possible that these oracles of chap. iii. may be later than those of the previous chapters.¹

¹ See above, p. 363, n. 2.

SECOND SECTION : CHAPS. IV., V.

This section of the book opens with two passages, verses 1-5 and verses 6, 7, which there are serious objections against assigning to Micah.

1. The first of these, 1-5, is the famous prophecy of the Mountain of the Lord's House, which is repeated in Isaiah ii. 2-5. Probably the Book of Micah presents this to us in the more original form.¹ The alternatives therefore are four: Micah was the author, and Isaiah borrowed from him; or both borrowed from an earlier source;² or the oracle is authentic in Micah, and has been inserted by a later editor in Isaiah; or it has been inserted by later editors in both Micah and Isaiah.

The last of these conclusions is required by the arguments first stated by Stade and Hackmann, and then elaborated, in a very strong piece of reasoning, by Cheyne. Hackmann, after marking the want of connection with the previous chapter, alleges the keynotes of the passage to be three: that it is not the arbitration of Jehovah,³ but His sovereignty over foreign nations, and their adoption of His law, which the passage predicts; that it is the Temple at Jerusalem whose future supremacy is affirmed; and that there is a strong feeling against war. These, Cheyne contends, are the doctrines of a much later age than that of Micah; he holds the passage to be the work of a post-exilic imitator of the prophets, which was first

¹ So Hitzig ("ohne Zweifel"), and Cheyne, *Introduction to the Book of Isaiah*; Ryssel, *op. cit.*, pp. 218 1. Hackmann (*Die Zukunftserwartung des Jesaja*, 127-8, n.) prefers the Greek of Micah. Ewald is doubtful. Duhm, however, inclines to authorship by Isaiah, and would assign the composition to Isaiah's old age.

² Hitzig; Ewald

³ As against Duhm.

intruded into the Book of Micah and afterwards borrowed from this by an editor of Isaiah's prophecies. It is just here, however, that the theory of these critics loses its strength. Agreeing heartily as I do with recent critics that the genuine writings of the early prophets have received some, and perhaps considerable, additions from the Exile and later periods, it seems to me extremely improbable that the same post-exilic insertion should find its way into *two* separate books. And I think that the undoubted bias towards the post-exilic period of all Canon Cheyne's recent criticism, has in this case hurried him past due consideration of the possibility of a pre-exilic date. In fact the gentle temper shown by the passage towards foreign nations, the absence of hatred or of any ambition to subject the Gentiles to servitude to Israel, contrasts strongly with the temper of many exilic and post-exilic prophecies ;¹ while the position which it demands for Jehovah and His religion is quite consistent with the fundamental principles of earlier prophecy. The passage really claims no more than a suzerainty of Jehovah over the heathen tribes, with the result only that their war with Israel and with one another shall cease, not that they shall become, as the great prophecy of the Exile demands, tributaries and servitors. Such a claim was no more than the natural deduction from the early prophets' belief of Jehovah's supremacy in righteousness. And although Amos had not driven the principle so far as to promise the absolute cessation of war, he also had recognised in the most unmistakable fashion the responsibility of the Gentiles to Jehovah, and His supreme arbitrament upon them.² And Isaiah himself,

¹ So rightly Duhm on Isa. ii. 2-4.

² Amos i. and ii. See above, pp. 124, 133.

in his prophecy on Tyre, promised a still more complete subjection of the life of the heathen to the service of Jehovah.¹ Moreover the fifth verse of the passage in Micah (though it is true its connection with the previous four is not apparent) is much more in harmony with pre-exilic than with post-exilic prophecy: *All the nations shall walk each in the name of his god, and we shall walk in the name of Jehovah our God for ever and aye.* This is consistent with more than one prophetic utterance before the Exile,² but it is not consistent with the beliefs of Judaism after the Exile. Finally, the great triumph achieved for Jerusalem in 701 is quite sufficient to have prompted the feelings expressed by this passage for the *mountain of the house of the Lord*; though if we are to bring it down to a date subsequent to 701, we must rearrange our views with regard to the date and meaning of the second chapter of Isaiah. In Micah the passage is obviously devoid of all connection, not only with the previous chapter, but with the subsequent verses of chap. iv. The possibility of a date in the eighth or beginning of the seventh century is all that we can determine with regard to it; the other questions must remain in obscurity.

2. Verses 6, 7, may refer to the Captivity of Northern Israel, the prophet adding that when it shall be restored the united kingdom shall be governed from Mount Zion; but a date during the Exile is, of course, equally probable.

3. Verses 8-13 contain a series of small pictures of Jerusalem in siege, from which, however, she issues

¹ Isa. xxiii. 17 f.

² Jer. xvii.

triumphant.¹ It is impossible to say whether such a siege is actually in course while the prophet writes, or is pictured by him as inevitable in the near future. The words *thou shalt go to Babylon* may be, but are not necessarily, a gloss.

4. Chap. iv. 14—v. 8 again pictures such a siege of Jerusalem, but promises a Deliverer out of Bethlehem, the city of David.² Sufficient heroes will be raised up along with him to drive the Assyrians from the land, and what is left of Israel after all these disasters shall prove a powerful and sovereign influence upon the peoples. These verses were probably not all uttered at the same time.

5. Verses 9-14.—In prospect of such a deliverance the prophet returns to what chap. i. has already described and Isaiah frequently emphasises as the sin of Judah—her armaments and fortresses, her magic and idolatries, the things she trusted in instead of Jehovah. They will no more be necessary, and will disappear. The nations that serve not Jehovah will feel His wrath.

In all these oracles there is nothing inconsistent with authorship in the eighth century: there is much that witnesses to this date. Everything that they threaten or promise is threatened or promised by Hosea and by Isaiah, with the exception of the destruction (in ver. 12) of the Maççebot, or sacred pillars,

¹ Wellhausen indeed thinks that ver. 8 presupposes that Jerusalem is already devastated, reduced to the state of a shepherd's tower in the wilderness. This, however, is incorrect. The verse implies only that the whole country is overrun by the foe, Jerusalem alone standing, with the flock of God in it, like a fortified fold (cf. Isaiah i.).

Roorda, reasoning from the Greek text, takes *House of Ephratha* as the original reading, with Bethlehem added later; and Hitzig properly reads Ephrath, giving its final letter to the next word which improves the grammar, thus: אפרת הצעיר

against which we find no sentence going forth from Jehovah before the Book of Deuteronomy, while Isaiah distinctly promises the erection of a Maççebah to Jehovah in the land of Egypt.¹ But waiving for the present the possibility of a date for Deuteronomy, or for part of it, in the reign of Hezekiah, we must remember the destruction, which took place under this king, of idolatrous sanctuaries in Judah, and feel also that, in spite of such a reform, it was quite possible for Isaiah to introduce a Maççebah into his poetic vision of the worship of Jehovah in Egypt. For has he not also dared to say that the *harlot's hire* of the Phœnician commerce shall one day be consecrated to Jehovah?

THIRD SECTION: CHAPS. VI., VII.

The style now changes. We have had hitherto a series of short oracles, as if delivered orally. These are succeeded by a series of conferences or arguments, by several speakers. Ewald accounts for the change by supposing that the latter date from a time of persecution, when the prophet, unable to speak in public, uttered himself in literature. But chap. i. is also dramatic.

I. Chap. vi. 1-8.—An argument in which the prophet as herald calls on the hills to listen to Jehovah's case against the people (1, 2). Jehovah Himself appeals to the latter, and in a style similar to Hosea's cites His deeds in their history, as evidence of what He seeks from them (3-5). The people, presumably penitent, ask how they shall come before Jehovah (6, 7). And the prophet tells them what Jehovah has declared in the matter (8). Opening very much like Micah's first

¹ Isa. xix. 19.

oracle (chap. i. 1), this argument contains nothing strange either to Micah or the eighth century. Exception has been taken to the reference in ver. 7 to the sacrifice of the first-born, which appears to have become more common from the gloomy age of Manasseh onwards, and which, therefore, led Ewald to date all chaps. vi. and vii. from that king's reign. But child-sacrifice is stated simply as a possibility, and—occurring as it does at the climax of the sentence—as an extreme possibility.¹ I see no necessity, therefore, to deny the piece to Micah or the reign of Hezekiah. Of those who place it under Manasseh, some, like Driver, still reserve it to Micah himself, whom they suppose to have survived Hezekiah and seen the evil days which followed.

2. Verses 9-16.—Most expositors² take these verses along with the previous eight, as well as with the six which follow in chap. vii. But there is no connection between verses 8 and 9; and 9-16 are better taken by themselves. The prophet heralds, as before, the speech of Jehovah to *tribe and city* (9). Addressing Jerusalem, Jehovah asks how He can forgive such fraud and violence as those by which her wealth has been gathered (10-12). Then addressing the people (note the change from feminine to masculine in the second personal pronouns) He tells them He must smite; they shall not enjoy the fruit of their labours (14, 15). They have sinned the sins of Omri and the house of Ahab (query—should it not be of Ahab and the house of Omri?), so that they must be put to shame before the Gentiles³ (16). In this section three or four words have been marked

¹ So also Wellhausen.

² E.g. Ewald and Driver.

³ For עַמִּים read גוֹיִם with the LXX.

as of late Hebrew.¹ But this is uncertain, and the inference made from it precarious. The deeds of Omri and Ahab's house have been understood as the persecution of the adherents of Jehovah, and the passage has, therefore, been assigned by Ewald and others to the reign of the tyrant Manasseh. But such habits of persecution could hardly be imputed to the City or People as a whole; and we may conclude that the passage means some other of that notorious dynasty's sins. Among these, as is well known, it is possible to make a large selection—the favouring of idolatry, or the tyrannous absorption by the rich of the land of the poor (as in Naboth's case), a sin which Micah has already marked as that of his age. The whole treatment of the subject, too, whether under the head of the sin or its punishment, strongly resembles the style and temper of Amos. It is, therefore, by no means impossible for this passage also to have been Micah's, and we must accordingly leave the question of its date undecided. Certainly we are not shut up, as the majority of modern critics suppose, to a date under Manasseh or Amon.

3. Chap. vii. 1-6.—These verses are spoken by the prophet in his own name or that of the people's. The land is devastated; the righteous have disappeared; everybody is in ambush to commit deeds of violence and take his neighbour unawares. There is no justice: the great ones of the land are free to do what they like; they have intrigued with and bribed the autho-

¹ Wellhausen states four. But תושיה of ver. 9 is an uncertain reading. רכמיה is found in Hosea vii. 16, though the text of this, it is true, is corrupt. זכה in another verbal form is found in Isa. i. 16. There only remains כטטה, but again it is uncertain whether we should take this in its late sense of tribe.

rities. Informers have crept in everywhere. Men must be silent, for the members of their own families are their foes. Some of these sins have already been marked by Micah as those of his age (chap. ii.), but the others point rather to a time of persecution such as that under Manasseh. Wellhausen remarks the similarity to the state of affairs described in Mal. iii. 24 and in some Psalms. We cannot fix the date.

4. Verses 7-20.—This passage starts from a totally different temper of prophecy, and presumably, therefore, from very different circumstances. Israel, as a whole, speaks in penitence. She has sinned, and bows herself to the consequences, but in hope. A day shall come when her exiles shall return and the heathen acknowledge her God. The passage, and with it the Book of Micah, concludes by apostrophising Jehovah as the God of forgiveness and grace to His people. Ewald, and following him Driver, assign the passage, with those which precede it, to the times of Manasseh, in which of course it is possible that Micah was still active, though Ewald supposes a younger and anonymous prophet as the author. Wellhausen¹ goes further, and, while recognising that the situation and temper of the passage resemble those of Isaiah xl. ff., is inclined to bring it even further down to post-exilic times, because of the universal character of the Diaspora. Driver objects to these inferences, and maintains that a prophet in the time of Manasseh, thinking the destruction of Jerusalem to be nearer than it actually was, may easily have pictured it as having taken place, and put an ideal confession in the mouth of the people. It seems to me that all these critics have failed to appreciate a piece of evidence even more remarkable than

¹ And also Giesebrecht, *Beiträge*, p. 217.

any they have insisted on in their argument for a late date. This is, that the passage speaks of a restoration of the people only to Bashan and Gilead, the provinces overrun by Tiglath-Pileser III. in 734. It is not possible to explain such a limitation either by the circumstances of Manasseh's time or by those of the Exile. In the former surely Samaria would have been included; in the latter Zion and Judah would have been emphasised before any other region. It would be easy for the defenders of a post-exilic date, and especially of a date much subsequent to the Exile, to account for a longing after Bashan and Gilead, though they also would have to meet the objection that Samaria or Ephraim is not mentioned. But how natural it would be for a prophet writing soon after the captivity of Tiglath-Pileser III. to make this precise selection! And although there remain difficulties (arising from the temper and language of the passage) in the way of assigning all of it to Micah or his contemporaries, I feel that on the geographical allusions much can be said for the origin of this part of the passage in their age, or even in an age still earlier: that of the Syrian wars in the end of the ninth century, with which there is nothing inconsistent either in the spirit or the language of vv. 14-17. And I am sure that if the defenders of a late date had found a selection of districts as suitable to the post-exilic circumstances of Israel as the selection of Bashan and Gilead is to the circumstances of the eighth century, they would, instead of ignoring it, have emphasised it as a conclusive confirmation of their theory. On the other hand, ver. 11 can date only from the Exile, or the following years, before Jerusalem was rebuilt. Again, vv. 18-20 appear to stand by themselves.

It seems likely, therefore, that chap. vii. 7-20 is a Psalm composed of little pieces from various dates, which, combined, give us a picture of the secular sorrows of Israel, and of the conscience she ultimately felt in them, and conclude by a doxology to the everlasting mercies of her God.

CHAPTER XXV

MICAH THE MORASTHITE

MICAH i.

SOME time in the reign of Hezekiah, when the kingdom of Judah was still inviolate, but shivering to the shock of the fall of Samaria, and probably while Sargon the destroyer was pushing his way past Judah to meet Egypt at Raphia, a Judæan prophet of the name of Micah, standing in sight of the Assyrian march, attacked the sins of his people and prophesied their speedy overthrow beneath the same flood of war. If we be correct in our surmise, the exact year was 720—719 B.C. Amos had been silent thirty years, Hosea hardly fifteen; Isaiah was in the midway of his career. The title of Micah's book asserts that he had previously prophesied under Jotham and Ahaz, and though we have seen it to be possible, it is by no means proved, that certain passages of the book date from these reigns.

Micah is called the Morasthite.¹ For this designation there appears to be no other meaning than that of a native of Moresbeth-Gath, a village mentioned by himself.² It signifies *Property* or *Territory* of Gath, and after the fall of the latter, which from this time no

¹ Micah i.; Jer. xxvi. 18.

² i. 14.

more appears in history, Moresheth may have been used alone. Compare the analogous cases of Helkath (*portion of—*) Galilee, Ataroth, Chesulloth and Iim.¹

In our ignorance of Gath's position, we should be equally at fault about Moresheth, for the name has vanished, were it not for one or two plausible pieces of evidence. Belonging to Gath, Moresheth must have lain near the Philistine border: the towns among which Micah includes it are situate in that region; and Jerome declares that the name—though the form, Morasthi, in which he cites it is suspicious—was in his time still extant in a small village to the east of Eleutheropolis or Beit-Jibrin. Jerome cites Morasthi as distinct from the neighbouring Mareshah, which is also quoted by Micah beside Moresheth-Gath.²

Moresheth was, therefore, a place in the Shephelah, or range of low hills which lie between the hill-country of Judah and the Philistine plain. It is the opposite exposure from the wilderness of Tekoa,³ some seventeen miles away across the watershed. As the home of Amos is bare and desert, so the home of Micah is fair and fertile. The irregular chalk hills are

¹ Ataroth (Numb. xxxii. 3) is Atroth-Shophan (*ib.* 35); Chesulloth (Josh. xix. 18) is Chisloth-Tabor (*ib.* 12); Iim (Numb. xxxiii. 45) is Iye-Abarim (*ib.* 44).

² "Michæam de Morasthi qui usque hodie juxta Eleutheropolim, haud grandis est viculus."—Jerome, Preface to Micha. "Morasthi, unde fuit Micheas propheta, est autem vicus contra orientem Eleuthero-poleos."—*Onomasticon*, which also gives "Maresa, in tribu Juda; cuius nunc tantummodo sunt ruinæ in secundo lapide Eleuthero-poleos." See, too, the *Epitaphium S. Paulæ*: "Videam Morasthim sepulchrum quondam Michææ, nunc ecclesiam, et ex latere derelinquam Choræos, et Gitthæos et Maresam." The occurrence of a place bearing the name Property-of-Gath so close to Beit-Jibrin certainly strengthens the claims of the latter to be Gath. See *Hist. Geog.*, p. 196.

³ See above, pp. 74 ff.

separated by broad glens, in which the soil is alluvial and red, with room for cornfields on either side of the perennial or almost perennial streams. The olive groves on the braes are finer than either those of the plain below or of the Judæan tableland above. There is herbage for cattle. Bees murmur everywhere, larks are singing, and although to-day you may wander in the maze of hills for hours without meeting a man or seeing a house, you are never out of sight of the traces of ancient habitation, and seldom beyond sound of the human voice—shepherds and ploughmen calling to their flocks and to each other across the glens. There are none of the conditions or of the occasions of a large town. But, like the south of England, the country is one of villages and homesteads, breeding good yeomen—men satisfied and in love with their soil, yet borderers with a far outlook and a keen vigilance and sensibility. The Shephelah is sufficiently detached from the capital and body of the land to beget in her sons an independence of mind and feeling, but so much upon the edge of the open world as to endue them at the same time with that sense of the responsibilities of warfare, which the national statesmen, aloof and at ease in Zion, could not possibly have shared.

Upon one of the westmost terraces of this Shephelah, nearly a thousand feet above the sea, lay Moresheth itself. There is a great view across the undulating plain with its towns and fortresses, Lachish, Eglon, Shaphir and others, beyond which runs the coast road, the famous war-path between Asia and Africa. Ashdod and Gaza are hardly discernible against the glitter of the sea, twenty-two miles away. Behind roll the round bush-covered hills of the Shephelah, with David's hold

at Adullam,¹ the field where he fought Goliath, and many another scene of border warfare; while over them rises the high wall of the Judæan plateau, with the defiles breaking through it to Hebron and Bethlehem.

The valley-mouth near which Moresheth stands has always formed the south-western gateway of Judæa, the Philistine or Egyptian gate, as it might be called, with its outpost at Lachish, twelve miles across the plain. Roads converge upon this valley-mouth from all points of the compass. Beit-Jibrin, which lies in it, is midway between Jerusalem and Gaza, about twenty-five miles from either, nineteen miles from Bethlehem and thirteen from Hebron. Visit the place at any point of the long history of Palestine, and you find it either full of passengers or a centre of campaign. Asa defeated the Ethiopians here. The Maccabees and John Hyrcanus contested Mareshah, two miles off, with the Idumeans. Gabinius fortified Mareshah. Vespasian and Saladin both deemed the occupation of the valley necessary before they marched upon Jerusalem. Septimius Severus made Beit-Jibrin the capital of the Shephelah, and laid out military roads, whose pavements still radiate from it in all directions. The *Onomasticon* measures distances in the Shephelah from Beit-Jibrin. Most of the early pilgrims from Jerusalem by Gaza to Sinai or Egypt passed through it, and it was a centre of Crusading operations whether against Egypt during the Latin kingdom or against Jerusalem during the Third Crusade. Not different was the place in the time of Micah. Micah must have seen pass by his

¹ For the situation of Adullam in the Shephelah see *Hist. Geog.*, p. 229.

door the frequent embassies which Isaiah tells us went down to Egypt from Hezekiah's court, and seen return those Egyptian subsidies in which a foolish people put their trust instead of in their God.

In touch, then, with the capital, feeling every throb of its folly and its panic, but standing on that border which must, as he believed, bear the brunt of the invasion that its crimes were attracting, Micah lifted up his voice. They were days of great excitement. The words of Amos and Hosea had been fulfilled upon Northern Israel. Should Judah escape, whose injustice and impurity were as flagrant as her sister's? It were vain to think so. The Assyrians had come up to her northern border. Isaiah was expecting their assault upon Mount Zion.¹ The Lord's Controversy was not closed. Micah will summon the whole earth to hear the old indictment and the still unexhausted sentence.

The prophet speaks :—

*Hear ye, peoples² all ;
Hearken, O Earth, and her fulness !*

¹ Isa. x. 28 ff. This makes it quite conceivable that Micah i. 9, *it hath struck right up to the gate of Jerusalem*, was composed immediately after the fall of Samaria, and not, as Smend imagines, during the campaign of Sennacherib. Against the latter date there is the objection that by then the fall of Samaria, which Micah i. 6 describes as present, was already nearly twenty years past.

² The address is either to the tribes, in which case we must substitute *land* for *earth* in the next line ; or much more probably it is to the Gentile *nations*, but in this case we cannot translate (as all do) in the third line that the Lord will be a witness *against* them, for the charge is only against Israel. They are summoned in the same sense as Amos summons a few of the nations in chap. iii. 9 ff. —The opening words of Micah are original to this passage, and interpolated in the exordium of the other Micah, 1 Kings xxii. 28.

*That Jehovah may be among you to testify,
The Lord from His holy temple !
For, lo ! Jehovah goeth forth from His place ;
He descendeth and marcheth on the heights of the earth.¹
Molten are the mountains beneath Him,
And the valleys gape open,
Like wax in face of the fire,
Like water poured over a fall.*

God speaks :—

*For the transgression of Jacob is all this,
And for the sins of the house of Israel.
What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not
Samaria?
And what is the sin of the house² of Judah? is it
not Jerusalem?
Therefore do I turn Samaria into a ruin of the field,³
And into vineyard terraces ;
And I pour down her stones to the glen,
And lay bare her foundations.⁴
All her images are shattered,
And all her hires are being burned in the fire ;
And all her idols I lay desolate,
For from the hire of a harlot they were gathered,⁵
And to a harlot's hire they return.⁶*

¹ Jehovah's *Temple* or *Place* is not, as in earlier poems, Sinai or Seir (cf. Deborah's song and Deut. xxxiii.), but Heaven (cf. Isaiah xix. or Psalm xxix.).

² So LXX. and other versions.

³ Wellhausen's objections to this phrase are arbitrary and incorrect. A ruin in the midst of soil gone out of cultivation, where before there had been a city among vineyards, is a striking figure of desolation.

⁴ Which is precisely how Herod's Samaria lies at the present day.

⁵ So Ewald.

⁶ It must be kept in mind that all the verbs in the above passage

The prophet speaks :—

*For this let me mourn, let me wail,
Let me go barefoot and stripped (of my robe),
Let me make lamentation like the jackals,
And mourning like the daughters of the desert.¹
For her stroke² is desperate;
Yea, it hath come unto Judah!
It hath smitten right up to the gate of my people,
Up to Jerusalem.*

Within the capital itself Isaiah was also recording the extension of the Assyrian invasion to its walls, but in a different temper.³ He was full of the exulting assurance that, although at the very gate, the Assyrian could not harm the city of Jehovah, but must fall when he lifted his impious hand against it. Micah has no such hope: he is overwhelmed with the thought of Jerusalem's danger. Provincial though he be, and full of wrath at the danger into which the politicians of Jerusalem had dragged the whole country, he profoundly mourns the peril of the capital, *the gate of my people*, as he fondly calls her. Therefore we must not exaggerate the frequently drawn contrast between Isaiah and himself.⁴ To Micah also Jerusalem was dear, and his subsequent prediction of her overthrow⁵ ought to be read with the accent of this previous

may as correctly be given in the future tense; in that case the passage will be dated just before the fall of Samaria, in 722-1, instead of just after.

¹ בְּנוֹת יַעֲנָה, that is, the ostriches: cf. Arab. wa'ana, "white, barren ground." The Arabs call the ostrich "father of the desert: abu saharâ."

² LXX.

³ Isa. x. 28 ff.

⁴ It is well put by Robertson Smith's *Prophets*², pp. 289 ff.

⁵ iii. 12.

mourning for her peril. Nevertheless his heart clings most to his own home, and while Isaiah pictures the Assyrian entering Judah from the north by Migron, Michmash and Nob, Micah anticipates invasion by the opposite gateway of the land, at the door of his own village. His elegy sweeps across the landscape so dear to him. This obscure province was even more than Jerusalem his world, the world of his heart. It gives us a living interest in the man that the fate of these small villages, many of them vanished, should excite in him more passion than the fortunes of Zion herself. In such a passion we can incarnate his spirit. Micah is no longer a book, or an oration, but flesh and blood upon a home and a countryside of his own. We see him on his housetop pouring forth his words before the hills and the far-stretching heathen land. In the name of every village within sight he reads a symbol of the curse that is coming upon his country, and of the sins that have earned the curse. So some of the greatest poets have caught their music from the nameless brooklets of their boyhood's fields; and many a prophet has learned to read the tragedy of man and God's verdict upon sin in his experience of village life. But there was more than feeling in Micah's choice of his own country as the scene of the Assyrian invasion. He had better reasons for his fears than Isaiah, who imagined the approach of the Assyrian from the north. For it is remarkable how invaders of Judæa, from Sennacherib to Vespasian and from Vespasian to Saladin and Richard, have shunned the northern access to Jerusalem and endeavoured to reach her by the very gateway at which Micah stood mourning. He had, too, this greater motive for his fear, that Sargon, as we have seen, was actually in

the neighbourhood, marching to the defeat of Judah's chosen patron, Egypt. Was it not probable that, when the latter was overthrown, Sargon would turn back upon Judah by Lachish and Mareshah? If we keep this in mind we shall appreciate, not only the fond anxiety, but the political foresight that inspires the following passage, which is to our Western taste so strangely cast in a series of plays upon place-names. The disappearance of many of these names, and our ignorance of the transactions to which the verses allude, often render both the text and the meaning very uncertain. Micah begins with the well-known play upon the name of Gath; the Acco which he couples with it is either the Phœnician port to the north of Carmel, the modern Acre, or some Philistine town, unknown to us, but in any case the line forms with the previous one an intelligible couplet: *Tell it not in Tell-town; Weep not in Weep-town.* The following Beth-le-'Aphrah, *House of Dust*, must be taken with them, for in the phrase *roll thyself* there is a play upon the name Philistine. So, too, Shaphir, or Beauty, the modern Suafir, lay in the Philistine region. Sa'anán and Beth-esel and Maroth are unknown; but if Micah, as is probable, begins his list far away on the western horizon and comes gradually inland, they also are to be sought for on the maritime plain. Then he draws nearer by Lachish, on the first hills, and in the leading pass towards Judah, to Moresheth-Gath, Achzib, Mareshah and Adullam, which all lie within Israel's territory and about the prophet's own home. We understand the allusion, at least, to Lachish in ver. 13. As the last Judæan outpost towards Egypt, and on a main road thither, Lachish would receive the Egyptian subsidies of horses and chariots, in which the poli-

ticians put their trust instead of in Jehovah. Therefore she was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion. And if we can trust the text of ver. 14, Lachish would pass on the Egyptian ambassadors to Moresheth-Gath, the next stage of their approach to Jerusalem. But this is uncertain. With Moresheth-Gath is coupled Achzib, a town at some distance from Jerome's site for the former, to the neighbourhood of which, Mareshah, we are brought back again in ver. 15. Adullam, with which the list closes, lies some eight or ten miles to the north-east of Mareshah.

The prophet speaks :—

Tell it not in Gath,

Weep not in Acco,¹

In Beth-le-^cAphrah² roll thyself in dust.

Pass over, inhabitress of Shaphir,³ thy shame uncovered!

The inhabitress of Sa'anān⁴ shall not march forth;

The lamentation of Beth-esel⁵ taketh from you its standing.

The inhabitress of Maroth⁶ trembleth for good,

¹ LXX, ἐν Ἀκειμ; Heb. "weep not at all."

² לְעֶפְרָה cannot be the Ophrah, עֶפְרָה, of Benjamin. It may be connected with עֶפְרָר, a gazelle; and it is to be noted that S. of Beit-Jibrin there is a wady now called El-Ghufr, the corresponding Arabic word. But, as stated in the text above, the name ought to be one of a Philistine town.

³ Beauty town. This is usually taken to be the modern Suafir on the Philistine plain, 4½ miles S.E. of Ashdod, a site not unsuitable for identification with the Σαφειρ of the *Onom.*, "between Eleuthero- polis and Ascalon," except that Σαφειρ is also described as "in the hill country." Guérin found the name Safar a very little N. of Beit-Jibrin (*Judée*, II. 317).

⁴ March-town: perhaps the same as Şenan (שָׁנַן) of Josh. xv. 37; given along with Migdal-Gad and Hadashah; not identified.

⁵ Unknown.

⁶ "Bitternesses": unknown.

*For evil hath come down from Jehovah to the gate
of Jerusalem.*

*Harness the horse to the chariot, inhabitress of
Lachish,¹*

*That hast been the beginning of sin to the daughter
of Zion;*

Yea, in thee are found the transgressions of Israel.

Therefore thou givest . . .² to Moresheth-Gath:³

*The houses of Achzib⁴ shall deceive the kings of
Israel.*

*Again shall I bring the Possessor [conqueror] to thee,
inhabitress of Mareshah;⁵*

To Adullam⁶ shall come the glory of Israel.

Make thee bald, and shave thee for thy darlings;

Make broad thy baldness like the vulture,

For they go into banishment from thee.

This was the terrible fate which the Assyrian kept before the peoples with whom he was at war. Other foes raided, burned and slew: he carried off whole populations into exile.

Having thus pictured the doom which threatened his people, Micah turns to declare the sins for which it has been sent upon them.

¹ Tell-el-Hesy.

² *Ambassadors or letters of dismissal.*

³ See above, p. 376.

⁴ Josh. xv. 44; mentioned with Keilah and Mareshah; perhaps the present Ain Kezbeh, 8 miles N.N.E. of Beit-Jibrin.

⁵ מְרֵשֶׁת, but in Josh. xv. 44 מְרֵשֶׁת, which is identical with spelling of the present name of a ruin 1 mile S. of Beit-Jibrin. Μαρησα is placed by Eusebius (*Onom.*) 2 Roman miles S. of Eleutheropolis (= Beit-Jibrin).

⁶ 6 miles N.E. of Beit-Jibrin.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE PROPHET OF THE POOR

MICAH ii., iii.

WE have proved Micah's love for his countryside in the effusion of his heart upon her villages with a grief for their danger greater than his grief for Jerusalem. Now in his treatment of the sins which give that danger its fatal significance, he is inspired by the same partiality for the fields and the folk about him. While Isaiah chiefly satirises the fashions of the town and the intrigues of the court, Micah scourges the avarice of the landowner and the injustice which oppresses the peasant. He could not, of course, help sharing Isaiah's indignation for the fatal politics of the capital, any more than Isaiah could help sharing his sense of the economic dangers of the provinces;¹ but it is the latter with which Micah is most familiar and on which he spends his wrath. These so engross him, indeed, that he says almost nothing about the idolatry, or the luxury, or the hideous vice, which, according to Amos and Hosea, were now corrupting the nation.

Social wrongs are always felt most acutely, not in the town, but in the country. It was so in the days of Rome, whose earliest social revolts were agrarian.²

¹ Isa. v. 8.

² Mr. Congreve, in his *Essay on Slavery* appended to his edition

It was so in the Middle Ages : the fourteenth century saw both the Jacquerie in France and the Peasants' Rising in England ; Langland, who was equally familiar with town and country, expends nearly all his sympathy upon the poverty of the latter, "the poure folk in cotes." It was so after the Reformation, under the new spirit of which the first social revolt was the Peasants' War in Germany. It was so at the French Revolution, which began with the march of the starving peasants into Paris. And it is so still, for our new era of social legislation has been forced open, not by the poor of London and the large cities, but by the peasantry of Ireland and the crofters of the Scottish Highlands. Political discontent and religious heresy take their start among industrial and manufacturing centres, but the first springs of the social revolt are nearly always found among rural populations.

Why the country should begin to feel the acuteness of social wrong before the town is sufficiently obvious. In the town there are mitigations, and there are escapes. If the conditions of one trade become oppressive, it is easier to pass to another. The workers are better educated and better organised ; there is a middle class, and the tyrant dare not bring matters to so high a crisis. The might of the wealthy, too, is divided ; the poor man's employer is seldom at the same time his landlord. But in the country power easily gathers into the hands of the few. The labourer's opportunities and means of work, his home, his very standing-ground, are often all of them the property of one man. In the

of Aristotle's *Politics*, p. 496, points out that all the servile wars from which Rome suffered arose, not in the capital, but in the provinces, notably in Sicily.

country the rich have a real power of life and death, and are less hampered by competition with each other and by the force of public opinion. One man cannot hold a city in fee, but one man can affect for evil or for good almost as large a population as a city's, when it is scattered across a countryside.

This is precisely the state of wrong which Micah attacks. The social changes of the eighth century in Israel were peculiarly favourable to its growth.¹ The enormous increase of money which had been produced by the trade of Uzziah's reign threatened to overwhelm the simple economy under which every family had its craft. As in many another land and period, the social problem was the descent of wealthy men, land-hungry, upon the rural districts. They made the poor their debtors, and bought out the peasant proprietors. They absorbed into their power numbers of homes, and had at their individual disposal the lives and the happiness of thousands of their fellow-countrymen. Isaiah had cried, *Woe upon them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room for the common people, and the inhabitants of the rural districts grow fewer and fewer.*² Micah pictures the recklessness of those plutocrats—the fatal ease with which their wealth enabled them to dispossess the yeomen of Judah.

The prophet speaks :—

*Woe to them that plan mischief,
And on their beds work out evil !
As soon as morning breaks they put it into execution,
For—it lies to the power of their hands !*

¹ See above, pp. 32 ff.

² Isa. v. 8.

*They covet fields and—seize them,
Houses and—lift them up.
So they crush a good man and his home,
A man and his heritage.*

This is the evil—the ease with which wrong is done in the country! *It lies to the power of their hands: they covet and seize.* And what is it that they get so easily—not merely field and house, so much land and stone and lime: it is human life, with all that makes up personal independence, and the security of home and of the family. That these should be at the mercy of the passion or the caprice of one man—this is what stirs the prophet's indignation. We shall presently see how the tyranny of wealth was aided by the bribed and unjust judges of the country; and how, growing reckless, the rich betook themselves, as the lords of the feudal system in Europe continually did, to the basest of assaults upon the persons of peaceful men and women. But meantime Micah feels that by themselves the economic wrongs explain and justify the doom impending on the nation. When this doom falls, by the Divine irony of God it shall take the form of a conquest of the land by the heathen, and the disposal of these great estates to the foreigner.

The prophet speaks:—

*Therefore thus saith Jehovah:
Behold, I am planning evil against this race,
From which ye shall not withdraw your necks,
Nor walk upright;
For an evil time it is !¹*

¹ Cf. Amos v. 13.

*In that day shall they raise a taunt-song against
you,
And wail out the wailing ("It is done");¹ and say,
"We be utterly undone:
My people's estate is measured off!²
How they take it away from me!³
To the rebel our fields are allotted."
So thou shalt have none to cast the line by lot
In the congregation of Jehovah.*

No restoration at time of Jubilee for lands taken away in this fashion! There will be no congregation of Jehovah left!

At this point the prophet's pessimist discourse, that must have galled the rich, is interrupted by their clamour to him to stop.

The rich speak:—

*Prate not, they prate, let none prate of such things!
Revilings will never cease!
O thou that speakest thus to the house of Jacob,⁴
Is the spirit of Jehovah cut short?
Or are such His doings?
Shall not His words mean well with him that walketh
uprightly?*

So the rich, in their immoral confidence that Jehovah was neither weakened nor could permit such a disaster

¹ "Fuit." But whether this is a gloss, as of the name of the dirge or of the tune, or a part of the text, is uncertain. Query: וְנָחָה יְנַהֵה וְאָמַר.

² So LXX., and adds: "with the measuring rope."

³ Or (after the LXX.) *there is none to give it back to me.*

⁴ Uncertain. "Is the house of Jacob . . . ?" (Wellhausen). "What a saying, O house of Jacob?" (Ewald and Guthe). In the latter case the interruption of the rich ceases with the previous line, and this one is the beginning of the prophet's answer to them.

to fall on His own people, tell the prophet that his sentence of doom on the nation, and especially on themselves, is absurd, impossible. They cry the eternal cry of Respectability: "God can mean no harm to the like of us! His words are good to them that walk uprightly—and we are conscious of being such. What you, prophet, have charged us with are nothing but natural transactions." The Lord Himself has His answer ready. Upright indeed! They have been unprovoked plunderers!

God speaks:—

*But ye are the foes of My people,
Rising against those that are peaceful;
The mantle ye strip from them that walk quietly by,
Averse to war!¹
Women of My people ye tear from their happy
homes,²
From their children ye take My glory for ever.
Rise and begone—for this is no resting-place!
Because of the uncleanness that bringeth destruction,
Destruction incurable.*

Of the outrages on the goods of honest men, and the persons of women and children, which are possible in a time of peace, when the rich are tyrannous and

¹ So we may conjecture the very obscure details of a verse whose general meaning, however, is evident. For ואתם לואתמול read ואתם ל. The LXX. takes שלמה as *peace* and not as *cloak*, for which there seems to be no place beside ארר (or אדרת). Wellhausen with further alterations renders: "But ye come forward as enemies against My people; from good friends ye rob their . . . , from peaceful wanderers war-booty."

² Wellhausen reads בני for בית, "tenderly bred children," another of the many emendations which he proposes in the interests of complete parallelism. See the Preface to this volume.

abetted by mercenary judges and prophets, we have an illustration analogous to Micah's in the complaint of Peace in Langland's vision of English society in the fourteenth century. The parallel to our prophet's words is very striking:—

“ And thanne come Pees into parlement · and put forth a bille,
 How Wronge ageines his wille · had his wyf taken.
 ‘ Both my gees and my gryns¹ · his gadelynges² feccheth ;
 I dar noughte for fere of hym · fyghte ne chyde.
 He borwed of me bayard³ · he broughte hym home nevre,
 Ne no ferthyngge ther-fore · for naughte I couthe plede.
 He meymteneth his men · to marther myne hewen,⁴
 Forstalleth my feyres⁵ · and fighteth in my chepyngge,
 And breketh up my bernes dore · and bereth aweye my whete,
 And taketh me but a taile⁶ · for ten quarters of otes,
 And yet he bet me ther-to · and lyth bi my mayde,
 I nam⁷ noughte hardy for hym · uneth⁸ to loke.’ ”

They pride themselves that all is stable and God is with them. How can such a state of affairs be stable ! They feel at ease, yet injustice can never mean rest. God has spoken the final sentence, but with a rare sarcasm the prophet adds his comment on the scene. These rich men had been flattered into their religious security by hireling prophets, who had opposed himself. As they leave the presence of God, having heard their sentence, Micah looks after them and muses in quiet prose.

The prophet speaks:—

Yea, if one whose walk is wind and falsehood were to try to cozen thee, saying, I will babble to thee of wine and strong drink, then he might be the prophet of such a people.

At this point in chap. ii. there have somehow slipped into the text two verses (12, 13), which all are agreed

¹ Little pigs.

² A horse.

³ Fairs, markets.

⁴ Am not.

⁵ Fellows.

⁶ Servants.

⁷ A tally.

⁸ Scarcely.

do not belong to it, and for which we must find another place.¹ They speak of a return from the Exile, and interrupt the connection between ver. 11 and the first verse of chap. iii. With the latter Micah begins a series of three oracles, which give the substance of his own prophesying in contrast to that of the false prophets whom he has just been satirising. He has told us what they say, and he now begins the first of his own oracles with the words, *But I said*. It is an attack upon the authorities of the nation, whom the false prophets flatter. Micah speaks very plainly to them. Their business is to know justice, and yet they love wrong. They flay the people with their exactions; they cut up the people like meat.

The prophet speaks:—*But I said,*
Hear now, O chiefs of Jacob,
And rulers of the house of Israel:
Is it not yours to know justice?—
Haters of good and lovers of evil,
Tearing their hide from upon them
 (he points to the people),
And their flesh from the bones of them;
And who devour the flesh of my people,
And their hide they have stripped from them
And their bones have they cleft,

¹ *I will gather, gather thee, O Jacob, in mass,*
I will bring, bring together the Remnant of Israel!
I will set them like sheep in a fold,
Like a flock in the midst of the pasture.
They shall hum with men!
The breach-breaker hath gone up before them:
They have broken the breach, have carried the gate, and are gone
out by it;
And their king hath passed on before them, and Jehovah at their
head.

*And served it up as if from a pot,
Like meat from the thick of the caldron !
At that time shall they cry to Jehovah,
And He will not answer them ;
But hide His face from them at that time,
Because they have aggravated their deeds.*

These words of Micah are terribly strong, but there have been many other ages and civilisations than his own of which they have been no more than true. "They crop us," said a French peasant of the lords of the great Louis' time, "as the sheep crops grass." "They treat us like their food," said another on the eve of the Revolution.

Is there nothing of the same with ourselves? While Micah spoke he had wasted lives and bent backs before him. His speech is elliptic till you see his finger pointing at them. Pinched peasant-faces peer between all his words and fill the ellipses. And among the living poor to-day are there not starved and bitten faces—bodies with the blood sucked from them, with the Divine image crushed out of them? Brothers, we cannot explain all of these by vice. Drunkenness and unthrift do account for much; but how much more is explicable only by the following facts! Many men among us are able to live in fashionable streets and keep their families comfortable only by paying their employés a wage upon which it is impossible for men to be strong or women to be virtuous. Are those not using these as their food? They tell us that if they are to give higher wages they must close their business, and cease paying wages at all; and they are right if they themselves continue to live on the scale they do. As long as many families are maintained in

comfort by the profits of businesses in which some or all of the employés work for less than they can nourish and repair their bodies upon, the simple fact is that the one set are feeding upon the other set. It may be inevitable, it may be the fault of the system and not of the individual, it may be that to break up the system would mean to make things worse than ever—but all the same the truth is clear that many families of the middle class, and some of the very wealthiest of the land, are nourished by the waste of the lives of the poor. Now and again the fact is acknowledged with as much shamelessness as was shown by any tyrant in the days of Micah. To a large employer of labour, who was complaining that his employés, by refusing to live at the low scale of Belgian workmen, were driving trade from this country, the present writer once said: "Would it not meet your wishes if, instead of your workmen being levelled down, the Belgians were levelled up? This would make the competition fair between you and the employers in Belgium." His answer was, "I care not so long as I get my profits." He was a religious man, a liberal giver to his Church, and he died leaving more than one hundred thousand pounds.

Micah's tyrants, too, had religion to support them. A number of the hireling prophets, whom we have seen both Amos and Hosea attack, gave their blessing to this social system, which crushed the poor, for they shared its profits. They lived upon the alms of the rich, and flattered according as they were fed. To them Micah devotes the second oracle of chap. iii., and we find confirmed by his words the principle we laid down before, that in that age the one great difference between the false and the true prophet was what it has been

in every age since then till now— an ethical difference ; and not a difference of dogma, or tradition, or ecclesiastical note. The false prophet spoke, consciously or unconsciously, for himself and his living. He sided with the rich ; he shut his eyes to the social condition of the people ; he did not attack the sins of the day. This made him *false*—robbed him of insight and the power of prediction. But the true prophet exposed the sins of his people. Ethical insight and courage, burning indignation of wrong, clear vision of the facts of the day—this was what Jehovah's spirit put into him, this was what Micah felt to be inspiration.

The prophet speaks :—

*Thus saith Jehovah against the prophets who lead
my people astray,
Who while they have ought between their teeth
proclaim peace,
But against him who will not lay to their mouths
they sanctify war !
Wherefore night shall be yours without vision,
And yours shall be darkness without divination ;
And the sun shall go down on the prophets,
And the day shall darken about them ;
And the seers shall be put to the blush,
And the diviners be ashamed :
All of them shall cover the beard,
For there shall be no answer from God.
But I—I am full of power by the spirit of Jehovah,
and justice and might,
To declare to Jacob his transgressions and to Israel
his sin.*

In the third oracle of this chapter rulers and prophets are combined—how close the conspiracy

between them! It is remarkable that, in harmony with Isaiah, Micah speaks no word against the king. But evidently Hezekiah had not power to restrain the nobles and the rich. When this oracle was uttered it was a time of peace, and the lavish building, which we have seen to be so marked a characteristic of Israel in the eighth century,¹ was in process. Jerusalem was larger and finer than ever. Ah, it was a building of God's own city *in blood!* Judges, priests and prophets were all alike mercenary, and the poor were oppressed for a reward. No walls, however sacred, could stand on such foundations. Did they say that they built her so grandly, for Jehovah's sake? Did they believe her to be inviolate because He was in her? They should see. Zion—yes, Zion—should be ploughed like a field, and the Mountain of the Lord's Temple become desolate.

The prophet speaks :—

*Hear now this, O chiefs of the house of Jacob,
And rulers of the house of Israel,
Who spurn justice and twist all that is straight,
Building Zion in blood, and Jerusalem with crime!
Her chiefs give judgment for a bribe,
And her priests oracles for a reward,
And her prophets divine for silver;
And on Jehovah they lean, saying:
"Is not Jehovah in the midst of us?
Evil cannot come at us."
Therefore for your sakes shall Zion be ploughed like
a field,
And Jerusalem become heaps,
And the Mount of the House mounds in a jungle.*

¹ See above, p. 33.

It is extremely difficult for us to place ourselves in a state of society in which bribery is prevalent, and the fingers both of justice and of religion are gilded by their suitors. But this corruption has always been common in the East. "An Oriental state can never altogether prevent the abuse by which officials, small and great, enrich themselves in illicit ways."¹ The strongest government takes the bribery for granted, and periodically prunes the rank fortunes of its great officials. A weak government lets them alone. But in either case the poor suffer from unjust taxation and from laggard or perverted justice. Bribery has always been found, even in the more primitive and puritan forms of Semitic life. Mr. Doughty has borne testimony with regard to this among the austere Wahabees of Central Arabia. "When I asked if there were no handling of bribes at Hâyil by those who are nigh the prince's ear, it was answered, 'Nay.' The Byzantine corruption cannot enter into the eternal and noble simplicity of this people's (airy) life, in the poor nomad country; but (we have seen) the art is not unknown to the subtle-headed Shammar princes, who thereby help themselves with the neighbour Turkish governments."² The bribes of the ruler of Hâyil "are, according to the shifting weather of the world, to great Ottoman government men; and now on account of Kheybar, he was gilding some of their crooked fingers in Medina."³ Nothing marks the difference of Western government more than the absence of all this, especially from our courts of justice. Yet the improvement has

¹ Nöldeke, *Sketches from Eastern History*, translated by Black, pp. 134 f.

² *Arabia Deserta*, I. 607.

³ *Id.*, II. 20.

only come about within comparatively recent centuries. What a large space, for instance, does Langland give to the arraiging of "Mede," the corrupter of all authorities and influences in the society of his day! Let us quote his words, for again they provide a most exact parallel to Micah's, and may enable us to realise a state of life so contrary to our own. It is Conscience who arraigns Mede before the King:—

"By ihesus with here jeweles · youre justices she shendeth,¹
 And lith² agein the lawe · and letteth hym the gate,
 That feith may noughte have his forth³ · here floreines go so
 thikke,

She ledeth the lawe as hire list · and lovedays maketh
 And doth men lese thorw hire love · that law myghte wynne,
 The mase⁴ for a mene man · though he mote⁵ hir eure.
 Law is so lordeliche · and loth to make ende,
 Without presentz or pens⁶ · she pleseth wel fewe.

* * * * *

For pore men mowe⁷ have no powere · to pleyne⁸ hem though
 thei smerte;

Suche a maistre is Mede · amonge men of gode."⁹

¹ Ruins.

⁴ Confusion.

⁷ May.

² Lieth.

⁵ Summon.

⁸ Complain.

³ Course.

⁶ Pence.

⁹ Substance or property.

CHAPTER XXVII

ON TIME'S HORIZON

MICAH iv. 1-7.

THE immediate prospect of Zion's desolation which closes chap. iii. is followed in the opening of chap. iv. by an ideal picture of her exaltation and supremacy *in the issue of the days*. We can hardly doubt that this arrangement has been made of purpose, nor can we deny that it is natural and artistic. Whether it be due to Micah himself, or whether he wrote the second passage, are questions we have already discussed.¹ Like so many others of their kind, they cannot be answered with certainty, far less with dogmatism. But I repeat, I see no conclusive reason for denying either to the circumstances of Micah's times or to the principles of their prophecy the possibility of such a hope as inspires chap. iv. 1-4. Remember how the prophets of the eighth century identified Jehovah with supreme and universal righteousness; remember how Amos explicitly condemned the aggravations of war and slavery among the heathen as sins against Him, and how Isaiah claimed the future gains of Tyrian commerce as gifts for His sanctuary; remember how Amos heard His voice come forth from Jerusalem, and Isaiah counted upon the

¹ See above, pp. 365 ff.

eternal inviolateness of His shrine and city,—and you will not think it impossible for a third Judæan prophet of that age, whether he was Micah or another, to have drawn the prospect of Jerusalem which now opens before us.

It is the far-off horizon of time, which, like the spatial horizon, always seems a fixed and eternal line, but as constantly shifts with the shifting of our standpoint or elevation. Every prophet has his own vision of *the latter days*; seldom is that prospect the same. Determined by the circumstances of the seer, by the desires these prompt or only partially fulfil, it changes from age to age. The ideal is always shaped by the real, and in this vision of the eighth century there is no exception. This is not any of the ideals of later ages, when the evil was the oppression of the Lord's people by foreign armies or their scattering in exile; it is not, in contrast to these, the spectacle of the armies of the Lord of Hosts imbrued in the blood of the heathen, or of the columns of returning captives filling all the narrow roads to Jerusalem, *like streams in the south*; nor, again, is it a nation of priests gathering about a rebuilt temple and a restored ritual. But because the pain of the greatest minds of the eighth century was the contradiction between faith in the God of Zion as Universal Righteousness and the experience that, nevertheless, Zion had absolutely no influence upon surrounding nations, this vision shows a day when Zion's influence will be as great as her right, and from far and wide the nations whom Amos has condemned for their transgressions against Jehovah will acknowledge His law, and be drawn to Jerusalem to learn of Him. Observe that nothing is said of Israel going forth to teach the nations the law of the

Lord. That is the ideal of a later age, when Jews were scattered across the world. Here, in conformity with the experience of a still untravelled people, we see the Gentiles drawing in upon the Mountain of the House of the Lord. With the same lofty impartiality which distinguishes the oracles of Amos on the heathen, the prophet takes no account of their enmity to Israel; nor is there any talk—such as later generations were almost forced by the hostility of neighbouring tribes to indulge in—of politically subduing them to the king in Zion. Jehovah will arbitrate between them, and the result shall be the institution of a great peace, with no special political privilege to Israel, unless this be understood in ver. 5, which speaks of such security to life as was impossible, at that time at least, in all borderlands of Israel. But among the heathen themselves there will be a resting from war: the factions and ferocities of that wild Semitic world, which Amos so vividly characterised,¹ shall cease. In all this there is nothing beyond the possibility of suggestion by the circumstances of the eighth century or by the spirit of its prophecy.

A prophet speaks:—

And it shall come to pass in the issue of the days,²

¹ See above, Chap. VII.

² אַחֲרֵית is the hindmost, furthest, ultimate, whether of space (Psalm cxxxix. 9: "the uttermost part of the sea"), or of time (Deut. xi. 12: "the end of the year"). It is the end as compared with the beginning, the sequel with the start, the future with the present (Job xlii. 12). In Proverbs it is chiefly used in the moral sense of issue or result. But it chiefly occurs in the phrase used here, אַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים, not "the latter days," as A.V., nor ultimate days, for in these phrases lurks the idea of time having an end, but the *after-days* (Cheyne), or, better still, the *issue of the days*.

*That the Mount of the House of Jehovah shall be
 established on the tops¹ of the mountains,
 And lifted shall it be above the hills,
 And peoples shall flow to it,
 And many nations shall go and say :
 "Come, and let us up to the Mount of Jehovah,
 And to the House of the God of Jacob,
 That He may teach us of His ways,
 And we will walk in His paths."
 For from Zion goeth forth the law,
 And the word of Jehovah from out of Jerusalem !
 And He shall judge between many peoples,
 And decide² for strong nations far and wide ;³
 And they shall hammer their swords into plough-
 shares,
 And their spears into pruning-hooks :
 They shall not lift up, nation against nation, a sword,
 And they shall not any more learn war.
 Every man shall dwell under his vine
 And under his fig-tree,
 And none shall make afraid ;
 For the mouth of Jehovah of Hosts has spoken.*

What connection this last verse is intended to have with the preceding is not quite obvious. It may mean that every family among the Gentiles shall dwell in peace ; or, as suggested above, that with the voluntary disarming of the surrounding heathendom, Israel herself shall dwell secure, in no fear of border raids and slave-hunting expeditions, with which especially Micah's Shephelah and other borderlands were familiar. The verse does not occur in Isaiah's quotation of the three which precede it. We can scarcely suppose, vain though

¹ LXX.² Or *arbitrate*.³ Literally: "up to far away."

we may be to do so, that Micah added the verse in order to exhibit the future correction of the evils he has been deploring in chap. iii. : the insecurity of the householder in Israel before the unscrupulous land-grabbing of the wealthy. Such are not the evils from which this passage prophesies redemption. It deals only, like the first oracles of Amos, with the relentlessness and ferocity of the heathen : under Jehovah's arbitrament these shall be at peace, and whether among themselves or in Israel, hitherto so exposed to their raids, men shall dwell in unalarmed possession of their houses and fields. Security from war, not from social tyranny, is what is promised.

The following verse (5) gives in a curious way the contrast of the present to that future in which all men will own the sway of one God. *For at the present time all the nations are walking each in the name of his God, but we go in the name of Jehovah for ever and aye.*

To which vision, complete in itself, there has been added by another hand, of what date we cannot tell, a further effect of God's blessed influence. To peace among men shall be added healing and redemption, the ingathering of the outcast and the care of the crippled.

*In that day—'tis the oracle of Jehovah—
I will gather the halt,
And the cast-off I will bring in, and all that I have
afflicted ;
And I will make the halt for a Remnant,¹
And her that was weakened² into a strong people,
And Jehovah shall reign over them
In the Mount of Zion from now and for ever.*

¹ That which shall abide and be the stock of the future.

² LXX. *cast off.*

Whatever be the origin of the separate oracles which compose this passage (iv. 1-7), they form as they now stand a beautiful whole, rising from Peace through Freedom to Love. They begin with obedience to God and they culminate in the most glorious service which God or man may undertake, the service of saving the lost. See how the Divine spiral ascends. We have, first, Religion the centre and origin of all, compelling the attention of men by its historical evidence of justice and righteousness. We have the world's willingness to learn of it. We have the results in the widening brotherhood of nations, in universal Peace, in Labour freed from War, and with none of her resources absorbed by the conscriptions and armaments which in our times are deemed necessary for enforcing peace. We have the universal diffusion and security of Property, the prosperity and safety of the humblest home. And, finally, we have this free strength and wealth inspired by the example of God Himself to nourish the broken and to gather in the forwandered.

Such is the ideal world, seen and promised two thousand five hundred years ago, out of as real an experience of human sin and failure as ever mankind awoke to. Are we nearer the Vision to-day, or does it still hang upon time's horizon, that line which seems so stable from every seer's point of view, but which moves from the generations as fast as they travel to it?

So far from this being so, there is much in the Vision that is not only nearer us than it was to the Hebrew prophets, and not only abreast of us, but actually achieved and behind us, as we live and strive still onward. Yes, brothers, actually behind us! History has in part fulfilled the promised influence of religion upon the nations. The Unity of God has been

owned, and the civilised peoples bow to the standards of justice and of mercy first revealed from Mount Zion. *Many nations and powerful nations* acknowledge the arbitrament of the God of the Bible. We have had revealed that High Fatherhood of which every family in heaven and earth is named; and wherever that is believed the brotherhood of men is confessed. We have seen Sin, that profound discord in man and estrangement from God, of which all human hatreds and malices are the fruit, atoned for and reconciled by a Sacrifice in face of which human pride and passion stand abashed. The first part of the Vision is fulfilled. *The nations stream to the God of Jerusalem and His Christ.* And though to-day our Peace be but a paradox, and the "Christian" nations stand still from war not in love, but in fear of one another, there are in every nation an increasing number of men and women, with growing influence, who, without being fanatics for peace, or blind to the fact that war may be a people's duty in fulfilment of its own destiny or in relief of the enslaved, do yet keep themselves from foolish forms of patriotism, and by their recognition of each other across all national differences make sudden and unconsidered war more and more of an impossibility. I write this in the sound of that call to stand upon arms which broke like thunder upon our Christmas peace; but, amid all the ignoble jealousies and hot rashness which prevail, how the air, burned clean by that first electric discharge, has filled with the determination that war shall not happen in the interests of mere wealth or at the caprice of a tyrant! God help us to use this peace for the last ideals of His prophet! May we see, not that of which our modern peace has been far too full, mere freedom for the wealth of the few to

increase at the expense of the mass of mankind. May our Peace mean the gradual disarmament of the nations, the increase of labour, the diffusion of property, and, above all, the redemption of the waste of the people and the recovery of our outcasts. Without this, peace is no peace; and better were war to burn out by its fierce fires those evil humours of our secure comfort, which render us insensible to the needy and the fallen at our side. Without the redemptive forces at work which Christ brought to earth, peace is no peace; and the cruelties of war, that slay and mutilate so many, are as nothing to the cruelties of a peace which leaves us insensible to the outcasts and the perishing, of whom there are so many even in our civilisation.

One application of the prophecy may be made at this moment. We are told by those who know best and have most responsibility in the matter that an ancient Church and people of Christ are being left a prey to the wrath of an infidel tyrant, not because Christendom is without strength to compel him to deliver, but because to use the strength, would be to imperil the peace, of Christendom. It is an ignoble peace which cannot use the forces of redemption, and with the cry of Armenia in our ears the Unity of Europe is but a mockery.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE KING TO COME

MICAH iv. 8—v

WHEN a people has to be purged of long injustice, when some high aim of liberty or of order has to be won, it is remarkable how often the drama of revolution passes through three acts. There is first the period of criticism and of vision, in which men feel discontent, dream of new things, and put their hopes into systems: it seems then as if the future were to come of itself. But often a catastrophe, relevant or irrelevant, ensues: the visions pale before a vast conflagration, and poet, philosopher and prophet disappear under the feet of a mad mob of wreckers. Yet this is often the greatest period of all, for somewhere in the midst of it a strong character is forming, and men, by the very anarchy, are being taught, in preparation for him, the indispensableness of obedience and loyalty. With their chastened minds he achieves the third act, and fulfils all of the early vision that God's ordeal by fire has proved worthy to survive. Thus history, when distraught, rallies again upon the Man.

To this law the prophets of Israel only gradually gave expression. We find no trace of it among the earliest of them; and in the essential faith of all there

was much which predisposed them against the conviction of its necessity. For, on the one hand, the seers were so filled with the inherent truth and inevitableness of their visions, that they described these as if already realised; there was no room for a great figure to rise before the future, for with a rush the future was upon them. On the other hand, it was ever a principle of prophecy that God is able to dispense with human aid. "In presence of the Divine omnipotence all secondary causes, all interposition on the part of the creature, fall away."¹ The more striking is it that before long the prophets should have begun, not only to look for a Man, but to paint him as the central figure of their hopes. In Hosea, who has no such promise, we already see the instinct at work. The age of revolution which he describes is cursed by its want of men: there is no great leader of the people sent from God; those who come to the front are the creatures of faction and party; there is no king from God.² How different it had been in the great days of old, when God had ever worked for Israel through some man—a Moses, a Gideon, a Samuel, but especially a David. Thus memory equally with the present dearth of personalities prompted to a great desire, and with passion Israel waited for a Man. The hope of the mother for her firstborn, the pride of the father in his son, the eagerness of the woman for her lover, the devotion of the slave to his liberator, the enthusiasm of soldiers for their captain—unite these noblest affections of the human heart and you shall yet fail to reach the passion and the glory with which prophecy looked for the King to Come. Each age, of course, expected him in

¹ Schultz, *A. T. Theol.*, p. 722.

² See above, pp. 276 ff.

the qualities of power and character needed for its own troubles, and the ideal changed from glory unto glory. From valour and victory in war, it became peace and good government, care for the poor and the oppressed, sympathy with the sufferings of the whole people, but especially of the righteous among them, with fidelity to the truth delivered unto the fathers, and, finally, a conscience for the people's sin, a bearing of their punishment and a travail for their spiritual redemption. But all these qualities and functions were gathered upon an individual—a Victor, a King, a Prophet, a Martyr, a Servant of the Lord.

Micah stands among the first, if he is not the very first, who thus focussed the hopes of Israel upon a great Redeemer; and his promise of Him shares all the characteristics just described. In his book it lies next a number of brief oracles with which we are unable to trace its immediate connection. They differ from it in style and rhythm: they are in verse, while it seems to be in prose. They do not appear to have been uttered along with it. But they reflect the troubles out of which the Hero is expected to emerge, and the deliverance which He shall accomplish, though at first they picture the latter without any hint of Himself. They apparently describe an invasion which is actually in course, rather than one which is near and inevitable; and if so they can only date from Sennacherib's campaign against Judah in 701 B.C. Jerusalem is in siege, standing alone in the land,¹ like one of those solitary towers with folds round them

¹ Wellhausen declares that this is unsuitable to the position of Jerusalem in the eighth century, and virtually implies her ruin and desolation. But, on the contrary, it is not so: Jerusalem is still standing, though alone (cf. the similar figure in Isa, i.). Conse-

which were built here and there upon the border pastures of Israel for defence of the flock against the raiders of the desert.¹ The prophet sees the possibility of Zion's capitulation, but the people shall leave her only for their deliverance elsewhere. Many are gathered against her, but he sees them as sheaves upon the floor for Zion to thresh. This oracle (vv. 11-13) cannot, of course, have been uttered at the same time as the previous one, but there is no reason why the same prophet should not have uttered both at different periods. Isaiah had prospects of the fate of Jerusalem which differ quite as much.² Once more (ver. 14) the blockade is established. Israel's ruler is helpless, *smitten on the cheek by the foe*.³ It is to this last picture that the promise of the Deliverer is attached.

The prophet speaks:—

*But thou, O Tower of the Flock,
Hill of the daughter of Zion,
To thee shall arrive the former rule,
And the kingdom shall come to the daughter of
Zion.
Now wherefore criest thou so loud?*

quently the contradiction which Wellhausen sees between this eighth verse and vv. 9, 10, does not exist. He grants that the latter may belong to the time of Sennacherib's invasion—unless it be a *vaticinium post eventum*!

¹ See above, p. 32.

² This in answer to Wellhausen, who thinks the two oracles incompatible, and that the second one is similar to the eschatological prediction common from Ezekiel onwards. Jerusalem, however, is surely still standing.

³ Even Wellhausen agrees that this verse is most suitably dated from the time of Micah,

*Is there no king in thee,¹ or is thy counsellor perished,
That throes have seized thee like a woman in child-
birth ?*

*Quiver and writhe, daughter of Zion, like one in
childbirth :*

*For now must thou forth from the city,
And encamp on the field (and come unto Babel) ;²
There shalt thou be rescued,
There shall Jehovah redeem thee from the hand of
thy foes !*

*And now gather against thee many nations, that
say,*

*“ Let her be violatèd, that our eyes may fasten on
Zion ! ”*

*But they know not the plans of Jehovah,
Nor understand they His counsel,
For He hath gathered them in like sheaves to the
floor.*

*Up and thresh, O daughter of Zion !
For thy horns will I turn into iron,
And thy hoofs will I turn into brass ;
And thou wilt beat down many nations,
And devote to Jehovah their spoil,
And their wealth to the Lord of all earth.*

*Now press thyself together, thou daughter of pressure :³
The foe hath set a wall around us,
With a rod they smite on the cheek Israel's regent !*

¹ Those who maintain the exilic date understand by this Jehovah Himself. In any case it may be He who is meant.

² The words in parenthesis are perhaps a gloss.

³ Uncertain.

*But thou, Beth-Ephrath,¹ smallest among the thou-
sands² of Judah,
From thee unto Me shall come forth the Ruler to
be in Israel!
Yea, of old are His goings forth, from the days of
long ago!
Therefore shall He suffer them till the time that one
bearing shall have born.³
(Then the rest of His brethren shall return with the
children of Israel.)⁴
And He shall stand and shepherd His flock⁵ in the
strength of Jehovah,
In the pride of the name of His God.
And they shall abide!
For now is He great to the ends of the earth.
And Such an One shall be our Peace.⁶*

Bethlehem was the birthplace of David, but when Micah says that the Deliverer shall emerge from her he does not only mean what Isaiah affirms by his promise of a rod from the stock of Jesse, that the King to Come shall spring from the one great dynasty in Judah. Micah means rather to emphasise the rustic and popular origin of the Messiah, *too small to be among the thousands of Judah*. David, the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, was a dearer figure than Solomon son of David the King. He impressed the people's imagination, because he had sprung from themselves, and in

¹ The name Bethlehem is probably a later insertion. I read with Hitzig and others אפרת הצעיר, and omit להיות.

² Smallest form of district: cf. English *hundreds*.

³ Cf. the prophecy of Immanuel, Isa. vii.

⁴ This seems like a later insertion: it disturbs both sense and rhythm.

⁵ So LXX.

⁶ Take this clause from ver. 4 and the following oracle and put it with ver. 3.

his lifetime had been the popular rival of an unlovable despot. Micah himself was the prophet of the country as distinct from the capital, of the peasants as against the rich who oppressed them. When, therefore, he fixed upon Bethlehem as the Messiah's birthplace, he doubtless desired, without departing from the orthodox hope in the Davidic dynasty, to throw round its new representative those associations which had so endeared to the people their father-monarch. The shepherds of Judah, that strong source of undefiled life from which the fortunes of the state and prophecy itself had ever been recuperated, should again send forth salvation. Had not Micah already declared that, after the overthrow of the capital and the rulers, the glory of Israel should come to Adullam, where of old David had gathered its soiled and scattered fragments?

We may conceive how such a promise would affect the crushed peasants for whom Micah wrote. A Saviour, who was one of themselves, not born up there in the capital, foster-brother of the very nobles who oppressed them, but born among the people, sharer of their toils and of their wrongs!—it would bring hope to every broken heart among the disinherited poor of Israel. Yet meantime, be it observed, this was a promise, not for the peasants only, but for the whole people. In the present danger of the nation the class disputes are forgotten, and the hopes of Israel gather upon their Hero for a common deliverance from the foreign foe. *Such an One shall be our peace.* But in the peace He is *to stand and shepherd His flock*, conspicuous and watchful. The country-folk knew what such a figure meant to themselves for security and weal on the land of their fathers. Heretofore their rulers had not been shepherds, but thieves and robbers.

We can imagine the contrast which such a vision must have offered to the fancies of the false prophets. What were they beside this? Deity descending in fire and thunder, with all the other features of the ancient Theophanies that had now become so much cant in the mouths of mercenary traditionalists. Besides those, how sane was this, how footed upon the earth, how practical, how popular in the best sense!

We see, then, the value of Micah's prophecy for his own day. Has it also any value for ours—especially in that aspect of it which must have appealed to the hearts of those for whom chiefly Micah arose? "Is it wise to paint the Messiah, to paint Christ, so much as a working-man? Is it not much more to our purpose to remember the general fact of His humanity, by which He is able to be Priest and Brother to all classes, high and low, rich and poor, the noble and the peasant alike? Is not the Man of Sorrows a much wider name than the Man of Labour?" Let us answer these questions.

The value of such a prophecy of Christ lies in the correctives which it supplies to the Christian apocalypse and theology. Both of these have raised Christ to a throne too far above the actual circumstance of His earthly ministry and the theatre of His eternal sympathies. Whether enthroned in the praises of heaven, or by scholasticism relegated to an ideal and abstract humanity, Christ is lifted away from touch with the common people. But His lowly origin was a fact. He sprang from the most democratic of peoples. His ancestor was a shepherd, and His mother a peasant girl. He Himself was a carpenter: at home, as His parables show, in the fields and the folds and the barns of His country; with the servants of the great houses, with the unemployed in the market; with the

woman in the hovel seeking one piece of silver, with the shepherd on the moors seeking the lost sheep. *The poor had the gospel preached to them; and the common people heard Him gladly.* As the peasants of Judæa must have listened to Micah's promise of His origin among themselves with new hope and patience, so in the Roman empire the religion of Jesus Christ was welcomed chiefly, as the Apostles and the Fathers bear witness, by the lowly and the labouring of every nation. In the great persecution which bears his name, the Emperor Domitian heard that there were two relatives alive of this Jesus whom so many acknowledged as their King, and he sent for them that he might put them to death. But when they came, he asked them to hold up their hands, and seeing these brown and chapped with toil, he dismissed the men, saying, "From such slaves we have nothing to fear." Ah but, Emperor! it is just the horny hands of this religion that thou and thy gods have to fear! Any cynic or satirist of thy literature from Celsus onwards could have told thee that it was by men who worked with their hands for their daily bread, by domestics, artisans and all manner of slaves, that the power of this King should spread, which meant destruction to thee and thine empire! *From little Bethlehem came forth the Ruler, and now He is great to the ends of the earth.*

There follows upon this prophecy of the Shepherd a curious fragment which divides His office among a number of His order, though the grammar returns towards the end to One. The mention of Assyria stamps this oracle also as of the eighth century. Mark the refrain which opens and closes it.¹

¹ Wellhausen alleges in the numbers another trace of the late Apocalyptic writings—but this is not conclusive.

*When Asshûr cometh into our land,
 And when he marcheth on our borders,¹
 Then shall we raise against him seven shepherds
 And eight princes of men.
 And they shall shepherd Asshûr with a sword,
 And Nimrod's land with her own bare blades.
 And He shall deliver from Asshûr,
 When he cometh into our land,
 And marcheth upon our borders.*

There follows an oracle in which there is no evidence of Micah's hand or of his times; but if it carries any proof of a date, it seems a late one.

*And the remnant of Jacob shall be among many
 peoples
 Like the dew from Jehovah,
 Like showers upon grass,
 Which wait not for a man,
 Nor tarry for the children of men.
 And the remnant of Jacob (among nations,) among
 many peoples,
 Shall be like the lion among the beasts of the jungle,
 Like a young lion among the sheepfolds,
 Who, when he cometh by, treadeth and teareth,
 And none may deliver.
 Let thine hand be high on thine adversaries,
 And all thine enemies be cut off!*

Finally in this section we have an oracle full of the notes we had from Micah in the first two chapters. It explains itself. Compare Micah ii. and Isaiah ii.

¹ So LXX. Cf. the refrain at the close.

*And it shall be in that day—'tis the oracle of
Jehovah—*

*That I will cut off thy horses from the midst of thee,
And I will destroy thy chariots ;*

*That I will cut off the cities of thy land,
And tear down all thy fortresses,*

*And I will cut off thine enchantments from thy
hand,*

And thou shalt have no more soothsayers ;

*And I will cut off thine images and thy pillars from
the midst of thee,*

*And thou shalt not bow down any more to the work
of thy hands ;*

*And I will uproot thine Asheras from the midst of
thee,*

And will destroy thine idols.

So shall I do, in My wrath and Mine anger,

Vengeance to the nations, who have not known Me.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE REASONABLENESS OF TRUE RELIGION

MICAH vi. 1-8.

WE have now reached a passage from which all obscurities of date and authorship¹ disappear before the transparence and splendour of its contents. "These few verses," says a great critic, "in which Micah sets forth the true essence of religion, may raise a well-founded title to be counted as the most important in the prophetic literature. Like almost no others, they afford us an insight into the innermost nature of the religion of Israel, as delivered by the prophets."

Usually it is only the last of the verses upon which the admiration of the reader is bestowed: *What doth the Lord require of thee, O man, but to do justice and love mercy and walk humbly with thy God?* But in truth the rest of the passage differeth not in glory; the wonder of it lies no more in its peroration than in its argument as a whole.

The passage is cast in the same form as the opening chapter of the book—that of an Argument or Debate between the God of Israel and His people, upon the great theatre of Nature. The heart must be dull that does not leap to the Presences before which the trial is enacted.

¹ See above, pp. 369 ff.

The prophet speaks :—

*Hear ye now that which Jehovah is saying ;
Arise, contend before the mountains,
And let the hills hear thy voice !
Hear, O mountains, the Lord's Argument,
And ye, the everlasting ! foundations of earth !*

This is not mere scenery. In all the moral questions between God and man, the prophets feel that Nature is involved. Either she is called as a witness to the long history of their relations to each other, or as sharing God's feeling of the intolerableness of the evil which men have heaped upon her, or by her droughts and floods and earthquakes as the executioner of their doom. It is in the first of these capacities that the prophet in this passage appeals to the mountains and eternal foundations of earth. They are called, not because they are the biggest of existences, but because they are the most full of memories and associations with both parties to the Trial.

The main idea of the passage, however, is the Trial itself. We have seen more than once that the forms of religion which the prophets had to combat were those which expressed it mechanically in the form of ritual and sacrifice, and those which expressed it in mere enthusiasm and ecstasy. Between such extremes the prophets insisted that religion was knowledge and that it was conduct—rational intercourse and loving duty between God and man. This is what they figure in their favourite scene of a Debate which is now before us.

*Jehovah hath a Quarrel with His People,
And with Israel He cometh to argue.*

To us, accustomed to communion with the Godhead,

as with a Father, this may seem formal and legal. But if we so regard it we do it an injustice. The form sprang by revolt against mechanical and sensational ideas of religion. It emphasised religion as rational and moral, and at once preserved the reasonableness of God and the freedom of man. God spoke with the people whom He had educated: He pled with them, listened to their statements and questions, and produced His own evidences and reasons. Religion, such a passage as this asserts—religion is not a thing of authority nor of ceremonial nor of mere feeling, but of argument, reasonable presentation and debate. Reason is not put out of court: man's freedom is respected; and he is not taken by surprise through his fears or his feelings. This sublime and generous conception of religion, which we owe first of all to the prophets in their contest with superstitious and slothful theories of religion that unhappily survive among us, was carried to its climax in the Old Testament by another class of writers. We find it elaborated with great power and beauty in the Books of Wisdom. In these the Divine Reason has emerged from the legal forms now before us, and has become the Associate and Friend of Man. The Prologue to the Book of Proverbs tells how Wisdom, fellow of God from the foundation of the world, descends to dwell among men. She comes forth into their streets and markets, she argues and pleads there with an urgency which is equal to the urgency of temptation itself. But it is not till the earthly ministry of the Son of God, His arguments with the doctors, His parables to the common people, His gentle and prolonged education of His disciples, that we see the reasonableness of religion in all its strength and beauty.

In that free court of reason in which the prophets saw God and man plead together, the subjects were such as became them both. For God unfolds no mysteries, and pleads no power, but the debate proceeds upon the facts and evidences of life: the appearance of Character in history; whether the past be not full of the efforts of Love; whether God had not, as human wilfulness permitted Him, achieved the liberation and progress of His people.

God speaks:—

*My people, what have I done unto thee?
And how have I wearied thee—answer Me!
For I brought thee up from the land of Misraim,
And from the house of slavery I redeemed thee.
I sent before thee Moses, Aharon and Miriam.
My people, remember now what Balak king of
Moab counselled,
And how he was answered by Bala'am, Be'or's
son—
So that thou mayest know the righteous deeds of
Jehovah.¹*

Always do the prophets go back to Egypt or the wilderness. There God made the people, there He redeemed them. In lawbook as in prophecy, it is the fact of redemption which forms the main ground of His appeal. Redeemed by Him, the people are not their own, but His. Treated with that wonderful love and patience, like patience and love they are called to bestow upon the weak and miserable beneath them.²

¹ Omitted from the above is the strange clause *from Shittim to Gilgal*, which appears to be a gloss.

² See the passages on the subject in Professor Harper's work on Deuteronomy in this series.

One of the greatest interpreters of the prophets to our own age, Frederick Denison Maurice, has said upon this passage: "We do not know God till we recognise him as a Deliverer; we do not understand our own work in the world till we believe we are sent into it to carry out His designs for the deliverance of ourselves and the race. The bondage I groan under is a bondage of the will. God is emphatically the Redeemer of the will. It is in that character He reveals Himself to us. We could not think of God at all as the God, the living God, if we did not regard Him as such a Redeemer. But if of my will, then of all wills: sooner or later I am convinced He will be manifested as the Restorer, Regenerator—not of something else, but of this—of the fallen spirit that is within us."

In most of the controversies which the prophets open between God and man, the subject on the side of the latter is his sin. But that is not so here. In the controversy which opens the Book of Micah the argument falls upon the transgressions of the people, but here upon their sincere though mistaken methods of approaching God. There God deals with dull consciences, but here with darkened and imploring hearts. In that case we had rebels forsaking the true God for idols, but here are earnest seekers after God, who have lost their way and are weary. Accordingly, as indignation prevailed there, here prevails pity; and though formally this be a controversy under the same legal form as before, the passage breathes tenderness and gentleness from first to last. By this as well as by the recollections of the ancient history of Israel we are reminded of the style of Hosea. But there is no expostulation, as in his book, with the people's continued devotion to ritual. All that is past, and a new

temper prevails. Israel have at last come to feel the vanity of the exaggerated zeal with which Amos pictures them exceeding the legal requirements of sacrifice;¹ and with a despair, sufficiently evident in the superlatives which they use, they confess the futility and weariness of the whole system, even in the most lavish and impossible forms of sacrifice. What then remains for them to do? The prophet answers with the beautiful words, that express an ideal of religion to which no subsequent century has ever been able to add either grandeur or tenderness.

The people speak :—

*Wherewithal shall I come before Jehovah,
Shall I bow myself to God the Most High?
Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings,
With calves of one year?
Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams,
With myriads of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for a guilt-offering,
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*

The prophet answers :—

*He hath shown thee, O man, what is good;
And what is the LORD seeking from thee,
But to do justice and love mercy,
And humbly³ to walk with thy God?*

¹ See above, p. 161.

² See above, p. 370, on the futility of the argument which because of this line would put the whole passage in Manasseh's reign.

³ This word הִצְנִיעַ is only once used again, in Prov. xi. 2, in another grammatical form, where also it might mean *humbly*. But the root-meaning is evidently *in secret*, or *secretly* (cf. the Aram. צִנֵּעַ, to be hidden; צִנִּיעַ, one who lives noiselessly, humble, pious; in the feminine of a bride who is modest); and it is uncertain whether we should not take that sense here.

This is the greatest saying of the Old Testament ; and there is only one other in the New which excels it :—

Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.

CHAPTER XXX

THE SIN OF THE SCANT MEASURE

MICAH vi. 9—vii. 6.

THE state of the text of Micah vi. 9—vii. 6 is as confused as the condition of society which it describes: it is difficult to get reason, and impossible to get rhyme, out of the separate clauses. We had best give it as it stands, and afterwards state the substance of its doctrine, which, in spite of the obscurity of details, is, as so often happens in similar cases, perfectly clear and forcible. The passage consists of two portions, which may not originally have belonged to each other, but which seem to reflect the same disorder of civic life, with the judgment that impends upon it.¹ In the first of them, vi. 9-16, the prophet calls for attention to the voice of God, which describes the fraudulent life of Jerusalem, and the evils He is bringing on her. In the second, vii. 1-6, Jerusalem bemoans her corrupt society; but perhaps we hear her voice only in ver. 1, and thereafter the prophet's.

The prophet speaks:—

*Hark! Jehovah crieth to the city!
(Thy salvation to fear Thy Name!)*²

¹ See above, pp. 370 ff.

² Probably a later parenthesis. The word תוֹשִׁיָה is one which, unusual in the prophets, the Wisdom literature has made its own Prov. ii. 7, xviii. 1; Job v. 12, etc. For *Thy* LXX. read *His*.

Hear ye, O tribe and council of the city ! (?)¹

God speaks :—

. . . in the house of the wicked treasures of wickedness,

And the scant measure accursed !

Can she be pure with the evil balances,

And with the bag of false weights,

Whose rich men are full of violence,²

And her citizens speak falsehood,

And their tongue is deceit in their mouth ?

But I on My part have begun to plague thee,

To lay thee in ruin because of thy sins.

Thou eatest and art not filled,

But thy famine³ is in the very midst of thee !

¹ Translation of LXX. emended by Wellhausen so as to read מוֹעַר הָעִיר, the מוֹעַר being obtained by taking and transferring the עוֹר of the next verse, and relieving that verse of an unusual formation, viz. עוֹר before the interrogative הֲאִישׁ. But for an instance of עוֹר preceding an interrogative see Gen. xix. 12.

² The text of the two preceding verses, which is acknowledged to be corrupt, must be corrected by the undoubted 3rd feminine suffix in this one—"her rich men." Throughout the reference must be to the city. We ought therefore to change הַתּוֹכָה of ver. 11 into הַתּוֹכָה, which agrees with the LXX. δικαιωθήσεται. Ver. 10 is more uncertain, but for the same reason that "the city" is referred to throughout vv. 9-12, it is possible that it is the nominative to זַעֲמוּמָה; translate "cursed with the short measure." Again for אֲצָרוֹת LXX. read אֲצָרוֹת אֲצָרוֹת, to which also the city would be nominative. And this suggests the query whether in the letters הָאִישׁ בֵּית, that make little sense as they stand in the Massoretic Text, there was not originally another feminine participle. The recommendation of a transformation of this kind is that it removes the abruptness of the appearance of the 3rd feminine suffix in ver. 12.

³ The word is found only here. The stem יחַשׁ is no doubt the same as the Arabic verb waḥash, which in Form V. means "Inani ventre fuit præ fame; vacuum reliquit stomachum" (Freytag). In modern colloquial Arabic waḥsha means a "longing for an absent friend."

*And but try to remove,¹ thou canst not bring off;
 And what thou bringest off, I give to the sword.
 Thou sowest, but never reapest;
 Treadest olives, but never anointest with oil,
 And must, but not to drink wine!
 So thou keepest the statutes of Omri,²
 And the habits of the house of Ahab,
 And walkest in their principles,
 Only that I may give thee to ruin,
 And her inhabitants for sport—
 Yea, the reproach of the Gentiles³ shall ye bear!*

Jerusalem speaks:—

*Woe, woe is me, for I am become like sweepings of
 harvest,
 Like gleanings of the vintage—
 Not a cluster to eat, not a fig that my soul lusteth
 after.
 Perished are the leal from the land,
 Of the upright among men there is none:
 All of them are lurking for blood;
 Every man takes his brother in a net.
 Their hands are on evil to do it thoroughly.⁴
 The prince makes requisition,
 The judge judgeth for payment,
 And the great man he speaketh his lust;
 So together they weave it out.
 The best of them is but a thorn thicket,⁵*

¹ Jussive. The objects removed can hardly be goods, as Hitzig and others infer; for it is to the sword they afterwards fall. They must be persons.

² LXX. *Zimri*.

³ So LXX.; but Heb. *My people*.

⁴ Uncertain.

⁵ Cf. Prov. xv. 19.

*The most upright worse than a prickly hedge.¹
 The day that thy sentinels saw, thy visitation, draweth
 on;
 Now is their havoc² come!
 Trust not any friend! Rely on no confidant!
 From her that lies in thy bosom guard the gates of
 thy mouth.
 For son insulteth father, daughter is risen against
 her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-
 in-law;
 And the enemies of a man are the men of his house.*

Micah, though the prophet of the country and stern critic of its life, characterised Jerusalem herself as the centre of the nation's sins. He did not refer to idolatry alone, but also to the irreligion of the politicians, and the cruel injustice of the rich in the capital. The poison which weakened the nation's blood had found its entrance to their veins at the very heart. There had the evil gathered which was shaking the state to a rapid dissolution.

This section of the Book of Micah, whether it be by that prophet or not, describes no features of Jerusalem's life which were not present in the eighth century; and it may be considered as the more detailed picture of the evils he summarily denounced. It is one of the most poignant criticisms of a commercial community which have ever appeared in literature. In

¹ Roorda, by rearranging letters and clauses (some of them after LXX.), and by changing points, gets a reading which may be rendered: *For evil are their hands! To do good the prince demandeth a bribe, and the judge, for the reward of the great, speaketh what he desireth. And they entangle the good more than thorns, and the righteous more than a thorn hedge.*

² Cf. Isa. xxii. 5.

equal relief we see the meanest instruments and the most prominent agents of covetousness and cruelty—the scant measure, the false weights, the unscrupulous prince and the venal judge. And although there are some sins denounced which are impossible in our civilisation, yet falsehood, squalid fraud, pitilessness of the everlasting struggle for life are exposed exactly as we see them about us to-day. Through the prophet's ancient and often obscure eloquence we feel just those shocks and sharp edges which still break everywhere through our Christian civilisation. Let us remember, too, that the community addressed by the prophet was, like our own, professedly religious.

The most widespread sin with which the prophet charges Jerusalem in these days of her commercial activity is falsehood: *Her inhabitants speak lies, and their tongue is deceit in their mouth.* In Mr. Lecky's *History of European Morals* we find the opinion that "the one respect in which the growth of industrial life has exercised a favourable influence on morals has been in the promotion of truth." The tribute is just, but there is another side to it. The exigencies of commerce and industry are fatal to most of the conventional pretences, insincerities and flatteries, which tend to grow up in all kinds of society. In commercial life, more perhaps than in any other, a man is taken, and has to be taken, in his inherent worth. Business, the life which is called *par excellence* Busy-ness, wears off every mask, all false veneer and unction, and leaves no time for the cant and parade which are so prone to increase in all other professions. Moreover the soul of commerce is credit. Men have to show that they can be trusted before other men will traffic with them, at least upon that large and lavish scale

on which alone the great undertakings of commerce can be conducted. When we look back upon the history of trade and industry, and see how they have created an atmosphere in which men must ultimately seem what they really are; how they have of their needs replaced the jealousies, subterfuges, intrigues, which were once deemed indispensable to the relations of men of different peoples, by large international credit and trust; how they break through the false conventions that divide class from class, we must do homage to them, as among the greatest instruments of the truth which maketh free.

But to all this there is another side. If commerce has exploded so much conventional insincerity, it has developed a species of the genus which is quite its own. In our days nothing can lie like an advertisement. The saying "the tricks of the trade" has become proverbial. Every one knows that the awful strain and harassing of commercial life is largely due to the very amount of falseness that exists. The haste to be rich, the pitiless rivalry and competition, have developed a carelessness of the rights of others to the truth from ourselves, with a capacity for subterfuge and intrigue, which reminds one of nothing so much as that state of barbarian war out of which it was the ancient glory of commerce to have assisted mankind to rise. Are the prophet's words about Jerusalem too strong for large portions of our own commercial communities? Men who know these best will not say that they are. But let us cherish rather the powers of commerce which make for truth. Let us tell men who engage in trade that there are none for whom it is more easy to be clean and straight; that lies, whether of action or of speech, only in-

crease the mental expense and the moral strain of life ; and that the health, the capacity, the foresight, the opportunities of a great merchant depend ultimately on his resolve to be true and on the courage with which he sticks to the truth.

One habit of falseness on which the prophet dwells is the use of unjust scales and short measures. The *stores* or fortunes of his day are *stores of wickedness*, because they have been accumulated by the use of the *lean ephah*, the *balances of wrong* and the *bag of false weights*. These are evils more common in the East than with us : modern government makes them almost impossible. But, all the same, ours is the sin of the scant measure, and the more so in proportion to the greater speed and rivalry of our commercial life. The prophet's name for it, *measure of leanness*, of *consumption* or *shrinkage*, is a proper symbol of all those duties and offices of man to man, the full and generous discharge of which is diminished by the haste and the grudge of a prevalent selfishness. The speed of modern life tends to shorten the time expended on every piece of work, and to turn it out untempered and incomplete. The struggle for life in commerce, the organised rivalry between labour and capital, not only puts every man on his guard against giving any other more than his due, but tempts him to use every opportunity to scamp and curtail his own service and output. You will hear men defend this parsimony as if it were a law. They say that business is impossible without the temper which they call "sharpness" or the habit which they call "cutting it fine." But such character and conduct are the very decay of society. The shrinkage of the units must always and everywhere mean the disintegration of the mass.

A society whose members strive to keep within their duties is a society which cannot continue to cohere. Selfishness may be firmness, but it is the firmness of frost, the rigour of death. Only the unselfish excess of duty, only the generous loyalty to others, give to society the compactness and indissolubleness of life. Who is responsible for the enmity of classes, and the distrust which exists between capital and labour? It is the workman whose one aim is to secure the largest amount of wages for the smallest amount of work, and who will, in his blind pursuit of that, wreck the whole trade of a town or a district; it is the employer who believes he has no duties to his men beyond paying them for their work the least that he can induce them to take; it is the customer who only and ever looks to the cheapness of an article—procurer in that prostitution of talent to the work of scamping which is fast killing art, and joy and all pity for the bodies and souls of our brothers. These are the true anarchists and breakers-up of society. On their methods social coherence and harmony are impossible. Life itself is impossible. No organism can thrive whose various limbs are ever shrinking in upon themselves. There is no life except by living to others.

But the prophet covers the whole evil when he says that the *pious are perished out of the land*. *Pious* is a translation of despair. The original means the man distinguished by “*hesedh*,” that word which we have on several occasions translated *leal love*, because it implies not only an affection but loyalty to a relation. And, as the use of the word frequently reminds us, “*hesedh*” is love and loyalty both to God and to our fellow-men. We need not dissociate these: they are one. But

here it is the human direction in which the word looks. It means a character which fulfils all the relations of society with the fidelity, generosity and grace, which are the proper affections of man to man. Such a character, says the prophet, is perished from the land. Every man now lives for himself, and as a consequence preys upon his brother. *They all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.* This is not murder which the prophet describes: it is the reckless, pitiless competition of the new conditions of life developed in Judah by the long peace and commerce of the eighth century. And he carries this selfishness into a very striking figure in ver. 4: *The best of them is as a thorn thicket, the most upright worse than a prickly hedge.* He realises exactly what we mean by sharpness and sharp-dealing: bristling self-interest, all points; splendid in its own defence, but barren of fruit, and without nest or covert for any life.

CHAPTER XXXI

OUR MOTHER OF SORROWS

MICAH vii. 7-20.

AFTER so stern a charge, so condign a sentence, confession is natural, and, with prayer for forgiveness and praise to the mercy of God, it fitly closes the whole book. As we have seen,¹ the passage is a cento of several fragments, from periods far apart in the history of Israel. One historical allusion suits best the age of the Syrian wars; another can only refer to the day of Jerusalem's ruin. In spirit and language the Confessions resemble the prayers of the Exile. The Doxology has echoes of several Scriptures.²

But from these fragments, it may be of many centuries, there rises clear the One Essential Figure: Israel, all her secular woes upon her; our Mother of Sorrows, at whose knees we learned our first prayers of confession and penitence. Other nations have been our teachers in art and wisdom and government. But she is our mistress in pain and in patience, teaching men with what conscience they should bear the chastening of the Almighty, with what hope and humility they should wait for their God. Surely not less lovable, but only more human, that her pale cheeks flush for

¹ Above, pp. 372 ff.

² Cf. with it Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7 (J); Jer. iii. 5, l. 20; Isa. lvii. 16; Psalms ciii. 9, cv. 9, 10.

a moment with the hate of the enemy and the assurance of revenge. Her passion is soon gone, for she feels her guilt to be greater; and, seeking forgiveness, her last word is what man's must ever be, praise to the grace and mercy of God.

Israel speaks:—

*But I will look for the LORD,
I will wait for the God of my salvation:
My God will hear me!
Rejoice not, O mine enemy, at me:
If I be fallen, I rise;
If I sit in the darkness, the LORD is a light to me.*

*The anger of the LORD will I bear—
For I have sinned against Him—
Until that He take up my quarrel,
And execute my right.
He will carry me forth to the light;
I will look on His righteousness:
So shall mine enemy see, and shame cover her,
She that saith unto me, Where is Jehovah thy God?—
Mine eyes shall see her,
Now is she for trampling, like mire in the streets!*

The prophet¹ responds:—

*A day for the building of thy walls shall that day be!
Broad shall thy border be² on that day!*

¹ It was a woman who spoke before, the People or the City. But the second personal pronouns to which this reply of the prophet is addressed are all masculine. Notice the same change in vi. 9-16 (above p 427).

² ירחיקהק, Ewald: "distant the date." Notice the assonance. It explains the use of the unusual word for *border*. LXX. *thy border*. The LXX. also takes into ver. 11 (as above) the הוֹיָה of ver. 12.

.¹ and shall come to thee
 From Assyria unto Egypt, and from Egypt to the
 River,
 And to Sea from Sea, and Mountain from Mountain;²
 Though³ the land be waste on account of her inhabitants,
 Because of the fruit of their doings.

An Ancient Prayer :—

Shepherd Thy people with Thy staff,
 The sheep of Thy heritage dwelling solitarily. . . .⁴
 May they pasture in Bashan and Gilead as in days
 of old!
 As in the days when Thou wentest forth from the
 land of Misraim, give us wonders to see!
 Nations shall see and despair of all their might;
 Their hands to their mouths shall they put,
 Their ears shall be deafened.
 They shall lick the dust like serpents;
 Like worms of the ground from their fastnesses,
 To Jehovah our God they shall come trembling,
 And in fear before Thee!

¹ Something has probably been lost here.

² For הוהר read מהר.

³ It is difficult to get sense when translating the conjunction in any other way. But these two lines may belong to the following.

⁴ The words omitted above are literally *jungle in the midst of gardenland* or *Carmel*. Plausible as it would be to take the proper name Carmel here along with Bashan and Gilead (see *Hist. Geog.*, 338), the connection prefers the common noun *garden* or *gardenland*: translate "dwelling alone like a bit of jungle in the midst of cultivated land." Perhaps the clause needs rearrangement: יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּרִמְלֵי, with a verb to introduce it. Yet compare יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּרִמְלֵי, 2 Kings xix. 23; Isa. xxxvii. 24.

A Doxology :—

*Who is a God like to Thee? Forgiven iniquity,
And passing by transgression, to the remnant of
His heritage;*

*He keepeth not hold of His anger for ever,
But One who delighteth in mercy is He;*

*He will come back, He will pity us,
He will tread under foot our iniquities—*

*Yea, Thou wilt cast to the depths of the sea every one
of our sins.*

*Thou wilt show faithfulness to Jacob, leal love to
Abraham,*

*As Thou hast sworn to our fathers from the days
of yore.*

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THE BOOK
OF
THE TWELVE PROPHETS
COMMONLY CALLED THE MINOR

BY
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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.—ZEPHANIAH, NAHUM, HABAKKUK, OBADIAH,
HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH I.—VIII., "MALACHI," JOEL,
"ZECHARIAH" IX.—XIV. AND JONAH

WITH HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL INTRODUCTIONS

NEW YORK
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1903

PREFACE

THE first volume on the Twelve Prophets dealt with the three who belonged to the Eighth Century: Amos, Hosea and Micah. This second volume includes the other nine books arranged in chronological order: Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk, of the Seventh Century; Obadiah, of the Exile; Haggai, Zechariah i.—viii., “Malachi” and Joel, of the Persian Period, 538—331; “Zechariah” ix.—xiv. and the Book of Jonah, of the Greek Period, which began in 332, the date of Alexander’s Syrian campaign.

The same plan has been followed as in Volume I. A historical introduction is offered to each period. To each prophet are given, first a chapter of critical introduction, and then one or more chapters of exposition. A complete translation has been furnished, with critical and explanatory notes. All questions of date and of text, and nearly all of interpretation, have been confined to the introductions and the notes, so that those who consult the volume only for expository purposes will find the exposition unencumbered by the discussion of technical points.

The necessity of including within one volume so many prophets, scattered over more than three centuries, and each of them requiring a separate introduction, has reduced the space available for the practical application of their teaching to modern life. But this is the less to be regretted, that the contents of the nine books before us are not so applicable to our own day, as we have found their greater predecessors to be. On the other hand, however, they form a more varied introduction to Old Testament Criticism, while, by the long range of time which they cover, and the many stages of religion to which they belong, they afford a wider view of the development of prophecy. Let us look for a little at these two points.

1. To Old Testament Criticism these books furnish valuable introduction—some of them, like Obadiah, Joel and “Zechariah” ix.—xiv., by the great variety of opinion that has prevailed as to their dates or their relation to other prophets with whom they have passages in common; some, like Zechariah and “Malachi,” by their relation to the Law, in the light of modern theories of the origin of the latter; and some, like Joel and Jonah, by the question whether we are to read them as history, or as allegories of history, or as apocalypse. That is to say, these nine books raise, besides the usual questions of genuineness and integrity, every other possible problem of Old

Testament Criticism. It has, therefore, been necessary to make the critical introductions full and detailed. The enormous differences of opinion as to the dates of some must start the suspicion of arbitrariness, unless there be included in each case a history of the development of criticism, so as to exhibit to the English reader the principles and the evidence of fact upon which that criticism is based. I am convinced that what is chiefly required just now by the devout student of the Bible is the opportunity to judge for himself how far Old Testament Criticism is an adult science; with what amount of reasonableness it has been prosecuted; how gradually its conclusions have been reached, how jealously they have been contested; and how far, amid the many varieties of opinion which must always exist with reference to facts so ancient and questions so obscure, there has been progress towards agreement upon the leading problems. But, besides the accounts of past criticism given in this volume, the reader will find in each case an independent attempt to arrive at a conclusion. This has not always been successful. A number of points have been left in doubt; and even where results have been stated with some degree of positiveness, the reader need scarcely be warned (after what was said in the Preface to Vol. I.) that many of these must necessarily be provisional. But, in looking back from the close of this work upon the discussions which it contains,

I am more than ever convinced of the extreme probability of most of the conclusions. Among these are the following: that the correct interpretation of Habakkuk is to be found in the direction of the position to which Budde's ingenious proposal has been carried on pages 123 ff. with reference to Egypt; that the most of Obadiah is to be dated from the sixth century; that "Malachi" is an anonymous work from the eve of Ezra's reforms; that Joel follows "Malachi"; and that "Zechariah" ix.—xiv. has been rightly assigned by Stade to the early years of the Greek Period. I have ventured to contest Koster's theory that there was no return of Jewish exiles under Cyrus, and am the more disposed to believe his strong argument inconclusive, not only upon a review of the reasons I have stated in Chap. XVI., but on this ground also, that many of its chief adherents in this country and Germany have so modified it as virtually to give up its main contention. I think, too, there can be little doubt as to the substantial authenticity of Zephaniah ii. (except the verses on Moab and Ammon) and iii. 1-13, of Habakkuk ii. 5 ff., and of the whole of Haggai; or as to the ungentine character of the lyric piece in Zechariah ii. and the intrusion of "Malachi" ii. 11-13a. On these and smaller points the reader will find full discussion at the proper places.

[I may here add a word or two upon some of the critical conclusions reached in Vol. I., which have

been recently contested. The student will find strong grounds offered by Canon Driver in his *Joel and Amos*¹ for the authenticity of those passages in Amos which, following other critics, I regarded or suspected as not authentic. It makes one diffident in one's opinions when Canon Driver supports Professors Kuenen and Robertson Smith on the other side. But on a survey of the case I am unable to feel that even they have removed what they admit to be "forcible" objections to the authorship by Amos of the passages in question. They seem to me to have established not more than a possibility that the passages are authentic; and on the whole I still feel that the probability is in the other direction. If I am right, then I think that the date of the apostrophes to Jehovah's creative power which occur in the Book of Amos, and the reference to astral deities in chap. v. 27, may be that which I have suggested on pages 8 and 9 of this volume. Some critics have charged me with inconsistency in denying the authenticity of the epilogue to Amos while defending that of the epilogue to Hosea. The two cases, as my arguments proved, are entirely different. Nor do I see any reason to change the conclusions of Vol. I. upon the questions of the authenticity of various parts of Micah.]

The text of the nine prophets treated in this volume

¹ Cambridge Bible for Schools, 1897

has presented even more difficulties than that of the three treated in Vol. I. And these difficulties must be my apology for the delay of this volume.

2. But the critical and textual value of our nine books is far exceeded by the historical. Each exhibits a development of Hebrew prophecy of the greatest interest. From this point of view, indeed, the volume might be entitled "The Passing of the Prophet." For throughout our nine books we see the spirit and the style of the classic prophecy of Israel gradually dissolving into other forms of religious thought and feeling. The clear start from the facts of the prophet's day, the ancient truths about Jehovah and Israel, and the direct appeal to the conscience of the prophet's contemporaries, are not always given, or when given are mingled, coloured and warped by other religious interests, both present and future, which are even powerful enough to shake the ethical absolutism of the older prophets. With Nahum and Obadiah the ethical is entirely missed in the presence of the claims—and we cannot deny that they were natural claims—of the long-suffering nation's hour of revenge upon her heathen tyrants. With Zephaniah prophecy, still austere ethical, passes under the shadow of apocalypse; and the future is solved, not upon purely historical lines, but by the intervention of "supernatural" elements. With Habakkuk the ideals of the older prophets encounter

the shock of the facts of experience: we have the prophet as sceptic. Upon the other margin of the Exile, Haggai and Zechariah (i.—viii.), although they are as practical as any of their predecessors, exhibit the influence of the exilic developments of ritual, angelology and apocalypse. God appears further off from Zechariah than from the prophets of the eighth century, and in need of mediators, human and super-human. With Zechariah the priest has displaced the prophet, and it is very remarkable that no place is found for the latter beside *the two sons of oil*, the political and priestly heads of the community, who, according to the Fifth Vision, stand in the presence of God and between them feed the religious life of Israel. Nearly sixty years later "Malachi" exhibits the working of Prophecy within the Law, and begins to employ the didactic style of the later Rabinism. Joel starts, like any older prophet, from the facts of his own day, but these hurry him at once into apocalypse; he calls, as thoroughly as any of his predecessors, to repentance, but under the imminence of the Day of the Lord, with its "supernatural" terrors, he mentions no special sin and enforces no single virtue. The civic and personal ethics of the earlier prophets are absent. In the Greek Period, the oracles now numbered from the ninth to the fourteenth chapters of the Book of Zechariah repeat to aggravation the exulting revenge of Nahum and

Obadiah, without the strong style or the hold upon history which the former exhibits, and show us prophecy still further enwrapped in apocalypse. But in the Book of Jonah, though it is parable and not history, we see a great recovery and expansion of the best elements of prophecy. God's character and Israel's true mission to the world are revealed in the spirit of Hosea and of the Seer of the Exile, with much of the tenderness, the insight, the analysis of character and even the humour of classic prophecy. These qualities raise the Book of Jonah, though it is probably the latest of our Twelve, to the highest rank among them. No book is more worthy to stand by the side of Isaiah xl.—lv.; none is nearer in spirit to the New Testament.

All this gives unity to the study of prophets so far separate in time, and so very distinct in character, from each other. From Zephaniah to Jonah, or over a period of three centuries, they illustrate the dissolution of Prophecy and its passage into other forms of religion.

The scholars, to whom every worker in this field is indebted, are named throughout the volume. I regret that Nowack's recent commentary on the Minor Prophets (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) reached me too late for use (except in footnotes) upon the earlier of the nine prophets.

GEORGE ADAM SMITH.

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* c. = circa: it refers chiefly to the accession of the kings of Judah; the years are exact so far as they concern nearly all the Assyrian data. A date opposite the mere name of a king signifies the year of his accession.

	EGYPT.	JUDAH.	THE PROPHETS.	PHILISTIA, PHENICIA, ARABIA, CYPRUS, ETC.	ASSYRIA.	
727 c.	Shabaka	Heczekiah	...	...	Shalmaneser IV.	727
725	...	(Siege of Samaria begins.)	...	...	Sargon takes Samaria.	722 or 1
720 or 19	...	(Fall of Samaria.)	...	Gaza overthrown by . . .	Sargon as he marches past Judah and defeats Egypt at Raphia, by subjugated tribes deported from Assyria.)	720 or 19
715	...	(Samaria peopled . . .)	...	...	Sargon.	715
709	...	...	Isalah.	Ashdod taken by . . .	Sargon takes Babylon from Merodach-Baladan.	711
705	...	...	Micah.	...	Death of Sargon.	709
704	Taharka	Events in Isaiah xxxix.?	...	...	Accession of Sennacherib.	705
701	...	Invasion of Judah . . .	...	and all Palestine	War with Merodach-Baladan, by Sennacherib.	704
	Defeat of Egypt	Deliverance of Jerusalem.	...	Siege of Ekron . . .	...	701
705 c.	Manasseh	Manasseh.	...	at Battle of Eltekeb . . .	by Sennacherib.	
692	...	...	...	...	Sennacherib destroys Balylon, Sennacherib murdered.	692
681	...	...	...	...	Asarhaddon	681
678	...	...	...	Sidon subdued and Sidonians deported	by Asarhaddon.	678
676	...	Manasseh and . . .	...	21 Palestine princes pay tribute to also Greek princes of Cyprus.	Assyria:	676
675	...	...	...	Arabia invaded . . .	by Asarhaddon.	675
674	...	...	...	Sinai invaded . . .	by Asarhaddon.	674
671	...	...	...	Tyre besieged . . .	by Asarhaddon.	671
670 c.	Taharka defeated at Memphis	...	...	...	by Asarhaddon.	670 c.
668	Taharka regains Egypt.	...	...	...	Assurbanipal.	668
666	...	Manasseh and . . .	...	21 Palestine princes pay tribute to Assyria.	...	666
664 c.	Taharka overthrown, Memphis taken, Dodekarchy established	...	...	(Palestine princes aiding) . . .	by Assurbanipal.	664 c.
663 c.	Urdamman overthrown and Thebes taken	...	...	...	by Egyptian campaign of Assurbanipal.	663 c.
662	Psamtik I.	...	...	Tyre and Arvad taken . . .	by Assurbanipal.	662
662	Psamtik I.	...	...	Palestine princes, Arabia, Lydia, . . .	Elam and Babylon revolt from Assyria.	662
649	...	...	...	...	Assurbanipal reduces Elam and Babylon.	649
647	...	...	...	Hauran, N. Arabia and Edom) . . .	reduced in two campaigns by Assurbanipal.	647
645	...	...	...	Ammon, Moab and Nabatea . . .	Assurbanipal.	645
641 c.	...	Amon Josiah	...	Uss " by the sea " and Akko . . .	Assurbanipal.	641
639 c.	...	...	...	Tyre assists, against Arvad, . . .	...	641
630 c.	...	...	...	...	Seythians invade Media and Western Asia.	630 c.
627	...	Jeremiah appears	...	...	invaded by Seythians.	627
626 c.	...	...	Sephaniah.	Western Palestine . . .	Assur-Bel-Idani	626 c.
624	...	...	...	...	Ninveh attacked by Medes.	624
621	...	...	...	...	Nabopolassar independent in Babylon.	621
620 c.	...	Book of the Law (Deut. v.-xxiv., xxvii.) discovered.	...	...	...
619	Necho II.	Josiah's reforms begin.	...	...	...
608	Necho defeats and slays Josiah at Megiddo	Judah Egypt's vassal.	...	...	...
607-6	...	Jehoahaz reigns three months; taken to Egypt	...	...	...
605	...	Jehoiakim succeeds.	...	...	...
604 or 600	...	...	Jeremiah	...	...
599 or 597	...	Judah vassal . . . but is subdued (2 Kings xxiv. 2 ff.)	...	...	...
597	...	Judah withholds tribute from Babylon, in alliance with Babylon, to Nebuchadrezzar.	...	by Moab, Ammon and Arameans	...	597
594	Psamtik II.	Jehoiachin yields Temple plundered.	...	...	...
593	...	First Great Exile	...	...	to Babylonia, of Babylon.	
589	Uab-ab-ra (Hophra, Apries)	Zedekiah vassal . . .	...	...	against Babylon.	589
587-6	...	Jewish revolt stayed by Jeremiah, offers help to Zedekiah, who	...	...	revolts from Babylon.	589
	...	Jerusalem taken . . . Second Great Exile . . .	...	...	by Nebuchadrezzar, to Babylonia.	587-6

*INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETS OF THE
SEVENTH CENTURY*

VOL. II.

CHAPTER I

THE SEVENTH CENTURY BEFORE CHRIST

THE three prophets who were treated in the first volume of this work belonged to the eighth century before Christ: if Micah lived into the seventh his labours were over by 675. The next group of our twelve, also three in number, Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk, did not appear till after 630. To make our study continuous¹ we must now sketch the course of Israel's history between.

In another volume of this series,² some account was given of the religious progress of Israel from Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem in 701 to Jeremiah and the Fall of Jerusalem in 587. Isaiah's strength was bent upon establishing the inviolableness of Zion. Zion, he said, should not be taken, and the people, though cut to their roots, should remain planted in their own land, the stock of a noble nation in the latter days. But Jeremiah predicted the ruin both of City and Temple, summoned Jerusalem's enemies against her in the name of Jehovah, and counselled his people to submit to them. This reversal of the prophetic ideal had a twofold reason. In the first place the moral condition of Israel was worse in 600 B.C. than it had been in 700; another century had shown how much the nation needed the penalty and purgation of

¹ See Vol. I., p. viii. ² Expositor's Bible, *Isaiah xl.—lxvi.*, Chap. II.

exile. But secondly, however the inviolableness of Jerusalem had been required in the interests of pure religion in 701, religion had now to show that it was independent even of Zion and of Israel's political survival. Our three prophets of the eighth century (as well as Isaiah himself) had indeed preached a gospel which implied this, but it was reserved to Jeremiah to prove that the existence of state and temple was not indispensable to faith in God, and to explain the ruin of Jerusalem, not merely as a well-merited penance, but as the condition of a more spiritual intercourse between Jehovah and His people.

It is our duty to trace the course of events through the seventh century, which led to this change of the standpoint of prophecy, and which moulded the messages especially of Jeremiah's contemporaries, Zephaniah, Nahum and Habakkuk. We may divide the century into three periods: *First*, that of the Reaction and Persecution under Manasseh and Amon, from 695 or 690 to 639, during which prophecy was silent or anonymous; *Second*, that of the Early Years of Josiah, 639 to 625, near the end of which we meet with the young Jeremiah and Zephaniah; *Third*, the Rest of the Century, 625 to 600, covering the Decline and Fall of Niniveh, and the prophets Nahum and Habakkuk, with an addition carrying on the history to the Fall of Jerusalem in 587-6.

I. REACTION UNDER MANASSEH AND AMON (695 ?—639).

Jerusalem was delivered in 701, and the Assyrians kept away from Palestine for twenty-three years.¹

¹ It is uncertain whether Hezekiah was an Assyrian vassal during these years, as his successor Manasseh is recorded to have been in 676.

Judah had peace, and Hezekiah was free to devote his latter days to the work of purifying the worship of his people. What he exactly achieved is uncertain. The historian imputes to him the removal of the high places, the destruction of all Maççeboth and Asheras, and of the brazen serpent.¹ That his measures were drastic is probable from the opinions of Isaiah, who was their inspiration, and proved by the reaction which they provoked when Hezekiah died. The *removal* of the high places and the concentration of the national worship within the Temple would be the more easy that the provincial sanctuaries had been devastated by the Assyrian invasion, and that the shrine of Jehovah was glorified by the raising of the siege of 701.

While the first of Isaiah's great postulates for the future, the inviolableness of Zion, had been fulfilled, the second, the reign of a righteous prince in Israel, seemed doomed to disappointment. Hezekiah died early in the seventh century,² and was succeeded by his son Manasseh, a boy of twelve, who appears to have been captured by the party whom his father had opposed. The few years' peace—peace in Israel was always dangerous to the health of the higher religion—the interests of those who had suffered from the reforms, the inevitable reaction which a rigorous puritanism provokes—these swiftly reversed the religious fortunes of Israel. Isaiah's and Micah's predictions of the final overthrow of Assyria seemed falsified, when in 681 the more vigorous Asarhaddon succeeded Sennacherib, and in 678 swept the long absent armies back upon Syria.

¹ 2 Kings xviii. 4.

² The exact date is quite uncertain; 695 is suggested on the chronological table prefixed to this volume, but it may have been 690 or 685.

Sidon was destroyed, and twenty-two princes of Palestine immediately yielded their tribute to the conqueror. Manasseh was one of them, and his political homage may have brought him, as it brought Ahaz, within the infection of foreign idolatries.¹ Everything, in short, worked for the revival of that eclectic paganism which Hezekiah had striven to stamp out. The high places were rebuilt; altars were erected to Baal, with the sacred pole of Asherah, as in the time of Ahab;² shrines to the *host of heaven* defiled the courts of Jehovah's house; there was a recrudescence of sooth-saying, divination and traffic with the dead.

But it was all very different from the secure and sunny temper which Amos had encountered in Northern Israel.³ The terrible Assyrian invasions had come between. Life could never again feel so stable. Still more destructive had been the social poisons which our prophets described as sapping the constitution of Israel for nearly three generations. The rural simplicity was corrupted by those economic changes which

¹ Cf. McCurdy, *History, Prophecy and the Monuments*, § 799.

² Stade (*Gesch. des Volkes Israel*, I., pp. 627 f.) denies to Manasseh the reconstruction of the high places, the Baal altars and the Asheras, for he does not believe that Hezekiah had succeeded in destroying these. He takes 2 Kings xxi. 3, which describes these reconstructions, as a late interpolation rendered necessary to reconcile the tradition that Hezekiah's reforms had been quite in the spirit of Deuteronomy, with the fact that there were still high places in the land when Josiah began his reforms. Further, Stade takes the rest of 2 Kings xxi. 2b-7 as also an interpolation, but unlike verse 3 an accurate account of Manasseh's idolatrous institutions, because it is corroborated by the account of Josiah's reforms, 2 Kings xxiii. Stade also discusses this passage in *Z.A.T.W.*, 1886, pp. 186 ff.

³ See Vol. I., p. 41. In addition to the reasons of the change given above, we must remember that we are now treating, not of Northern Israel, but of the more stern and sullen Judæans.

Micah bewails. With the ousting of the old families from the soil, a thousand traditions, memories and habits must have been broken, which had preserved the people's presence of mind in days of sudden disaster, and had carried them, for instance, through so long a trial as the Syrian wars. Nor could the blood of Israel have run so pure after the luxury and licentiousness described by Hosea and Isaiah. The novel obligations of commerce, the greed to be rich, the increasing distress among the poor, had strained the joyous temper of that nation of peasants' sons, whom we met with Amos, and shattered the nerves of their rulers. There is no word of fighting in Manasseh's days, no word of revolt against the tyrant. Perhaps also the intervening puritanism, which had failed to give the people a permanent faith, had at least awakened within them a new conscience.

At all events there is now no more *ease in Zion*, but a restless fear, driving the people to excesses of religious zeal. We do not read of the happy country festivals of the previous century, nor of the careless pride of that sudden wealth which built vast palaces and loaded the altar of Jehovah with hecatombs. The full-blooded patriotism, which at least kept ritual in touch with clean national issues, has vanished. The popular religion is sullen and exasperated. It takes the form of sacrifices of frenzied cruelty and lust. Children are passed through the fire to Moloch, and the Temple is defiled by the orgies of those who abuse their bodies to propitiate a foreign and a brutal god.¹

But the most certain consequence of a religion whose nerves are on edge is persecution, and this raged all

¹ 2 Kings **xxi.**, **xxiii.**

the earlier years of Manasseh. The adherents of the purer faith were slaughtered, and Jerusalem drenched¹ with innocent blood. *Her own sword*, says Jeremiah, *devoured the prophets like a destroying lion.*²

It is significant that all that has come down to us from this "killing time" is anonymous;³ we do not meet with our next group of public prophets till Manasseh and his like-minded son have passed away. Yet prophecy was not wholly stifled. Voices were raised to predict the exile and destruction of the nation. *Jehovah spake by His servants*;⁴ while others wove into the prophecies of an Amos, a Hosea or an Isaiah some application of the old principles to the new circumstances. It is probable, for instance, that the extremely doubtful passage in the Book of Amos, v. 26 f., which imputes to Israel as a whole the worship of astral deities from Assyria, is to be assigned to the reign of Manasseh. In its present position it looks very like an intrusion: nowhere else does Amos charge his generation with serving foreign gods; and certainly in all the history of Israel we could not find a more suitable period for so specific a charge than the days when into the central sanctuary of the national worship images were introduced of the host of heaven, and the nation was, in consequence, threatened with exile.⁵

¹ *Filled from mouth to mouth* (2 Kings xxi. 16).

² Jer. ii. 30.

³ We have already seen that there is no reason for that theory of so many critics which assigns to this period Micah. See Vol. I., p. 370.

⁴ 2 Kings xxi. 10 ff.

⁵ Whether the parenthetical apostrophes to Jehovah as Maker of the heavens, their hosts and all the powers of nature (Amos iv. 13, v. 8, 9, ix. 5, 6), are also to be attributed to Manasseh's reign is more doubtful. Yet the following facts are to be observed: that

In times of persecution the documents of the suffering faith have ever been revered and guarded with especial zeal. It is not improbable that the prophets, driven from public life, gave themselves to the arrangement of the national scriptures; and some critics date from Manasseh's reign the weaving of the two earliest documents of the Pentateuch into one continuous book of history.¹ The Book of Deuteronomy forms a problem by itself. The legislation which composes the bulk of it² appears to have been found among the Temple

these passages are also (though to a less degree than v. 26 f.) parenthetical; that their language seems of a later cast than that of the time of Amos (see Vol. I., pp. 204, 205: though here evidence is adduced to show that the late features are probably post-exilic); and that Jehovah is expressly named as the *Maker* of certain of the stars. Similarly when Mohammed seeks to condemn the worship of the heavenly bodies, he insists that God is their Maker. Koran, Sur. 41, 37: "To the signs of His Omnipotence belong night and day, sun and moon; but do not pray to sun or moon, for God hath created them." Sur. 53, 50: "Because He is the Lord of Sirius." On the other side see Driver's *Joel and Amos* (Cambridge Bible for Schools Series), 1897, pp. 118 f., 189.

How deeply Manasseh had planted in Israel the worship of the heavenly host may be seen from the survival of the latter through all the reforms of Josiah and the destruction of Jerusalem (Jer. vii. 18, viii., xlv.; Ezek. viii. Cf. Stade, *Gesch. des V. Israel*, I., pp. 629 ff.).

¹ The Jehovist and Elohist into the closely mortised JE. Stade indeed assigns to the period of Manasseh Israel's first acquaintance with the Babylonian cosmogonies and myths which led to that reconstruction of them in the spirit of her own religion which we find in the Jehovistic portions of the beginning of Genesis (*Gesch. des V. Isr.*, I., pp. 630 ff.). But it may well be doubted (1) whether the reign of Manasseh affords time for this assimilation, and (2) whether it was likely that Assyrian and Babylonian theology could make so deep and lasting impression upon the purer faith of Israel at a time when the latter stood in such sharp hostility to all foreign influences and was so bitterly persecuted by the parties in Israel who had succumbed to these influences.

² Chaps. v.-xxvi., xxviii.

archives at the end of our period, and presented to Josiah as an old and forgotten work.¹ There is no reason to charge with fraud those who made the presentation by affirming that they really invented the book. They were priests of Jerusalem, but the book is written by members of the prophetic party, and ostensibly in the interests of the priests of the country. It betrays no tremor of the awful persecutions of Manasseh's reign; it does not hint at the distinction, then for the first time apparent, between a false and a true Israel. But it does draw another distinction, familiar to the eighth century, between the true and the false prophets. The political and spiritual premisses of the doctrine of the book were all present by the end of the reign of Hezekiah, and it is extremely improbable that his reforms, which were in the main those of Deuteronomy, were not accompanied by some code, or by some appeal to the fountain of all law in Israel.

But whether the Book of Deuteronomy now existed or not, there were those in the nation who through all the dark days between Hezekiah and Josiah laid up its truth in their hearts and were ready to assist the latter monarch in his public enforcement of it.

While these things happened within Judah, very great events were taking place beyond her borders. Asarhaddon of Assyria (681—668) was a monarch of long purposes and thorough plans. Before he invaded Egypt, he spent a year (675) in subduing the restless tribes of Northern Arabia, and another (674) in conquering the peninsula of Sinai, an ancient appanage of Egypt. Tyre upon her island baffled his assaults,

¹ 621 B.C.

but the rest of Palestine remained subject to him. He received his reward in carrying the Assyrian arms farther into Egypt than any of his predecessors, and about 670 took Memphis from the Ethiopian Pharaoh Taharka. Then he died. Assurbanipal, who succeeded, lost Egypt for a few years, but about 665, with the help of his tributaries in Palestine, he overthrew Taharka, took Thebes, and established along the Nile a series of vassal states. He quelled a revolt there in 663 and overthrew Memphis for a second time. The fall of the Egyptian capital resounds through the rest of the century; we shall hear its echoes in Nahum. Tyre fell at last with Arvad in 662. But the Assyrian empire had grown too vast for human hands to grasp, and in 652 a general revolt took place in Egypt, Arabia, Palestine, Elam, Babylon and Asia Minor. In 649 Assurbanipal reduced Elam and Babylon; and by two further campaigns (647 and 645) Hauran, Edom, Ammon, Moab, Nabatea and all the northern Arabs. On his return from these he crossed Western Palestine to the sea and punished Usu and Akko. It is very remarkable that, while Assurbanipal, who thus fought the neighbours of Judah, makes no mention of her, nor numbers Manasseh among the rebels whom he chastised, the Book of Chronicles should contain the statement that *Jehovah sent upon Manasseh the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, who bound him with fetters and carried him to Babylon.*¹ What grounds the Chronicler had for such a statement are quite unknown to us. He introduces Manasseh's captivity as the consequence of idolatry, and asserts that on his restoration Manasseh abolished in Judah

¹ 2 Chron. xxxiii 11 ff.

all worship save that of Jehovah, but if this happened (and the Book of Kings has no trace of it) it was without result. Amon, son of Manasseh, continued to sacrifice to all the images which his father had introduced.

2. THE EARLY YEARS OF JOSIAH (639—625): JEREMIAH AND ZEPHANIAH.

Amon had not reigned for two years when *his servants conspired against him, and he was slain in his own house.*¹ But the *people of the land* rose against the court, slew the conspirators, and secured the throne for Amon's son, Josiah, a child of eight. It is difficult to know what we ought to understand by these movements. Amon, who was slain, was an idolater; the popular party, who slew his slayers, put his son on the throne, and that son, unlike both his father and grandfather, bore a name compounded with the name of Jehovah. Was Amon then slain for personal reasons? Did the people, in their rising, have a zeal for Jehovah? Was the crisis purely political, but usurped by some school or party of Jehovah who had been gathering strength through the later years of Manasseh, and waiting for some such unsettlement of affairs as now occurred? The meagre records of the Bible give us no help, and for suggestions towards an answer we must turn to the wider politics of the time.

Assurbanipal's campaigns of 647 and 645 were the last appearances of Assyria in Palestine. He had not attempted to reconquer Egypt,² and her king, Psamtik I.,

¹ 2 Kings xxi. 23.

² But in his conquests of Hauran, Northern Arabia and the eastern neighbours of Judah, he had evidently sought to imitate the policy of

began to push his arms northward. Progress must have been slow, for the siege of Ashdod, which Psamtik probably began after 645, is said to have occupied him twenty-nine years. Still, he must have made his influence to be felt in Palestine, and in all probability there was once more, as in the days of Isaiah, an Egyptian party in Jerusalem. As the power of Assyria receded over the northern horizon, the fascination of her idolatries, which Manasseh had established in Judah, must have waned. The priests of Jehovah's house, jostled by their pagan rivals, would be inclined to make common cause with the prophets under a persecution which both had suffered. With the loosening of the Assyrian yoke the national spirit would revive, and it is easy to imagine prophets, priests and people working together in the movement which placed the child Josiah on the throne. At his tender age, he must have been wholly in the care of the women of the royal house; and among these the influence of the prophets may have found adherents more readily than among the counsellors of an adult prince. Not only did the new monarch carry the name of Jehovah in his own; this was the case also with his mother's father.¹ In the revolt, therefore, which raised this unconscious child to the throne and in the circumstances which moulded his character, we may infer that there already existed the germs of the great work of reform which his manhood achieved.

Asarhaddon in 675 f., and secure firm ground in Palestine and Arabia for a subsequent attack upon Egypt. That this never came shows more than anything else could Assyria's consciousness of growing weakness.

¹ The name of Josiah's (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן-יְהוֹיָכִן) mother was Jedidah (יְדִידָה), daughter of Adaiah (אֲדַיָּה) of Boşkath in the Shephelah of Judah.

For some time little change would be possible, but from the first facts were working for great issues. The Book of Kings, which places the destruction of the idols after the discovery of the law-book in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, records a previous cleansing and restoration of the house of Jehovah.¹ This points to the growing ascendancy of the prophetic party during the first fifteen years of Josiah's reign. Of the first ten years we know nothing, except that the prestige of Assyria was waning; but this fact, along with the preaching of the prophets, who had neither a native tyrant nor the exigencies of a foreign alliance to silence them, must have weaned the people from the worship of the Assyrian idols. Unless these had been discredited, the repair of Jehovah's house could hardly have been attempted; and that this progressed means that part of Josiah's destruction of the heathen images took place before the discovery of the Book of the Law, which happened in consequence of the cleansing of the Temple.

But just as under the good Hezekiah the social condition of the people, and especially the behaviour of the upper classes, continued to be bad, so it was again in the early years of Josiah. There was a *remnant of Baal*² in the land. The shrines of *the host of heaven* might have been swept from the Temple, but they were still worshipped from the housetops.³ Men swore by the Queen of Heaven, and by Moloch, the King. Some turned back from Jehovah; some, grown up in idolatry, had not yet sought Him. Idolatry may have been disestablished from the national sanctuary:

¹ 2 Kings xxii., xxiii.

² Zeph. i. 4: the LXX. reads *names of Baal*. See below, p. 40, n. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, 5.

its practices still lingered (how intelligibly to us!) in social and commercial life. Foreign fashions were affected by the court and nobility; trade, as always, was combined with the acknowledgment of foreign gods.¹ Moreover, the rich were fraudulent and cruel. The ministers of justice, and the great in the land, ravened among the poor. Jerusalem was full of oppression. These were the same disorders as Amos and Hosea exposed in Northern Israel, and as Micah exposed in Jerusalem. But one new trait of evil was added. In the eighth century, with all their ignorance of Jehovah's true character, men had yet believed in Him, gloried in His energy, and expected Him to act—were it only in accordance with their low ideals. They had been alive and bubbling with religion. But now they *had thickened on their lees*. They had grown sceptical, dull, indifferent; they said in their hearts, *Jehovah will not do good, neither will He do evil!*

Now, just as in the eighth century there had risen, contemporaneous with Israel's social corruption, a cloud in the north, black and pregnant with destruction, so was it once more. But the cloud was not Assyria. From the hidden world beyond her, from the regions over Caucasus, vast, nameless hordes of men arose, and, sweeping past her unchecked, poured upon Palestine. This was the great Scythian invasion recorded by Herodotus.² We have almost no other report than his few paragraphs, but we can realise the event from our knowledge of the Mongol and Tartar invasions which in later centuries pursued the same path southwards. Living in the saddle, and (it would seem) with no infantry nor chariots to delay them, these Centaurs

¹ *Ibid.*, 8-12.

² I. 102 ff.

swept on with a speed of invasion hitherto unknown. In 630 they had crossed the Caucasus, by 626 they were on the borders of Egypt. Psamtik I. succeeded in purchasing their retreat,¹ and they swept back again as swiftly as they came. They must have followed the old Assyrian war-paths of the eighth century, and, without foot-soldiers, had probably kept even more closely to the plains. In Palestine their way would lie, like Assyria's, across Hauran, through the plain of Esdraelon, and down the Philistine coast, and in fact it is only on this line that there exists any possible trace of them.² But they shook the whole of Palestine into consternation. Though Judah among her hills escaped them, as she escaped the earlier campaigns of Assyria, they showed her the penal resources of her offended God. Once again the dark, sacred North was seen to be full of the possibilities of doom.

Behold, therefore, exactly the two conditions, ethical and political, which, as we saw, called forth the sudden prophets of the eighth century, and made them so sure of their message of judgment: on the one side Judah, her sins calling aloud for punishment; on the other side the forces of punishment swiftly drawing on. It was precisely at this juncture that prophecy again arose, and as Amos, Hosea, Micah and Isaiah appeared in the end of the eighth century, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Nahum and Jeremiah appeared in the end of the seventh: The coincidence is exact, and a remarkable confirmation of the truth which we deduced from the experience of Amos, that the assurance of the prophet

¹ Herod., I. 105.

² The new name of Bethshan in the mouth of Esdraelon, viz. Scythopolis, is said to be derived from them (but see *Hist. Geog. of the Holy Land*, pp. 363 f.); they conquered Askalon (Herod., I. 105).

in Israel arose from the coincidence of his conscience with his political observation. The justice of Jehovah demands His people's chastisement, but see—the forces of chastisement are already upon the horizon. Zephaniah uses the same phrase as Amos: *the Day of Jehovah*, he says, *is drawing near*.

We are now in touch with Zephaniah, the first of our prophets, but, before listening to him, it will be well to complete our survey of those remaining years of the century in which he and his immediate successors laboured.

3. THE REST OF THE CENTURY (625—586): THE FALL OF NINIVEH; NAHUM AND HABAKKUK.

Although the Scythians had vanished from the horizon of Palestine and the Assyrians came over it no more, the fateful North still lowered dark and turbulent. Yet the keen eyes of the watchmen in Palestine perceived that, for a time at least, the storm must break where it had gathered. It is upon Niniveh, not upon Jerusalem, that the prophetic passion of Nahum and Habakkuk is concentrated; the new day of the Lord is filled with the fate, not of Israel, but of Assyria.

For nearly two centuries Niniveh had been the capital and cynosure of Western Asia; for more than one she had set the fashions, the art, and even, to some extent, the religion of all the Semitic nations. Of late years, too, she had drawn to herself the world's trade. Great roads from Egypt, from Persia and from the Ægean converged upon her, till like Imperial Rome she was filled with a vast motley of peoples, and men went forth from her to the ends of the earth.

Under Assurbanipal travel and research had increased, and the city acquired renown as the centre of the world's wisdom. Thus her size and glory, with all her details of rampart and tower, street, palace and temple, grew everywhere familiar. But the peoples gazed at her as those who had been bled to build her. The most remote of them had seen face to face on their own fields, trampling, stripping, burning, the warriors who manned her walls. She had dashed their little ones against the rocks. Their kings had been dragged from them and hung in cages about her gates. Their gods had lined the temples of her gods. Year by year they sent her their heavy tribute, and the bearers came back with fresh tales of her rapacious insolence. So she stood, bitterly clear to all men, in her glory and her cruelty! Their hate haunted her every pinnacle; and at last, when about 625 the news came that her frontier fortresses had fallen and the great city herself was being besieged, we can understand how her victims gloated on each possible stage of her fall, and saw her yield to one after another of the cruelties of battle, siege and storm, which for two hundred years she had inflicted on themselves. To such a vision the prophet Nahum gives voice, not on behalf of Israel alone, but of all the nations whom Niniveh had crushed.

It was obvious that the vengeance which Western Asia thus hailed upon Assyria must come from one or other of two groups of peoples, standing respectively to the north and to the south of her.

To the north, or north-east, between Mesopotamia and the Caspian, there were gathered a congeries of restless tribes known to the Assyrians as the Madai or Matai, the Medes. They are mentioned first

by Shalmaneser II. in 840, and few of his successors do not record campaigns against them. The earliest notice of them in the Old Testament is in connection with the captives of Samaria, some of whom in 720 were settled among them.¹ These Medes were probably of Turanian stock, but by the end of the eighth century, if we are to judge from the names of some of their chiefs,² their most easterly tribes had already fallen under Aryan influence, spreading westward from Persia.³ So led, they became united and formidable to Assyria. Herodotus relates that their King Phraortes, or Fravartis, actually attempted the siege of Niniveh, probably on the death of Assurbanipal in 625, but was slain.⁴ His son Kyaxares, Kastarit or Uvakshathra, was forced by a Scythian invasion of his own country to withdraw his troops from Assyria; but having either bought off or assimilated the Scythian invaders, he returned in 608, with forces sufficient to overthrow the northern Assyrian fortresses and to invest Niniveh herself.

The other and southern group of peoples which threatened Assyria were Semitic. At their head were the Kasdim or Chaldeans.⁵ This name appears for

¹ 2 Kings xvii. 6 : *and in the cities (LXX. mountains) of the Medes.* The Heb. is מַדַּי, Madai.

² Mentioned by Sargon.

³ Sayce, *Empires of the East*, 239 : cf. McCurdy, § 823 f.

⁴ Herod., I. 103.

⁵ Heb. Kasdim, כַּשְׁדִּימִי; LXX. Χαλδαῖοι; Assyr. Kaldāa, Kaldu. The Hebrew form with *s* is regarded by many authorities as the original, from the Assyrian root *kashadu*, to conquer, and the Assyrian form with *l* to have arisen by the common change of *sh* through *r* into *l*. The form with *s* does not occur, however, in Assyrian, which also possesses the root *kaladu*, with the same meaning as *kashadu*. See Mr. Pinches' articles on Chaldea and the Chaldeans in the new edition of Vol. I. of Smith's *Bible Dictionary*.

the first time in the Assyrian annals a little earlier than that of the Medes,¹ and from the middle of the ninth century onwards the people designated by it frequently engage the Assyrian arms. They were, to begin with, a few half-savage tribes to the south of Babylon, in the neighbourhood of the Persian Gulf; but they proved their vigour by the repeated lordship of all Babylonia and by inveterate rebellion against the monarchs of Niniveh. Before the end of the seventh century we find their names used by the prophets for the Babylonians as a whole. Assurbanipal, who was a patron of Babylonian culture, kept the country quiet during the last years of his reign, but his son Asshur-italilani, upon his accession in 625, had to grant the viceroyalty to Nabopolassar the Chaldean with a considerable degree of independence. Asshur-italilani was succeeded in a few years² by Sinsuriskin, the Sarakos of the Greeks, who preserved at least a nominal sovereignty over Babylon,³ but Nabopolassar must already have cherished ambitions of succeeding the Assyrian in the empire of the world. He enjoyed sufficient freedom to organise his forces to that end.

These were the two powers which from north and south watched with impatience the decay of Assyria. That they made no attempt upon her between 625 and 608 was probably due to several causes: their jealousy of each other, the Medes' trouble with the Scythians, Nabopolassar's genius for waiting till his forces were

¹ About 880 B.C. in the annals of Assurnatsirpal. See Chronological Table to Vol. I.

² No inscriptions of Asshur-italilani have been found later than the first two years of his reign.

³ Billerbeck-Jeremias, "Der Untergang Niniveh's," in Delitzsch and Haupt's *Beiträge zur Assyriologie*, III., p. 113.

ready, and above all the still considerable vigour of the Assyrian himself. The Lion, though old,¹ was not broken. His power may have relaxed in the distant provinces of his empire, though, if Budde be right about the date of Habakkuk,² the peoples of Syria still groaned under the thought of it; but his own land—his *lair*, as the prophets call it—was still terrible. It is true that, as Nahum perceives, the capital was no longer native and patriotic as it had been; the trade fostered by Assurbanipal had filled Niniveh with a vast and mercenary population, ready to break and disperse at the first breach in her walls. Yet Assyria proper was covered with fortresses, and the tradition had long fastened upon the peoples that Niniveh was impregnable. Hence the tension of those years. The peoples of Western Asia looked eagerly for their revenge; but the two powers which alone could accomplish this stood waiting—afraid of each other perhaps, but more afraid of the object of their common ambition.

It is said that Kyaxares and Nabopolassar at last came to an agreement;³ but more probably the crisis was hastened by the appearance of another claimant for the coveted spoil. In 608 Pharaoh Necho *went up against the king of Assyria towards the river Euphrates*.⁴ This Egyptian advance may have forced the hand of

¹ Nahum ii.

² See below, p. 120.

³ Abydenus (apud Euseb., *Chron.*, I. 9) reports a marriage between Nebuchadrezzar, Nabopolassar's son, and the daughter of the Median king.

⁴ 2 Kings xxiii. 29. The history is here very obscure. Necho, met at Megiddo by Josiah, and having slain him, appears to have spent a year or two in subjugating, and arranging for the government of, Syria (*ibid.*, verses 33-35), and only reached the Euphrates in 605, when Nebuchadrezzar defeated him.

Kyaxares, who appears to have begun his investment of Niniveh a little after Necho defeated Josiah at Megiddo.¹ The siege is said to have lasted two years. Whether this included the delays necessary for the reduction of fortresses upon the great roads of approach to the Assyrian capital we do not know; but Niniveh's own position, fortifications and resources may well account for the whole of the time. Colonel Billerbeck, a military expert, has suggested² that the Medes found it possible to invest the city only upon the northern and eastern sides. Down the west flows the Tigris, and across this the besieged may have been able to bring in supplies and reinforcements from the fertile country beyond. Herodotus affirms that the Medes effected the capture of Niniveh by themselves,³ and for this some recent evidence has been found,⁴ so that another tradition that the Chaldeans were also actively

¹ The reverse view is taken by Wellhausen, who says (*Israel u. Jüd. Gesch.*, pp. 97 f.): "Der Pharaoh scheint ausgezogen zu sein um sich seinen Teil an der Erbschaft Ninives vorwegzunehmen, während die Meder und Chaldäer die Stadt belagerten."

² See above, p. 20, n. 3.

³ I. 106.

⁴ A stele of Nabonidus discovered at Hilleh and now in the museum at Constantinople relates that in his third year, 553, the king restored at Harran the temple of Sin, the moon-god, which the Medes had destroyed fifty-four years before, *i.e.* 607. Whether the Medes did this before, during or after the siege of Niniveh is uncertain, but the approximate date of the siege, 608—606, is thus marvellously confirmed. The stele affirms that the Medes alone took Niniveh, but that they were called in by Marduk, the Babylonian god, to assist Nabopolassar and avenge the deportation of his image by Sennacherib to Niniveh. Messerschmidt (*Mittheilungen der Vorderasiatischen Gesellschaft*, I. 1896) argues that the Medes were summoned by the Babylonians while the latter were being sore pressed by the Assyrians. Winckler had already (*Untersuch.*, pp. 124 ff., 1889) urged that the Babylonians would refrain from taking an active part in the overthrow of Niniveh, in

engaged,¹ which has nothing to support it, may be regarded as false. Nabopolassar may still have been in name an Assyrian viceroy; yet, as Colonel Billerbeck points out, he had it in his power to make Kyaxares' victory possible by holding the southern roads to Niniveh, detaching other viceroys of her provinces and so shutting her up to her own resources. But among other reasons which kept him away from the siege may have been the necessity of guarding against Egyptian designs on the moribund empire. Pharaoh Necho, as we know, was making for the Euphrates as early as 608. Now if Nabopolassar and Kyaxares had arranged to divide Assyria between them, then it is likely that they agreed also to share the work of making their inheritance sure, so that while Kyaxares overthrew Niniveh, Nabopolassar, or rather his son Nebuchadrezzar,² waited for and overthrew Pharaoh by Carchemish on the Euphrates. Consequently Assyria was divided between the Medes and the Chaldeans; the latter as her heirs in the south took over her title to Syria and Palestine.

The two prophets with whom we have to deal at this time are almost entirely engrossed with the fall of

fear of incurring the guilt of sacrilege. Neither Messerschmidt's *Palmer*, nor Scheil's (who describes the stele in the *Recueil des Travaux*, XVIII. 1896), being accessible to me, I have written this note on the information supplied by Rev. C. H. W. Johns, of Cambridge, in the *Expository Times*, 1896, and by Prof. A. B. Davidson in App. I. to *Nah., Hab. and Zeph.*

¹ Berosus and Abydenus in Eusebius.

² This spelling (Jer. xlix. 28) is nearer the original than the alternative Hebrew Nebuchadnezzar. But the LXX. *Ναβουχοδονόσορ*, and the *Ναβουκοδρόσορος* of Abydenus and Megasthenes and *Ναβοκοδρόσοροι* of Strabo, have preserved the more correct vocalisation; for the original is Nabu-kudurri-ušur = Nebo, defend the crown!

Assyria. Nahum exults in the destruction of Niniveh, Habakkuk sees in the Chaldeans nothing but the avengers of the peoples whom Assyria¹ had oppressed. For both these events are the close of an epoch: neither prophet looks beyond this. Nahum (not on behalf of Israel alone) gives expression to the epoch's long thirst for vengeance on the tyrant; Habakkuk (if Budde's reading of him be right²) states the problems with which its victorious cruelties had filled the pious mind—states the problem and beholds the solution in the Chaldeans. And, surely, the vengeance was so just and so ample, the solution so drastic and for the time complete, that we can well understand how two prophets should exhaust their office in describing such things, and feel no motive to look either deep into the moral condition of Israel, or far out into the future which God was preparing for His people. It might, of course, be said that the prophets' silence on the latter subjects was due to their positions immediately after the great Reform of 621, when the nation, having been roused to an honest striving after righteousness, did not require prophetic rebuke, and when the success of so godly a prince as Josiah left no spiritual ambitions unsatisfied. But this (even if the dates of the two prophets were certain) is hardly probable; and the other explanation is sufficient. Who can doubt this who has realised the long epoch which then reached a crisis, or has been thrilled by the crash of the crisis itself? The fall of Niniveh was deafening enough to drown for the moment, as it does in Nahum, even a Hebrew's clamant conscience of his country's sin. The problems, which the long success of Assyrian cruelty had started,

¹ But see below, pp. 123 f.

² Below, pp. 121 ff.

were old and formidable enough to demand statement and answer before either the hopes or the responsibilities of the future could find voice. The past also requires its prophets. Feeling has to be satisfied, and experience balanced, before the heart is willing to turn the leaf and read the page of the future.

Yet, through all this time of Assyria's decline, Israel had her own sins, fears and convictions of judgment to come. The disappearance of the Scythians did not leave Zephaniah's predictions of doom without means of fulfilment; nor did the great Reform of 621 remove the necessity of that doom. In the deepest hearts the assurance that Israel must be punished was by these things only confirmed. The prophetess Huldah, the first to speak in the name of the Lord after the Book of the Law was discovered, emphasised not the reforms which it enjoined but the judgments which it predicted. Josiah's righteousness could at most ensure for himself a peaceful death: his people were incorrigible and doomed.¹ The reforms indeed proceeded, there was public and widespread penitence, idolatry was abolished. But those were only shallow pedants who put their trust in the possession of a revealed Law and purged Temple,² and who boasted that therefore Israel was secure. Jeremiah repeated the gloomy forecasts of Zephaniah and Huldah, and even before the wickedness of Jehoiakim's reign proved the obduracy of Israel's heart, he affirmed *the imminence of*

¹ 2 Kings xxii. 11-20. The genuineness of this passage is proved (as against Stade, *Gesch. des Volkes Israel*, I.) by the promise which it gives to Josiah of a peaceful death. Had it been written after the battle of Megiddo, in which Josiah was slain, it could not have contained such a promise.

² Jer. vii. 4, viii. 8.

*the evil out of the north and the great destruction.*¹ Of our three prophets in this period Zephaniah, though the earliest, had therefore the last word. While Nahum and Habakkuk were almost wholly absorbed with the epoch that is closing, he had a vision of the future. Is this why his book has been ranged among our Twelve after those of his slightly later contemporaries?

The precise course of events in Israel was this—and we must follow them, for among them we have to seek exact dates for Nahum and Habakkuk. In 621 the Book of the Law was discovered, and Josiah applied himself with thoroughness to the reforms which he had already begun. For thirteen years he seems to have had peace to carry them through. The heathen altars were thrown down, with all the high places in Judah and even some in Samaria. Images were abolished. The heathen priests were exterminated, with the wizards and soothsayers. The Levites, except the sons of Zadok, who alone were allowed to minister in the Temple, henceforth the only place of sacrifice, were debarred from priestly duties. A great passover was celebrated.² The king did justice and was the friend of the poor;³ it went well with him and the people.⁴ He extended his influence into Samaria; it is probable that he ventured to carry out the injunctions of Deuteronomy with regard to the neighbouring heathen.⁵ Literature flourished: though

¹ vi. 1.

² All these reforms in 2 Kings xxiii.

³ Jer. xxii. 15 f.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ver. 16.

⁵ We have no record of this, but a prince who so rashly flung himself in the way of Egypt would not hesitate to claim authority over Moab and Ammon.

critics have not combined upon the works to be assigned to this reign, they agree that a great many were produced in it. Wealth must have accumulated: certainly the nation entered the troubles of the next reign with an arrogant confidence that argues under Josiah the rapid growth of prosperity in every direction. Then of a sudden came the fatal year of 608. Pharaoh Necho appeared in Palestine¹ with an army destined for the Euphrates, and Josiah went up to meet him at Megiddo. His tactics are plain—it is the first strait on the land-road from Egypt to the Euphrates—but his motives are obscure. Assyria can hardly have been strong enough at this time to fling him as her vassal across the path of her ancient foe. He must have gone of himself. “His dream was probably to bring back the scattered remains of the northern kingdom to a pure worship, and to unite the whole people of Israel under the sceptre of the house of David; and he was not inclined to allow Egypt to cross his aspirations, and rob him of the inheritance which was falling to him from the dead hand of Assyria.”²

Josiah fell, and with him not only the liberty of his

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 24. The question whether Necho came by land from Egypt or brought his troops in his fleet to Acre is hardly answered by the fact that Josiah went to Megiddo to meet him. But Megiddo on the whole tells more for the land than the sea. It is not on the path from Acre to the Euphrates; it is the key of the land-road from Egypt to the Euphrates. Josiah could have no hope of stopping Pharaoh on the broad levels of Philistia; but at Megiddo there was a narrow pass, and the only chance of arresting so large an army as it moved in detachments. Josiah's tactics were therefore analogous to those of Saul, who also left his own territory and marched north to Esdraelon, to meet his foe—and death.

² A. B. Davidson, *The Exile and the Restoration*, p. 8 (Bible Class Primers, ed. by Salmond; Edin., T. & T. Clark, 1897).

people, but the chief support of their faith. That the righteous king was cut down in the midst of his days and in defence of the Holy Land—what could this mean? Was it, then, vain to serve the Lord? Could He not defend His own? With some the disaster was a cause of sore complaint, and with others, perhaps, of open desertion from Jehovah.

But the extraordinary thing is, how little effect Josiah's death seems to have had upon the people's self-confidence at large, or upon their adherence to Jehovah. They immediately placed Josiah's second son on the throne; but Necho, having got him by some means to his camp at Riblah between the Lebanons, sent him in fetters to Egypt, where he died, and established in his place Eliakim, his elder brother. On his accession Eliakim changed his name to Jehoiakim, a proof that Jehovah was still regarded as the sufficient patron of Israel; and the same blind belief that, for the sake of His Temple and of His Law, Jehovah would keep His people in security, continued to persevere in spite of Megiddo. It was a most immoral ease, and filled with injustice. Necho subjected the land to a fine. This was not heavy, but Jehoiakim, instead of paying it out of the royal treasures, exacted it from *the people of the land*,¹ and then employed the peace which it purchased in erecting a costly palace for himself by the forced labour of his subjects.² He was covetous, unjust and violently cruel. Like prince like people: social oppression prevailed, and there was a recrudescence of the idolatries of Manasseh's time,³ especially (it may be inferred) after Necho's defeat at Carchemish in 605. That all this should

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 33-35.

² Jer. xxii. 13-15.

³ Jer. xi.

exist along with a fanatic trust in Jehovah need not surprise us who remember the very similar state of the public mind in North Israel under Amos and Hosea. Jeremiah attacked it as they had done. Though Assyria was fallen, and Egypt was promising protection, Jeremiah predicted destruction from the north on Egypt and Israel alike. When at last the Egyptian defeat at Carchemish stirred some vague fears in the people's hearts, Jeremiah's conviction broke out into clear flame. For three-and-twenty years he had brought God's word in vain to his countrymen. Now God Himself would act: Nebuchadrezzar was but His servant to lead Israel into captivity.¹

The same year, 605 or 604, Jeremiah wrote all these things in a volume;² and a few months later, at a national fast, occasioned perhaps by the fear of the Chaldeans, Baruch, his secretary, read them in the house of the Lord, in the ears of all the people. The king was informed, the roll was brought to him, and as it was read, with his own hands he cut it up and burned it, three or four columns at a time. Jeremiah answered by calling down on Jehoiakim an ignominious death, and repeated the doom already uttered on the land. Another prophet, Urijah, had recently been executed for the same truth; but Jeremiah and Baruch escaped into hiding.

This was probably in 603, and for a little time Jehoiakim and the populace were restored to their false security by the delay of the Chaldeans to come south. Nebuchadrezzar was occupied in Babylon, securing his succession to his father. At last, either in 602 or more probably in 600, he marched into Syria, and

¹ xxv. 1 ff.

² xxxvi.

Jehoiakim *became his servant for three years*.¹ In such a condition the Jewish state might have survived for at least another generation,² but in 599 or 597 Jehoiakim, with the madness of the doomed, held back his tribute. The revolt was probably instigated by Egypt, which, however, did not dare to support it. As in Isaiah's time against Assyria, so now against Babylon, Egypt was a blusterer *who blustered and sat still*. She still *helped in vain and to no purpose*.³ Nor could Judah count on the help of the other states of Palestine. They had joined Hezekiah against Sennacherib, but remembering perhaps how Manasseh had failed to help them against Assurbanipal, and that Josiah had carried things with a high hand towards them,⁴ they obeyed Nebuchadrezzar's command and raided Judah till he himself should have time to arrive.⁵ Amid these raids the senseless Jehoiakim seems to have perished,⁶ for when Nebuchadrezzar appeared before Jerusalem in 597, his son Jehoiachin, a youth of eighteen, had succeeded to the throne. The innocent reaped the harvest sown by the guilty. In the attempt (it would appear) to save his people from destruction,⁷ Jehoiachin capitulated. But Nebuchadrezzar was not content with

¹ 2 Kings xxiv. 1. In the chronological table appended to Kautzsch's *Bibel* this verse and Jehoiakim's submission are assigned to 602. But this allows too little time for Nebuchadrezzar to confirm his throne in Babylon and march to Palestine, and it is not corroborated by the record in the Book of Jeremiah of events in Judah in 604—602.

² Nebuchadrezzar did not die till 562.

³ See *Isaiah i.—xxxix.* (Expositor's Bible), pp. 223 f.

⁴ See above, p. 26, n. 5.

⁵ 2 Kings xxiv. 2.

⁶ Jer. xxxvii. 30, but see 2 Kings xxiv. 6.

⁷ So Josephus puts it (X. *Antiq.*, vii. 1). Jehoiachin was unusually

the person of the king : he deported to Babylon the court, a large number of influential persons, *the mighty men of the land* or what must have been nearly all the fighting men, with the necessary military artificers and swordsmiths. Priests also went, Ezekiel among them, and probably representatives of other classes not mentioned by the annalist. All these were the flower of the nation. Over what was left Nebuchadrezzar placed a son of Josiah on the throne who took the name of Zedekiah. Again with a little common-sense, the state might have survived ; but it was a short respite. The new court began intrigues with Egypt, and Zedekiah, with the Ammonites and Tyre, ventured a revolt in 589. Jeremiah and Ezekiel knew it was in vain. Nebuchadrezzar marched on Jerusalem, and though for a time he had to raise the siege in order to defeat a force sent by Pharaoh Hophra, the Chaldean armies closed in again upon the doomed city. Her defence was stubborn ; but famine and pestilence sapped it, and numbers fell away to the enemy. About the eighteenth month, the besiegers took the northern suburb and stormed the middle gate. Zedekiah and the army broke their lines only to be captured at Jericho. In a few weeks more the city was taken and given over to fire. Zedekiah was blinded, and with a large number of his people carried to Babylon. It was the end, for although a small community of Jews was left at Mizpeh under a Jewish viceroy and with Jeremiah to guide them, they were soon broken up and fled to Egypt. Judah had perished. Her savage neighbours,

bewailed (Lam. iv. 20 ; Ezek. xvii. 22 ff.). He survived in captivity till the death of Nebuchadrezzar, whose successor Evil-Merodach in 561 took him from prison and gave him a place in his palace (2 Kings xxv. 27 ff.).

who had gathered with glee to the day of Jerusalem's calamity, assisted the Chaldeans in capturing the fugitives, and Edomites came up from the south on the desolate land.

It has been necessary to follow so far the course of events, because of our prophets Zephaniah is placed in each of the three sections of Josiah's reign, and by some even in Jehoiakim's; Nahum has been assigned to different points between the eve of the first and the eve of the second siege of Niniveh; and Habakkuk has been placed by different critics in almost every year from 621 to the reign of Jehoiachin; while Obadiah, whom we shall find reasons for dating during the Exile, describes the behaviour of Edom at the final siege of Jerusalem. The next of the Twelve, Haggai, may have been born before the Exile, but did not prophesy till 520. Zechariah appeared the same year, Malachi not for half a century after. These three are prophets of the Persian period. With the approach of the Greeks Joel appears, then comes the prophecy which we find in the end of Zechariah's book, and last of all the Book of Jonah. To all these post-exilic prophets we shall provide later on the necessary historical introductions.

ZEPHANIAH

Dies Iræ, Dies Illa !—ZEPH. i. 15.

“His book is the first tinging of prophecy with apocalypse : that is the moment which it supplies in the history of Israel's religion.”

CHAPTER II

THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

THE Book of Zephaniah is one of the most difficult in the prophetic canon. The title is very generally accepted; the period from which chap. i. dates is recognised by practically all critics to be the reign of Josiah, or at least the last third of the seventh century. But after that doubts start, and we find present nearly every other problem of introduction.

To begin with, the text is very damaged. In some passages we may be quite sure that we have not the true text;¹ in others we cannot be sure that we have it,² and there are several glosses.³ The bulk of the second chapter was written in the Qinah, or elegiac measure, but as it now stands the rhythm is very much broken. It is difficult to say whether this is due to the dilapidation of the original text or to wilful insertion of glosses and other later passages. The Greek version of Zephaniah possesses the same general features as that of other difficult prophets. Occasionally it enables us to correct the text; but by the time it was made the text must already have contained the same corruptions which we encounter, and the

¹ i. 3*b*, 5*b*; ii. 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 last word, 14*b*; iii. 18, 19*a*, 20.

² i. 14*b*; ii. 1, 3; iii. 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 15, 17.

³ i. 3*b*, 5*b*; ii. 2, 6; iii. 5 (?).

translators were ignorant besides of the meaning of some phrases which to us are plain.¹

The difficulties of textual criticism as well as of translation are aggravated by the large number of words, grammatical forms and phrases which either happen very seldom in the Old Testament,² or nowhere else in it at all.³ Of the rare words and phrases, a very few (as will be seen from the appended notes) are found in earlier writings. Indeed all that are found are from the authentic prophecies of Isaiah, with whose style and doctrine Zephaniah's own exhibit most affinity. All the other rarities of vocabulary and grammar are shared only by *later* writers; and as a whole the language of Zephaniah exhibits symptoms which separate it by many years from the language of the prophets of the eighth century, and range it with that of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Second Isaiah and still later literature. It may be useful to the student to collect in a note the most striking of these

¹ For details see translation below.

² i. 3, מְשֻׁלָּזֹת, only in Isa. iii. 6; 15, מְשֻׁוּאָה, only in Job xxx. 3, xxxviii. 27—cf. Psalms lxxiii. 18, lxxiv. 3; ii. 8, גְּדָפִים, Isa. xliii. 28—cf. li. 7; 9, חָרוּל, Prov. xxiv. 31, Job xxx. 7; 15, עֲלִיזָה, Isa. xxii. 2, xxiii. 7, xxxii. 13—cf. xiii. 3, xxiv. 8; iii. 1, נָגַלָה, see next note but one; 3, זָאבֵי עָרֵב, Hab. i. 8; 11, עֲלִיזֵי גְאוּתֶךָ, Isa. xiii. 3; 18, גְּוֹנֵי, Lam. i. 4, נִגְוֹת.

³ i. 11, הַמְּכַתֵּשׁ, as the name of a part of Jerusalem, otherwise only Jer. xv. 19; נְטִילֵי כֶסֶף, 12, קָפָא in pt. Qal, and otherwise only Exod. xv. 8, Zech. xiv. 6, Job x. 10; 14, מְהֵרָה (adj.), but the pointing may be wrong—cf. Maher-shalal-hash-baz, Isa. viii. 1, 3; צָרָח in Qal, elsewhere only once in Hi. Isa. xlii. 13; 17, לְחֹם in sense of flesh, cf. Job xx. 23; 18, נִבְהַלָה if a noun (?); ii. 1, קִשֵּׁשׁ in Qal and Hithpo, elsewhere only in Polel; 9, מְכַרְהָ, מְכַרְהָ, מְכַרְהָ, 11, רֹזָה, to make lean, otherwise only in Isa. xvii. 4, to be lean; 14, אֲרֹזָה (?); iii. 1, מְרָאָה, pt. of מָרָה; יוֹנָה, pt. Qal, in Jer. xlvi. 16, l. 16, it may be a noun; 4, אֲנָשֵׁי בְנֵי דָוִד; 6, נִצְדָו; 9, שְׂכָם אֶחָד; 10, עֲתֵרֵי בְתִיפּוּצֵי; 15, פָּנָה in sense to *turn away*; 18, מִמֶּךָ הָיוּ (?).

symptoms of the comparative lateness of Zephaniah's dialect.¹

We now come to the question of date, and we take, to begin with, the First Chapter. It was said above that critics agree as to the general period—between 639, when Josiah began to reign, and 600. But this period was divided into three very different sections, and each of these has received considerable support from modern criticism. The great majority of critics place the chapter in the early years of Josiah, before the enforcement of Deuteronomy and the great Reform in 621.² Others have argued for the later years of Josiah, 621—608, on the ground that the chapter implies that the great Reform has already taken place, and otherwise shows knowledge of Deuteronomy ;³ while some prefer the days of reaction under Jehoiakim, 608 ff.,⁴ and assume that the phrase in the title, *in the days of Josiah*, is a late and erroneous inference from i. 4.

The evidence for the argument consists of the title and the condition of Judah reflected in the body of the

¹ i. 8, etc., פקד על, followed by person, but not by thing—cf. Jer. ix. 24, xxiii. 34, etc., Job xxxvi. 23, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 23, Ezek. i. 2 ; 13, מִי־שָׁמָּה, only in Hab. ii. 7, Isa. xlii., Jer. xxx. 16, 2 Kings xxi. 14 ; 17, הַיָּזֵר, Hi. of צָר, only in 1 Kings viii. 37, and Deut., 2 Chron., Jer., Neh. ; ii. 3, עֲנוּה, 8, גְּדוּפִים, Isa. xliii. 28, li. 7 (fem. pl.) ; 9, חָרוּל, Prov. xxiv. 31, Job xxx. 7 ; iii. 1, נִגְאָלָה, Ni, pt.=impure, Isa. lix. 3, Lam. iv. 14 ; יוֹנָה, a pt. in Jer. xlvi. 16, l. 16 ; 3, זֹאבֵי עֵרֶב, Hab. i. 8—cf. Jer. v. 6, זֹאב עֲרֵבוֹת, 9, בְּרוּר, Isa. xlix. 2, בָּרַר, Ezek. xx. 38, 1 Chron. vii. 40, ix. 22, xvi. 41, Neh. v. 18, Job xxxiii. 3, Eccles. iii. 18, ix. 1 ; 11, עֲלֵיזֵי נְאוֹת, Isa. xiii. 3 ; 18, נִינְי, Lam. i. 4 has נִינּוֹת.

² So Hitzig, Ewald, Pusey, Kuenen, Robertson Smith (*Encyc. Brit.*), Driver, Wellhausen, Kirkpatrick, Budde, von Orelli, Cornill, Schwally, Davidson.

³ So Delitzsch, Kleinert, and Schulz (*Commentar über den Proph Zeph.*, 1892, p. 7, quoted by König).

⁴ So König.

chapter. The latter is a definite piece of oratory. Under the alarm of an immediate and general war, Zephaniah proclaims a vast destruction upon the earth. Judah must fall beneath it: the worshippers of Baal, of the host of heaven and of Milcom, the apostates from Jehovah, the princes and house of the king, the imitators of foreign fashions, and the forceful and fraudulent, shall be cut off in a great slaughter. Those who have grown sceptical and indifferent to Jehovah shall be unsettled by invasion and war. This shall be the Day of Jehovah, near and immediate, a day of battle and disaster on the whole land.

The conditions reflected are thus twofold—the idolatrous and sceptical state of the people, and an impending invasion. But these suit, more or less exactly, each of the three sections of our period. For Jeremiah distinctly states that he had to attack idolatry in Judah for twenty-three years, 627 to 604;¹ he inveighs against the falseness and impurity of the people alike before the great Reform, and after it while Josiah was still alive, and still more fiercely under Jehoiakim. And, while before 621 the great Scythian invasion was sweeping upon Palestine from the north, after 621, and especially after 604, the Babylonians from the same quarter were visibly threatening the land. But when looked at more closely, the chapter shows several features which suit the second section of our period less than they do the other two. The worship of the host of heaven, probably introduced under Manasseh, was put down by Josiah in 621; it revived under Jehoiakim,² but during the latter years of Josiah it cannot possibly have been so public as Zephaniah describes.³

¹ Jer. xxv.

² Jer. vii. 18.

³ i. 3.

Other reasons which have been given for those years are inconclusive¹—the chapter, for instance, makes no indubitable reference to Deuteronomy or the Covenant of 621—and on the whole we may leave the end of Josiah's reign out of account. Turning to the third section, Jehoiakim's reign, we find one feature of the prophecy which suits it admirably. The temper described in ver. 12—*men who are settled on their lees, who say in their heart, Jehovah doeth neither good nor evil*—is the kind of temper likely to have been produced among the less earnest adherents of Jehovah by the failure of the great Reform in 621 to effect either the purity or the prosperity of the nation. But this is more than counterbalanced by the significant exception of the king from the condemnation which ver. 8 passes

¹ Kleinert in his Commentary in Lange's *Bibelwerk*, and Delitzsch in his article in Herzog's *Real-Encyclopadie*², both offer a number of inconclusive arguments. These are drawn from the position of Zephaniah after Habakkuk, but, as we have seen, the order of the Twelve is not always chronological; from the supposition that Zephaniah i. 7, *Silence before the Lord Jehovah*, quotes Habakkuk ii. 20, *Keep silence before Him, all the earth*, but the phrase common to both is too general to be decisive, and if borrowed by one or other may just as well have been Zephaniah's originally as Habakkuk's; from the phrase *remnant of Baal* (i. 4), as if this were appropriate only after the Reform of 621, but it was quite as appropriate after the beginnings of reform six years earlier; from the condemnation of *the sons of the king* (i. 8), whom Delitzsch takes as Josiah's sons, who before the great Reform were too young to be condemned, while later their characters did develop badly and judgment fell upon all of them, but *sons of the king*, even if that be the correct reading (LXX. *house of the king*), does not necessarily mean the reigning monarch's children; and from the assertion that Deuteronomy is quoted in the first chapter of Zephaniah, and "so quoted as to show that the prophet needs only to put the people in mind of it as something supposed to be known," but the verses cited in support of this (viz. 13, 15, 17: cf. Deut. xxviii. 30 and 29) are too general in their character to prove the assertion. See translation below.

on the *princes and the sons of the king*. Such an exception could not have been made when Jehoiakim was on the throne; it points almost conclusively to the reign of the good Josiah. And with this agrees the title of the chapter—*in the days of Josiah*.¹ We are, therefore, driven back to the years of Josiah before 621. In these we find no discrepancy either with the chapter itself, or with its title. The southward march of the Scythians,² between 630 and 625, accounts for Zephaniah's alarm of a general war, including the invasion of Judah; the idolatrous practices which he describes may well have been those surviving from the days of Manasseh,³ and not yet reached by the drastic measures of 621; the temper of scepticism and hopelessness condemned by ver. 12 was possible among those adherents of Jehovah who had hoped greater things from the overthrow of Amon than the slow and small reforms of the first fifteen years of Josiah's reign. Nor is a date before 621 made at all difficult by the genealogy of Zephaniah in the title. If, as is probable,⁴ the Hezekiah given as his great-great-grandfather be Hezekiah the king, and if he died about 695, and Manasseh, his successor, who was then twelve, was his eldest son, then by 630 Zephaniah cannot have been much more than twenty years of age,

¹ König has to deny the authenticity of this in order to make his case for the reign of Jehoiakim. But nearly all critics take the phrase as genuine.

² See above, p. 15. For inconclusive reasons Schwally, *Z.A.T.W.*, 1890, pp. 215-217, prefers the Egyptians under Psamtik. See in answer Davidson, p. 98.

³ Not much stress can be laid upon the phrase *I will cut off the remnant of Baal*, ver. 4, for, if the reading be correct, it may only mean the destruction of Baal-worship, and not the uprooting of what has been left over.

⁴ See below, p. 47, n. 2.

and not more than twenty-five by the time the Scythian invasion had passed away.¹ It is therefore by no means impossible to suppose that he prophesied before 625; and besides, the data of the genealogy in the title are too precarious to make them valid, as against an inference from the contents of the chapter itself.

The date, therefore, of the first chapter of Zephaniah may be given as about 625 B.C., and probably rather before than after that year, as the tide of Scythian invasion has apparently not yet ebbed.

The other two chapters have within recent years been almost wholly denied to Zephaniah. Kuenen doubted chap. iii. 9-20. Stade makes all chap. iii. post-exilic, and suspects ii. 1-3, 11. A very thorough examination of them has led Schwally² to assign to exilic or post-exilic times the whole of the little sections comprising them, with the possible exception of chap. iii. 1-7, which "may be" Zephaniah's. His essay has been subjected to a searching and generally hostile criticism by a number of leading scholars;³ and he has admitted the inconclusiveness of some of his reasons.⁴

Chap. ii. 1-4 is assigned by Schwally to a date later than Zephaniah's, principally because of the term *meeekness* (ver. 3), which is a favourite one with post-exilic writers. He has been sufficiently answered;⁵ and the

¹ If 695 be the date of the accession of Manasseh, being then twelve, Amariah, Zephaniah's great-grandfather, cannot have been more than ten, that is, born in 705. His son Gedaliah was probably not born before 689, his son Kushi probably not before 672, and his son Zephaniah probably not before 650.

² *Z.A.T.W.*, 1890, Heft 1.

³ Bacher, *Z.A.T.W.*, 1891, 186; Cornill, *Einleitung*, 1891; Budde, *Theol. Stud. u. Krit.*, 1893, 393 ff.; Davidson, *Nah., Hab. and Zeph.*, 100 ff.

⁴ *Z.A.T.W.*, 1891, Heft 2.

⁵ By especially Bacher, Cornill and Budde as above.

close connection of vv. 1-3 with chap. i. has been clearly proved.¹ Chap. ii. 4-15 is the passage in elegiac measure but broken, an argument for the theory that insertions have been made in it. The subject is a series of foreign nations—Philistia (5-7), Moab and Ammon (8-10), Egypt (11) and Assyria (13-15). The passage has given rise to many doubts; every one must admit the difficulty of coming to a conclusion as to its authenticity. On the one hand, the destruction just predicted is so universal that, as Professor Davidson says, we should expect Zephaniah to mention other nations than Judah.² The concluding oracle on Niniveh must have been published before 608, and even Schwally admits that it may be Zephaniah's own. But if this be so, then we may infer that the first of the oracles on Philistia is also Zephaniah's, for both it and the oracle on Assyria are in the elegiac measure, a fact which makes it probable that the whole passage, however broken and intruded upon, was originally a unity. Nor is there anything in the oracle on Philistia incompatible with Zephaniah's date. Philistia lay on the path of the Scythian invasion; the phrase in ver. 7, *shall turn their captivity*, is not necessarily exilic. As Cornill, too, points out, the expression in ver. 13, *He will stretch out His hand to the north*, implies that the prophecy has already looked in other directions. There remains the passage between the oracles on Philistia and Assyria. This is not in the elegiac measure. Its subject is Moab

¹ See Budde and Davidson.

² The ideal of chap. i.—ii. 3, of the final security of a poor and lowly remnant of Israel, "necessarily implies that they shall no longer be threatened by hostility from without, and this condition is satisfied by the prophet's view of the impending judgment on the ancient enemies of his nation," *i.e.* those mentioned in ii. 4-15 (Robertson Smith, *Encyc. Brit.*, art. "Zephaniah").

and Ammon, who were not on the line of the Scythian invasion, and Wellhausen further objects to it, because the attitude to Israel of the two peoples whom it describes is that which is attributed to them only just before the Exile and surprises us in Josiah's reign. Dr. Davidson meets this objection by pointing out that, just as in Deuteronomy, so here, Moab and Ammon are denounced, while Edom, which in Deuteronomy is spoken of with kindness, is here not denounced at all. A stronger objection to the passage is that ver. 11 predicts the conversion of the nations, while ver. 12 makes them the prey of Jehovah's sword, and in this ver. 12 follows on naturally to ver. 7. On this ground as well as on the absence of the elegiac measure the oracle on Moab and Ammon is strongly to be suspected.

On the whole, then, the most probable conclusion is that chap. ii. 4-15 was originally an authentic oracle of Zephaniah's in the elegiac metre, uttered at the same date as chap. i.—ii. 3, the period of the Scythian invasion, though from a different standpoint; and that it has suffered considerable dilapidation (witness especially vv. 6 and 14), and probably one great intrusion, vv. 8-10.

There remains the Third Chapter. The authenticity has been denied by Schwally, who transfers the whole till after the Exile. But the chapter is not a unity.¹

¹ See, however, Davidson for some linguistic reasons for taking the two sections as one. Robertson Smith, also in 1888 (*Encyc. Brit.*, art. "Zephaniah"), assumed (though not without pointing out the possibility of the addition of other pieces to the genuine prophecies of Zephaniah) that "a single leading motive runs through the whole" book, and "the first two chapters would be incomplete without the third, which moreover is certainly pre-exilic (vv. 1-4) and presents specific points of contact with what precedes, as well as a general agreement in style and idea."

In the first place, it falls into two sections, vv. 1-13 and 14-20. There is no reason to take away the bulk of the first section from Zephaniah. As Schwally admits, the argument here is parallel to that of chap. i.—ii. 3. It could hardly have been applied to Jerusalem during or after the Exile, but suits her conditions before her fall. Schwally's linguistic objections to a pre-exilic date have been answered by Budde.¹ He holds ver. 6 to be out of place and puts it after ver. 8, and this may be. But as it stands it appeals to the impenitent Jews of ver. 5 with the picture of the judgment God has already completed upon the nations, and contrasts with ver. 7, in which God says that He trusts Israel will repent. Vv. 9 and 10 are, we shall see, obviously an intrusion, as Budde maintains and Davidson admits to be possible.²

We reach more certainty when we come to the second section of the chapter, vv. 14-20. Since Kuenen it has been recognised by the majority of critics that we have here a prophecy from the end of the Exile or after the Return. The temper has changed. Instead of the austere and sombre outlook of chap. i.—ii. 3 and chap. iii. 1-13, in which the sinful Israel is to be saved indeed, but only as by fire, we have a triumphant prophecy of her recovery from all affliction (nothing is said of her sin) and of her glory among

¹ Schwally (234) thinks that the epithet צַדִּיק (ver. 5) was first applied to Jehovah by the Second Isaiah (xlvi. 21, lxiv. 2, xlii. 21), and became frequent from his time on. In disproof Budde (3398) quotes Exod. ix. 27, Jer. xii. 1, Lam. i. 18. Schwally also points to צַדִּיק as borrowed from Aramaic.

² Budde, p. 395; Davidson, 103. Schwally (230 ff.) seeks to prove the unity of 9 and 10 with the context, but he has apparently mistaken the meaning of ver. 8 (231). That surely does not mean that the nations are gathered in order to punish the godlessness of the Jews, but that they may themselves be punished.

the nations of the world. To put it otherwise, while the genuine prophecies of Zephaniah almost grudgingly allow a door of escape to a few righteous and humble Israelites from a judgment which is to fall alike on Israel and the Gentiles, chap. iii. 14-20 predicts Israel's deliverance from her Gentile oppressors, her return from captivity and the establishment of her renown over the earth. The language, too, has many resemblances to that of Second Isaiah.¹ Obviously therefore we have here, added to the severe prophecies of Zephaniah, such a more hopeful, peaceful epilogue as we saw was added, during the Exile or immediately after it, to the despairing prophecies of Amos.

¹ See Davidson, 103.

CHAPTER III

THE PROPHET AND THE REFORMERS

ZEPHANIAH i.—ii. 3

TOWARDS the year 625, when King Josiah had passed out of his minority,¹ and was making his first efforts at religious reform, prophecy, long slumbering, awoke again in Israel.

Like the king himself, its first heralds were men in their early youth. In 627 Jeremiah calls himself but a boy, and Zephaniah can hardly have been out of his teens.² For the sudden outbreak of these young lives there must have been a large reservoir of patience and hope gathered in the generation behind them. So Scripture itself testifies. To Jeremiah it was said: *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I consecrated thee.*³ In an age when names were bestowed only because of their significance,⁴ both prophets bore that of Jehovah in their own. So did Jeremiah's father, who was of the priests of Anathoth. Zephaniah's "forbears" are given for four generations, and with one exception

¹ Josiah, born c. 648, succeeded c. 639, was about eighteen in 630, and then appears to have begun his reforms.

² See above, pp. 40 f., n. 1.

³ Jer. i. 5.

⁴ See G. B. Gray, *Hebrew Proper Names*.

they also are called after Jehovah: *The Word of Jehovah which came to Şephanyah, son of Kushi, son of Gedhalyah, son of Amaryah, son of Hizkīyah, in the days of Joshiyahu,¹ Amon's son, king of Judah.* Zephaniah's great-great-grandfather Hezekiah was in all probability the king.² His father's name Kushi, or *Ethiop*, is curious. If we are right, that Zephaniah was a young man towards 625, then Kushi must have been born towards 663, about the time of the conflicts between Assyria and Egypt, and it is possible that, as Manasseh and the predominant party in Judah so closely hung upon and imitated Assyria, the adherents of Jehovah put their hope in Egypt, whereof, it may be, this name Kushi is a token.³ The name Zephaniah itself, meaning *Jehovah hath hidden*, suggests the prophet's birth in the "killing-time" of Manasseh. There was at least one other contemporary of the same name—a priest executed by Nebuchadrezzar.⁴

¹ Josiah.

² It is not usual in the O.T. to carry a man's genealogy beyond his grandfather, except for some special purpose, or in order to include some ancestor of note. Also the name Hezekiah is very rare apart from the king. The number of names compounded with Jah or Jehovah is another proof that the line is a royal one. The omission of the phrase *king of Judah* after Hezekiah's name proves nothing; it may have been of purpose because the phrase has to occur immediately again.

³ It was not till 652 that a league was made between the Palestine princes and Psamtik I. against Assyria. This certainly would have been the most natural year for a child to be named Kushi. But that would set the birth of Zephaniah as late as 632, and his prophecy towards the end of Josiah's reign, which we have seen to be improbable on other grounds.

⁴ Jer. xxi. 1, xxix. 25, 29, xxxvii. 3, lii. 24 ff.; 2 Kings xxv. 18. The analogous Phœnician name שפניאל, Saphan-ba'al = "Baal protects or hides," is found in No. 207 of the Phœnician inscriptions in the *Corpus Inscr. Semiticarum*.

Of the adherents of Jehovah, then, and probably of royal descent, Zephaniah lived in Jerusalem. We descry him against her, almost as clearly as we descry Isaiah. In the glare and smoke of the conflagration which his vision sweeps across the world, only her features stand out definite and particular: the flat roofs with men and women bowing in the twilight to the host of heaven, the crowds of priests, the nobles and their foreign fashions; the *Fishgate*, the New or *Second Town*, where the rich lived, the *Heights* to which building had at last spread, and between them the hollow *Mortar*, with its markets, Phœnician merchants and money-dealers. In the first few verses of Zephaniah we see almost as much of Jerusalem as in the whole book either of Isaiah or Jeremiah.

For so young a man the vision of Zephaniah may seem strangely dark and final. Yet not otherwise was Isaiah's inaugural vision, and as a rule it is the young and not the old whose indignation is ardent and unsparing. Zephaniah carries this temper to the extreme. There is no great hope in his book, hardly any tenderness and never a glimpse of beauty. A townsman, Zephaniah has no eye for nature; not only is no fair prospect described by him, he has not even a single metaphor drawn from nature's loveliness or peace. He is pitilessly true to his great keynotes: *I will sweep, sweep from the face of the ground; He will burn, burn up everything.* No hotter book lies in all the Old Testament. Neither dew nor grass nor tree nor any blossom lives in it, but it is everywhere fire, smoke and darkness, drifting chaff, ruins, nettles, saltpits, and owls and ravens looking from the windows of desolate palaces. Nor does Zephaniah foretell the restoration of nature in the end of the days. There is no prospect

of a redeemed and fruitful land, but only of a group of battered and hardly saved characters: a few meek and righteous are hidden from the fire and creep forth when it is over. Israel is left *a poor and humble folk*. No prophet is more true to the doctrine of the remnant, or more resolutely refuses to modify it. Perhaps he died young.

The full truth, however, is that Zephaniah, though he found his material in the events of his own day, tears himself loose from history altogether. To the earlier prophets the Day of the Lord, the crisis of the world, is a definite point in history: full of terrible, divine events, yet "natural" ones—battle, siege, famine, massacre and captivity. After it history is still to flow on, common days come back and Israel pursue their way as a nation. But to Zephaniah the Day of the Lord begins to assume what we call the "supernatural." The grim colours are still woven of war and siege, but mixed with vague and solemn terrors from another sphere, by which history appears to be swallowed up, and it is only with an effort that the prophet thinks of a rally of Israel beyond. In short, with Zephaniah the Day of the Lord tends to become the Last Day. His book is the first tinging of prophecy with apocalypse: that is the moment which it supplies in the history of Israel's religion. And, therefore, it was with a true instinct that the great Christian singer of the Last Day took from Zephaniah his keynote. The "Dies Iræ, Dies Illa" of Thomas of Celano is but the Vulgate translation of Zephaniah's *A day of wrath is that day*.¹

¹ Chap. i. 15. With the above paragraph cf. Robertson Smith, *Encyc. Brit.*, art. "Zephaniah."

Nevertheless, though the first of apocalyptic writers, Zephaniah does not allow himself the license of apocalypse. As he refuses to imagine great glory for the righteous, so he does not dwell on the terrors of the wicked. He is sober and restrained, a matter-of-fact man, yet with power of imagination, who, amidst the vague horrors he summons, delights in giving a sharp realistic impression. The Day of the Lord, he says, what is it? *A strong man—there!—crying bitterly.*¹

It is to the fierce ardour, and to the elemental interests of the book, that we owe the absence of two features of prophecy which are so constant in the prophets of the eighth century. Firstly, Zephaniah betrays no interest in the practical reforms which (if we are right about the date) the young king, his contemporary, had already started.² There was a party of reform, the party had a programme, the programme was drawn from the main principles of prophecy and was designed to put these into practice. And Zephaniah was a prophet—and ignored them. This forms the dramatic interest of his book. Here was a man of the same faith which kings, priests and statesmen were striving to realise in public life, in the assured hope—as is plain from the temper of Deuteronomy—that the nation as a whole would be reformed and become a very great nation, righteous and victorious. All this he ignored,

¹ Chap. i. 14*b*.

² In fact this forms one difficulty about the conclusion which we have reached as to the date. We saw that one reason against putting the Book of Zephaniah after the great Reforms of 621 was that it betrayed no sign of their effects. But it might justly be answered that, if Zephaniah prophesied before 621, his book ought to betray some sign of the approach of reform. Still the explanation given above is satisfactory.

and gave his own vision of the future: Israel is a brand plucked from the burning; a very few meek and righteous are saved from the conflagration of a whole world. Why? Because for Zephaniah the elements were loose, and when the elements were loose what was the use of talking about reforms? The Scythians were sweeping down upon Palestine, with enough of God's wrath in them to destroy a people still so full of idolatry as Israel was; and if not the Scythians, then some other power in that dark, rumbling North which had ever been so full of doom. Let Josiah try to reform Israel, but it was neither Josiah's nor Israel's day that was falling. It was the Day of the Lord, and when He came it was neither to reform nor to build up Israel, but to make visitation and to punish in His wrath for the unbelief and wickedness of which the nation was still full.

An analogy to this dramatic opposition between prophet and reformer may be found in our own century. At its crisis, in 1848, there were many righteous men rich in hope and energy. The political institutions of Europe were being rebuilt. In our own land there were great measures for the relief of labouring children and women, the organisation of labour and the just distribution of wealth. But Carlyle that year held apart from them all, and, though a personal friend of many of the reformers, counted their work hopeless: society was too corrupt, the rudest forces were loose, "Niagara" was near. Carlyle was proved wrong and the reformers right, but in the analogous situation of Israel the reformers were wrong and the prophet right. Josiah's hope and daring were overthrown at Megiddo, and, though the Scythians passed away, Zephaniah's conviction of the sin and doom of Israel

was fulfilled, not forty years later, in the fall of Jerusalem and the great Exile.

Again, to the same elemental interests, as we may call them, is due the absence from Zephaniah's pages of all the social and individual studies which form the charm of other prophets. With one exception, there is no analysis of character, no portrait, no satire. But the exception is worth dwelling upon: it describes the temper equally abhorred by both prophet and reformer—that of the indifferent and stagnant man. Here we have a subtle and memorable picture of character, which is not without its warnings for our own time.

Zephaniah heard God say: *And it shall be at that time that I will search out Jerusalem with lights, and I will make visitation upon the men who are become stagnant upon their lees, who say in their hearts, Jehovah doeth no good and doeth no evil.*¹ The metaphor is clear. New wine was left upon its lees only long enough to fix its colour and body.² If not then drawn off it grew thick and syrupy—sweeter indeed than the strained wine, and to the taste of some more pleasant, but feeble and ready to decay. "To settle upon one's lees" became a proverb for sloth, indifference and the muddy mind. *Moab hath been at ease from his youth and hath settled upon his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel; therefore his taste stands in him and his scent is not changed.*³ The characters stigmatised by Zephaniah are also obvious. They were a precipitate from the ferment of fifteen years back. Through the cruel days of Manasseh and Amon hope had been

¹ Chap. i. 12.

² So *wine upon the lees* is a generous wine according to Isa. xxv. 6.

³ Jer. xlvi. 11.

stirred and strained, emptied from vessel to vessel, and so had sprung sparkling and keen into the new days of Josiah. But no miracle came, only ten years of waiting for the king's majority and five more of small, tentative reforms. Nothing divine happened. There were but the ambiguous successes of a small party who had secured the king for their principles. The court was still full of foreign fashions, and idolatry was rank upon the housetops. Of course disappointment ensued—disappointment and listlessness. The new security of life became a temptation; persecution ceased, and religious men lived again at ease. So numbers of eager and sparkling souls, who had been in the front of the movement, fell away into a selfish and idle obscurity. The prophet hears God say, *I must search Jerusalem with lights* in order to find them. They had "fallen from the van and the freemen"; they had "sunk to the rear and the slaves," where they wallowed in the excuse that *Jehovah Himself would do nothing—neither good, therefore it is useless to attempt reform like Josiah and his party, nor evil, therefore Zephaniah's prophecy of destruction is also vain.* Exactly the same temper was encountered by Mazzini in the second stage of his career. Many of those, who with him had eagerly dreamt of a free Italy, fell away when the first revolt failed—fell away not merely into weariness and fear, but, as he emphasises, into the very two tempers which are described by Zephaniah, scepticism and self-indulgence.

All this starts questions for ourselves. Here is evidently the same public temper, which at all periods provokes alike the despair of the reformer and the indignation of the prophet: the criminal apathy of the well-to-do classes sunk in ease and religious indiffer-

ence. We have to-day the same mass of obscure, nameless persons, who oppose their almost unconquerable inertia to every movement of reform, and are the drag upon all vital and progressive religion. The great causes of God and Humanity are not defeated by the hot assaults of the Devil, but by the slow, crushing, glacier-like mass of thousands and thousands of indifferent nobodies. God's causes are never destroyed by being blown up, but by being sat upon. It is not the violent and anarchical whom we have to fear in the war for human progress, but the slow, the staid, the respectable. And the danger of these does not lie in their stupidity. Notwithstanding all their religious profession, it lies in their real scepticism. Respectability may be the precipitate of unbelief. Nay, it is that, however religious its mask, wherever it is mere comfort, decorousness and conventionality; where, though it would abhor articulately confessing that God does nothing, it virtually means so—*says so* (as Zephaniah puts it) *in its heart*, by refusing to share manifest opportunities of serving Him, and covers its sloth and its fear by sneering that God is not with the great crusades for freedom and purity to which it is summoned. In these ways, Respectability is the precipitate which unbelief naturally forms in the selfish ease and stillness of so much of our middle-class life. And that is what makes mere respectability so dangerous. Like the unshaken, unstrained wine to which the prophet compares its obscure and muddy comfort, it tends to decay. To some extent our respectable classes are just the dregs and lees of our national life; like all dregs, they are subject to corruption. A great sermon could be preached on the putrescence of respectability—how the ignoble comfort

of our respectable classes and their indifference to holy causes lead to sensuality, and poison the very institutions of the Home and the Family, on which they pride themselves. A large amount of the licentiousness of the present day is not that of outlaw and disordered lives, but is bred from the settled ease and indifference of many of our middle-class families.

It is perhaps the chief part of the sin of the obscure units, which form these great masses of indifference, that they think they escape notice and cover their individual responsibility. At all times many have sought obscurity, not because they are humble, but because they are slothful, cowardly or indifferent. Obviously it is this temper which is met by the words, *I will search out Jerusalem with lights*. None of us shall escape because we have said, "I will go with the crowd," or "I am a common man and have no right to thrust myself forward." We shall be followed and judged, each of us for his and her personal attitude to the great movements of our time. These things are not too high for us: they are *our* duty; and we cannot escape our duty by slinking into the shadow.

For all this wickedness and indifference Zephaniah sees prepared the Day of the Lord—near, hastening and very terrible. It sweeps at first in vague desolation and ruin of all things, but then takes the outlines of a solemn slaughter-feast for which Jehovah has consecrated the guests, the dim unnamed armies from the north. Judah shall be invaded, and they that are at ease, who say *Jehovah does nothing*, shall be unsettled and routed. One vivid trait comes in like a screech upon the hearts of a people unaccustomed for years to war. *Hark, Jehovah's Day!* cries the prophet. *A strong man—there!—crying bitterly.* From

this flash upon the concrete, he returns to a great vague terror, in which earthly armies merge in heavenly; battle, siege, storm and darkness are mingled, and destruction is spread abroad upon the whole earth. The first shades of Apocalypse are upon us.

We may now take the full text of this strong and significant prophecy. We have already given the title. Textual emendations and other points are explained in footnotes.

I will sweep, sweep away everything from the face of the ground—oracle of Jehovah—sweep man and beast, sweep the fowl of the heaven and the fish of the sea, and I will bring to ruin¹ the wicked and cut off the men of wickedness from the ground—oracle of Jehovah. And I will stretch forth My hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off from this place the remnant² of the Baal,³ the names⁴ of the priestlings

¹ The text reads *the ruins* (מִבְּשִׁלֹּת, unless we prefer with Wellhausen מִבְּשִׁלִּים, *the stumbling-blocks*, i.e. *idols*) *with the wicked, and I will cut off man* (LXX. *the lawless*) *from off the face of the ground*. Some think the clause partly too redundant, partly too specific, to be original. But suppose we read וְהִכִּיתִּי (cf. Mal. ii. 8, Lam. i. 14 and *passim*: this is more probable than Schwally's בְּשִׁלִּי, *op. cit.*, p. 169), and for אָדָם the reading which probably the LXX. had before them, אָדָם רָשָׁע (Job xx. 29, xxvii. 13, Prov. xi. 7: cf. אָדָם בְּלִיעַל, Prov. vi. 12) or אָדָם עָנָל (cf. iii. 5), we get the rendering adopted in the translation above. Some think the whole passage an intrusion, yet it is surely probable that the earnest moral spirit of Zephaniah would aim at the wicked from the very outset of his prophecy.

² LXX. *names*, held by some to be the original reading (Schwally, etc.). In that case the phrase might have some allusion to the well-known promise in Deut., *the place where I shall set My name*. This is more natural than a reference to Hosea ii. 19, which is quoted by some.

³ Some Greek codd. take Baal as fem., others as plur.

⁴ So LXX.

with the priests, and them who upon the housetops bow themselves to the host of heaven, and them who . . .¹ swear by their Melech,² and them who have turned from following Jehovah, and who do not seek Jehovah nor have inquired of Him.

Silence for the Lord Jehovah! For near is Jehovah's Day. Jehovah has prepared a³ slaughter, He has consecrated His guests.

And it shall be in Jehovah's day of slaughter that I will make visitation upon the princes and the house⁴ of the king, and upon all who array themselves in foreign raiment; and I will make visitation upon all who leap over the threshold⁵ on that day, who fill their lord's house full of violence and fraud.

And on that day—oracle of Jehovah—there shall be a noise of crying from the Fishgate, and wailing from the Mishneh,⁶ and great havoc on the Heights. Howl,

¹ Heb. reads *and them who bow themselves, who swear, by Jehovah* So LXX. B with *and* before *who swear*. But LXX. A omits *and*. LXX. Q omits *them who bow themselves*. Wellhausen keeps the clause with the exception of *who swear*, and so reads (to the end of verse) *them who bow themselves to Jehovah and swear by Milcom*.

² Or Molech = king. LXX. *by their king*. Other Greek versions: Moloch and Melchom. Vulg. Melchom.

³ LXX. *His*.

⁴ So L. X. Heb. *sons*.

⁵ Is this some superstitious rite of the idol-worshippers as described in the case of Dagon, 1 Sam. v. 5? Or is it a phrase for breaking into a house, and so parallel to the second clause of the verse? Most interpreters prefer the latter. The idolatrous rites have been left behind. Schwally suggests the original order may have been: *princes and sons of the king, who fill their lord's house full of violence and deceit; and I will visit upon every one that leapeth over the threshold on that day, and upon all that wear foreign raiment*.

⁶ The *Second* or *New Town*: cf. 2 Kings xxii. 14, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 22, which state that the prophetess Huldah lived there. Cf. Neh. iii. 9, 12, xi. 9.

O dwellers in the Mortar,¹ for undone are all the merchant folk,² cut off are all the money-dealers.³

And in that time it shall be, that I will search Jerusalem with lanterns, and make visitation upon the men who are become stagnant upon their lees, who in their hearts say, Jehovah doeth no good and doeth no evil.⁴ Their substance shall be for spoil, and their houses for wasting. . . .⁵

Near is the great Day of Jehovah, near and very speedy.⁶ Hark, the Day of Jehovah! A strong man—there!—crying bitterly!

A day of wrath is that Day!⁷ Day of siege and blockade, day of stress and distress,⁸ day of darkness and murk, day of cloud and heavy mist, day of the war-horn and battle-roar, up against the fenced cities and against the highest turrets! And I will beleaguer men, and they shall walk like the blind, for they have sinned against Jehovah; and poured out shall their blood be like dust, and the flesh of them like dung. Even their silver, even their gold shall not avail to save them

¹ The hollow probably between the western and eastern hills, or the upper part of the Tyropæan (Orelli).

² Heb. *people of Canaan*.

³ נטיל, found only here, from נטל, to lift up, and in Isa. xl. 15 to weigh. Still it may have a wider meaning, *all they that carry money* (Davidson).

⁴ See above, p. 52.

⁵ The Hebrew text and versions here add: *And they shall build houses and not inhabit* (Greek *in them*), *and plant vineyards and not drink the wine thereof*. But the phrase is a common one (Deut. xxviii. 30; Amos v. 11: cf. Micah vi. 15), and while likely to have been inserted by a later hand, is here superfluous, and mars the firmness and edge of Zephaniah's threat.

⁶ For מזהר Wellhausen reads ממוהר, pt. Pi; but מזהר may be a verbal adj.; compare the phrase מזהר שלל, Isa. viii. 1.

⁷ Dies Iræ, Dies Illa!

⁸ Heb. sho'ah u-mesho'ah. Lit. ruin (or devastation) and destruction.

in the day of Jehovah's wrath,¹ and in the fire of His zeal shall all the earth be devoured, for destruction, yea,² sudden collapse shall He make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Upon this vision of absolute doom there follows³ a qualification for the few meek and righteous. They may be hidden on the day of the Lord's anger; but even for them escape is only a possibility. Note the absence of all mention of the Divine mercy as the cause of deliverance. Zephaniah has no gospel of that kind. The conditions of escape are sternly ethical—meekness, the doing of justice and righteousness. So austere is our prophet.

. . . ,⁴ O people unabashed!⁵ before that ye become as

¹ Some take this first clause of ver. 18 as a gloss. See Schwally *in loco*.

² Read הָאָרֶץ for הָאָרְצָה. So LXX., Syr., Wellhausen, Schwally.

³ In vv. 1-3 of chap. ii., wrongly separated from chap. i.: see Davidson.

⁴ Heb. הִתְקַוְּשׁוּ יַגְדְּשׁוּ. A.V. *Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together* (קָוְּשׁוּ is to gather straw or sticks—cf. Arab. *ḡash*, to sweep up—and Nithp. of the Aram. is to assemble). Orelli: *Crowd and crouch down*. Ewald compares Aram. *ḡash*, late Heb. קָוְּשׁוּ, to grow old, which he believes originally meant to be withered, grey. Budde suggests התבששו, but, as Davidson remarks, it is not easy to see how this, if once extant, was altered to the present reading.

⁵ נִבְכָּה is usually thought to have as its root meaning to be pale or colourless, i.e. either white or black (*Journal of Phil.*, 14, 125), whence נִבְכָּה, silver or the pale metal: hence in the Qal to long for, Job xiv. 15, Ps. xvii. 12; so Ni, Gen. xxxi. 30, Ps. lxxxiv. 3; and here to be ashamed. But the derivation of the name for silver is quite imaginary, and the colour of shame is red rather than white: cf. the mod. Arab. saying, "They are a people that cannot blush; they have no blood in their faces," i.e. shameless. Indeed Schwally says (*in loco*), "Die Bedeutung fahl, blass ist unerweislich." Hence (in spite of the meanings of the Aram. נִבְכָּה both to lose colour and to be ashamed) a derivation for the Hebrew is more probably to be found in the root *kasaf*, to cut off. The Arab. كَسَفَ, which in the classicque ton

the drifting chaff, before the anger of Jehovah come upon you,¹ before there come upon you the day of Jehovah's wrath;² seek Jehovah, all ye meek of the land who do His ordinance,³ seek righteousness, seek meekness, per-adventure ye may hide yourselves in the day of Jehovah's wrath.

means to cut a thread or eclipse the sun, is in colloquial Arabic to give a rebuff, refuse a favour, disappoint, shame. In the forms *inkasaf* and *itkasaf* it means to receive a rebuff, be disappointed, then shy or timid, and *kasûf* means shame, shyness (as well as eclipse of the sun). See Spiro's *Arabic-English Vocabulary*. In Ps. lxxxiv. נכסף is evidently used of unsatisfied longing (but see Cheyne), which is also the proper meaning of the parallel כלה (cf. other passages where כלה is used of still unfulfilled or rebuffed hopes: Job xix. 27, Ps. lxxix. 4, cxix. 81, cxliii. 7). So in Ps. xvii. 4 כסף is used of a lion who is longing for, *i.e.* still disappointed in, his prey, and so in Job xiv. 15.

¹ LXX. πρὸ τοῦ γενέσθαι ὑμᾶς ὡς ἄνθος (here in error reading נץ for מין) παραπορευόμενον, πρὸ τοῦ ἐπελθεῖν ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ὀργὴν κυρίου (last clause omitted by A^{al}). According to this the Hebrew text, which is obviously disarranged, may be restored to בְּטָרְם לֹא־תִהְיוּ בְּמִין עֵבֶר בְּטָרְם לֹא־יָבֹא עֲלֵיכֶם חֶרוֹן יְהוָה.

² This clause Wellhausen deletes. Cf. Hexaplar Syriac translation.

³ LXX. take this also as imperative, *do judgment*, and so co-ordinate to the other clauses.

CHAPTER IV

NINIVE DELENDÄ

ZEPHANIAH ii. 4-15

THERE now come a series of oracles on foreign nations, connected with the previous prophecy by the conjunction *for*, and detailing the worldwide judgment which it had proclaimed. But though dated from the same period as that prophecy, *circa* 626, these oracles are best treated by themselves.¹

These oracles originally formed one passage in the well-known Qinah or elegiac measure; but this has suffered sadly both by dilapidation and rebuilding. How mangled the text is may be seen especially from vv. 6 and 14, where the Greek gives us some help in restoring it. The verses (8-11) upon Moab and Ammon cannot be reduced to the metre which both precedes and follows them. Probably, therefore, they are a later addition: nor did Moab and Ammon lie upon the way of the Scythians, who are presumably the invaders pictured by the prophet.²

The poem begins with Philistia and the sea-coast,

¹ See above, pp. 41 ff.

² Some, however, think the prophet is speaking in prospect of the Chaldean invasion of a few years later. This is not so likely, because he pictures the overthrow of Niniveh as subsequent to the invasion of Philistia, while the Chaldeans accomplished the latter only after Niniveh had fallen.

the very path of the Scythian raid.¹ Evidently the latter is imminent, the Philistine cities are shortly to be taken and the whole land reduced to grass. Across the emptied strip the long hope of Israel springs seaward; but—mark!—not yet with a vision of the isles beyond. The prophet is satisfied with reaching the edge of the Promised Land: *by the sea shall they feed*² their flocks.

*For Gaza forsaken shall be,
Ashk'lon a desert.*

*Ashdod—by noon shall they rout her,
And Ekron be torn up!*³

*Ah! woe, dwellers of the sea-shore,
Folk of Kerēthim.*

*The word of Jehovah against thee, Kēna'an,⁴
Land of the Philistines!*

¹ According to Herodotus.

² Ver. 7, LXX.

³ The measure, as said above, is elegiac: alternate lines long with a rising, and short with a falling, cadence. There is a play upon the names, at least on the first and last—"Gazzah" or "Azzah 'Azubah"—which in English we might reproduce by the use of Spenser's word for "dreary": *For Gaza ghastful shall be.* "Ekron te'aker." LXX. Ἀκκαρων ἐκριζωθήσεται (B), ἐκριφήσεται (A). In the second line we have a slighter assonance, 'Ashk'elōn lishēmamah. In the third the verb is יִנְרְשֶׁהָ; Bacher (*Z.A.T.W.*, 1891, 185 ff.) points out that יִנְרְשֶׁהָ is not used of cities, but of their populations or of individual men, and suggests (from Abulwalid) יִרְשֶׁהָ, *shall possess her*, as "a plausible emendation." Schwally (*ibid.*, 260) prefers to alter to יִשְׂרְשֶׁהָ, with the remark that this is not only a good parallel to תִּעַקֵּר, but suits the LXX. ἐκριφήσεται.—On the expression *by noon* see Davidson, *N. H. and Z.*, Appendix, Note 2, where he quotes a parallel expression, in the Senjerli inscription, of Asarhaddon: that he took Memphis by midday or in half a day (Schrader). This suits the use of the phrase in Jer. xv. 8, where it is parallel to *suddenly*.

⁴ Canaan omitted by Wellhausen, who reads עליך for עליכם. But as the metre requires a larger number of syllables in the first line of

And I destroy thee to the last inhabitant,¹
And Kereth shall become shepherds' cots,²
And folds for flocks.
And the coast³ for the remnant of Judah's house ;
By the sea⁴ shall they feed.
In Ashkelon's houses at even shall they couch ;
For Jehovah their God shall visit them,⁵
And turn their captivity.⁶

There comes now an oracle upon Moab and Ammon (vv. 8-11). As already said, it is not in the elegiac measure which precedes and follows it, while other features cast a doubt upon its authenticity. Like other oracles on the same peoples, this denounces the loud-mouthed arrogance of the sons of Moab and Ammon.

each couplet than in the second, Kēna'an should probably remain. The difficulty is the use of Canaan as synonymous with *Land of the Philistines*. Nowhere else in the Old Testament is it expressly applied to the coast south of Carmel, though it is so used in the Egyptian inscriptions, and even in the Old Testament in a sense which covers this as well as other lowlying parts of Palestine.

¹ An odd long line, either the remains of two, or perhaps we should take the two previous lines as one, omitting Canaan.

² So LXX. : Hebrew text *and the sea-coast shall become dwellings, cots* (כִּרְתֹּת) *of shepherds*. But the pointing and meaning of כִּרְתֹּת are both conjectural, and the *sea-coast* has probably fallen by mistake into this verse from the next. On Kereth and Kerethim as names for Philistia and the Philistines see *Hist. Geog.*, p. 171.

³ LXX. adds *of the sea*. So Wellhausen, but unnecessarily and improbably for phonetic reasons, as *sea* has to be read in the next line.

⁴ So Wellhausen, reading for עַל-הַיָּם עַל-הַיָּם.

⁵ Some words must have fallen out, for *fi. st* a short line is required here by the metre, and *second* the LXX. have some additional words, which, however, give us no help to what the lost line was: ἀπὸ προσώπου υἱῶν Ἰούδα.

⁶ As stated above, there is no conclusive reason against the pre-exilic date of this expression.

I have heard¹ the reviling of Moab and the insults of the sons of Ammon, who have reviled My people and vaunted themselves upon their² border. Wherefore as I live, saith Jehovah of Hosts, God of Israel, Moab shall become as Sodom, and Ammon's sons as Gomorrah—the possession³ of nettles, and saltpits,⁴ and a desolation for ever; the remnant of My people shall spoil them, and the rest of My nation possess them. This to them for their arrogance, because they reviled, and vaunted themselves against, the people of⁵ Jehovah of Hosts. Jehovah showeth Himself terrible⁶ against them, for He hath made lean⁷ all gods of earth, that all the coasts of the nations may worship Him, every man from his own place.⁸

The next oracle is a very short one (ver. 12) upon Egypt, which after its long subjection to Ethiopic dynasties is called, not Miṣraim, but Kush, or Ethiopia. The verse follows on naturally to ver. 7, but is not reducible to the elegiac measure.

Also ye, O Kushites, are the slain of My sword.⁹

¹ Cf. Isa. xvi. 6.

² LXX. *My*.

³ Doubtful word, not occurring elsewhere.

⁴ Heb. singular.

⁵ LXX. omits *the people of*.

⁶ LXX. *maketh Himself manifest*, נראה for נורה.

⁷ ἀπαξ λεγόμενον. The passive of the verb means *to grow lean* (Isa. xvii. 4).

⁸ מקום has probably here the sense which it has in a few other passages of the Old Testament, and in Arabic, of *sacred place*.

Many will share Schwally's doubts (p. 192) about the authenticity of ver. 11; nor, as Wellhausen points out, does its prediction of the conversion of the heathen agree with ver. 12, which devotes them to destruction. Ver. 12 follows naturally on to ver. 7.

⁹ Wellhausen reads *His sword*, to agree with the next verse. Perhaps חרב יהוה is an abbreviation for חרב יהוה.

The elegiac measure is now renewed¹ in an oracle against Assyria, the climax and front of heathendom (vv. 13-15). It must have been written before 608; there is no reason to doubt that it is Zephaniah's.

*And may He stretch out His hand against the North,
And destroy Asshur;*

*And may He turn Niniveh to desolation,
Dry as the desert.*

*And herds shall couch in her midst,
Every beast of²*

*Yea, pelican and bittern³ shall roost on the capitals;
The owl shall hoot in the window,
The raven on the doorstep.*

*Such is the City, the Jubilant,
She that sitteth at ease,*

¹ See Budde, *Z.A.T.W.*, 1882, 25.

² Heb. reads *a nation*, and Wellhausen translates *ein buntes Gemisch von Volk*. LXX. *beasts of the earth*.

³ תַּנְּקָא, a water-bird according to Deut. xiv. 17, Lev. xi. 18, mostly taken as *pelican*; so R.V. A.V. *cormorant*. תַּנְּקָא has usually been taken from תַּנְּקָא, to draw together, therefore *hedgehog* or *porcupine*. But the other animals mentioned here are birds, and it is birds which would naturally roost on capitals. Therefore *bittern* is the better rendering (Hitzig, Cheyne). The name is onomatopœic. Cf. Eng. *butter-dump*. LXX. translates *chameleons and hedgehogs*.

⁴ Heb.: *a voice shall sing in the window, desolation on the threshold, for He shall uncover the cedar-work*. LXX. *καὶ θηρία φωνήσει ἐν τοῖς διορύγμασιν αὐτῆς, κέρακες ἐν τοῖς πυλώσιν αὐτῆς, διότι κέδρος τὸ ἀνάστημα αὐτῆς*: Wild beasts shall sound in her excavations, ravens in her porches, because (the) cedar is her height. For קוֹל, *voice*, Wellhausen reads כּוֹס, *owl*, and with the LXX. עֵרָב, *raven*, for חֲרָב, *desolation*. The last two words are left untranslated above. הַקֵּדָר occurs only here and is usually taken to mean *cedar-work*; but it might be pointed *her cedar*. עֵרָב, *he, or one, has st. pped the cedar-work*.

*She that saith in her heart, I am
And there is none else !
How hath she become desolation !
A lair of beasts.
Every one passing by her hisses,
Shakes his hand.*

The essence of these oracles is their clear confidence in the fall of Niniveh. From 652, when Egypt revolted from Assyria, and, Assurbanipal notwithstanding, began to push northward, men must have felt, throughout all Western Asia, that the great empire upon the Tigris was beginning to totter. This feeling was strengthened by the Scythian invasion, and after 625 it became a moral certainty that Niniveh would fall¹—which happened in 607-6. These are the feelings, 625 to 608, which Zephaniah's oracles reflect. We can hardly over-estimate what they meant. Not a man was then alive who had ever known anything else than the greatness and the glory of Assyria. It was two hundred and thirty years since Israel first felt the weight of her arms.² It was more than a hundred since her hosts had swept through Palestine,³ and for at least fifty her supremacy had been accepted by Judah. Now the colossus began to totter. As she had menaced, so she was menaced. The ruins with which for nigh three centuries she had strewn Western Asia—to these were to be reduced her own impregnable and ancient glory. It was the close of an epoch.

¹ See above, pp. 17, 18.

² At the battle of Karkar, 854.

³ Under Tiglath-Pileser in 734.

CHAPTER V

SO AS BY FIRE

ZEPHANIAH iii

THE third chapter of the Book of Zephaniah consists¹ of two sections, of which only the first, vv. 1-13, is a genuine work of the prophet; while the second, vv. 14-20, is a later epilogue such as we found added to the genuine prophecies of Amos. It is written in the large hope and brilliant temper of the Second Isaiah, saying no word of Judah's sin or judgment, but predicting her triumphant deliverance out of all her afflictions

In a second address to his City (vv. 1-13) Zephaniah strikes the same notes as he did in his first. He spares the king, but denounces the ruling and teaching classes. Jerusalem's princes are lions, her judges wolves, her prophets braggarts, her priests pervert the law, her wicked have no shame. He repeats the proclamation of a universal doom. But the time is perhaps later. Judah has disregarded the many threats. She will not accept the Lord's discipline; and while in chap. i.—ii. 3 Zephaniah had said that the meek and righteous might escape the doom, he now emphatically affirms that all proud and impenitent men shall be removed from Jerusalem, and a humble

¹ See above, pp. 43-45.

people be left to her, righteous and secure. There is the same moral earnestness as before, the same absence of all other elements of prophecy than the ethical. Before we ask the reason and emphasise the beauty of this austere gospel, let us see the exact words of the address. There are the usual marks of poetic diction in it—elliptic phrases, the frequent absence of the definite article, archaic forms and an order of the syntax different from that which obtains in prose. But the measure is difficult to determine, and must be printed as prose. The echo of the elegiac rhythm in the opening is more apparent than real: it is not sustained beyond the first verse. Verses 9 and 10 are relegated to a footnote, as very probably an intrusion, and disturbance of the argument.

Woe, rebel and unclean, city of oppression!¹ She listens to no voice, she accepts no discipline, in Jehovah she trusts not, nor has drawn near to her God.

Her princes in her midst are roaring lions; her judges evening wolves,² they . . .³ not till morning; her

¹ Heb. *the city the oppressor*. The two participles in the first clause are not predicates to the noun and adjective of the second (Schwally), but vocatives, though without the article, after הָיָה.

² LXX. *wolves of Arabia*.

³ The verb left untranslated, גָּרַמוּ, is quite uncertain in meaning. גָּרַם is a root common to the Semitic languages and seems to mean originally *to cut off*, while the noun גָּרַם is *a bone*. In Num. xxiv. 8 the Piel of the verb used with another word for bone means *to gnaw, munch*. (The only other passage where it is used, Ezek. xxiii. 34, is corrupt.) So some take it here: *they do not gnaw bones till morning, i.e. devour all at once*; but this is awkward, and Schwally (198) has proposed to omit the negative, *they do gnaw bones till morning*, yet in that case surely the impf. and not the perf. tense would have been used. The LXX. render *they do not leave over*, and it has been attempted, though inconclusively, to derive this meaning from that of

prophets are braggarts and traitors; her priests have profaned what is holy and done violence to the Law.¹ Jehovah is righteous in the midst of her, He does no wrong. Morning by morning He brings His judgment to light: He does not let Himself fail²—but the wicked man knows no shame. I have cut off nations, their turrets are ruined; I have laid waste their broad streets, till no one passes upon them; destroyed are their cities, without a man, without a dweller.³ I said, Surely she will fear Me, she will accept punishment,⁴ and all that I have visited upon her⁵ shall never vanish from her eyes.⁶ But only the more zealously have they corrupted all their doings.⁷

Wherefore wait ye for Me—oracle of Jehovah—wait for the day of My rising to testify, for 'tis My fixed purpose⁸ to sweep nations together, to collect kingdoms, to pour upon them . . .⁹ all the heat of My wrath—

cutting off, i.e. laying aside (the Arabic Form II. means, however, to leave behind). Another line of meaning perhaps promises more. In Aram. the verb means to be the cause of anything, to bring about, and perhaps contains the idea of deciding (Levy *sub voce* compares *κρίνω*, *cerno*); in Arab. it means, among other things, to commit a crime, be guilty, but in mod. Arabic to fine. Now it is to be noticed that here the expression is used of judges, and it may be there is an intentional play upon the double possibility of meaning in the root.

¹ Ezek. xxii. 26: *Her priests have done violence to My Law and have profaned My holy things; they have put no difference between the holy and profane, between the clean and the unclean.* Cf. Jer. ii. 8.

² Schwally by altering the accents: *morning by morning He giveth forth His judgment: no day does He fail.*

³ On this ver. 6 see above, p. 44. It is doubtful.

⁴ Or *discipline*.

⁵ Wellhausen: *that which I have commanded her.* Cf. Job xxxvi. 23; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 23; Ezra i. 2.

⁶ So LXX., reading *בְּיָמֶיהָ* for the Heb. *בְּיִשְׁבְּתָהּ*, *her dwelling*.

⁷ A frequent phrase of Jeremiah's.

⁸ *בְּיִשְׁבְּתָהּ*, decree, ordinance, decision.

⁹ Heb. *My anger*. LXX. omits.

yea, with the fire of My jealousy shall the whole earth be consumed.¹

In that day thou shalt not be ashamed² of all thy deeds, by which thou hast rebelled against Me: for then will I turn out of the midst of thee all who exult with that arrogance of thine,³ and thou wilt not again vaunt thyself upon the Mount of My Holiness. But I will leave in thy midst a people humble and poor, and they shall trust in the name of Jehovah. The Remnant of Israel shall do no evil, and shall not speak falsehood, and no fraud shall be found in their mouth, but they shall pasture and they shall couch, with none to make them afraid.

Such is the simple and austere gospel of Zephaniah.

¹ That is to say, the prophet returns to that general judgment of the whole earth, with which in his first discourse he had already threatened Judah. He threatens her with it again in this eighth verse, because, as he has said in the preceding ones, all other warnings have failed. The eighth verse therefore follows naturally upon the seventh, just as naturally as in Amos iv. ver. 12, introduced by the same יִבְרַח as here, follows its predecessors. The next two verses of the text, however, describe an opposite result: instead of the destruction of the heathen, they picture their conversion, and it is only in the eleventh verse that we return to the main subject of the passage, Judah herself, who is represented (in harmony with the close of Zephaniah's first discourse) as reduced to a righteous and pious remnant. Vv. 9 and 10 are therefore obviously a later insertion, and we pass to the eleventh verse. Vv. 9 and 10: *For then* (this has no meaning after ver. 8) *will I give to the peoples a pure lip* (elliptic phrase: *turn to the peoples a pure lip*—i.e. *turn their evil lip into a pure lip*: pure = *picked out, select, excellent*, cf. Isa. xlix. 2), *that they may all of them call upon the name of the Lord, that they may serve Him with one consent* (Heb. *shoulder, LXX. yoke*). *From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia*—there follows a very obscure phrase, $\text{יְתַרְי בַּת־פּוּצִי}$, *suppliants* (?) *of the daughter of My dispersed*, but *Ewald of the daughter of Phut*—they shall bring Mine offering.

² Wellhausen *despair*. ³ Heb. *the jubilant ones of thine arrogance*.

It is not to be overlooked amid the lavish and gorgeous promises which other prophets have poured around it, and by ourselves, too, it is needed in our often unscrupulous enjoyment of the riches of grace that are in Christ Jesus. A thorough purgation, the removal of the wicked, the sparing of the honest and the meek; insistence only upon the rudiments of morality and religion; faith in its simplest form of trust in a righteous God, and character in its basal elements of meekness and truth,—these and these alone survive the judgment. Why does Zephaniah never talk of the Love of God, of the Divine Patience, of the Grace that has spared and will spare wicked hearts if only it can touch them to penitence? Why has he no call to repent, no appeal to the wicked to turn from the evil of their ways? We have already seen part of the answer. Zephaniah stands too near to judgment and the last things. Character is fixed, the time for pleading is past; there remains only the separation of bad men from good. It is the same standpoint (at least ethically) as that of Christ's visions of the Judgment. Perhaps also an austere gospel was required by the fashionable temper of the day. The generation was loud and arrogant; it gilded the future to excess, and knew no shame.¹ The true prophet was forced to reticence; he must make his age feel the desperate earnestness of life, and that salvation is by fire. For the gorgeous future of its unsanctified hopes he must give it this severe, almost mean, picture of a poor and humble folk, hardly saved but at last at peace.

The permanent value of such a message is proved

¹ See vv. 4, 5, 11.

by the thirst which we feel even to-day for the clear, cold water of its simple promises. Where a glaring optimism prevails, and the future is preached with a loud assurance, where many find their only religious enthusiasm in the resurrection of mediæval ritual or the singing of stirring and gorgeous hymns of second-hand imagery, how needful to be recalled to the earnestness and severity of life, to the simplicity of the conditions of salvation, and to their ethical, not emotional, character! Where sensationalism has so invaded religion, how good to hear the sober insistence upon God's daily commonplaces—*morning by morning He bringeth forth His judgment to light*—and to know that the acceptance of discipline is what prevails with Him. Where national reform is vaunted and the progress of education, how well to go back to a prophet who ignored all the great reforms of his day that he might impress his people with the indispensableness of humility and faith. Where Churches have such large ambitions for themselves, how necessary to hear that the future is destined for *a poor folk*, the meek and the honest. Where men boast that their religion—Bible, Creed or Church—has undertaken to save them, *vaunting themselves on the Mount of My Holiness*, how needful to hear salvation placed upon character and a very simple trust in God.

But, on the other hand, is any one in despair at the darkness and cruelty of this life, let him hear how Zephaniah proclaims that, though all else be fraud, *the Lord is righteous in the midst of us, He doth not let Himself fail*, that the resigned heart and the humble, the just and the pure heart, is imperishable, and in the end there is at least peace.

EPILOGUE.

VERSES 14-20.

Zephaniah's prophecy was fulfilled. The Day of the Lord came, and the people met their judgment. The Remnant survived—a folk poor and humble. To them, in the new estate and temper of their life, came a new song from God—perhaps it was nearly a hundred years after Zephaniah had spoken—and they added it to his prophecies. It came in with wonderful fitness, for it was the song of the redeemed, whom he had foreseen, and it tuned his book, severe and simple, to the full harmony of prophecy, so that his book might take a place in the great choir of Israel—the diapason of that full salvation which no one man, but only the experience of centuries, could achieve.

Sing out, O daughter of Zion! shout aloud, O Israel! Rejoice and be jubilant with all thy¹ heart, daughter of Jerusalem! Jehovah hath set aside thy judgments,² He hath turned thy foes. King of Israel, Jehovah is in thy midst; thou shalt not see³ evil any more.

In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear not. O Zion, let not thy hands droop! Jehovah, thy God, in the midst of thee is mighty;⁴ He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy, He will make new⁵ His love, He will exult over thee with singing.

¹ Heb. *the*.

² מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ. But Wellhausen reads מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ, thine adversaries; cf. Job ix. 15.

³ Reading יִרְאֵי (with LXX., Wellhausen and Schwally) for יִרְאֵי of the Hebrew text, *fear*.

⁴ Lit. *hero, mighty man*.

⁵ Heb. *will be silent in*, יִחְרֵשׁ, but not in harmony with the next clause. LXX. and Syr. render *will make new*, which translates יִחְרֵשׁ, a form that does not elsewhere occur, though that is no objection to

The scattered of thy congregation¹ have I gathered—thine² are they, . . .³ reproach upon her. Behold, I am about to do all for thy sake at that time,⁴ and I will rescue the lame and the outcast will I bring in,⁵ and I will make them for renown and fame whose shame is in the whole earth.⁶ In that time I will bring you in,⁷ even in the time that I gather you.⁸ For I will set you for fame and renown among all the peoples of the earth, when I turn again your captivity before your eyes, saith Jehovah.⁹

finding it in Zephaniah, or יִחְרַהֵב. Hitzig: *He makes new things in His love.* Buhl: *He renews His love.* Schwally suggests יִחְרַהֵב, *He rejoices in His love.*

¹ LXX. *In the days of thy festival*, which it takes with the previous verse. The Heb. construction is ungrammatical, though not unprecedented—the construct state before a preposition. Besides נֹנִי is obscure in meaning. It is a Ni. pt. for נֹנֶה from נָה, *to be sad*: cf. the Pi. in Lam. iii. 33. But the Hiphil הִנֵּה in 2 Sam. xx. 13, followed (as here) by מִן, means *to thrust away from*, and that is probably the sense here.

² LXX. *thine oppressed* in acc. governed by the preceding verb, which in LXX. begins the verse.

³ The Heb., מְשָׂאת, *burden of*, is unintelligible. Wellhausen proposes מְשָׂאת עֲלֵיהֶם.

⁴ This rendering is only a venture in the almost impossible task of restoring the text of the clause. As it stands the Heb. runs, *Behold, I am about to do, or deal, with thine oppressors* (which Hitzig and Ewald accept). Schwally points מְעַנִּיךָ (active) as a passive, מְעַנֵּיךָ, *thine oppressed*. LXX. has ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ποιῶ ἐν σοὶ ἔνεκεν σοῦ, *i.e.* it read אֶתְּךָ לְמַעַנְךָ. Following its suggestion we might read אֶתְּכֶם לְמַעַנְךָ, and so get the above translation. ⁵ Micah iv. 6.

⁶ This rendering (Ewald's) is doubtful. The verse concludes with *in the whole earth their shame*. But אֶתְּכֶם may be a gloss. LXX. take it as a verb with the next verse.

⁷ LXX. *do good to you*; perhaps אָטִיב for אָבִיב.

⁸ So Heb. literally, but the construction is very awkward. Perhaps we should read *in that time I will gather you*.

⁹ *Before your eyes, i.e.* in your lifetime. It is doubtful whether ver. 20 is original to the passage. For it is simply a variation on ver. 19, and it has more than one impossible reading: see previous note, and for שְׁבוֹתֵיכֶם read שְׁבוֹתְכֶם.

NAHUM

*Woe to the City of Blood,
All of her guile, robbery-full, ceaseless rapine !*

*Hark the whip,
And the rumbling of wheels !
Horses at the gallop,
And the rattling dance of the chariot !
Cavalry at the charge,
Flash of sabres, and lightning of lances !*

CHAPTER VI

THE BOOK OF NAHUM

THE Book of Nahum consists of a double title and three odes. The title runs *Oracle of Niniveh: Book of the Vision of Nahum the Elkoshite*. The three odes, eager and passionate pieces, are all of them apparently vibrant to the impending fall of Assyria. The first, chap. i. with the possible inclusion of chap. ii. 2,¹ is general and theological, affirming God's power of vengeance and the certainty of the overthrow of His enemies. The second, chap. ii. with the omission of ver. 2,² and the third, chap. iii., can hardly be disjoined; they both present a vivid picture of the siege, the storm and the spoiling of Niniveh.

The introductory questions, which title and contents start, are in the main three: 1. The position of Elkōsh, to which the title assigns the prophet; 2. The authenticity of chap. i.; 3. The date of chaps. ii., iii.: to which siege of Niniveh do they refer?

¹ In the English version, but in the Hebrew chap. ii. vv. 1 and 3; for the Hebrew text divides chap. i. from chap. ii. differently from the English, which follows the Greek. The Hebrew begins chap. ii. with what in the English and Greek is the fifteenth verse of chap. i.: *Behold, upon the mountains, etc.*

² In the English text, but in the Hebrew with the omission of vv. 1 and 3: see previous note.

I. THE POSITION OF ELĶŌSH.

The title calls Nahum the ElĶŏshite—that is, native or citizen of ElĶŏsh.¹ Three positions have been claimed for this place, which is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible.

The first we take is the modern Al-Ķŭsh, a town still flourishing about twenty-four miles to the north of the site of Niniveh,² with “no fragments of antiquity” about it, but possessing a “simple plaster box,” which Jews, Christians and Mohammedans alike reverence as the tomb of Nahum.³ There is no evidence that Al-Ķŭsh, a name of Arabic form, is older than the Arab period, while the tradition which locates the tomb there is not found before the sixteenth century of our era, but on the contrary Nahum’s grave was pointed out to Benjamin of Tudela in 1165 at ‘Ain Japhaia, on the south of Babylon.⁴ The tradition that the prophet lived and died at Al-Ķŭsh is therefore due to the similarity of the name to that of Nahum’s ElĶŏsh, as well as to the fact that Niniveh was the subject of his prophesying.⁵ In his book there is no trace of proof for the assertion that Nahum was a descendant of the ten tribes exiled in 721 to the region to the north of Al-Ķŭsh. He prophesies for Judah alone. Nor does he show any more knowledge of Niniveh than her ancient fame must have scattered

¹ Other meanings have been suggested, but are impossible.

² So it lies on Billerbeck’s map in Delitzsch and Haupt’s *Beiträge zur Assyriologie*, III. Smith’s *Bible Dictionary* puts it at only 2 m. N. of Mosul.

³ Layard, *Niniveh and its Remains*, I. 233, 3rd ed., 1849.

⁴ Bohn’s *Early Travels in Palestine*, p. 102.

⁵ Just as they show Jonah’s tomb at Niniveh itself.

to the limits of the world.¹ We might as well argue from chap. iii. 8-10 that Nahum had visited Thebes of Egypt.

The second tradition of the position of Elḵōsh is older. In his commentary on Nahum Jerome says that in his day it still existed, a petty village of Galilee, under the name of Helkesei,² or Elkese, and apparently with an established reputation as the town of Nahum.³ But the book itself bears no symptom of its author's connection with Galilee, and although it was quite possible for a prophet of that period to have lived there, it is not very probable.⁴

A third tradition places Elḵōsh in the south of Judah. A Syriac version of the accounts of the prophets, which are ascribed to Epiphanius,⁵ describes Nahum as "of Elḵōsh beyond Bêt Gabrê, of the tribe of Simeon";⁶ and

¹ See above, p. 18.

² Just as in Micah's case Jerome calls his birthplace Moresheth by the adjective Morasthi, so with equal carelessness he calls Elḵosh by the adjective with the article Ha-elḵoshi, the Elḵoshite. Jerome's words are: "Quum Elcese usque hodie in Galilea viculus sit, parvus quidem et vix ruinis veterum ædificiorum indicans vestigia, sed tamen notus Judæis et mihi quoque a circumducente monstratus" (in *Prol. ad Prophetiam Nachumi*). In the *Onomasticon* Jerome gives the name as Elcese, Eusebius as Ἐλκεσέ, but without defining the position.

³ This Elkese has been identified, though not conclusively, with the modern El Kauze near Ramieh, some seven miles W. of Tibnin.

⁴ Cf. Kuenen, § 75, n. 5; Davidson, p. 12 (2).

Capernaum, which the *Textus Receptus* gives as Καπερναούμ, but most authorities as Καφαρναούμ and the Peshitto as Kaphar Nahum, obviously means Village of Nahum, and both Hitzig and Knobel looked for Elḵōsh in it. See *Hist. Geog.*, p. 456.

Against the Galilean origin of Nahum it is usual to appeal to John vii. 52: *Search and see that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet; but this is not decisive, for Jonah came out of Galilee.*

⁵ Though perhaps falsely.

⁶ This occurs in the Syriac translation of the Old Testament by Paul

it may be noted that Cyril of Alexandria says¹ that Elkese was a village in the country of the Jews. This tradition is superior to the first in that there is no apparent motive for its fabrication, and to the second in so far as Judah was at the time of Nahum a much more probable home for a prophet than Galilee; nor does the book give any references except such as might be made by a Judæan.² No modern place-name, however, can be suggested with any certainty as the echo of Elkôsh. Umm Lâkis, which has been proved not to be Lachish, contains the same radicals, and some six and a quarter miles east from Beit-Jibrin at the upper end of the Wady es Sur there is an ancient well with the name Bir el Kûs.³

of Tella, 617 A.D., in which the notices of Epiphanius (Bishop of Constantia in Cyprus A.D. 367) or Pseudepiphanius are attached to their respective prophets. It was first communicated to the *Z.D.P.V.*, I. 122 ff., by Dr. Nestle: cf. *Hist. Geog.*, p. 231, n. 1. The previously known readings of the passage were either geographically impossible, as "He came from Elkesei beyond Jordan, towards Begabar of the tribe of Simeon" (so in Paris edition, 1622, of the works of St. Epiphanius, Vol. II., p. 147: cf. Migne, *Patr. Gr.*, XLIII. 409); or based on a misreading of the title of the book: "Nahum son of Elkesaios was of Jesbe of the tribe of Simeon"; or indefinable: "Nahum was of Elkesem beyond Betabarem of the tribe of Simeon"; these last two from recensions of Epiphanius published in 1855 by Tischendorf (quoted by Davidson, p. 13). In the *Στιχηρὸν τῶν ἸΒ' Προφητῶν καὶ Ἰσαιοῦ*, attributed to Hesychius, Presbyter of Jerusalem, who died 428 or 433 (Migne, *Patrologia Gr.*, XCIII. 1357), it is said that Nahum was ἀπὸ Ἐλκεσεῖν (Helcesin) πέραν τοῦ τηνβαρεῖν ἐκ φυλῆς Συμεῶν; to which has been added a note from Theophylact, Ἐλκασαὶ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου εἰς Βιγαβρῖ.

¹ Ad Nahum i. 1 (Migne, *Patr. Gr.*, LXXI. 780): Κώμη δὲ αὕτη πάντως τοῦ τῆς Ἰουδαίων χώρας.

² The selection Bashan, Carmel and Lebanon (i. 4), does not prove northern authorship.

³ שִׁרְיָן may be (1) a theophoric name = Kosh is God; and Kosh might then be the Edomite deity כִּי־ש whose name is spelt with

2. THE AUTHENTICITY OF CHAP. I.

Till recently no one doubted that the three chapters formed a unity. "Nahum's prophecy," said Kuenen in 1889, "is a whole." In 1891¹ Cornill affirmed that no questions of authenticity arose in regard to the book; and in 1892 Wellhausen saw in chap. i. an introduction leading "in no awkward way to the proper subject of the prophecy."

Meantime, however, Bickell,² discovering what he thought to be the remains of an alphabetic Psalm in chap. i. 1-7, attempted to reconstruct throughout chap. i.—i. 3 twenty-two verses, each beginning with a successive letter of the alphabet. And, following this, Gunkel in 1893 produced a more full and plausible

a Shin on the Assyrian monuments (Baethgen, *Beiträge z. Semit. Religionsgeschichte*, p. 11; Schrader, *K.A.T.*², pp. 150, 613), and who is probably the same as the Arab deity Kais (Baethgen, *id.*, p. 108); and this would suit a position in the south of Judah, in which region we find the majority of place-names compounded with אל. Or else (2) the N is prosthetic, as in the place-names נכויב on the Phœnician coast, נכשף in Southern Canaan, אשדוד, etc. In this case we might find its equivalent in the form לקויש (cf. כויב אכויב); but no such form is now extant or recorded at any previous period. The form Lâkis would not suit. On Bir el Kûs see Robinson, *B.R.*, III., p. 14, and Guérin, *Judée*, III., p. 341. Bir el Kûs means Well of the Bow, or, according to Guérin, of the Arch, from ruins that stand by it. The position, east of Beit-Jibrin, is unsuitable; for the early Christian texts quoted in the previous note fix it beyond, presumably south or south-west of Beit-Jibrin, and in the tribe of Simeon. The error "tribe of Simeon" does not matter, for the same fathers place Bethzecharias, the alleged birthplace of Habakkuk, there.

¹ *Einleitung*, 1st ed.

² Who seems to have owed the hint to a quotation by Delitzsch on Psalm ix. from G. Frohnmeyer to the effect that there were traces of "alphabetic" verses in chap. i., at least in vv. 3-7. See Bickell's *Beiträge zur Semit. Metrik*, Separatabdruck, Wien, 1894.

reconstruction of the same scheme.¹ By radical emendations of the text, by excision of what he believes to be glosses and by altering the order of many of the verses, Gunkel seeks to produce twenty-three distichs, twenty of which begin with the successive letters of the alphabet, two are wanting, while in the first three letters of the twenty-third, **ש**, he finds very probable the name of the author, Shobai or Shobi.² He takes this ode, therefore, to be an eschatological Psalm of the later Judaism, which from its theological bearing has been thought suitable as an introduction to Nahum's genuine prophecies.

The text of chap. i.—ii. 4 has been badly mauled and is clamant for reconstruction of some kind. As it lies, there are traces of an alphabetical arrangement as far as the beginning of ver. 9,³ and so far Gunkel's changes are comparatively simple. Many of his emendations are in themselves and apart from the alphabetic scheme desirable. They get rid of difficulties and improve the poetry of the passage.⁴ His reconstruction is always clever and as a whole forms a wonderfully spirited poem. But to have produced good or poetical Hebrew is not conclusive proof of having recovered the original, and there are obvious objections to the

¹ *Z.A.T.W.*, 1893, pp. 223 ff.

² Cf. Ezra ii. 42; Neh. vii. 45; 2 Sam. xvii. 27.

³ Ver. 1 is title; 2 begins with א; ב is found in בסופה, 3b; ג in נוטר, 4; ד is wanting—Bickell proposes to substitute a New-Hebrew word רצק, Gunkel דאב, for אמלל, 4b; ה in הרים, 5a; ו in ותשא, 5b; ז by removing לפני of ver. 6a to the end of the clause (and reading it there לפניו), and so leaving זעמו as the first word; ח in חמתו in 6b; ט in טוב, 7a; י by eliding ו from וידע, 7b; כ in בלה, 8; ל is wanting, though Gunkel seeks to supply it by taking 9c, beginning לא, with 9b, before 9a; מ begins 9a.

See below in the translation.

process. Several of the proposed changes are unnatural in themselves and unsupported by anything except the exigencies of the scheme; for example, *2b* and *3a* are dismissed as a gloss only because, if they be retained, the *Aleph* verse is two bars too long. The gloss, Gunkel thinks, was introduced to mitigate the absoluteness of the declaration that Jehovah is a God of wrath and vengeance; but this is not obvious and would hardly have been alleged apart from the needs of the alphabetic scheme. In order to find a *Daleth*, it is quite arbitrary to say that the first *אמלל* in *4b* is redundant in face of the second, and that a word beginning with *Daleth* originally filled its place, but was removed because it was a rare or difficult word! The re-arrangement of *7* and *8a* is very clever, and reads as if it were right; but the next effort, to get a verse beginning with *Lamed*, is of the kind by which anything might be proved. These, however, are nothing to the difficulties which vv. 9-14 and chap. ii. 1, 3, present to an alphabetic scheme, or to the means which Gunkel takes to surmount them. He has to re-arrange the order of the verses,¹ and of the words within the verses. The distichs beginning with *Nun* and *Koph* are wanting, or at least undecipherable. To provide one with initial *Resh* the interjection has to be removed from the opening of chap. ii. 1, and the verse made to begin with *רנלי* and to run thus: *the feet of him that bringeth good news on the mountains; behold him that publisheth peace.* Other unlikely changes will be noticed when we come to the translation. Here we may ask the question: if the passage was originally alphabetic, that is, furnished with so fixed and easily recognised a frame, why has it so fallen to pieces? And again, if it has so fallen

¹ As thus: *9a*, *11b*, *12* (but unintelligible), *10*, *13*, *14*, ii. *1*, *3*.

to pieces, is it possible that it can be restored? The many arbitrarinesses of Gunkel's able essay would seem to imply that it is not. Dr. Davidson says: "Even if it should be assumed that an alphabetical poem lurks under chap. i., the attempt to restore it, just as in Psalm x., can never be more than an academic exercise."

Little is to be learned from the language. Wellhausen, who makes no objection to the genuineness of the passage, thinks that about ver. 7 we begin to catch the familiar dialect of the Psalms. Gunkel finds a want of originality in the language, with many touches that betray connection not only with the Psalms but with late eschatological literature. But when we take one by one the clauses of chap. i., we discover very few parallels with the Psalms, which are not at the same time parallels with Jeremiah's or some earlier writings. That the prophecy is vague, and with much of the air of the later eschatology about it, is no reason for removing it from an age in which we have already seen prophecy beginning to show the same apocalyptic temper.¹ Gunkel denies any reference in ver. 9b to the approaching fall of Niniveh, although that is seen by Kuenen, Wellhausen, König and others, and he omits ver. 11a, in which most read an allusion to Sennacherib.

Therefore, while it is possible that a later poem has been prefixed to the genuine prophecies of Nahum, and the first chapter supplies many provocations to belief in such a theory, this has not been proved, and the able essays of proof have much against them. The question is open.²

¹ See above on Zephaniah, pp. 49 ff.

² Cornill, in the 2nd ed. of his *Einleitung*, has accepted Gunkel's and Bickell's main contentions.

3. THE DATE OF CHAPS. II. AND III.

We turn now to the date of the Book apart from this prologue. It was written after a great overthrow of the Egyptian Thebes¹ and when the overthrow of Niniveh was imminent. Now Thebes had been devastated by Assurbanipal about 664 (we know of no later overthrow), and Niniveh fell finally about 607. Nahum flourished, then, somewhere between 664 and 607.² Some critics, feeling in his description of the fall of Thebes the force of a recent impression, have placed his prophesying immediately after that, or about 660.³ But this is too far away from the fall of Niniveh. In 660 the power of Assyria was unthreatened. Nor is 652, the year of the revolt of Babylon, Egypt and the princes of Palestine, a more likely date.⁴ For although in that year Assyrian supremacy ebbed from Egypt never to return, Assurbanipal quickly reduced Elam, Babylon and all Syria. Nahum, on the other hand, represents the very centre of the empire as threatened. The land of Assyria is apparently already invaded (iii. 13, etc.). Niniveh, if not invested, must immediately be so, and that by forces too great for resistance. Her mixed populace already show signs of breaking up. Within, as without, her doom is sealed. All this implies not only the advance of an enormous force upon Niniveh, but the reduction of her people to the last stage of

¹ iii. 8-10.

² The description of the fall of No-Amon precludes the older view almost universally held before the discovery of Assurbanipal's destruction of Thebes, viz. that Nahum prophesied in the days of Hezekiah or in the earlier years of Manasseh (Lightfoot, Pusey, Nägelsbach, etc.).

³ So Schrader, Volck in Herz. *Real. Enc.*, and others.

⁴ It is favoured by Winckler, *A.T. Untersuch.*, pp. 127 f.

hopelessness. Now, as we have seen,¹ Assyria proper was thrice overrun. The Scythians poured across her about 626, but there is no proof that they threatened Niniveh.² A little after Assurbanipal's death in 625, the Medes under King Phraortes invaded Assyria, but Phraortes was slain and his son Kyaxares called away by an invasion of his own country. Herodotus says that this was after he had defeated the Assyrians in a battle and had begun the siege of Niniveh,³ but before he had succeeded in reducing the city. After a time he subdued or assimilated the Medes, and then investing Niniveh once more, about 607, in two years he took and destroyed her.

To which of these two sieges by Kyaxares are we to assign the Book of Nahum? Hitzig, Kuenen, Cornill and others incline to the first on the ground that Nahum speaks of the yoke of Assyria as still heavy on Judah, though about to be lifted. They argue that by 608, when King Josiah had already felt himself free enough to extend his reforms into Northern Israel, and dared to dispute Necho's passage across Esdraelon, the Jews must have been conscious that they had nothing more to fear from Assyria, and Nahum could hardly have written as he does in i. 13, *I will break his yoke from off thee and burst thy bonds in sunder.*⁴ But this is not conclusive,

¹ Above, pp. 15 f.; 19, 22 ff.

² This in answer to Jeremias in Delitzsch's and Haupt's *Beiträge zur Assyriologie*, III. 96.

³ L. 103.

⁴ Hitzig's other reason, that the besiegers of Niniveh are described by Nahum in ii. 3 ff. as single, which was true of the siege in 625 c., but not of that of 607-6, when the Chaldeans joined the Medes, is disposed of by the proof on p. 22 above, that even in 607-6 the Medes carried on the siege alone.

for *first*, as we have seen, it is not certain that i. 13 is from Nahum himself, and *second*, if it be from himself, he might as well have written it about 608 as about 625, for he speaks not from the feelings of any single year, but with the impression upon him of the whole epoch of Assyrian servitude then drawing to a close. The eve of the later siege as a date for the book is, as Davidson remarks,¹ "well within the verge of possibility," and some critics prefer it because in their opinion Nahum's descriptions thereby acquire greater reality and naturalness. But this is not convincing, for if Kyaxares actually began the siege of Niniveh about 625, Nahum's sense of the imminence of her fall is perfectly natural. Wellhausen indeed denies that earlier siege. "Apart from Herodotus," he says, "it would never have occurred to anybody to doubt that Nahum's prophecy coincided with the fall of Niniveh."² This is true, for it is to Herodotus alone that we owe the tradition of the earlier siege. But what if we believe Herodotus? In that case, it is impossible to come to a decision as between the two sieges. With our present scanty knowledge of both, the prophecy of Nahum suits either equally well.³

Fortunately it is not necessary to come to a decision.

¹ Page 17.

² In commenting on chap. i. 9; p. 156 of *Kleine Propheten*.

³ The phrase which is so often appealed to by both sides, i. 9, *Jehovah maketh a complete end, not twice shall trouble arise*, is really inconclusive. Hitzig maintains that if Nahum had written this after the first and before the second siege of Niniveh he would have had to say, "not thrice shall trouble arise." This is not conclusive: the prophet is looking only at the future and thinking of it—*not twice again shall trouble rise*; and if there were really two sieges of Niniveh, would the words *not twice* have been suffered to remain, if

Nahum, we cannot too often insist, expresses the feelings neither of this nor of that decade in the reign of Josiah, but the whole volume of hope, wrath and just passion of vengeance which had been gathering for more than a century and which at last broke into exultation when it became certain that Niniveh was falling. That suits the eve of either siege by Kyaxares. Till we learn a little more about the first siege and how far it proceeded towards a successful result, perhaps we ought to prefer the second. And of course those who feel that Nahum writes not in the future but the present tense of the details of Niniveh's overthrow, must prefer the second.

That the form as well as the spirit of the Book of Nahum is poetical is proved by the familiar marks of poetic measure—the unusual syntax, the frequent absence of the article and particles, the presence of elliptic forms and archaic and sonorous ones. In the two chapters on the siege of Niniveh the lines are short and quick, in harmony with the dashing action they echo.

As we have seen, the text of chap. i. is very uncertain. The subject of the other two chapters involves the use of a number of technical and some foreign terms, of the meaning of most of which we are

they had been a confident prediction *before* the first siege? Besides, the meaning of the phrase is not certain; it may be only a general statement corresponding to what seems a general statement in the first clause of the verse. Kuenen and others refer the *trouble* not to that which is about to afflict Assyria, but to the long slavery and slaughter which Judah has suffered at Assyria's hands. Davidson leaves it ambiguous.

ignorant.¹ There are apparently some glosses; here and there the text is obviously disordered. We get the usual help, and find the usual faults, in the Septuagint; they will be noticed in the course of the translation.

¹ Technical military terms: ii. 2, מצורה; 4, פלדת (?); 4, הרעלו; 6, הסכך; iii. 3, מעלה (?). Probably foreign terms: ii. 8, הצב; iii. 17, מנזריך. Certainly foreign: iii. 17, טפסריך.

CHAPTER VII

THE VENGEANCE OF THE LORD

NAHUM i

THE prophet Nahum, as we have seen,¹ arose probably in Judah, if not about the same time as Zephaniah and Jeremiah, then a few years later. Whether he prophesied before or after the great Reform of 621 we have no means of deciding. His book does not reflect the inner history, character or merits of his generation. His sole interest is the fate of Niniveh. Zephaniah had also doomed the Assyrian capital, yet he was much more concerned with Israel's unworthiness of the opportunity presented to them. The yoke of Asshur, he saw, was to be broken, but the same cloud which was bursting from the north upon Niniveh must overwhelm the incorrigible people of Jehovah. For this Nahum has no thought. His heart, for all its bigness, holds room only for the bitter memories, the baffled hopes, the unappeased hatreds of a hundred years. And that is why we need not be anxious to fix his date upon one or other of the shifting phases of Israel's history during that last quarter of the seventh century. For he represents no single movement of his fickle people's progress, but

¹ Above, pp. 78 ff., 85 ff.

the passion of the whole epoch then drawing to a close. Nahum's book is one great At Last!

And, therefore, while Nahum is a worse prophet than Zephaniah, with less conscience and less insight, he is a greater poet, pouring forth the exultation of a people long enslaved, who see their tyrant ready for destruction. His language is strong and brilliant; his rhythm rumbles and rolls, leaps and flashes, like the horsemen and chariots he describes. It is a great pity the text is so corrupt. If the original lay before us, and that full knowledge of the times which the excavation of ancient Assyria may still yield to us, we might judge Nahum to be an even greater poet than we do.

We have seen that there are some reasons for doubting whether he wrote the first chapter of the book,¹ but no one questions its fitness as an introduction to the exultation over Niniveh's fall in chapters ii. and iii. The chapter is theological, affirming those general principles of Divine Providence, by which the overthrow of the tyrant is certain and God's own people are assured of deliverance. Let us place ourselves among the people, who for so long a time had been thwarted, crushed and demoralised by the most brutal empire which was ever suffered to roll its force across the world, and we shall sympathise with the author, who for the moment will feel nothing about his God, save that He is a God of vengeance. Like the grief of a bereaved man, the vengeance of an enslaved people has hours sacred to itself. And this people had such a God! Jehovah must punish the tyrant, else were He untrue. He had been patient, and patient, as a verse

¹ See above, pp. 81 ff.

seems to hint,¹ just because He was omnipotent, but in the end He must rise to judgment. He was God of heaven and earth, and it is the old physical proofs of His power, so often appealed to by the peoples of the East, for they feel them as we cannot, which this hymn calls up as Jehovah sweeps to the overthrow of the oppressor. *Before such power of wrath who may stand? What think ye of Jehovah?* The God who works with such ruthless, absolute force in nature will not relax in the fate He is preparing for Niniveh. *He is one who maketh utter destruction*, not needing to raise up His forces a second time, and as stubble before fire so His foes go down before Him. No half-measures are His, Whose are the storm, the drought and the earthquake.

Such is the sheer religion of the Proem to the Book of Nahum—thoroughly Oriental in its sense of God's method and resources of destruction; very Jewish, and very natural to that age of Jewish history, in the bursting of its long pent hopes of revenge. We of the West might express these hopes differently. We should not attribute so much personal passion to the Avenger. With our keener sense of law, we should emphasise the slowness of the process, and select for its illustration the forces of decay rather than those of sudden ruin. But we must remember the crashing times in which the Jews lived. The world was breaking up. The elements were loose, and all that God's own people could hope for was the bursting of their yoke, with a little shelter in the day of trouble. The elements were loose, but amidst the blind crash the little people knew that Jehovah knew them.

¹ Ver. 3, if the reading be correct.

*A God jealous and avenging is Jehovah ;
Jehovah is avenger and lord of wrath ;
Vengeful is Jehovah towards His enemies,
And implacable He to His foes.*

*Jehovah is long-suffering and great in might,¹
Yet He will not absolve.
Jehovah ! His way is in storm and in hurricane,
And clouds are the dust of His feet.²
He curbeth the sea, and drieth it up ;
All the streams hath He parched.
Withered³ be Bashan and Carmel ;
The bloom of Lebānon is withered.
Mountains have quaked before Him,
And the hills have rolled down.
Earth heaved at His presence,
The world and all its inhabitants.
Before His rage who may stand,
Or who abide in the glow of His anger ?
His wrath pours forth like fire,
And rocks are rent before Him.*

*Good is Jehovah to them that wait upon Him in the
day of trouble,⁴
And He knoweth them that trust Him.
With an overwhelming flood He makes an end of
His rebels,
And His foes He comes down on⁵ with darkness.*

¹ Gunkel amends to *in mercy* to make the parallel exact. But see above, p. 82.

² Gunkel's emendation is quite unnecessary here.

³ See above, p. 83.

⁴ So LXX. Heb. = *for a stronghold in the day of trouble.*

⁵ *Thrusts into*, Wellhausen, reading *יָרַד* or *יָרַד* for *יָרַד*. LXX. *darkness shall pursue.*

*What think ye of Jehovah?
He is one that makes utter destruction;
Not twice need trouble arise.
For though they be like plaited thorns,
And sodden as . . . ,¹
They shall be consumed like dry stubble.*

*Came there not² out of thee one to plan evil against
Jehovah,
A counsellor of mischief?³*

*Thus saith Jehovah, . . . many waters,⁴ yet shall they
be cut off and pass away, and I will so humble thee that
I need humble thee⁵ no more;⁶ and Jehovah hath ordered
concerning thee, that no more of thy seed be sown: from
the house of thy God, I will cut off graven and molten
image. I will make thy sepulchre⁷*

¹ Heb. and R.V. *drenched as with their drink*. LXX. *like a tangled yew*. The text is corrupt.

² The superfluous word מלנ at the end of ver. 10 Wellhausen reads as הלל at the beginning of ver. 11.

³ Usually taken as Sennacherib.

⁴ The Hebrew is given by the R.V. *though they be in full strength and likewise many*. LXX. *Thus saith Jehovah ruling over many waters*, reading מיטל מים רבים and omitting the first וכן. Similarly Syr. *Thus saith Jehovah of the heads of many waters*, על מיטלי מים רבים. Wellhausen, substituting מים for the first וכן, translates, *Let the great waters be ever so full, they will yet all . . . ?* (misprint here) *and vanish*. For עבר read עברו with LXX., borrowing ו from next word.

⁵ Lit. *and I will afflict thee, I will not afflict thee again*. This rendering implies that Niniveh is the object. The A.V., *though I have afflicted thee I will afflict thee no more*, refers to Israel.

⁶ Omit ver. 13 and run 14 on to 12. For the curious alternation now occurs: Assyria in one verse, Judah in the other. Assyria: i. 12, 14, ii. 2 (Heb.; Eng. ii. 1), 4 ff. Judah: i. 13, ii. 1 (Heb.; Eng. i. 15), 3 (Heb.; Eng. 2). Remove these latter, as Wellhausen does, and the verses on Assyria remain a connected and orderly whole. So in the text above.

⁷ Syr. *make it thy sepulchre*. The Hebrew left untranslated above

Disentangled from the above verses are three which plainly refer not to Assyria but to Judah. How they came to be woven among the others we cannot tell. Some of them appear applicable to the days of Josiah after the great Reform.

*And now will I break his yoke from upon thee,
And burst thy bonds asunder.
Lo, upon the mountains the feet of Him that bringeth
good tidings,
That publisheth peace !
Keep thy feasts, O Judah,
Fulfil thy vows :
For no more shall the wicked attempt to pass through
thee ;
Cut off is the whole of him.¹
For Jehovah hath turned the pride of Jacob,
Like to the pride of Israël :²
For the plunderers plundered them,
And destroyed their vinebranches.*

might be rendered *for thou art vile*. Bickell amends into *dunghills*. Lightfoot, *Chron. Temp. et Ord. Text V.T.* in *Collected Works*, I. 109, takes this as a prediction of Sennacherib's murder in the temple, an interpretation which demands a date for Nahum under either Hezekiah or Manasseh. So Pusey also, p. 357.

¹ LXX. *destruction*, הָלַךְ for הָלַךְ.

² Davidson : *restoreth the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel*, but when was the latter restored ?

CHAPTER VIII

THE SIEGE AND FALL OF NINIVEH

NAHUM ii., iii

THE scene now changes from the presence and awful arsenal of the Almighty to the historical consummation of His vengeance. Nahum foresees the siege of Niniveh. Probably the Medes have already overrun Assyria.¹ The *Old Lion* has withdrawn to his inner den, and is making his last stand. The suburbs are full of the enemy, and the great walls which made the inner city one vast fortress are invested. Nahum describes the details of the assault. Let us try, before we follow him through them, to form some picture of Assyria and her capital at this time.²

¹ See above, pp. 22 ff.

² The authorities are very full. First there is M. Botta's huge work *Monument de Ninive*, Paris, 5 vols., 1845. Then must be mentioned the work of which we availed ourselves in describing Babylon in *Isaiah xl.—lxvi.*, Expositor's Bible, pp. 52 ff.: "Memoirs by Commander James Felix Jones, I.N.," in *Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government*, No. XLIII., New Series, 1857. It is good to find that the careful and able observations of Commander Jones, too much neglected in his own country, have had justice done them by the German Colonel Billerbeck in the work about to be cited. Then there is the invaluable *Niniveh and its Remains*, by Layard. There are also the works of Rawlinson and George Smith. And recently Colonel Billerbeck, founding on these and other works, has published an admirable monograph (lavishly illustrated by maps and pictures),

As we have seen,¹ the Assyrian Empire began about 625 to shrink to the limits of Assyria proper, or Upper Mesopotamia, within the Euphrates on the south-west, the mountain-range of Kurdistan on the north-east, the river Chabor on the north-west and the Lesser Zab on the south-east.² This is a territory of nearly a hundred and fifty miles from north to south, and rather more than two hundred and fifty from east to west. To the south of it the Viceroy of Babylon, Nabopolassar, held practically independent sway over Lower Mesopotamia, if he did not command as well a large part of the Upper Euphrates Valley. On the north the Medes were urgent, holding at least the farther ends of the passes through the Kurdish mountains, if they had not already penetrated these to their southern issues.

The kernel of the Assyrian territory was the triangle, two of whose sides are represented by the Tigris and the Greater Zab, the third by the foot of the Kurdistan mountains. It is a fertile plain, with some low hills. To-day the level parts of it are covered by a large number of villages and well-cultivated fields. The more frequent mounds of ruin attest in ancient

not only upon the military state of Assyria proper and of Niniveh at this period, but upon the whole subject of Assyrian fortification and art of besieging, as well as upon the course of the Median invasions. It forms the larger part of an article to which Dr. Alfred Jeremias contributes an introduction, and reconstruction with notes of chaps. ii. and iii. of the Book of Nahum: "Der Untergang Niniveh's und die Weissagungsschrift des Nahum von Elkosh," in Vol. III. of *Beiträge zur Assyriologie und Semitischen Sprachwissenschaft*, edited by Friedrich Delitzsch and Paul Haupt, with the support of Johns Hopkins University at Baltimore, U.S.A.: Leipzig, 1895.

¹ Pages 20 f.

² Colonel Billerbeck (p. 115) thinks that the south-east frontier at this time lay more to the north, near the Greater Zab.

times a still greater population. At the period of which we are treating, the plains must have been covered by an almost continuous series of towns. At either end lay a group of fortresses. The southern was the ancient capital of Assyria, Kalchu, now Nimrud, about six miles to the north of the confluence of the Greater Zab and the Tigris. The northern, close by the present town of Khorsabad, was the great fortress and palace of Sargon, Dur-Sargina:¹ it covered the roads upon Niniveh from the north, and standing upon the upper reaches of the Choser protected Niniveh's water supply. But besides these there were scattered upon all the main roads and round the frontiers of the territory a number of other forts, towers and posts, the ruins of many of which are still considerable, but others have perished without leaving any visible traces. The roads thus protected drew in upon Niniveh from all directions. The chief of those, along which the Medes and their allies would advance from the east and north, crossed the Greater Zab, or came down through the Kurdistan mountains upon the citadel of Sargon. Two of them were distant enough from the latter to relieve the invaders from the necessity of taking it, and Kalchu lay far to the south of all of them. The brunt of the first defence of the land would therefore fall upon the smaller fortresses.

Niniveh itself lay upon the Tigris between Kalchu and Sargon's city, just where the Tigris is met by the Choser. Low hills descend from the north upon the very site of the fortress, and then curve east and south, bow-shaped, to draw west again upon the Tigris at

¹ First excavated by M. Botta, 1842—1845. See also George Smith, *Assyr. Disc.*, pp. 98 f.

the south end of the city. To the east of the latter they leave a level plain, some two and a half miles by one and a half. These hills appear to have been covered by several forts. The city itself was four-sided, lying lengthwise to the Tigris and cut across its breadth by the Choser. The circumference was about seven and a half miles, enclosing the largest fortified space in Western Asia, and capable of holding a population of three hundred thousand. The western wall, rather over two and a half miles long, touched the Tigris at either end, but between there lay a broad, bow-shaped stretch of land, probably in ancient times, as now, free of buildings. The north-western wall ran up from the Tigris for a mile and a quarter to the low ridge which entered the city at its northern corner. From this the eastern wall, with a curve upon it, ran down in face of the eastern plain for a little more than three miles, and was joined to the western by the short southern wall of not quite half a mile. The ruins of the western wall stand from ten to twenty, those of the others from twenty-five to sixty, feet above the natural surface, with here and there the still higher remains of towers. There were several gates, of which the chief were one in the northern and two in the eastern wall. Round all the walls except the western ran moats about a hundred and fifty feet broad—not close up to the foot of the walls, but at a distance of some sixty feet. Water was supplied by the Choser to all the moats south of it; those to the north were fed from a canal which entered the city near its northern corner. At these and other points one can still trace the remains of huge dams, batardeaux and sluices; and the moats might be emptied by opening at either end of the western wall other dams, which kept back the waters

from the bed of the Tigris. Beyond its moat, the eastern wall was protected north of the Choser by a large outwork covering its gate, and south of the Choser by another outwork, in shape the segment of a circle, and consisting of a double line of fortification more than five hundred yards long, of which the inner wall was almost as high as the great wall itself, but the outer considerably lower. Again, in front of this and in face of the eastern plain was a third line of fortification, consisting of a low inner wall and a colossal outer wall still rising to a height of fifty feet, with a moat one hundred and fifty feet broad between them. On the south this third line was closed by a large fortress.

Upon the trebly fortified city the Medes drew in from east and north, far away from Kalchu and able to avoid even Dur-Sargina. The other fortresses on the frontier and the approaches fell into their hands, says Nahum, like *ripe fruit*.¹ He cries to Niniveh to prepare for the siege.² Military authorities³ suppose that the Medes directed their main attack upon the northern corner of the city. Here they would be upon a level with its highest point, and would command the water-works by which most of the moats were fed. Their flank, too, would be protected by the ravines of the Choser. Nahum describes fighting in the suburbs before the assault of the walls, and it was just here, according to some authorities,⁴ that the famous suburbs of Niniveh lay, out upon the canal and the road to Khorsabad. All the open fighting which Nahum

¹ iii. 12.

² iii. 14.

³ See Jones and Billerbeck.

⁴ Delitzsch places the עִיר רִחְבֹּת of Gen. x. 11, the "ribit Nina" of the inscriptions, on the north-east of Niniveh.

foresees would take place in these *outplaces* and *broad streets*¹—the mustering of the *red ranks*,² the *prancing horses*³ and *rattling chariots*⁴ and *cavalry at the charge*.⁵ Beaten there the Assyrians would retire to the great walls, and the waterworks would fall into the hands of the besiegers. They would not immediately destroy these, but in order to bring their engines and battering-rams against the walls they would have to lay strong dams across the moats; the eastern moat has actually been found filled with rubbish in face of a great breach at the north end of its wall. This breach may have been effected not only by the rams but by directing upon the wall the waters of the canal; or farther south the Choser itself, in its spring floods, may have been confined by the besiegers and swept in upon the sluices which regulate its passage through the eastern wall into the city. To this means tradition has assigned the capture of Niniveh,⁶ and Nahum perhaps foresees the possibility of it: *the gates of the rivers are opened, the palace is dissolved*.⁷

Now of all this probable progress of the siege Nahum, of course, does not give us a narrative, for he is writing upon the eve of it, and probably, as we have seen, in Judah, with only such knowledge of the position and strength of Niniveh as her fame had scattered across the world. The military details, the muster, the fighting in the open, the investment, the assault, he did not need to go to Assyria or to wait for the fall of Niniveh

¹ ii. 4 Eng., 5 Heb.

² *Ibid.* LXX.

³ ii. 3 Eng., 4 Heb.

⁴ iii. 2.

⁵ iii. 3.

⁶ It is the waters of the Tigris that the tradition avers to have broken the wall; but the Tigris itself runs in a bed too low for this; it can only have been the Choser. See both Jones and Billerbeck.

⁷ ii. 6.

to describe as he has done. Assyria herself (and herein lies much of the pathos of the poem) had made all Western Asia familiar with their horrors for the last two centuries. As we learn from the prophets and now still more from herself, Assyria was the great Besieger of Men. It is siege, siege, siege, which Amos, Hosea and Isaiah tell their people they shall feel : *siege and blockade, and that right round the land !* It is siege, irresistible and full of cruelty, which Assyria records as her own glory. Miles of sculpture are covered with masses of troops marching upon some Syrian or Median fortress. Scaling ladders and enormous engines are pushed forward to the walls under cover of a shower of arrows. There are assaults and breaches, panic-stricken and suppliant defenders. Streets and places are strewn with corpses, men are impaled, women led away weeping, children dashed against the stones. The Jews had seen, had felt these horrors for a hundred years, and it is out of their experience of them that Nahum weaves his exultant predictions. The Besieger of the world is at last besieged ; every cruelty he has inflicted upon men is now to be turned upon himself. Again and again does Nahum return to the vivid details, —he hears the very whips crack beneath the walls, and the rattle of the leaping chariots ; the end is slaughter, dispersion and a dead waste.¹

¹ If the above conception of chaps. ii. and iii. be correct, then there is no need for such a re-arrangement of these verses as has been proposed by Jeremias and Billerbeck. In order to produce a continuous narrative of the progress of the siege, they bring forward iii. 12-15 (describing the fall of the fortresses and gates of the land and the call to the defence of the city), and place it immediately after ii. 2, 4 (the description of the invader) and ii. 5-11 (the appearance of chariots in the suburbs of the city, the opening of the floodgates, the flight and the spoiling of the city). But if they believe that the

Two other points remain to be emphasised.

There is a striking absence from both chapters of any reference to Israel.¹ Jehovah of Hosts is mentioned twice in the same formula,² but otherwise the author does not obtrude his nationality. It is not in Judah's name he exults, but in that of all the peoples of Western Asia. Niniveh has sold *peoples* by her harlotries and *races* by her witchcraft; it is *peoples* that shall gaze upon her nakedness and *kingdoms* upon her shame. Nahum gives voice to no national passions, but to the outraged conscience of mankind. We see here another proof, not only of the large, human heart of prophecy, but of that which in the introduction to these Twelve Prophets we ventured to assign as one of its causes. By crushing all peoples to a common level of despair, by the universal pity which her cruelties excited, Assyria contributed to the development in Israel of the idea of a common humanity.³

The other thing to be noticed is Nahum's feeling of the incoherence and mercenariness of the vast population of Niniveh. Niniveh's command of the world had turned her into a great trading power. Under Assurbanipal the lines of ancient commerce had been diverted so as to pass through her. The immediate result was

original gave an orderly account of the progress of the siege, why do they not bring forward also iii. 2 f., which describe the arrival of the foe under the city walls? The truth appears to be as stated above. We have really two poems against Niniveh, chap. ii. and chap. iii. They do not give an orderly description of the siege, but exult over Niniveh's imminent downfall, with gleams scattered here and there of how this is to happen. Of these "impressions" of the coming siege there are three, and in the order in which we now have them they occur very naturally: ii. 5 ff., iii. 2 f., and iii. 12 ff.

¹ ii. 2 goes with the previous chapter. See above, pp. 94 f.

² ii. 13, iii. 5.

³ See above, Vol. I., Chap. IV., especially pp. 54 ff.

an enormous increase of population, such as the world had never before seen within the limits of one city. But this had come out of all races and was held together only by the greed of gain. What had once been a firm and vigorous nation of warriors, irresistible in their united impact upon the world, was now a loose aggregate of many peoples, without patriotism, discipline or sense of honour. Nahum likens it to a reservoir of waters,¹ which as soon as it is breached must scatter, and leave the city bare. The Second Isaiah said the same of Babylon, to which the bulk of Niniveh's mercenary populace must have fled:—

*Thus are they grown to thee, they who did weary thee,
Traders of thine from thy youth up;
Each as he could escape have they fled;
None is thy helper.²*

The prophets saw the truth about both cities. Their vastness and their splendour were artificial. Neither of them, and Niniveh still less than Babylon, was a natural centre for the world's commerce. When their political power fell, the great lines of trade, which had been twisted to their feet, drew back to more natural courses, and Niniveh in especial became deserted. This is the explanation of the absolute collapse of that mighty city. Nahum's foresight, and the very metaphor in which he expressed it, were thoroughly sound. The population vanished like water. The site bears little trace of any disturbance since the ruin by the Medes, except such as has been inflicted by the weather and the wandering tribes around. Mosul, Niniveh's

¹ ii. 8.

² *Isaiah xl.—lxvi* (Expositor's Bible), pp. 197 ff.

representative to-day, is not built upon it, and is but a provincial town. The district was never meant for anything else.

The swift decay of these ancient empires from the climax of their commercial glory is often employed as a warning to ourselves. But the parallel, as the previous paragraphs suggest, is very far from exact. If we can lay aside for the moment the greatest difference of all, in religion and morals, there remain others almost of cardinal importance. Assyria and Babylonia were not filled, like Great Britain, with reproductive races, able to colonise distant lands, and carry everywhere the spirit which had made them strong at home. Still more, they did not continue at home to be homogeneous. Their native forces were exhausted by long and unceasing wars. Their populations, especially in their capitals, were very largely alien and distraught, with nothing to hold them together save their commercial interests. They were bound to break up at the first disaster. It is true that we are not without some risks of their peril. No patriot among us can observe without misgiving the large and growing proportion of foreigners in that department of our life from which the strength of our defence is largely drawn—our merchant navy. But such a fact is very far from bringing our empire and its chief cities into the fatal condition of Niniveh and Babylon. Our capitals, our commerce, our life as a whole are still British to the core. If we only be true to our ideals of righteousness and religion, if our patriotism continue moral and sincere, we shall have the power to absorb the foreign elements that throng to us in commerce, and stamp them with our own spirit.

We are now ready to follow Nahum's two great

poems delivered on the eve of the Fall of Niniveh. Probably, as we have said, the first of them has lost its original opening. It wants some notice at the outset of the object to which it is addressed: this is indicated only by the second personal pronoun. Other needful comments will be given in footnotes.

I.

*The Hammer¹ is come up to thy face!
Hold the rampart! ² Keep watch on the way!
Brace the loins!³ Pull thyself firmly together!⁴
The shields⁵ of his heroes are red,
The warriors are in scarlet;⁶
Like⁷ fire are the . . . ⁸ of the chariots in the day
of his muster,
And the horsemen⁹ are prancing.*

¹ Read מַטְּוֹן with Wellhausen (cf. Siegfried-Stade's *Wörterbuch*, sub פִּיץ) for מַטְּוִיץ, *Breaker in pieces*. In Jer. li. 20 Babylon is also called by Jehovah His מַטְּוֹן, *Hammer* or *Maul*.

² *Keep watch*, Wellhausen.

³ This may be a military call to attention, the converse of "Stand at ease!"

⁴ Heb. literally: *brace up thy power exceedingly*.

⁵ Heb. singular.

⁶ Rev. ix. 17. Purple or red was the favourite colour of the Medes. The Assyrians also loved red. ⁷ Read כְּאֵשׁ for בְּאֵשׁ.

⁸ פְּלִדוֹת, the word omitted, is doubtful; it does not occur elsewhere. LXX. ἡπλαί; Vulg. *habenæ*. Some have thought that it means *scythes*—cf. the Arabic *falad*, "to cut"—but the earliest notice of chariots armed with scythes is at the battle of Cunaxa, and in Jewish literature they do not appear before 2 Macc. xiii. 2. Cf. Jeremias, *op. cit.*, p. 97, where Billerbeck suggests that the words of Nahum are applicable to the covered siege-engines, pictured on the Assyrian monuments, from which the besiegers flung torches on the walls: cf. *ibid.*, p. 167, n. ***. But from the parallelism of the verse it is more probable that ordinary chariots are meant. The leading chariots were covered with plates of metal (Billerbeck, p. 167).

⁹ So LXX., reading פְּרִשִׁים for כְּרִשִׁים of Heb. text, that means

Through the markets rage chariots,
 They tear across the squares;¹
 The look of them is like torches,
 Like lightnings they dart to and fro.²
 He musters his nobles. . . .³
 They rush to the wall and the mantlet⁴ is fixed!
 The river-gates⁵ burst open, the palace dissolves.⁶
 And Huṣṣab⁷ is stripped, is brought forth,
 With her maids sobbing like doves,
 Beating their breasts.

fir-trees. If the latter be correct, then we should need to suppose with Billerbeck that either the long lances of the Aryan Medes were meant, or the great, heavy spears which were thrust against the walls by engines. We are not, however, among these yet; it appears to be the cavalry and chariots in the open that are here described.

¹ Or *broad places* or *suburbs*. See above, pp. 100 f.

² See above, p. 106, end of n. 8.

³ Heb. *They stumble in their goings*. Davidson holds this is more probably of the defenders. Wellhausen takes the verse as of the besiegers. See next note.

⁴ הַמָּגֶד. Partic. of the verb *to cover*, hence covering thing: whether *mantlet* (on the side of the besiegers) or *bulwark* (on the side of the besieged: cf. מִקָּדָה, Isa. xxii. 8) is uncertain. Billerbeck says, if it be an article of defence, we can read ver. 5 as illustrating the vanity of the hurried defence, when the elements themselves break in vv. 6 and 7 (p. 101: cf. p. 176, n. *).

⁵ *Sluices* (Jeremias) or *bridge-gates* (Wellhausen)?

⁶ Or *breaks into motion*, i.e. *flight*.

⁷ הַצִּב, if a Hebrew word, might be Hophal of נָצַב and has been taken to mean *it is determined, she* (Niniveh) *is taken captive*. Volck (in Herzog), Kleinert, Orelli: *it is settled*. LXX. ὑποβρασις = מַצֵּב. Vulg. *miles* (as if some form of צָבָה?). Hitzig points it הַצִּב, *the lizard*, Wellhausen *the toad*. But this noun is masculine (Lev. xi. 29) and the verbs feminine. Davidson suggests the other הַצִּב, fem., the *litter* or *palanquin* (Isa. lxvi. 20): "in lieu of anything better one might be tempted to think that the litter might mean the woman or lady, just as in Arab. ḡha'inah means a woman's litter and then a woman." One is also tempted to think of הַצִּב, *the beauty*. The Targ. has כַּלְכַּתָּהּ, *the queen*. From as early as

*And Niniveh! she was like a reservoir of waters,
Her waters . . .¹*

*And now they flee. "Stand, stand!" but there is
none to rally.*

*Plunder silver, plunder gold!
Infinite treasures, mass of all precious things!
Void and devoid and desolate² is she.
Melting hearts and shaking knees,
And anguish in all loins,
And nothing but faces full of black fear.³*

*Where is the Lion's den,
And the young lions' feeding ground⁴?
Whither the Lion retreated,⁵
The whelps of the Lion, with none to affray:
The Lion, who tore enough for his whelps,
And strangled for his lionesses.*

at least 1527 (*Latina Interpretatio Xantis Pagnini Lucensis* revised and edited for the Plantin Bible, 1615) the word has been taken by a series of scholars as a proper name, Huṣṣab. So Ewald and others. It may be an Assyrian word, like some others in Nahum. Perhaps, again, the text is corrupt.

Mr. Paul Ruben (*Academy*, March 7th, 1896) has proposed instead of העלתה, *is brought forth*, to read העתלה, and to translate it by analogy of the Assyrian "etellu," fem. "etellitu" = great or exalted, *The Lady*. The line would then run *Huṣṣab, the lady, is stripped*. (With העתלה Cheyne, *Academy*, June 21st, 1896, compares עתליה, which, he suggests, is "Yahwe is great" or "is lord.")

¹ Heb. מִיָּמֵי הַיָּמִים לְיָמֵי הַיָּמִים, *from days she was*. A.V. *is of old*. R.V. *hath been of old*, and Marg. *from the days that she hath been*. LXX. *her waters*, מִיָּמֵי הָיָה. On waters fleeing, cf. Ps. civ. 7.

² Buḩah, umebuḩah, umebullāḩah. Ewald: *desert and desolation and devastation*. The adj. are feminine.

³ Literally: *and the faces of all them gather lividness*.

⁴ For מַרְעָה Wellhausen reads מְעָרָה, *cave or hold*.

⁵ LXX., reading לְבֵינָה for לְבֵינָה.

*And he filled his pits with prey,
And his dens with rapine.*

*Lo, I am at thee (oracle of Jehovah of Hosts):
I will put up thy . . .¹ in flames,
The sword shall devour thy young lions;
I will cut off from the earth thy rapine,
And the noise of thine envoys shall no more be heard.*

2.

*Woe to the City of Blood,
All of her guile, robbery-full, ceaseless rapine!*

*Hark the whip,
And the rumbling of the wheel,
And horses galloping,
And the rattling dance of the chariot!²
Cavalry at the charge,³ and flash of sabres,
And lightning of lances,
Mass of slain and weight of corpses,
Endless dead bodies—
They stumble on their dead!
—For the manifold harlotries of the Harlot,
The well-favoured, mistress of charms,
She who sold nations with her harlotries
And races by her witchcrafts!*

*Lo, I am at thee (oracle of Jehovah of Hosts):
I will uncover thy skirts to thy face;⁴*

¹ Heb. *her chariots*. LXX. and Syr. suggest *thy mass or multitude*, רבכה. Davidson suggests *thy lair*, רבצכה.

² Literally *and the chariot dancing*, but the word, merakedah, has a rattle in it.

³ Doubtful, מַעֲלָה. LXX. ἀναβαλοντος.

⁴ Jeremias (104) shows how the Assyrians did this to female captives.

Give nations to look on thy nakedness,
 And kingdoms upon thy shame ;
 Will have thee pelted with filth, and disgrace thee,
 And set thee for a gazingstock ;
 So that every one seeing thee shall shrink from thee
 and say,
 " Shattered is Nimiveh—who will pity her ?
 Whence shall I seek for comforters to thee ? "

Shalt thou be better than No-Amon,¹
 Which sat upon the Nile streams²—waters were
 round her—
 Whose rampart was the sea,³ and waters her wall ;⁴
 Kush was her strength and Misraim without end ;
 Phut and the Lybians were there to assist her.⁵
 Even she was for exile, she went to captivity :
 Even her children were dashed on every street
 corner ;
 For her nobles they cast lots,
 And all her great men were fastened with fetters.

Thou too shalt stagger,⁶ shalt grow faint ;
 Thou too shalt seek help from⁷ the foe !

¹ Jer. xlvi. 25: *I will punish Amon at No.* Ezek. xxx. 14-16 . . . judgments in No. . . . *I will cut off No-Amon* (Heb. and A.V. multitude of No, reading הַמִּזְוֵן; so also LXX. τὸ πλῆθος for הַמִּזְוֵן) . . . and No shall be broken up. It is Thebes, the Egyptian name of which was Nu-Amen. The god Amen had his temple there: Herod. I. 182 II. 42. Nahum refers to Assurbanipal's account of the fall of Thebes See above, p. 11.

² הַיַּרְדֵּן. Pl. of the word for Nile.

³ Arabs still call the Nile the sea.

⁴ So LXX., reading הַיַּרְדֵּן for Heb. הַיַּרְדֵּן.

⁵ So LXX.; Heb. *thee*.

⁶ Heb. *be drunken*.

⁷ I.e. against, because of.

*All thy fortresses are fig-trees with figs early-ripe :
 Be they shaken they fall on the mouth of the eater.
 Lo, thy folk are but women in thy midst :¹
 To thy foes the gates of thy land fly open ;
 Fire has devoured thy bars.*

*Draw thee water for siege, strengthen thy forts !
 Get thee down to the mud, and tramp in the clay !
 Grip fast the brick-mould !
 There fire consumes thee, the sword cuts thee off.²
 Make thyself many as a locust swarm,
 Many as grasshoppers,
 Multiply thy traders more than heaven's stars,
 —The locusts break off³ and fly away.
 Thy . . .⁴ are as locusts and thy . . . as grass-
 hoppers,
 That hive in the hedges in the cold of the day :⁵
 The sun is risen, they are fled,
 And one knows not the place where they be.*

¹ Jer. i. 37, li. 30.

² Heb. and LXX. add *devour thee like the locust*, probably a gloss.

³ Cf. Jer. ix. 33. Some take it of the locusts stripping the skin which confines their wings : Davidson.

⁴ מְנוֹרֵיךְ. A.V. *thy crowned ones*; but perhaps like its neighbour an Assyrian word, meaning we know not what. Wellhausen reads מְנוֹרֵיךְ, LXX. ὁ συμμικτός σου (applied in Deut. xxiii. 3 and Zech. ix. 6 to the offspring of a mixed marriage between an Israelite and a Gentile), deine Mischlinge : a term of contempt for the floating foreign or semi-foreign population which filled Niniveh and was ready to fly at sight of danger. Similarly Wellhausen takes the second term, טַפְסָר. This, which occurs also in Jer. li. 27, appears to be some kind of official. In Assyrian *dupsar* is scribe, which may, like Heb. שֹׁטֵר, have been applied to any high official. See Schrader, *K.A.T.*, Eng. Tr., I. 141, II. 118. See also Fried. Delitzsch, *Wo lag Parad.*, p. 142. The name and office were ancient. Such Babylonian officials are mentioned in the Tell el Amarna letters as present at the Egyptian court.

⁵ Heb. *day of cold*.

*Asleep are thy shepherds, O king of Assyria,
Thy nobles do slumber;¹
Thy people are strewn on the mountains,
Without any to gather.
There is no healing of thy wreck,
Fatal thy wound!
All who hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hand at
thee,
For upon whom hath not thy cruelty passed without
ceasing?*

¹ ישכנו, *dwel*, is the Heb. reading. But LXX. ἵσνον, *ἐκοιμσεν*. Sleep must be taken in the sense of death: cf. Jer. li. 39, 57; Isa. xiv. 18.

HABAKKUK

*Upon my watch-tower will I stand,
And take up my post on the rampart.
I will watch to see what He will say to me,
And what answer I get back to my plea.*
• • • • •
The righteous shall live by his faithfulness.

“The beginning of speculation in Israel.”

CHAPTER IX

THE BOOK OF HABAKKUK

AS it has reached us, the Book of Habakkuk, under the title *The Oracle which Habakkuk the prophet received by vision*, consists of three chapters, which fall into three sections. *First*: chap. i. 2—ii. 4 (or 8), a piece in dramatic form; the prophet lifts his voice to God against the wrong and violence of which his whole horizon is full, and God sends him answer. *Second*: chap. ii. 5 (or 9)—20, a taunt-song in a series of Woes upon the wrong-doer. *Third*: chap. iii., part psalm, part prayer, descriptive of a Theophany and expressive of Israel's faith in their God. Of these three sections no one doubts the authenticity of the *first*; opinion is divided about the *second*; about the *third* there is a growing agreement that it is not a genuine work of Habakkuk, but a poem from a period after the Exile.

I. CHAP. I. 2—II. 4 (OR 8).

Yet it is the first piece which raises the most difficult questions. All¹ admit that it is to be dated somewhere along the line of Jeremiah's long career, *c.* 627—586. There is no doubt about the general trend of the argument: it is a plaint to God on the sufferings of

¹ Except one or two critics who place it in Manassch's reign. See below.

the righteous under tyranny, with God's answer. But the order and connection of the paragraphs of the argument are not clear. There is also difference of opinion as to who the tyrant is—native, Assyrian or Chaldee; and this leads to a difference, of course, about the date, which ranges from the early years of Josiah to the end of Jehoiakim's reign, or from about 630 to 597.

As the verses lie, their argument is this. In chap. i. 2-4 Habakkuk asks the Lord how long the wicked are to oppress the righteous, to the paralysing of the Torah, or Revelation of His Law, and the making futile of judgment. For answer the Lord tells him, vv. 5-11, to look round among the heathen: He is about to raise up the Chaldees to do His work, a people swift, self-reliant, irresistible. Upon which Habakkuk resumes his question, vv. 12-17, how long will God suffer a tyrant who sweeps up the peoples into his net like fish? Is he to go on with this for ever? In ii. 1 Habakkuk prepares for an answer, which comes in ii. 2, 3, 4: let the prophet wait for the vision though it tarries; the proud oppressor cannot last, but the righteous shall live by his constancy, or faithfulness.

The difficulties are these. Who are the wicked oppressors in chap. i. 2-4? Are they Jews, or some heathen nation? And what is the connection between vv. 1-4 and vv. 5-11? Are the Chaldees, who are described in the latter, raised up to punish the tyrant complained against in the former? To these questions three different sets of answers have been given.

First: the great majority of critics take the wrong complained of in vv. 2-4 to be wrong done by unjust and cruel Jews to their countrymen, that is, civic disorder and violence, and believe that in vv. 5-11

Jehovah is represented as raising up the Chaldees to punish the sin of Judah—a message which is pretty much the same as Jeremiah's. But Habakkuk goes further: the Chaldees themselves with their cruelties aggravate his problem, how God can suffer wrong, and he appeals again to God, vv. 12-17. Are the Chaldees to be allowed to devastate for ever? The answer is given, as above, in chap. ii. 1-4. Such is practically the view of Pusey, Delitzsch, Kleinert, Kuenen, Sinker,¹ Driver, Orelli, Kirkpatrick, Wildeboer and Davidson, a formidable league, and Davidson says "this is the most natural sense of the verses and of the words used in them." But these scholars differ as to the date. Pusey, Delitzsch and Volck take the whole passage from i. 5 as prediction, and date it from before the rise of the Chaldee power in 625, attributing the internal wrongs of Judah described in vv. 2-4 to Manasseh's reign or the early years of Josiah.² But the rest, on the grounds that the prophet shows some experience of the Chaldean methods of warfare, and that the account of the internal disorder in Judah does not suit Josiah's reign, bring the passage down to the reign of Jehoiakim, 608—598, or of Jehoiachin, 597. Kleinert and Von

¹ See next note.

² So Pusey. Delitzsch in his commentary on Habakkuk, 1843, preferred Josiah's reign, but in his *O. T. Hist. of Redemption*, 1881, p. 226, Manasseh's. Volck (in Herzog, *Real Encyc.*,² art. "Habakkuk," 1879), assuming that Habakkuk is quoted both by Zephaniah (see above, p. 39, n.) and Jeremiah, places him before these. Sinker (*The Psalm of Habakkuk*: see below, p. 127, n. 2) deems "the prophecy, taken as a whole," to bring "before us the threat of the Chaldean invasion, the horrors that follow in its train," etc., with a vision of the day "when the Chaldean host itself, its work done, falls beneath a mightier foe." He fixes the date either in the concluding years of Manasseh's reign, or the opening years of that of Josiah (Preface, 1-4).

Orelli date it before the battle of Carchemish, 506, in which the Chaldean Nebuchadrezzar wrested from Egypt the Empire of the Western Asia, on the ground that after that Habakkuk could not have called a Chaldean invasion of Judah incredible (i. 5). But Kuenen, Driver, Kirkpatrick, Wildeboer and Davidson date it after Carchemish. To Driver it must be immediately after, and before Judah became alarmed at the consequences to herself. To Davidson the description of the Chaldeans "is scarcely conceivable before the battle," "hardly one would think before the deportation of the people under Jehoiachin."¹ This also is Kuenen's view, who thinks that Judah must have suffered at least the first Chaldean raids, and he explains the use of an undoubted future in chap. i. 5, *Lo, I am about to raise up the Chaldeans*, as due to the prophet's predilection for a dramatic style. "He sets himself in the past, and represents the already experienced chastisement [of Judah] as having been then announced by Jehovah. His contemporaries could not have mistaken his meaning."

Second: others, however, deny that chap. i. 2-4 refers to the internal disorder of Judah, except as the effect of foreign tyranny. The *righteous* mentioned there are Israel as a whole, *the wicked* their heathen oppressors. So Hitzig, Ewald, König and practically Smend. Ewald is so clear that Habakkuk ascribes no sin to Judah, that he says we might be led by this to assign the prophecy to the reign of the righteous Josiah; but he prefers, because of the vivid sense which the prophet betrays of actual experience of the Chaldees, to date the

¹ Pages 53, 49. Kirkpatrick (*Smith's Dict. of the Bible*,² art. "Habakkuk," 1893) puts it not later than the sixth year of Jehoiakim.

passage from the reign of Jehoiakim, and to explain Habakkuk's silence about his people's sinfulness as due to his overwhelming impression of Chaldean cruelty. König¹ takes vv. 2-4 as a general complaint of the violence that fills the prophet's day, and vv. 5-11 as a detailed description of the Chaldeans, the instruments of this violence. Vv. 5-11, therefore, give not the judgment upon the wrongs described in vv. 2-4, but the explanation of them. Lebanon is already wasted by the Chaldeans (ii. 17); therefore the whole prophecy must be assigned to the days of Jehoiakim. Giesebrecht² and Wellhausen adhere to the view that no sins of Judah are mentioned, but that the *righteous* and *wicked* of chap. i. 4 are the same as in ver. 13, viz. Israel and a heathen tyrant. But this leads them to dispute that the present order of the paragraphs of the prophecy is the right one. In chap. i. 5 the Chaldeans are represented as about to be raised up for the first time, although their violence has already been described in vv. 1-4, and in vv. 12-17 these are already in full career. Moreover ver. 12 follows on naturally to ver. 4. Accordingly these critics would remove the section vv. 5-11. Giesebrecht prefixes it to ver. 1, and dates the whole passage from the Exile. Wellhausen calls 5-11 an older passage than the rest of the prophecy, and removes it altogether as not Habakkuk's. To the latter he assigns what remains, i. 1-4, 12-17, ii. 1-5, and dates it from the reign of Jehoiakim.³

Third: from each of these groups of critics Budde of Strasburg borrows something, but so as to construct an

¹ *Eml. in das A. T.*

² *Beiträge zur Jesaiakritik*, 1890, pp. 197 f.

³ See Further Note on p. 128.

arrangement of the verses, and to reach a date, for the whole, from which both differ.¹ With Hitzig, Ewald, König, Smend, Giesebrecht and Wellhausen he agrees that the violence complained of in i. 2-4 is that inflicted by a heathen oppressor, *the wicked*, on the Jewish nation, the *righteous*. But with Kuenen and others he holds that the Chaldeans are raised up, according to i. 5-11, to punish the violence complained of in i. 2-4 and again in i. 12-17. In these verses it is the ravages of another heathen power than the Chaldeans which Budde describes. The Chaldeans are still to come, and cannot be the same as the devastator whose long continued tyranny is described in i. 12-17. They are rather the power which is to punish him. He can only be the Assyrian. But if that be so, the proper place for the passage, i. 5-11, which describes the rise of the Chaldeans must be after the description of the Assyrian ravages in i. 12-17, and in the body of God's answer to the prophet which we find in ii. 2 ff. Budde, therefore, places i. 5-11 after ii. 2-4. But if the Chaldeans are still to come, and Budde thinks that they are described vaguely and with a good deal of imagination, the prophecy thus arranged must fall somewhere between 625, when Nabopolassar the Chaldean made himself independent of Assyria and King of Babylon, and 607, when Assyria fell. That the prophet calls Judah *righteous* is proof that he wrote after the great Reform of 621; hence, too, his reference to Torah and Mishpat (i. 4), and his complaint of the obstacles which Assyrian supremacy presented to their free course. As the Assyrian yoke appears not to have been felt anywhere in Judah by 608, Budde would

¹ *Studien u. Kritiken* for 1893.

fix the exact date of Habakkuk's prophecy about 615. To these conclusions of Budde Cornill, who in 1891 had very confidently assigned the prophecy of Habakkuk to the reign of Jehoiakim, gave his adherence in 1896.¹

Budde's very able and ingenious argument has been subjected to a searching criticism by Professor Davidson, who emphasises first the difficulty of accounting for the transposition of chap. i. 5-11 from what Budde alleges to have been its original place after ii. 4 to its present position in chap. i.² He points out that if chap. i. 2-4 and 12-17 and ii. 5 ff. refer to the Assyrian, it is strange the latter is not once mentioned. Again, by 615 we may infer (though we know little of Assyrian history at this time) that the Assyrian's hold on Judah was already too relaxed for the prophet to impute to him power to hinder the Law, especially as Josiah had begun to carry his reforms into the northern kingdom; and the knowledge of the Chaldeans displayed in i. 5-11 is too fresh and detailed³ to suit so early a date: it was possible only after the battle of Carchemish. And again, it is improbable that we have two different nations, as Budde thinks, described by the

¹ Cf. the opening of § 30 in the first edition of his *Einleitung* with that of § 34 in the third and fourth editions.

² Budde's explanation of this is, that to the later editors of the book, long after the Babylonian destruction of Jews, it was incredible that the Chaldean should be represented as the deliverer of Israel, and so the account of him was placed where, while his call to punish Israel for her sins was not emphasised, he should be pictured as destined to doom; and so the prophecy originally referring to the Assyrian was read of him. "This is possible," says Davidson, "if it be true criticism is not without its romance."

³ This in opposition to Budde's statement that the description of the Chaldeans in i. 5-11 "ist eine phantastische Schilderung" (p. 387).

very similar phrases in i. 11, *his own power becomes his god*, and in i. 16, *he sacrifices to his net*. Again, chap. i. 5-11 would not read quite naturally after chap. ii. 4. And in the woes pronounced on the oppressor it is not one nation, the Chaldeans, which are to spoil him, but all the remnant of the peoples (ii. 7, 8).

These objections are not inconsiderable. But are they conclusive? And if not, is any of the other theories of the prophecy less beset with difficulties?

The objections are scarcely conclusive. We have no proof that the power of Assyria was altogether removed from Judah by 615; on the contrary, even in 608 Assyria was still the power with which Egypt went forth to contend for the empire of the world. Seven years earlier her hand may well have been strong upon Palestine. Again, by 615 the Chaldeans, a people famous in Western Asia for a long time, had been ten years independent: men in Palestine may have been familiar with their methods of warfare; at least it is impossible to say they were not.¹ There is more weight in the objection drawn from the absence of the name of Assyria from all of the passages which Budde alleges describe it; nor do we get over all difficulties of text by inserting i. 5-11 between ii. 4 and 5. Besides, how does Budde explain i. 12*b* on the theory that it means Assyria? Is the clause not premature at that point? Does he propose to elide it, like Wellhausen? And in any case an erroneous transposition of the

¹ It is, however, a serious question whether it would be possible in 615 to describe the Chaldeans as *a nation that traversed the breadth of the earth to occupy dwelling-places that were not his own* (i. 6). This suits better after the battle of Carchemish.

original is impossible to prove and difficult to account for.¹

But have not the other theories of the Book of Habakkuk equally great difficulties? Surely, we cannot say that the *righteous* and the *wicked* in i. 4 mean something different from what they do in i. 13? But if this is impossible the construction of the book supported by the great majority of critics² falls to the ground. Professor Davidson justly says that it has "something artificial in it" and "puts a strain on the natural sense."³ How can the Chaldeans be described in i. 5 as *just about to be raised up*, and in 14-17 as already for a long time the devastators of earth? Ewald's, Hitzig's and König's views⁴ are equally beset by these difficulties; König's exposition also "strains the natural sense." Everything, in fact, points to i. 5-11 being out of its proper place; it is no wonder that Giesebrecht, Wellhausen and Budde independently arrived at this conclusion.⁵ Whether Budde be right in inserting i. 5-11 after ii. 4, there can be little doubt of the correctness of his views that i. 12-17 describe a heathen oppressor who is not the Chaldeans. Budde says this oppressor is Assyria. Can he be any one else? From 608 to 605 Judah was sorely beset by Egypt, who had overrun all Syria up to the Euphrates. The Egyptians killed Josiah, deposed his successor, and put their own vassal under a very heavy tribute; *gold and silver were exacted of the people of the land*: the picture of distress in i. 1-4 might easily be that of

¹ See above, p. 121, n. 2.

² Pages 49 and 50.

³ See above, pp. 114 ff.

⁴ See above, pp. 118 f.

⁵ Wellhausen in 1873 (see p. 661); Giesebrecht in 1890; Budde in 1892, before he had seen the opinions of either of the others (see *Stud. und Krit.*, 1893, p. 386, n. 2).

Judah in these three terrible years. And if we assigned the prophecy to them, we should certainly give it a date at which the knowledge of the Chaldeans expressed in i. 5-11 was more probable than at Budde's date of 615. But then does the description in chap. i. 14-17 suit Egypt so well as it does Assyria? We can hardly affirm this, until we know more of what Egypt did in those days, but it is very probable.

Therefore, the theory supported by the majority of critics being unnatural, we are, with our present meagre knowledge of the time, flung back upon Budde's interpretation that the prophet in i. 2—ii. 4 appeals from oppression by a heathen power, which is not the Chaldean, but upon which the Chaldean shall bring the just vengeance of God. The tyrant is either Assyria up to about 615 or Egypt from 608 to 605, and there is not a little to be said for the latter date.

In arriving at so uncertain a conclusion about i.—ii. 4, we have but these consolations, that no other is possible in our present knowledge, and that the uncertainty will not hamper us much in our appreciation of Habakkuk's spiritual attitude and poetic gifts.¹

2. CHAP. II. 5-20.

The dramatic piece i. 2—ii. 4 is succeeded by a series of fine taunt-songs, starting after an introduction from 6*b*, then 9, 11, 15 and (18) 19, and each opening with

¹ Cornill quotes a rearrangement of chaps. i., ii., by Rothstein, who takes i. 2-4, 12 *a*, 13, ii. 1-3, 4, 5 *a*, i. 6-10, 14, 15 *a*, ii. 6 *b*, 7, 9, 10 *a b β*, 11, 15, 16, 19, 18, as an oracle against Jehoiakim and the godless in Israel about 605, which during the Exile was worked up into the present oracle against Babylon. Cornill esteems it "too complicated." Budde (*Expositor*, 1895, pp. 372 ff.) and Nowack hold it untenable.

Woe! Their subject is, if we take Budde's interpretation of the dramatic piece, the Assyrian and not the Chaldean¹ tyrant. The text, as we shall see when we come to it, is corrupt. Some words are manifestly wrong, and the rhythm must have suffered beyond restoration. In all probability these fine lyric Woes, or at least as many of them as are authentic—for there is doubt about one or two—were of equal length. Whether they all originally had the refrain now attached to two is more doubtful.

Hitzig suspected the authenticity of some parts of this series of songs. Stade² and Kuenen have gone further and denied the genuineness of vv. 9-20. But this is with little reason. As Budde says, a series of Woes was to be expected here by a prophet who follows so much the example of Isaiah.³ In spite of Kuenen's objection, vv. 9-11 would not be strange of the Chaldean, but they suit the Assyrian better. Vv. 12-14 are doubtful: 12 recalls Micah iii. 10; 13 is a repetition of Jer. li. 58; 14 is a variant of Isa. xi. 9. Very likely Jer. li. 58, a late passage, is borrowed from this passage; yet the addition used here, *Are not these things*⁴ *from the Lord of Hosts?* looks as if it noted a citation. Vv. 15-17 are very suitable to the Assyrian; there is no reason to take them from Habakkuk.⁵ The final song, vv. 18 and 19, has its *Woe* at the beginning of its second verse, and closely resembles the language of later prophets.⁶

¹ As of course was universally supposed according to either of the other two interpretations given above.

² *Z.A.T.W.*, 1884, p. 154.

³ Cf. Isa. v. 8 ff. (x. 1-4), etc.

⁴ So LXX.

⁵ Cf. Davidson, p. 56, and Budde, p. 391, who allows 9-11 and 15-17.

⁶ E.g. Isa. xl. 18 ff., xlv. 9 ff., xlvi. 5 ff., etc. On this ground

Moreover the refrain forms a suitable close at the end of ver. 17. Ver. 20 is a quotation from Zephaniah,¹ perhaps another sign of the composite character of the end of this chapter. Some take it to have been inserted as an introduction to the theophany in chap. iii.

Smend has drawn up a defence² of the whole passage, ii. 9-20, which he deems not only to stand in a natural relation to vv. 4-8, but to be indispensable to them. That the passage quotes from other prophets, he holds to be no proof against its authenticity. If we break off with ver. 8, he thinks that we must impute to Habakkuk the opinion that the wrongs of the world are chiefly avenged by human means—a conclusion which is not to be expected after chap. i.—ii. 1 ff.

3. CHAP. III.

The third chapter, an Ode or Rhapsody, is ascribed to Habakkuk by its title. This, however, does not prove its authenticity: the title is too like those assigned to the Psalms in the period of the Second Temple.³ On the contrary, the title itself, the occurrence of the musical sign *Selah* in the contents, and the colophon suggest for the chapter a liturgical origin after the Exile.⁴ That this is more probable than the alternative

it is condemned by Stade, Kuenen and Budde. Davidson finds this not a serious difficulty, for, he points out, Habakkuk anticipates several later lines of thought.

¹ See above, p. 39, n.

² *A. T. Religionsgeschichte*, p. 229, n. 2.

³ Cf. the ascription by the LXX. of Psalms cxlvi.—cl. to the prophets Haggai and Zechariah.

⁴ Cf. Kuenen, who conceives it to have been taken from a post-exilic collection of Psalms. See also Cheyne, *The Origin of the Psalter: "exilic or more probably post-exilic"* (p. 125). "The most natural

opinion, that, being a genuine work of Habakkuk, the chapter was afterwards arranged as a Psalm for public worship, is confirmed by the fact that no other work of the prophets has been treated in the same way. Nor do the contents support the authorship by Habakkuk. They reflect no definite historical situation like the preceding chapters. The style and temper are different. While in them the prophet speaks for himself, here it is the nation or congregation of Israel that addresses God. The language is not, as some have maintained, late;¹ but the designation of the people as *Thine anointed*, a term which before the Exile was applied to the king, undoubtedly points to a post-exilic date. The figures, the theophany itself, are not necessarily archaic, but are more probably moulded on archaic models. There are many affinities with Psalms of a late date.

At the same time a number of critics² maintain the genuineness of the chapter, and they have some grounds for this. Habakkuk was, as we can see from chaps. i. and ii., a real poet. There was no need why a man of his temper should be bound down to reflecting only

position for it is in the Persian period. It was doubtless appended to Habakkuk, for the same reason for which Isa. lxiii. 7—lxiv. was attached to the great prophecy of Restoration, viz. that the earlier national troubles seemed to the Jewish Church to be typical of its own sore troubles after the Return. . . . The lovely closing verses of Hab. iii. are also in a tone congenial to the later religion" (p. 156). Much less certain is the assertion that the language is imitative and artificial (*ibid.*); while the statement that in ver. 3—cf. with Deut. xxxiii. 2—we have an instance of the effort to avoid the personal name of the Deity (p. 287) is disproved by the use of the latter in ver. 2 and other verses.

¹ *יָשַׁע אֱת*, ver. 13, cannot be taken as a proof of lateness; read probably *הוֹשִׁיעַ אֱת*.

² Pusey, Ewald, König, Sinkov (*The Psalm of Habakkuk*, Cambridge, 1890), Kirkpatrick (Smith's *Bible Dict.*, art. "Habakkuk"), Von Orelli

his own day. If so practical a prophet as Hosea, and one who has so closely identified himself with his times, was wont to escape from them to a retrospect of the dealings of God with Israel from of old, why should not the same be natural for a prophet who was much less practical and more literary and artistic? There are also many phrases in the Psalm which may be interpreted as reflecting the same situation as chaps. i., ii. All this, however, only proves possibility.

The Psalm has been adapted in Psalm lxxvii. 17-20.

FURTHER NOTE ON CHAP. I.—II. 4.

Since this chapter was in print Nowack's *Die Kleinen Propheten* in the "Handkommentar z. A. T." has been published. He recognises emphatically that the disputed passage about the Chaldeans, chap. i. 5-11, is out of place where it lies (this against Kuenen and the other authorities cited above, p. 117), and admits that it follows on, with a natural connection, to chap. ii. 4, to which Budde proposes to attach it. Nevertheless, for other reasons, which he does not state, he regards Budde's proposal as untenable; and reckons the disputed passage to be by another hand than Habakkuk's, and intruded into the latter's argument. Habakkuk's argument he assigns to after 605; perhaps 590. The tyrant complained against would therefore be the Chaldean.—Driver in the 6th ed. of his *Introduction* (1897) deems Budde's argument "too ingenious," and holds by the older and most numerously supported argument (above, pp. 116 ff.).—On a review of the case in the light of these two discussions, the present writer holds to his opinion that Budde's rearrangement, which he has adopted, offers the fewest difficulties.

CHAPTER X

THE PROPHET AS SCEPTIC

HABAKKUK i.—ii. 4

OF the prophet Habakkuk we know nothing that is personal save his name—to our ears his somewhat odd name. It is the intensive form of a root which means to caress or embrace. More probably it was given to him as a child, than afterwards assumed as a symbol of his clinging to God.¹

Tradition says that Habakkuk was a priest, the son of Joshua, of the tribe of Levi, but this is only an inference from the late liturgical notes to the Psalm which has been appended to his prophecy.² All that we know for certain is that he was a contemporary

¹ חַבְבְּקֻךְ (the Greek 'Αμβακουμ, LXX. version of the title of this book, and again the inscription to *Bel and the Dragon*, suggests the pointing חַבְבְּקֻךְ; Epiph., *De Vitis Proph.*—see next note—spells it 'Αββακουμ), from חַבַּח, to embrace. Jerome: "He is called 'embrace' either because of his love to the Lord, or because he wrestles with God." Luther: "Habakkuk means one who comforts and holds up his people as one embraces a weeping person."

² See above, pp. 126 ff. The title to the Greek version of *Bel and the Dragon* bears that the latter was taken from the prophecy of Habakkoum, son of Jesus, of the tribe of Levi. Further details are offered in the *De Vitis Prophetarum* of (Pseud-) Epiphanius, *Epiph. Opera*, ed. Paris, 1622, Vol. II., p. 147, according to which Habakkuk belonged to Βεθζοχηρ, which is probably Βεθζαχαριμ of 1 Macc. vi. 32, the modern Beit-Zakaryeh, a little to the north of Hebron, and placed by this notice, as Nahum's Elkosh is placed, in the tribe of Simeon. His grave was shown in the neighbouring Keilah. The notice further

of Jeremiah, with a sensitiveness under wrong and impulses to question God which remind us of Jeremiah; but with a literary power which is quite his own. We may emphasise the latter, even though we recognise upon his writing the influence of Isaiah's.

Habakkuk's originality, however, is deeper than style. He is the earliest who is known to us of a new school of religion in Israel. He is called *prophet*, but at first he does not adopt the attitude which is characteristic of the prophets. His face is set in an opposite direction to theirs. They address the nation Israel, on behalf of God: he rather speaks to God on behalf of Israel. Their task was Israel's sin, the proclamation of God's doom and the offer of His grace to their penitence. Habakkuk's task is God Himself, the effort to find out what He means by permitting tyranny and wrong. They attack the sins, he is the first to state the problems, of life. To him the prophetic revelation, the Torah, is complete: it has been codified in Deuteronomy and enforced by Josiah. Habakkuk's business is not to add to it but to ask why it does not work. Why does God suffer wrong to triumph, so that the Torah is paralysed, and Mishpat, the prophetic *justice* or *judgment*, comes to nought? The prophets travailed for Israel's character—to get the people to love justice till justice prevailed among them: Habakkuk feels justice cannot prevail in Israel, because of the great disorder

alleges that when Nebuchadrezzar came up to Jerusalem Habakkuk fled to Ostracine, where he travelled in the country of the Ishmaelites; but he returned after the fall of Jerusalem, and died in 538, two years before the return of the exiles. *Bel and the Dragon* tells an extraordinary story of his miraculous carriage of food to Daniel in the lions' den soon after Cyrus had taken Babylon.

which God permits to fill the world. It is true that he arrives at a prophetic attitude, and before the end authoritatively declares God's will; but he begins by searching for the latter, with an appreciation of the great obscurity cast over it by the facts of life. He complains to God, asks questions and expostulates. This is the beginning of speculation in Israel. It does not go far: it is satisfied with stating questions to God; it does not, directly at least, state questions *against* Him. But Habakkuk at least feels that revelation is baffled by experience, that the facts of life bewilder a man who believes in the God whom the prophets have declared to Israel. As in Zephaniah prophecy begins to exhibit traces of apocalypse, so in Habakkuk we find it developing the first impulses of speculation.

We have seen that the course of events which troubles Habakkuk and renders the Torah ineffectual is somewhat obscure. On one interpretation of these two chapters, that which takes the present order of their verses as the original, Habakkuk asks why God is silent in face of the injustice which fills the whole horizon (chap. i. 1-4), is told to look round among the heathen and see how God is raising up the Chaldeans (i. 5-11), presumably to punish this injustice (if it be Israel's own) or to overthrow it (if vv. 1-4 mean that it is inflicted on Israel by a foreign power). But the Chaldeans only aggravate the prophet's problem; they themselves are a wicked and oppressive people: how can God suffer them? (i. 12-17). Then come the prophet's waiting for an answer (ii. 1) and the answer itself (ii. 2 ff.). Another interpretation takes the passage about the Chaldeans (i. 5-11) to be out of place where it now lies, removes it to after chap. ii. 4

as a part of God's answer to the prophet's problem, and leaves the remainder of chap. i. as the description of the Assyrian oppression of Israel, baffling the Torah and perplexing the prophet's faith in a Holy and Just God.¹ Of these two views the former is, we have seen, somewhat artificial, and though the latter is by no means proved, the arguments for it are sufficient to justify us in re-arranging the verses chap. i.—ii. 4 in accordance with its proposals.

*The Oracle which Habakkuk the Prophet
Received by Vision.²*

*How long, O Jehovah, have I called and Thou hearest
not?*

I cry to Thee, Wrong! and Thou sendest no help.

Why make me look upon sorrow,

And fill mine eyes with trouble?

Violence and wrong are before me,

Strife comes and quarrel arises.³

*So the Law is benumbed, and judgment never gets
forth:⁴*

For the wicked beleaguers the righteous,

So judgment comes forth perverted.

* * * * *

*Art not Thou of old, Jehovah, my God, my Holy
One? . . .⁶*

¹ See above, pp. 119 ff.

² Heb. *saw*.

³ Text uncertain. Perhaps we should read, *Why make me look upon sorrow and trouble? why fill mine eyes with violence and wrong Strife is come before me, and quarrel arises.*

⁴ *Never gets away*, to use a colloquial expression.

⁵ Here vv. 5-11 come in the original.

⁶ Ver. 12b: *We shall not die* (many Jewish authorities read *Thou shalt not die*). *O Jehovah, for judgment hast Thou set him, and, O my Rock, for punishment hast Thou appointed him.*

*Purer of eyes than to behold evil,
 And that canst not gaze upon trouble !
 Why gazest Thou upon traitors,¹
 Art dumb when the wicked swallows him that is
 more righteous than he ?²
 Thou hast let men be made³ like fish of the sea,
 Like worms that have no ruler !⁴
 He lifts the whole of it with his angle ;
 Draws it in with his net, sweeps it in his drag-net :
 So rejoices and exults.
 So he sacrifices to his net, and offers incense to his
 drag-net ;
 For by them is his portion fat, and his food rich.
 Shall he for ever draw his sword,⁵
 And ceaselessly, ruthlessly massacre nations ?⁶*

*Upon my watch-tower I will stand,
 And take my post on the rampart.⁷
 I will watch to see what He will say to me,
 And what answer I⁸ get back to my plea.*

*And Jehovah answered me and said :
 Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets,
 That he may run who reads it.*

¹ Wellhausen : *on the robbery of robbers.*

² LXX. *devoureth the righteous.*

³ Literally *Thou hast made men.*

⁴ Wellhausen : cf. Jer. xviii. 1, xix. 1.

⁵ So Giesebrecht (see above, p. 119, n. 2), reading העולם יריק חרבו for העל-כן יריק חרמו, *shall he therefore empty his net?*

⁶ Wellhausen, reading יהרג for להרג : *should he therefore be emptying his net continually, and slaughtering the nations without pity?*

⁷ מצודר. But Wellhausen takes it as from נצור and = *ward* or *watch-tower*. So Nowack.

⁸ So Heb. and LXX. ; but Syr. *he* : so Wellhausen, *what answer He returns to my plea.*

For¹ the vision is for a time yet to be fixed,
 Yet it hurries² to the end, and shall not fail:
 Though it linger, wait thou for it;
 Coming it shall come, and shall not be behind.³
 Lo! swollen,⁴ not level is his⁵ soul within him;
 But the righteous shall live by his faithfulness.⁶

* * * * *

Look⁷ round among the heathen, and look well,
 Shudder and be shocked;⁸
 For I am⁹ about to do a work in your days,
 Ye shall not believe it when told.
 For, lo, I am about to raise up the Kasdim,¹⁰
 A people the most bitter and the most hasty,
 That traverse the breadths of the earth,
 To possess dwelling-places not their own.
 Awful and terrible are they;
 From themselves¹¹ start their purpose and rising.

¹ Bredenkamp (*Stud. u. Krit.*, 1889, pp. 161 ff.) suggests that the writing on the tablets begins here and goes on to ver. 5a. Budde (*Z.A.T.W.*, 1889, pp. 155 f.) takes the כִּי which opens it as simply equivalent to the Greek ὅτι, introducing, like our marks of quotation, the writing itself.

² וַיִּפְרָח: cf. Psalm xxvii. 12. Bredenkamp emends to וַיִּפְרַח.

³ Not be late, or past its fixed time.

⁴ So literally the Heb. עֲפֹלָה, i.e. *arrogant, false*: cf. the colloquial expression *swollen-head* = conceit, as opposed to level-headed. Bredenkamp, *Stud. u. Krit.*, 1889, 121, reads הַנִּעְלָף for עֲפֹלָה. Wellhausen suggests הַגֵּה הָעוֹל, *Lo, the sinner*, in contrast to צְדִיק of next clause. Nowack prefers this.

⁵ LXX. wrongly *my*.

⁶ LXX. πίστις, *faith*, and so in N. T.

⁷ Chap. i. 5-11.

⁸ So to bring out the assonance, reading הַתְּמָהֶמְהוּ וְהַתְּמָהוּ.

⁹ So LXX.

¹⁰ Or Chaldeans; on the name and people see above, p. 19.

¹¹ Heb. singular.

*Fleeter than leopards their steeds,
 Swifter than night-wolves.
 Their horsemen leap¹ from afar;
 They swoop like the eagle a-haste to devour.
 All for wrong do they² come;
 The set of their faces is forward,³
 And they sweep up captives like sand.
 They—at kings do they scoff,
 And princes are sport to them.
 They—they laugh at each fortress,
 Heap dust up and take it!
 Then the wind shifts,⁴ and they pass!
 But doomed are those whose own strength is their
 god!⁵*

The difficulty of deciding between the various arrangements of the two chapters of Habakkuk does not, fortunately, prevent us from appreciating his argument. What he feels throughout (this is obvious, however you arrange his verses) is the tyranny of a great

¹ Omit ופרשיו (evidently a dittography) and the lame יבאו which is omitted by LXX. and was probably inserted to afford a verb for the second פרשיו.

² Heb. sing., and so in all the clauses here except the next.

³ A problematical rendering. מנמה is found only here, and probably means *direction*. Hitzig translates *desire, effort, striving*. קרימה, *towards the front or forward*; but elsewhere it means only *eastward*: קרים, *the east wind*. Cf. Judg. v. 21, נהל קישון נהל קישון, *a river of spates or rushes is the river Kishon* (*Hist. Geog.*, p. 395). Perhaps we should change פניהם to a singular suffix, as in the clauses before and after, and this would leave מ to form with קרימה a participle from הקרים (cf. Amos ix. 10).

⁴ Or *their spirit changes*, or *they change like the wind* (Wellhausen suggests כרוח). Grätz reads כח and יחלף, *he renews his strength*.

⁵ Von Orelli. For אים Wellhausen proposes וישם, *and sets*.

heathen power,¹ be it Assyrian, Egyptian or Chaldean. The prophet's horizon is filled with wrong:² Israel thrown into disorder, revelation paralysed, justice perverted.³ But, like Nahum, Habakkuk feels not for Israel alone. The Tyrant has outraged humanity.⁴ He *sweeps peoples into his net*, and as soon as he empties this, he fills it again *ceaselessly*, as if there were no just God above. He exults in his vast cruelty, and has success so unbroken that he worships the very means of it. In itself such impiety is gross enough, but to a heart that believes in God it is a problem of exquisite pain. Habakkuk's is the burden of the finest faith. He illustrates the great commonplace of religious doubt, that problems arise and become rigorous in proportion to the purity and tenderness of a man's conception of God. It is not the coarsest but the finest temperaments which are exposed to scepticism. Every advance in assurance of God or in appreciation of His character develops new perplexities in face of the facts of experience, and faith becomes her own most cruel troubler. Habakkuk's questions are not due to any cooling of the religious temper in Israel, but are begotten of the very heat and ardour of prophecy in its encounter with experience. His tremulousness, for instance, is impossible without the high knowledge of God's purity and faithfulness, which older prophets had achieved in Israel :—

*Art not Thou of old, O LORD, my God, my Holy
One,*

¹ *The wicked* of chap. i. 4 must, as we have seen, be the same as *the wicked* of chap. i. 13—a heathen oppressor of *the righteous*, *i.e.* the people of God.

² i. 3.

³ i. 4.

⁴ i. 13-17.

*Purer of eyes than to behold evil,
And incapable of looking upon wrong?*

His despair is that which comes only from eager and persevering habits of prayer:—

*How long, O LORD, have I called and Thou hearest
not!
I cry to Thee of wrong and Thou givest no help!*

His questions, too, are bold with that sense of God's absolute power, which flashed so bright in Israel as to blind men's eyes to all secondary and intermediate causes. *Thou*, he says,—

*Thou hast made men like fishes of the sea,
Like worms that have no ruler,*

boldly charging the Almighty, in almost the temper of Job himself, with being the cause of the cruelty inflicted by the unchecked tyrant upon the nations; *for shall evil happen, and Jehovah not have done it?*¹ Thus all through we perceive that Habakkuk's trouble springs from the central founts of prophecy. This scepticism—if we may venture to give the name to the first motions in Israel's mind of that temper which undoubtedly became scepticism—this scepticism was the inevitable heritage of prophecy: the stress and pain to which prophecy was forced by its own strong convictions in face of the facts of experience. Habakkuk, *the prophet*, as he is called, stood in the direct line of his order, but just because of that he was the father also of Israel's religious doubt.

But a discontent springing from sources so pure

¹ Amos iii. 6. See Vol. I., p. 90.

was surely the preparation of its own healing. In a verse of exquisite beauty the prophet describes the temper in which he trusted for an answer to all his doubts :—

*On my watch-tower will I stand,
And take up my post on the rampart;
I will watch to see what He says to me,
And what answer I get back to my plea.*

This verse is not to be passed over, as if its metaphors were merely of literary effect. They express rather the moral temper in which the prophet carries his doubt, or, to use New Testament language, *the good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck*. Nor is this temper patience only and a certain elevation of mind, nor only a fixed attention and sincere willingness to be answered. Through the chosen words there breathes a noble sense of responsibility. The prophet feels he has a post to hold, a rampart to guard. He knows the heritage of truth, won by the great minds of the past; and in a world seething with disorder, he will take his stand upon that and see what more his God will send him. At the very least, he will not indolently drift, but feel that he has a standpoint, however narrow, and bravely hold it. Such has ever been the attitude of the greatest sceptics—not only, let us repeat, earnestness and sincerity, but the recognition of duty towards the truth: the conviction that even the most tossed and troubled minds have somewhere a *ποῦ στῶ* appointed of God, and upon it interests human and divine to defend. Without such a conscience, scepticism, however intellectually gifted, will avail nothing. Men who drift never discover, never grasp aught. They are only

dazzled by shifting gleams of the truth, only fretted and broken by experience.

Taking then his stand within the patient temper, but especially upon the conscience of his great order, the prophet waits for his answer and the healing of his trouble. The answer comes to him in the promise of *a Vision*, which, though it seem to linger, will not be later than the time fixed by God. *A Vision* is something realised, experienced—something that will be as actual and present to the waiting prophet as the cruelty which now fills his sight. Obviously some series of historical events is meant, by which, in the course of time, the unjust oppressor of the nations shall be overthrown and the righteous vindicated. Upon the re-arrangement of the text proposed by Budde,¹ this series of events is the rise of the Chaldeans, and it is an argument in favour of his proposal that the promise of *a Vision* requires some such historical picture to follow it as we find in the description of the Chaldeans—chap. i. 5-11. This, too, is explicitly introduced by terms of vision: *See among the nations and look round. . . . Yea, behold I am about to raise up the Kasdim.* But before this Vision is given,² and for the uncertain interval of waiting ere the facts come to pass, the Lord enforces upon His watching servant the great moral principle that arrogance and tyranny cannot, from the nature of them, last, and that if the righteous be only patient he will survive them:—

*Lo, swollen, not level, is his soul within him ;
But the righteous shall live by his faithfulness.*

¹ See above, pp. 119 ff.

² Its proper place in Budde's re-arrangement is after chap. ii. 4.

We have already seen¹ that the text of the first line of this couplet is uncertain. Yet the meaning is obvious, partly in the words themselves, and partly by their implied contrast with the second line. The soul of the wicked is a radically morbid thing: *inflated, swollen* (unless we should read *perverted*, which more plainly means the same thing²), not *level*, not natural and normal. In the nature of things it cannot endure. *But the righteous shall live by his faithfulness.* This word, wrongly translated *faith* by the Greek and other versions, is concentrated by Paul in his repeated quotation from the Greek³ upon that single act of faith by which the sinner secures forgiveness and justification. With Habakkuk it is a wider term. 'Emunah,⁴ from a verb meaning originally to be firm, is used in the Old Testament in the physical sense of steadfastness. So it is applied to the arms of Moses held up by Aaron and Hur over the battle with Amalek: *they were steadiness till the going down of the sun.*⁵ It is also used of the faithful discharge of public office,⁶ and of fidelity as between man and wife.⁷ It is also faithful testimony,⁸ equity in judgment,⁹ truth in speech,¹⁰ and sincerity or honest dealing.¹¹ Of course it has faith in God as its secret—the verb from which it is derived is the regular Hebrew term to believe—but it is rather the temper which faith produces of endurance, steadfastness, integrity. Let the righteous, however baffled his faith be by experience, hold on in

¹ Above, p. 134, n. 4.

² עֲפֵלָה instead of עֲפֵלָה.

³ Rom. i. 17; Gal. iii. 11.

⁴ עֲמוּנָה.

⁵ Exod. xvii. 12.

² Chron. xix. 9.

⁷ Hosea ii. 22 (Heb.).

⁸ Prov. xiv. 5.

⁹ Isa. xi. 5.

¹⁰ Prov. xii. 17: cf. Jer. ix. 2.

¹¹ Prov. xii. 22, xxviii. 30.

loyalty to God and duty, and he shall live. Though St. Paul, as we have said, used the Greek rendering of *faith* for the enforcement of trust in God's mercy through Jesus Christ as the secret of forgiveness and life, it is rather to Habakkuk's wider intention of patience and fidelity that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews returns in his fuller quotation of the verse: *For yet a little while and He that shall come will come and will not tarry; now the just shall live by faith, but if he draw back My soul shall have no pleasure in him.*¹

Such then is the tenor of the passage. In face of experience that baffles faith, the duty of Israel is patience in loyalty to God. In this the nascent scepticism of Israel received its first great commandment, and this it never forsook. Intellectual questions arose, of which Habakkuk's were but the faintest foreboding—questions concerning not only the mission and destiny of the nation, but the very foundation of justice and the character of God Himself. Yet did no sceptic, however bold and however provoked, forsake his *faithfulness*. Even Job, when most audaciously arraigning the God of his experience, turned from Him to God as in his heart of hearts he believed He must be, experience notwithstanding. Even the Preacher, amid the aimless flux and drift which he finds in the universe, holds to the conclusion of the whole matter in a command, which better than any other defines the contents of the *faithfulness* enforced by Habakkuk: *Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole of man.* It has been the same with the great mass

¹ Heb. x. 37, 38.

of the race. Repeatedly disappointed of their hopes, and crushed for ages beneath an intolerable tyranny, have they not exhibited the same heroic temper with which their first great questioner was endowed? Endurance—this above all others has been the quality of Israel: *though He slay me, yet will I trust Him*. And, therefore, as Paul's adaptation, *The just shall live by faith*, has become the motto of evangelical Christianity, so we may say that Habakkuk's original of it has been the motto and the fame of Judaism: *The righteous shall live by his faithfulness*.

CHAPTER XI

TYRANNY IS SUICIDE

HABAKKUK ii. 5-20

IN the style of his master Isaiah, Habakkuk follows up his *Vision* with a series of lyrics on the same subject: chap. ii. 5-20. They are taunt-songs, the most of them beginning with *Woe unto*, addressed to the heathen oppressor. Perhaps they were all at first of equal length, and it has been suggested that the striking refrain in which two of them close—

*For men's blood, and earth's waste,
Cities and their inhabitants—*

was once attached to each of the others as well. But the text has been too much altered, besides suffering several interpolations,¹ to permit of its restoration, and we can only reproduce these taunts as they now run in the Hebrew text. There are several quotations (not necessarily an argument against Habakkuk's authorship); but, as a whole, the expression is original, and there are some lines of especial force and freshness. Verses 5-6a are properly an introduction, the first *Woe* commencing with 6b.

The belief which inspires these songs is very simple.

¹ See above, pp. 125 t.

Tyranny is intolerable. In the nature of things it cannot endure, but works out its own penalties. By oppressing so many nations, the tyrant is preparing the instruments of his own destruction. As he treats them, so in time shall they treat him. He is like a debtor who increases the number of his creditors. Some day they shall rise up and exact from him the last penny. So that in cutting off others he is *but forfeiting his own life*. The very violence done to nature, the deforesting of Lebanon for instance, and the vast hunting of wild beasts, shall recoil on him. This line of thought is exceedingly interesting. We have already seen in prophecy, and especially in Isaiah, the beginnings of Hebrew Wisdom—the attempt to uncover the moral processes of life and express a philosophy of history. But hardly anywhere have we found so complete an absence of all reference to the direct interference of God Himself in the punishment of the tyrant; for *the cup of Jehovah's right hand* in ver. 16 is simply the survival of an ancient metaphor. These *proverbs* or *taunt-songs*, in conformity with the proverbs of the later Wisdom, dwell only upon the inherent tendency to decay of all injustice. Tyranny, they assert, and history ever since has affirmed their truthfulness—tyranny is suicide.

The last of the taunt-songs, which treats of the different subject of idolatry, is probably, as we have seen, not from Habakkuk's hand, but of a later date.¹

¹ See above, pp. 125 f. Nowack (1897) agrees that Cornill's and others' conclusion that vv. 9-20 are not Habakkuk's is too sweeping. He takes the first, second and fourth of the taunt-songs as authentic, but assigns the third (vv. 12-14) and the fifth (18-20) to another hand. He deems the refrain, 8*b* and 17*b*, to be a gloss, and puts 19 before 18. Driver, *Introd.*, 6th ed., holds to the authenticity of all the verses.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TAUNT-SONGS (ii. 5-6a).

For . . . ¹ treacherous,
 An arrogant fellow, and is not . . . ²
 Who opens his desire wide as Sheol;
 He is like death, unsatisfied;
 And hath swept to himself all the nations,
 And gathered to him all peoples.
 Shall not these, all of them, take up a proverb upon
 him,
 And a taunt-song against him? and say :—

FIRST TAUNT-SONG (ii. 6b-8).

Woe unto him who multiplies what is not his own,
 —How long?—
 And loads him with debts! ³
 Shall not thy creditors ⁴ rise up,
 And thy troublers awake,

¹ The text reads, *For also wine is treacherous*, under which we might be tempted to suspect some such original as, *As wine is treacherous*, so (next line) *the proud fellow*, etc. (or, as Davidson suggests, *Like wine is the treacherous dealer*), were it not that the word *wine* appears neither in the Greek nor in the Syrian version. Wellhausen suggests that ה"י, *wine*, is a corruption of ה"י, with which the verse, like vv. 6b, 9, 12, 15, 19, may have originally begun, but according to 6a the taunt-songs, opening with ה"י, start first in 6b. Bredenkamp proposes אֲנִי־מִשְׁכָּלִי.

² The text is יָנוּה, a verb not elsewhere found in the Old Testament, and conjectured by our translators to mean *keepeth at home*, because the noun allied to it means *homestead* or *resting-place*. The Syriac gives *is not satisfied*, and Wellhausen proposes to read יָרוּה with that sense. See Davidson's note on the verse.

³ A.V. *thick clay*, which is reached by breaking up the word עֲבֹטִים, *pledge* or *debt*, into עֶבֶ, *thick cloud*, and טִיט, *clay*.

⁴ Literally *thy biters*, נֹשְׁכִים, but נֹשֵׁךְ, *biting*, is *interest* or *usury*, and the Hiphil of נֹשֵׁךְ is *to exact interest*.

*And thou be for spoil¹ to them?
 Because thou hast spoiled many nations,
 All the rest of the peoples shall spoil thee.
 For men's blood, and earth's waste,
 Cities and all their inhabitants.²*

SECOND TAUNT-SONG (ii. 9-11).

*Woe unto him that gains evil gain for his house,³
 To set high his nest, to save him from the grasp
 of calamity!
 Thou hast planned shame for thy house;
 Thou hast cut off⁴ many people,
 While forfeiting thine own life.⁵
 For the stone shall cry out from the wall,
 And the lath⁶ from the timber answer it.*

THIRD TAUNT-SONG (ii. 12-14).

*Woe unto him that builds a city in blood,⁷
 And stablishes a town in iniquity!⁸
 Lo, is it not from Jehovah of hosts,
 That the nations shall toil for smoke,⁹
 And the peoples wear themselves out for nought?
 But earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the
 glory of Jehovah,¹⁰
 Like the waters that cover the sea.*

¹ LXX. sing., Heb. pl.

² These words occur again in ver. 17. Wellhausen thinks they suit neither here nor there. But they suit all the taunt-songs, and some suppose that they formed the refrain to each of these.

³ Dynasty or people?

⁴ So LXX.; Heb. *cutting off*.

⁵ The grammatical construction is obscure, if the text be correct. There is no mistaking the meaning.

⁶ כַּפִּיִם, not elsewhere found in the O.T., is in Rabbinic Hebrew both *cross-beam* and *lath*.

⁷ Micah iii. 10.

⁸ Literally *fire*.

⁹ Jer. xxii. 13.

¹⁰ Jer. li. 58: which original?

FOURTH TAUNT-SONG (ii. 15-17).

*Woe unto him that gives his neighbour to drink,
 From the cup of his wrath¹ till he be drunken,
 That he may gloat on his² nakedness!
 Thou art sated with shame—not with glory;
 Drink also thou, and stagger.³
 Comes round to thee the cup of Jehovah's right hand,
 And foul shame⁴ on thy glory.
 For the violence to Lebanon shall cover thee,
 The destruction of the beasts shall affray thee.⁵
 For men's blood, and earth's waste,
 Cities and all their inhabitants.⁶*

FIFTH TAUNT-SONG (ii. 18-20).

*What boots an image, when its artist has graven it,
 A cast-image and lie-oracle, that its moulder has
 trusted upon it,
 Making dumb idols?
 Woe to him that saith to a block, Awake!
 To a dumb stone, Arise!*

¹ After Wellhausen's suggestion to read כוסף חמתו instead of the text כוספה חמתך, adding, or mixing, thy wrath.

² So LXX. Q.; Heb. *their*.

³ Read הרעל (cf. Nahum ii. 4; Zech. xii. 2). The text is הערל, not found elsewhere, which has been conjectured to mean *uncover the foreskin*. And there is some ground for this, as parallel to *his nakedness* in the previous clause. Wellhausen also removes the first clause to the end of the verse: *Drink also thou and reel; there comes to thee the cup in Jehovah's right hand, and thou wilt glut thyself with shame instead of honour*.

⁴ So R.V. for קיקלון, which A.V. has taken as two words—קי, for which cf. Jer. xxv. 27, where however the text is probably corrupt, and קלון. With this confusion cf. above, ver. 6, עבטיט.

⁵ Read with LXX. יחיתן for יחתך of the text.

⁶ See above, ver. 8.

Can it teach ?

Lo, it . . .¹ with gold and silver ;

There is no breath at all in the heart of it.

But Jehovah is in His Holy Temple :

Silence before Him, all the earth !

י קפ"א

CHAPTER XII

•IN THE MIDST OF THE YEARS*

HABAKKUK iii.

WE have seen the impossibility of deciding the age of the ode which is attributed to Habakkuk in the third chapter of his book. But this is only one of the many problems raised by that brilliant poem. Much of its text is corrupt, and the meaning of many single words is uncertain. As in most Hebrew poems of description, the tenses of the verbs puzzle us; we cannot always determine whether the poet is singing of that which is past or present or future, and this difficulty is increased by his subject, a revelation of God in nature for the deliverance of Israel. Is this the deliverance from Egypt, with the terrible tempests which accompanied it? Or have the features of the Exodus been borrowed to describe some other deliverance, or to sum up the constant manifestation of Jehovah for His people's help?

The introduction, in ver. 2, is clear. The singer has heard what is to be heard of Jehovah, and His great deeds in the past. He prays for a revival of these *in the midst of the years*. The times are full of trouble and turmoil. Would that God, in the present confusion of baffled hopes and broken issues, made

* Above, pp. 126 ff.

Himself manifest by power and brilliance, as of old! *In turmoil remember mercy!* To render *turmoil* by *wrath*, as if it were God's anger against which the singer's heart appealed, is not true to the original word itself,¹ affords no parallel to *the midst of the years*, and misses the situation. Israel cries from a state of life in which the obscure years are huddled together and full of turmoil. We need not wish to fix the date more precisely than the writer himself does, but may leave it with him *in the midst of the years*.

There follows the description of the Great Theophany, of which, in his own poor times, the singer has heard. It is probable that he has in his memory the events of the Exodus and Sinai. On this point his few geographical allusions agree with his descriptions of nature. He draws all the latter from the desert, or Arabian, side of Israel's history. He introduces none of the sea-monsters, or imputations of arrogance and rebellion to the sea itself, which the influence of Babylonian mythology so thickly scattered through the later sea-poetry of the Hebrews. The Theophany takes place in a violent tempest of thunder and rain, the only process of nature upon which the desert poets of Arabia dwell with any detail. In harmony with this, God appears from the southern desert, from Teman and Paran, as in the theophanies in Deuteronomy xxxiii. and in the Song of Deborah;² a few

¹ רעם nowhere in the Old Testament means *wrath*, but either roar and noise of thunder (Job xxxvii. 2) and of horsehoofs (xxxix. 24), or the raging of the wicked (iii. 17) or the commotion of sea (iii. 26; Isa. xiv. 3).

² *Jehovah from Sinai hath come,
And risen from Séir upon them;
He shone from Mount Paran,*

lines recall the Song of the Exodus,¹ and there are many resemblances to the phraseology of the Sixty-Eighth Psalm. The poet sees under trouble the tents of Kushan and of Midian, tribes of Sinai. And though the Theophany is with floods of rain and lightning, and foaming of great waters, it is not with hills, rivers or sea that God is angry, but with the *nations*, the oppressors of His poor people, and in order that He may deliver the latter. All this, taken with the fact that no mention is made of Egypt, proves that, while the singer draws chiefly upon the marvellous events of the Exodus and Sinai for his description, he celebrates not them alone but all the ancient triumphs of God over the heathen oppressors of Israel. Compare the obscure line—these be *His goings of old*.

The report of it all fills the poet with trembling (ver. 16 returns upon ver. 26), and although his language is too obscure to permit us to follow with certainty the course of his feeling, he appears to await in confidence the issue of Israel's present troubles. His argument seems to be, that such a God may be trusted still, in face of approaching invasion (ver. 16).

*And broke from Meribah of Kadesh:
From the South fire . . . to them.*

Deut. xxxiii. 2, slightly altered after the LXX. *South*: some form of ימין must be read to bring the line into parallel with the others; תימן, Teman, is from the same root.

*Jehovah, in Thy going forth from Séir,
In Thy marching from Edom's field,
Earth shook, yea, heaven dropped,
Yea, the clouds dropped water.
Mountains flowed down before Jehovah,
Yon Sinai at the face of the God of Israel.*

Judges v. 4, 5.

¹ Exod. xv.

The next verse, however, does not express the experience of trouble from human foes; but figuring the extreme affliction of drought, barrenness and poverty, the poet speaking in the name of Israel declares that, in spite of them, he will still rejoice in the God of their salvation (ver. 17). So sudden is this change from human foes to natural plagues, that some scholars have here felt a passage to another poem describing a different situation. But the last lines with their confidence in the *God of salvation*, a term always used of deliverance from enemies, and the boast, borrowed from the Eighteenth Psalm, *He maketh my feet like to hinds' feet, and gives me to march on my heights*, reflect the same circumstances as the bulk of the Psalm, and offer no grounds to doubt the unity of the whole.¹

PSALM² OF HABAKKUK THE PROPHET.

LORD, I have heard the report of Thee;

*I stand in awe!*³

LORD, revive Thy work in the midst of the years,

In the midst of the years make Thee known •⁴

*In turmoil*⁵ *remember mercy!*

¹ In this case ver. 17 would be the only one that offered any reason for suspicion that it was an intrusion.

² תפלה, lit. Prayer, but used for Psalm: cf. Psalm cii. 1.

³ Sinker takes with this the first two words of next line: *I have trembled, O LORD, at Thy work.*

⁴ תודע, Imp. Niph., after LXX. γγνωσθήσῃ. The Hebrew has פודיע, Hi., *make known*. The LXX. had a text of these verses which reduplicated them, and it has translated them very badly.

⁵ רינו, *turmoil, noise*, as in Job: a meaning that offers a better parallel to *in the midst of the years* than *wrath*, which the word also means. Davidson, however, thinks it more natural to understand the *wrath* manifest at the coming of Jehovah to judgment. So Sinker.

*God comes from Teman,¹
 The Holy from Mount Paran.²
 He covers the heavens with His glory,
 And filled with His praise is the earth.
 The flash is like lightning;
 He has rays from each hand of Him,
 Therein³ is the ambush of His might.*

*Pestilence travels before Him,
 The plague-fire breaks forth at His feet.
 He stands and earth shakes,⁴
 He looks and drives nations asunder;
 And the ancient mountains are cloven,
 The hills everlasting sink down.
 These be His ways from of old.⁵*

Under trouble I see the tents of Kūshān,⁶

¹ Vulg. *ab Austro, from the South.*

² LXX. adds *κατασκίον δασέος*, which seems the translation of a clause, perhaps a gloss, containing the name of Mount Se'ir, as in the parallel descriptions of a theophany, Deut. xxiii. 2, Judg. v. 4. See Sinker, p. 45.

³ Wellhausen, reading *נָשׂוּ* for *נָשׂוּ*, translates *He made them*, etc.

⁴ So LXX. Heb. *and measures the earth.*

⁵ This is the only way of rendering the verse so as not to make it seem superfluous: so rendered it sums up and clenches the theophany from ver. 3 onwards; and a new strophe now begins. There is therefore no need to omit the verse, as Wellhausen does.

⁶ LXX. *'Αθιοπες*; but these are Kush, and the parallelism requires a tribe in Arabia. Calvin rejects the meaning *Ethiopian* on the same ground, but takes the reference as to King Kushan in Judg. iii. 8, 10, on account of the parallelism with Midian. The Midianite wife whom Moses married is called the Kushite (Num. xii. 1). Hommel (*Anc. Hebrew Tradition as illustrated by the Monuments*, p. 315 and n. 1) appears to take Zerah the Kushite of 2 Chron. xiv. 9 ff. as a prince of Kush in Central Arabia. But the narrative which makes him deliver his invasion of Judah at Mareshah surely confirms the usual opinion that he and his host were Ethiopians coming up from Egypt.

*The curtains of Midian's land are quivering.
 Is it with hills¹ Jehovah is wroth?
 Is Thine anger with rivers?
 Or against the sea is Thy wrath,
 That Thou ridest it with horses,
 Thy chariots of victory?
 Thy bow is stripped bare;²
 Thou gluttest (?) Thy shafts.³
 Into rivers Thou cleavest the earth;⁴
 Mountains see Thee and writhe;
 The rainstorm sweeps on:⁵
 The Deep utters his voice,*

¹ For הַבְּנֵהִים, *is it with streams*, read הַבְּהָרִים, *is it with hills*: because hills have already been mentioned, and rivers occur in the next clause, and are separated by the same disjunctive particle, וְ, which separates *the sea* in the third clause from them. The whole phrase might be rendered, *Is it with hills Thou art angry, O Jehovah?*

² Questionable: the verb הִתְעַוַּר, Ni. of a supposed עוֹר, does not elsewhere occur, and is only conjectured from the noun עֲרוּהָ, *nakedness*, and עָרָה, *stripping*. LXX. has ἐντελευων ἐντελευωσ, and Wellhausen reads, after 2 Sam. xxiii. 18, עוֹרָר הִתְעַוַּר, *Thou bringest into action Thy bow*.

³ שְׁבָעוֹת מִטּוֹת אִמָּר, literally *sworn are staves or rods of speech*. A.V.: according to the oaths of the tribes, even Thy word. LXX. (omitting שְׁבָעוֹת and adding יהוה) ἐπὶ σκηπτρα, λέγει κύριος. These words "form a riddle which all the ingenuity of scholars has not been able to solve. Delitzsch calculates that a hundred translations of them have been offered" (Davidson). In parallel to previous clause about a *bow*, we ought to expect מִטּוֹת, *staves*, though it is not elsewhere used for *shafts* or *arrows*. שְׁבָעוֹת may have been שְׁבַעְתָּ, *Thou satest*. The Cod. Barb. reads: ἐχόρτασας βολιδας τῆς φαρέτρης αὐτοῦ, *Thou hast satiated the shafts of his quiver*. Sinker: *sworn are the punishments of the solemn decree*, and relevantly compares Isa. xi. 4, *the rod of His mouth*; xxx. 32, *rod of doom*. Ewald: *sevenfold shafts of war*. But cf. Psalm cxviii. 12.

⁴ Uncertain, but a more natural result of cleaving than *the rivers Thou cleavest into dry land* (Davidson and Wellhausen).

⁵ But Ewald takes this as of the Red Sea floods sweeping on the Egyptians,

He lifts up his roar upon high.¹
Sun and moon stand still in their dwelling,
At the flash of Thy shafts as they speed,
At the sheen of the lightning, Thy lance.
In wrath Thou stridest the earth,
In anger Thou threshest the nations !
Thou art forth to the help of Thy people,
To save Thine anointed.²
Thou hast shattered the head from the house of the
wicked,
Laying bare from . . .³ to the neck.
Thou hast pierced with Thy spears the head of his
princes.⁴
They stormed forth to crush me ;
Their triumph was as to devour the poor in secret.⁵
Thou hast marched on the sea with Thy horses ;
Foamed⁶ the great waters.

I have heard, and my heart⁷ shakes ;

¹ רום ידיהו נשא = *he lifts up his hands on high*. But the LXX. read כוריהו, *φωραστας αὐτῆς*, and took נשא with the next verse. The reading כוריהו (for מוריהו) is indeed nonsense, but suggests an emendation to מורהו, *his shout or wail*: cf. Amos vi. 7, Jer. xvi. 5.

² Reading for יהושיע ישע, required by the acc. following. *Thine anointed*, lit. *Thy Messiah*, according to Isa. xl. ff. the whole people.

³ Heb. יסוד, *foundation*. LXX. *bonds*. Some suggest laying bare from the foundation to the neck, but this is mixed unless *neck* happened to be a technical name for a part of a building: cf. Isa. viii. 8, xxx. 28.

⁴ Heb. *his spears or staves; his own* (Von Orelli). LXX. *ἐν ἐκστάσει*: see Sinker, pp. 56 ff. *Princes*: פְּרָזוֹ only here. Hitzig: *his brave ones*. Ewald, Wellhausen, Davidson: *his princes*. Delitzsch: *his hosts*. LXX. *κεφαλὰς δυναστῶν*.

⁵ So Heb. literally. A very difficult line. On LXX. see Sinker, pp. 60 f.

⁶ For חִמָּר, *heap* (so A.V.), read some part of חִמֹּר, *to foam*. LXX. *ραράσσοντας*: cf. Psalm xlvi. 4.

⁷ So LXX. *Ν* (some codd.), softening the original *belly*.

*At the sound my lips tremble,¹
 Rottenness enters my bones,²
 My steps shake under me.³
 I will . . .⁴ for the day of trouble
 That pours in on the people.⁵*

*Though the fig-tree do not blossom,⁶
 And no fruit be on the vines,
 Fail the produce of the olive,
 And the fields yield no meat,
 Cut off⁷ be the flock from the fold,
 And no cattle in the stalls,
 Yet in the LORD will I exult,
 I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.
 Jehovah, the Lord, is my might;
 He hath made my feet like the hinds',
 And on my heights He gives me to march.*

This Psalm, whose musical signs prove it to have been employed in the liturgy of the Jewish Temple, has also largely entered into the use of the Christian

¹ Or *my lips quiver aloud*—לקול, *vocally* (Von Orelli).

² By the Hebrew the bones were felt, as a modern man feels his nerves: Psalms xxxii., li.; Job.

³ For אִשְׁרִי, for which LXX. gives ἡ ἔξις μου, read אִשְׁרִי, *my steps*; and for אֲרַנֶּנּוּ, LXX. ἐταπάχθη, ἱρῆνῶ.

⁴ אֶנְתָּה. LXX. ἀναπαύσομαι, *I will rest*. A.V.: *that I might rest in the day of trouble*. Others: *I will wait for*. Wellhausen suggests אֶנְתָּח (Isa. i. 24), *I will take comfort*. Sinker takes אִשְׁרִי as the simple relative: *I who will wait patiently for the day of doom*. Von Orelli takes it as the conjunction *because*.

⁵ יִבְרָכֶנּוּ, *it invades, brings up troops on them*, only in Gen. xlix. 19 and here. Wellhausen: *which invades us*. Sinker: *for the coming up against the people of him who shall assail it*.

⁶ תִּפְרַח; but LXX. תִּפְרָה, οὐ καρποφορήσει, *bear no fruit*.

⁷ For נִגְזַר Wellhausen reads נִגְזַר. LXX. ἐξέλιπεν.

Church. The vivid style, the sweep of vision, the exultation in the extreme of adversity with which it closes, have made it a frequent theme of preachers and of poets. St. Augustine's exposition of the Septuagint version spiritualises almost every clause into a description of the first and second advents of Christ.¹ Calvin's more sober and accurate learning interpreted it of God's guidance of Israel from the time of the Egyptian plagues to the days of Joshua and Gideon, and made it enforce the lesson that He who so wonderfully delivered His people in their youth will not forsake them in the midway of their career.² The closing verses have been torn from the rest to form the essence of a large number of hymns in many languages.

For ourselves it is perhaps most useful to fasten upon the poet's description of his own position in the midst of the years, and like him to take heart, amid our very similar circumstances, from the glorious story of God's ancient revelation, in the faith that He is still the same in might and in purpose of grace to His people. We, too, live among the nameless years. We feel them about us, undistinguished by the manifest workings of God, slow and petty, or, at the most, full of inarticulate turmoil. At this very moment we suffer from the frustration of a great cause, on which believing men had set their hearts as God's cause; Christendom has received from the infidel no greater reverse since the days of the Crusades. Or, lifting our eyes to a larger horizon, we are tempted to see about us a wide, flat waste of years. It is nearly nineteen centuries

¹ *De Civitate Dei*, XVIII. 32.

² So he paraphrases *in the midst of the years*.

since the great revelation of God in Christ, the redemption of mankind, and all the wonders of the Early Church. We are far, far away from that, and unstirred by the expectation of any crisis in the near future. We stand *in the midst of the years*, equally distant from beginning and from end. It is the situation which Jesus Himself likened to the long double watch in the middle of the night—*if he come in the second watch or in the third watch*—against whose dulness He warned His disciples. How much need is there at such a time to recall, like this poet, what God has done—how often He has shaken the world and overturned the nations, for the sake of His people and the Divine causes they represent. *His ways are everlasting*. As He then worked, so He will work now for the same ends of redemption. Our prayer for *a revival of His work* will be answered before it is spoken.

It is probable that much of our sense of the staleness of the years comes from their prosperity. The dull feeling that time is mere routine is fastened upon our hearts by nothing more firmly than by the constant round of fruitful seasons—that fortification of comfort, that regularity of material supplies, which modern life assures to so many. Adversity would brace us to a new expectation of the near and strong action of our God. This is perhaps the meaning of the sudden mention of natural plagues in the seventeenth verse of our Psalm. Not in spite of the extremes of misfortune, but just because of them, should we exult in *the God of our salvation*; and realise that it is by discipline He makes His Church to feel that she is not marching over the dreary levels of nameless years, but *on our high places He makes us to march*.

“Grant, Almighty God, as the dulness and hardness

of our flesh is so great that it is needful for us to be in various ways afflicted—oh grant that we patiently bear Thy chastisement, and under a deep feeling of sorrow flee to Thy mercy displayed to us in Christ, so that we depend not on the earthly blessings of this perishable life, but relying on Thy word go forward in the course of our calling, until at length we be gathered to that blessed rest which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. Amen.”¹

¹ From the prayer with which Calvin concludes his exposition of Habakkuk.

OBADIAH

*And Saviours shall come up on Mount Zion to judge Mount Esau,
and the kingdom shall be Jehovah's.*

CHAPTER XIII

THE BOOK OF OBADIAH

THE Book of Obadiah is the smallest among the prophets, and the smallest in all the Old Testament. Yet there is none which better illustrates many of the main problems of Old Testament criticism. It raises, indeed, no doctrinal issue nor any question of historical accuracy. All that it claims to be is *The Vision of Obadiah*;¹ and this vague name, with no date or dwelling-place to challenge comparison with the contents of the book, introduces us without prejudice to the criticism of the latter. Nor is the book involved in the central controversy of Old Testament scholarship, the date of the Law. It has no reference to the Law. Nor is it made use of in the New Testament. The more freely, therefore, may we study the literary and historical questions started by the

¹ עֲבַדְיָה, 'Obadyah, the later form of עֲבַדְיָהוּ, 'Obadyahu (a name occurring thrice before the Exile: Ahab's steward who hid the prophets of the Lord, 1 Kings xviii. 3-7, 16; of a man in David's house, 1 Chron. xxvii. 19; a Levite in Josiah's reign, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 12), is the name of several of the Jews who returned from exile: Ezra viii. 9, the son of Jehi'el (in 1 Esdras viii. 'Αβαδίας); Neh. x. 6, a priest, probably the same as the Obadiah in xii. 25, a porter, and the עֲבַדְיָה, the singer, in xi. 17, who is called עֲבַדְיָה in 1 Chron. ix. 16. Another 'Obadyah is given in the eleventh generation from Saul, 1 Chron. viii. 38, ix. 44; another in the royal line in the time of the Exile, iii. 21; a man of Issachar, vii. 3; a Gadite under David, xii. 9; a *prince* under Jehoshaphat sent to teach in the cities of Judah,

twenty-one verses which compose the book. Their brief course is broken by differences of style, and by sudden changes of outlook from the past to the future. Some of them present a close parallel to another passage of prophecy, a feature which when present offers a difficult problem to the critic. Hardly any of the historical allusions are free from ambiguity, for although the book refers throughout to a single nation—and so vividly that even if Edom were not named we might still discern the character and crimes of that bitter brother of Israel—yet the conflict of Israel and Edom was so prolonged and so monotonous in its cruelties, that there are few of its many centuries to which some scholar has not felt himself able to assign, in part or whole, Obadiah's indignant oration. The little book has been tossed out of one century into another by successive critics, till there exists in their estimates of its date a difference of nearly six hundred years.¹ Such a fact seems, at first sight, to convict criticism either of arbitrariness or helplessness;² yet a little consideration of details is enough to lead us to an appreciation of the reasonable methods of Old Testament criticism, and of its indubitable progress

2 Chron. xvii. 7. With the Massoretic points עֲבַדְיָהוּ means worshipper of Jehovah: cf. Obed-Edom, and so in the Greek form, Ὀβδείου, of Cod. B. But other Codd., A, θ and Ⲓ, give Ἀβδίου or Ἀβδείου, and this, with the alternative Hebrew form אֲבַדְיָהוּ of Neh. xi. 17, suggests rather אֲבַדְיָהוּ, *servant of Jehovah*. The name as given in the title is probably intended to be that of an historical individual, as in the titles of all the other books; but which, or if any, of the above mentioned it is impossible to say. Note, however, that it is the later post-exilic form of the name that is used, in spite of the book occurring among the pre-exilic prophets. Some, less probably, take the name Obadyah to be symbolic of the prophetic character of the writer.

¹ 889 B.C. Hofmann, Keil, etc.; and soon after 312, Hitzig.

² Cf. the extraordinary tirade of Pusey in his *Introd. to Obadiah*.

towards certainty, in spite of our ignorance of large stretches of the history of Israel. To the student of the Old Testament nothing could be more profitable than to master the historical and literary questions raised by the Book of Obadiah, before following them out among the more complicated problems which are started by other prophetic books in their relation to the Law of Israel, or to their own titles, or to claims made for them in the New Testament.

The Book of Obadiah contains a number of verbal parallels to another prophecy against Edom which appears in Jeremiah xlix. 7-22. Most critics have regarded this prophecy of Jeremiah as genuine, and have assigned it to the year 604 B.C. The question is whether Obadiah or Jeremiah is the earlier. Hitzig and Vatke¹ answered in favour of Jeremiah; and as the Book of Obadiah also contains a description of Edom's conduct in the day of Jerusalem's overthrow by Nebuchadrezzar, in 586, they brought the whole book down to post-exilic times. Very forcible arguments, however, have been offered for Obadiah's priority.² Upon this priority, as well as on the facts that Joel, whom they take to be early, quotes

¹ The first in his *Commentary on Die Zwölf Kleine Propheten*; the other in his *Einleitung*.

² Caspari (*Der Proph. Ob. ausgelegt* 1842), Ewald, Graf, Pusey, Driver, Giesebrecht, Wildeboer and König. Cf. Jer. xlix. 9 with Ob. 5; Jer. xlix. 14 ff. with Ob. 1-4. The opening of Ob. 1 ff. is held to be more in its place than where it occurs in the middle of Jeremiah's passage. The language of Obadiah is "terser and more forcible. Jeremiah seems to expand Obadiah, and parts of Jeremiah which have no parallel in Obadiah are like Obadiah's own style" (Driver). This strong argument is enforced in detail by Pusey: "Out of the sixteen verses of which the prophecy of Jeremiah against Edom consists, four are identical with those of Obadiah; a fifth embodies

from Obadiah, and that Obadiah's book occurs among the first six—presumably the pre-exilic members—of the Twelve, a number of scholars have assigned all of it to an early period in Israel's history. Some fix upon the reign of Jehoshaphat, when Judah was invaded by Edom and his allies Moab and Ammon, but saved from disaster through Moab and Ammon turning upon the Edomites and slaughtering them.¹ To this they refer the phrase in Obadiah 9, *the men of thy covenant have betrayed thee*. Others place the whole book in the reign of Joram of Judah (849—842 B.C.), when, according to the Chronicles,² Judah was invaded and Jerusalem partly sacked by Philistines and Arabs.³ But in the story of this invasion there is no mention of Edomites, and the argument which is drawn from Joel's quotation of Obadiah fails if Joel, as we shall see, be of late date. With greater prudence Pusey declines to fix a period.

The supporters of a pre-exilic origin for the *whole* Book of Obadiah have to explain vv. 11-14, which appear to reflect Edom's conduct at the sack of

a verse of Obadiah's; of the eleven which remain ten have some turns of expression or idioms, more or fewer, which occur in Jeremiah, either in these prophecies against foreign nations, or in his prophecies generally. Now it would be wholly improbable that a prophet, selecting verses out of the prophecy of Jeremiah, should have selected precisely those which contain none of Jeremiah's characteristic expressions; whereas it perfectly fits in with the supposition that Jeremiah interwove verses of Obadiah with his own prophecy, that in verses so interwoven there is not one expression which occurs elsewhere in Jeremiah." Similarly Nowack, *Comm.*, 1897.

¹ 2 Chron. xx.

² 2 Chron. xxi. 14-17.

³ So Delitzsch, Keil, Volck in Herzog's *Real. Ency.* II., Orelli and Kirkpatrick. Delitzsch indeed suggests that the prophet may have been *Obadiah the prince* appointed by Jehoshaphat to teach in the cities of Judah. See above, p. 163, n. 1.

Jerusalem by Nebuchadrezzar in 586, and they do so in two ways. Pusey takes the verses as predictive of Nebuchadrezzar's siege. Orelli and others believe that they suit better the conquest and plunder of the city in the time of Jehoram. But, as Calvin has said, "they seem to be mistaken who think that Obadiah lived before the time of Isaiah."

The question, however, very early arose, whether it was possible to take Obadiah as a unity. Vv. 1-9 are more vigorous and firm than vv. 10-21. In vv. 1-9 Edom is destroyed by nations who are its allies; in vv. 10-21 it is still to fall along with other Gentiles in the general judgment of the Lord.¹ Vv. 10-21 admittedly describe the conduct of the Edomites at the overthrow of Jerusalem in 586; but vv. 1-9 probably reflect earlier events; and it is significant that in them alone occur the parallels to Jeremiah's prophecy against Edom in 604. On some of these grounds Ewald regarded the little book as consisting of two pieces, both of which refer to Edom, but the first of which was written before Jeremiah, and the second is post-exilic. As Jeremiah's prophecy has some features more original than Obadiah's,² he traced both prophecies to an original oracle against Edom, of which Obadiah on the whole renders an exact version. He fixed the date of this oracle in the earlier days of Isaiah, when Rezin of Syria enabled Edom to assert again its independence of Judah, and Edom won back Elath, which Uzziah had taken.³ Driver, Wildeboer

¹ Driver, *Introd.*

² Jer. xlix. 9 and 16 appear to be more original than Ob. 3 and 2b. Notice the presence in Jer. xlix. 16 of תפלצתך, which Obadiah omits.

³ 2 Kings xiv. 22; xvi. 6, Revised Version margin.

and Cornill¹ adopt this theory, with the exception of the period to which Ewald refers the original oracle. According to them, the Book of Obadiah consists of two pieces, vv. 1-9 pre-exilic, and vv. 10-21 post-exilic and descriptive in 11-14 of Nebuchadrezzar's sack of Jerusalem.

This latter point need not be contested.² But is it clear that 1-9 are so different from 10-21 that they must be assigned to another period? Are they necessarily pre-exilic? Wellhausen thinks not, and has constructed still another theory of the origin of the book, which, like Vatke's, brings it all down to the period after the Exile.

There is no mention in the book either of Assyria or of Babylonia.³ The allies who have betrayed Edom (ver. 7) are therefore probably those Arabian tribes who surrounded it and were its frequent confederates.⁴ They are described as *sending* Edom to the border (*ib.*). Wellhausen thinks that this can only refer to the great northward movement of Arabs which began to press upon the fertile lands to the south-east of Israel during the time of the Captivity. Ezekiel⁵ prophesies that Ammon and Moab will disappear before the Arabs, and we know that by the year 312 the latter were firmly

¹ *Eint.*³ pp. 185 f.: "In any case Obadiah 1-9 are older than the fourth year of Jehoiakim."

² "That the verses Obadiah 10 ff. refer to this event [the sack of Jerusalem] will always remain the most natural supposition, for the description which they give so completely suits that time that it is not possible to take any other explanation into consideration."

³ Edom paid tribute to Sennacherib in 701, and to Asarhaddon (681-669). According to 2 Kings xxiv. 2 Nebuchadrezzar sent Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites [for אַרְמִי read אַדְמִי] against Jehoiakim, who had broken his oath to Babylonia.

⁴ For Edom's alliances with Arab tribes cf. Gen. xxv. 13 with xxxvi. 3, 12, etc. ⁵ Ezek. xxv. 4, 5, 10.

settled in the territories of Edom.¹ Shortly before this the Hagarenes appear in Chronicles, and Se'ir is called by the Arabic name Gebal,² while as early as the fifth century "Malachi"³ records the desolation of Edom's territory by the *jackals of the wilderness*, and the expulsion of the Edomites, who will not return. The Edomites were pushed up into the Negeb of Israel, and occupied the territory round, and to the south of, Hebron till their conquest by John Hyrcanus about 130; even after that it was called Idumæa.⁴ Wellhausen would assign Obadiah 1-7 to the same stage of this movement as is reflected in "Malachi" i. 1-5; and, apart from certain parentheses, would therefore take the whole of Obadiah as a unity from the end of the fifth century before Christ. In that case Giesebrecht argues that the parallel prophecy, Jeremiah xlix. 7-22, must be reckoned as one of the passages of the Book of Jeremiah in which post-exilic additions have been inserted.⁵

Our criticism of this theory may start from the seventh verse of Obadiah: *To the border they have sent thee, all the men of thy covenant have betrayed thee, they have overpowered thee, the men of thy peace.* On our present knowledge of the history of Edom it is impossible to assign the first of these clauses to any period before the Exile. No doubt in earlier days Edom was more than once subjected to Arab *vazzias*. But up to the Jewish Exile the Edomites were still in

¹ Diod. Sic. XIX. 94. A little earlier they are described as in possession of Iturea, on the south-east slopes of Anti-Lebanon (Arrian II. 20, 4).

² Psalm lxxxiii. 8.

³ i. 1-5.

⁴ *E.g.* in the New Testament: Mark iii. 8.

⁵ So too Nowack, 1897.

possession of their own land. So the Deuteronomist¹ implies, and so Ezekiel² and perhaps the author of Lamentations.³ Wellhausen's claim, therefore, that the seventh verse of Obadiah refers to the expulsion of Edomites by Arabs in the sixth or fifth century B.C. may be granted.⁴ But does this mean that verses 1-6 belong, as he maintains, to the same period? A negative answer seems required by the following facts. To begin with, the seventh verse is not found in the parallel prophecy in Jeremiah. There is no reason why it should not have been used there, if that prophecy had been compiled at a time when the expulsion of the Edomites was already an accomplished fact. But both by this omission and by all its other features, that prophecy suits the time of Jeremiah, and we may leave it, therefore, where it was left till the appearance of Wellhausen's theory—namely, with Jeremiah himself.⁵ Moreover Jeremiah xlix. 9 seems to have been adapted in Obadiah 5 in order to suit verse 6. But again, Obadiah 1-6, which contains so many parallels to Jeremiah's prophecy, also seems to imply that the Edomites are still in possession of their land. *The nations* (we may understand by this the Arab tribes) are risen against Edom, and Edom is already despicable in face of them (vv. 1, 2); but he has not yet fallen, any more than, to the writer of Isaiah

¹ Deut. ii. 5, 8, 12.

² Ezek. xxxv., esp. 2 and 15.

³ iv. 21: yet *Us* fails in LXX., and some take *יְרֵאָה* to refer to the Holy Land itself. Buhl, *Gesch. der Edomiter*, 73.

⁴ It can hardly be supposed that Edom's treacherous allies were Assyrians or Babylonians, for even if the phrase "men of thy covenant" could be applied to those to whom Edom was tributary, the Assyrian or Babylonian method of dealing with conquered peoples is described by saying that they took them off into captivity, not that they *sent them to the border*.

⁵ So even Cornill, *Einl.*³

xlv.—xlvii., who uses analogous language, Babylon is already fallen. Edom is weak and cannot resist the Arab *razzias*. But he still makes his eyrie on high and says: *Who will bring me down?* To which challenge Jehovah replies, not 'I have brought thee down,' but *I will bring thee down*. The post-exilic portion of Obadiah, then, I take to begin with verse 7; and the author of this prophecy has begun by incorporating in vv. 1-6 a pre-exilic prophecy against Edom, which had been already, and with more freedom, used by Jeremiah. Verses 8-9 form a difficulty. They return to the future tense, as if the Edomites were still to be cut off from Mount Esau. But verse 10, as Wellhausen points out, follows on naturally to verse 7, and, with its successors, clearly points to a period subsequent to Nebuchadrezzar's overthrow of Jerusalem. The change from the past tense in vv. 10-11 to the imperatives of 12-14 need cause, in spite of what Pusey says, no difficulty, but may be accounted for by the excited feelings of the prophet. The suggestion has been made, and it is plausible, that Obadiah speaks as an eye-witness of that awful time. Certainly there is nothing in the rest of the prophecy (vv. 15-21) to lead us to bring it further down than the years following the destruction of Jerusalem. Everything points to the Jews being still in exile. The verbs which describe the inviolateness of Jerusalem (17), and the reinstatement of Israel in their heritage (17, 19), and their conquest of Edom (18), are all in the future. The prophet himself appears to write in exile (20). The captivity of Jerusalem is in Sepharad (*ib.*) and the *saviours* have to *come up* to Mount Zion; that is to say, they are still beyond the Holy Land (21).¹

¹ This in answer to Wellhausen on the verse.

The one difficulty in assigning this date to the prophecy is that nothing is said in the Hebrew of ver. 19 about the re-occupation of the hill-country of Judæa itself, but here the Greek may help us.¹ Certainly every other feature suits the early days of the Exile.

The result of our inquiry is that the Book of Obadiah was written at that time by a prophet in exile, who was filled by the same hatred of Edom as filled another exile, who in Babylon wrote Psalm cxxxvii.; and that, like so many of the exilic writers, he started from an earlier prophecy against Edom, already used by Jeremiah.² [Nowack (*Comm.*, 1897) takes vv. 1-14 (with additions in vv. 1, 5, 6, 8 f. and 12) to be from a date not long after the Fall of Jerusalem, alluded to in vv. 11-14; and vv. 15-21 to belong to a later period, which it is impossible to fix exactly.]

There is nothing in the language of the book to disturb this conclusion. The Hebrew of Obadiah is pure; unlike its neighbour, the Book of Jonah, it contains neither Aramaisms nor other symptoms of decadence. The text is very sound. The Septuagint Version enables us to correct vv. 7 and 17, offers the true division between vv. 9 and 10, but makes an omission which leaves no sense in ver. 17.³ It will be best to give all the twenty-one verses together before commenting on their spirit.

¹ See below, p. 175, n. 6.

² Calvin, while refusing in his introduction to Obadiah to fix a date (except in so far as he thinks it impossible for the book to be earlier than Isaiah), implies throughout his commentary on the book that it was addressed to Edom while the Jews were in exile. See his remarks on vv. 18-20.

³ There is a mistranslation in ver. 18: שריר is rendered by πυρόφορος.

THE VISION OF OBADIAH.

*Thus hath the Lord Jehovah spoken concerning Edom.*¹

"A report have we heard from Jehovah, and a messenger has been sent through the nations, 'Up and let us rise against her to battle.' Lo, I have made thee small among the nations, thou art very despised! The arrogance of thy heart hath misled thee, dweller in clefts of the Rock²; the height is his dwelling, that saith in his heart 'Who shall bring me down to earth!' Though thou build high as the eagle, though between the stars thou set thy nest, thence will I bring thee down—oracle of Jehovah. If thieves had come into thee by night (how art thou humbled!),³ would they not steal just what they wanted? If vine-croppers had come into thee, would they not leave some gleanings? (How searched out is Esau, how rifled his treasures!)" But now to thy very border have they sent thee, all the men of thy covenant⁴ have betrayed thee, the men of thy peace have overpowered thee⁵; they kept setting traps for thee—there is no understanding in him! "⁶ Shall

¹ This is no doubt from the later writer, who before he gives the new word of Jehovah with regard to Edom, quotes the earlier prophecy, marked above by quotation marks. In no other way can we explain the immediate following of the words "Thus hath the Lord spoken" with "We have heard a report," etc.

² 'Sela,' the name of the Edomite capital, Petra.

³ The parenthesis is not in Jer. xlix. 9; Nowack omits it. *If spoilers* occurs in Heb. before *by night*: delete.

⁴ Antithetic to *thieves* and *spoilers by night*, as the sending of the people to their border is antithetic to the thieves taking only what they wanted.

⁵ לחם, *thy bread*, which here follows, is not found in the LXX., and is probably an error due to a mechanical repetition of the letters of the previous word.

⁶ Again perhaps a quotation from an earlier prophecy: Nowack counts it from another hand. Mark the sudden change to the future.

it not be in that day—oracle of Jehovah—that I will cause the wise men to perish from Edom, and understanding from Mount Esau? And thy heroes, O Teman, shall be dismayed, till¹ every man be cut off from Mount Esau." For the slaughter,² for the outraging of thy brother Jacob, shame doth cover thee, and thou art cut off for ever. In the day of thy standing aloof,³ in the day when strangers took captive his substance, and aliens came into his gates,⁴ and they cast lots on Jerusalem, even thou wert as one of them! Ah, gloat not⁵ upon the day of thy brother,⁶ the day of his misfortune⁷; exult not over the sons of Judah in the day of their destruction, and make not thy mouth large⁸ in the day of distress. Come not up into the gate of My people in the day of their disaster. Gloat not thou, yea thou, upon his ills, in the day of his disaster, nor put forth thy hand to his substance in the day of his disaster, nor stand at the parting⁹ of the ways (?) to cut off his fugitives; nor arrest his escaped ones in the day of distress.

For near is the day of Jehovah, upon all the nations—

¹ Heb. *so that*.

² With LXX. transfer this expression from the end of the ninth to the beginning of the tenth verse.

³ "When thou didst stand on the opposite side."—Calvin.

⁴ Plural; LXX. and Qeri.

⁵ Sudden change to imperative. The English versions render, *Thou shouldest not have looked on*, etc.

⁶ Cf. Ps. cxxxvii. 7, *the day of Jerusalem*.

⁷ The day of his strangeness = *aliena fortuna*.

⁸ With laughter. Wellhausen and Nowack suspect ver. 13 as an intrusion.

⁹ פְּרִק does not elsewhere occur. It means cleaving, and the LXX. render it by διεκβολή, *i.e.* pass between mountains. The Arabic forms from the same root suggest the sense of a band of men standing apart from the main body on the watch for stragglers (cf. נָנַךְ, in ver. 11). Calvin, "the going forth"; Grätz פְּרִץ, *breach*, but see Nowack.

as thou hast done, so shall it be done to thee: thy deed shall come back on thine own head.¹

For as ye² have drunk on my holy mount, all the nations shall drink continuously, drink and reel, and be as though they had not been.³ But on Mount Zion shall be refuge, and it shall be inviolate, and the house of Jacob shall inherit those who have disinherited them.⁴ For the house of Jacob shall be fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, but the house of Esau shall become stubble, and they shall kindle upon them and devour them, and there shall not one escape of the house of Esau—for Jehovah hath spoken.

And the Negeb shall possess Mount Esau, and the Shephelah the Philistines,⁵ and the Mountain⁶ shall possess Ephraim and the field of Samaria,⁷ and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. And the exiles of this host⁸ of the children of Israel shall possess (?) the

¹ Wellhausen proposes to put the last two clauses immediately after ver. 14.

² The prophet seems here to turn to address his own countrymen: the drinking will therefore take the meaning of suffering God's chastising wrath. Others, like Calvin, take it in the opposite sense, and apply it to Edom: "as ye have exulted," etc.

³ *Reel*—for רעל we ought (with Wellhausen) probably to read רעל: cf. Lam. iv. 2. Some codd. of LXX. omit *all the nations . . . continuously, drink and reel*. But א ו. A and Q have *all the nations shall drink wine*.

⁴ So LXX. Heb. *their heritages*.

⁵ That is the reverse of the conditions after the Jews went into exile, for then the Edomites came up on the Negeb and the Philistines on the Shephelah.

⁶ *I.e.* of Judah, the rest of the country outside the Negeb and Shephelah. The reading is after the LXX.

⁷ Whereas the pagan inhabitants of these places came upon the hill-country of Judæa during the Exile.

⁸ An unusual form of the word. Ewald would read *coast*. The verse is obscure.

land¹ of the Canaanites unto Sarephath, and the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad² shall inherit the cities of the Negeb. And saviours shall come up on Mount Zion to judge Mount Esau, and the kingdom shall be Jehovah's.

¹ So LXX.

² The Jews themselves thought this to be Spain : so Onkelos, who translates ספרד by אִסְפָּרְדָּא = Hispania. Hence the origin of the name Sephardim Jews. The supposition that it is Sparta need hardly be noticed. Our decision must lie between two other regions—the one in Asia Minor, the other in S.W. Media. First, in the ancient Persian inscriptions there thrice occurs (great Behistun inscription, I. 15; inscription of Darius, II. 12, 13; and inscription of Darius from Naqsh-i-Rustam) Çparda. It is connected with Janua or Ionia and Katapatuka or Cappadocia (Schrader, *Cun. Inscr. and O. T.*, Germ. ed., p. 446; Eng., Vol. II., p. 145); and Sayce shows that, called Shaparda on a late cuneiform inscription of 275 B.C., it must have lain in Bithynia or Galatia (*Higher Criticism and Monuments*, p. 483). Darius made it a satrapy. It is clear, as Cheyne says (*Founders of O. T. Criticism*, p. 312), that those who on other grounds are convinced of the post-exilic origin of this part of Obadiah, of its origin in the Persian period, will identify Sepharad with this Çparda, which both he and Sayce do. But to those of us who hold that this part of Obadiah is from the time of the Babylonian exile, as we have sought to prove above on pp. 171 f., then Sepharad cannot be Çparda, for Nebuchadrezzar did not subdue Asia Minor and cannot have transported Jews there. Are we then forced to give up our theory of the date of Obadiah 10-21 in the Babylonian exile? By no means. For, second, the inscriptions of Sargon, king of Assyria (721—705 B.C.), mention a Shaparda, in S.W. Media towards Babylonia, a name phonetically correspondent to ספרד (Schrader, *loc.*), and the identification of the two is regarded as "exceedingly probable" by Fried. Delitzsch (*Wo lag das Paradies?* p. 249). But even if this should be shown to be impossible, and if the identification Sepharad = Çparda be proved, that would not oblige us to alter our opinion as to the date of the whole of Obadiah 10-21, for it is possible that later additions, including Sepharad, have been made to the passage.

CHAPTER XIV

EDOM AND ISRAEL

OBADIAH 1-21

I the Book of Obadiah presents us with some of the most difficult questions of criticism, it raises besides one of the hardest ethical problems in all the vexed history of Israel.

Israel's fate has been to work out their calling in the world through antipathies rather than by sympathies, but of all the antipathies which the nation experienced none was more bitter and more constant than that towards Edom. The rest of Israel's enemies rose and fell like waves: Canaanites were succeeded by Philistines, Philistines by Syrians, Syrians by Greeks. Tyrant relinquished his grasp of God's people to tyrant: Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian; the Seleucids, the Ptolemies. But Edom was always there, *and fretted his anger for ever.*¹ From that far back day when their ancestors wrestled in the womb of Rebekah to the very eve of the Christian era, when a Jewish king² dragged the Idumeans beneath the yoke of the Law, the two peoples scorned, hated and scourged each other, with a relentlessness that finds no analogy, between kindred

¹ Amos i. 11. See Vol. I., p. 129.

² John Hyrcanus, about 130 B.C.

and neighbour nations, anywhere else in history. About 1030 David, about 130 the Hasmoneans, were equally at war with Edom; and few are the prophets between those distant dates who do not cry for vengeance against him or exult in his overthrow. The Book of Obadiah is singular in this, that it contains nothing else than such feelings and such cries. It brings no spiritual message. It speaks no word of sin, or of righteousness, or of mercy, but only doom upon Edom in bitter resentment at his cruelties, and in exultation that, as he has helped to disinherit Israel, Israel shall disinherit him. Such a book among the prophets surprises us. It seems but a dark surge staining the stream of revelation, as if to exhibit through what a muddy channel these sacred waters have been poured upon the world. Is the book only an outbreak of Israel's selfish patriotism? This is the question we have to discuss in the present chapter.

Reasons for the hostility of Edom and Israel are not far to seek. The two nations were neighbours with bitter memories and rival interests. Each of them was possessed by a strong sense of distinction from the rest of mankind, which goes far to justify the story of their common descent. But while in Israel this pride was chiefly due to the consciousness of a peculiar destiny not yet realised—a pride painful and hungry—in Edom it took the complacent form of satisfaction in a territory of remarkable isolation and self-sufficiency, in large stores of wealth, and in a reputation for worldly wisdom—a fulness that recked little of the future, and felt no need of the Divine.

The purple mountains, into which the wild sons of Esau clambered, run out from Syria upon the desert, some hundred miles by twenty of porphyry and red

sandstone. They are said to be the finest rock scenery in the world. "Salvator Rosa never conceived so savage and so suitable a haunt for banditti."¹ From Mount Hor, which is their summit, you look down upon a maze of mountains, cliffs, chasms, rocky shelves and strips of valley. On the east the range is but the crested edge of a high, cold plateau, covered for the most part by stones, but with stretches of corn land and scattered woods. The western walls, on the contrary, spring steep and bare, black and red, from the yellow of the desert 'Arabah. The interior is reached by defiles, so narrow that two horsemen may scarcely ride abreast, and the sun is shut out by the overhanging rocks. Eagles, hawks and other mountain birds fly screaming round the traveller. Little else than wild-fowls' nests are the villages; human eyries perched on high shelves or hidden away in caves at the ends of the deep gorges. There is abundance of water. The gorges are filled with tamarisks, oleanders and wild figs. Besides the wheat lands on the eastern plateau, the wider defiles hold fertile fields and terraces for the vine. Mount Esau is, therefore, no mere citadel with supplies for a limited siege, but a well-stocked, well-watered country, full of food and lusty men, yet lifted so high, and locked so fast by precipice and slippery mountain, that it calls for little trouble of defence. *Dweller in the clefts of the rock, the height is his habitation, that saith in his heart: Who shall bring me down to earth?*²

On this rich fortress-land the Edomites enjoyed a civilisation far above that of the tribes who swarmed

¹ Irby and Mangles' *Travels*: cf. Burckhardt's *Travels in Syria*, and Doughty, *Arabia Deserta*, I.

² Obadiah 3.

upon the surrounding deserts; and at the same time they were cut off from the lands of those Syrian nations who were their equals in culture and descent. When Edom looked out of himself, he looked *down* and *across*—down upon the Arabs, whom his position enabled him to rule with a loose, rough hand, and across at his brothers in Palestine, forced by their more open territories to make alliances with and against each other, from all of which he could afford to hold himself free. That alone was bound to exasperate them. In Edom himself it appears to have bred a want of sympathy, a habit of keeping to himself and ignoring the claims both of pity and of kinship—with which he is charged by all the prophets. *He corrupted his natural feelings, and watched his passion for ever.*¹ *Thou stoodest aloof!*²

This self-sufficiency was aggravated by the position of the country among several of the main routes of ancient trade. The masters of Mount Se'ir held the harbours of 'Akaba, into which the gold ships came from Ophir. They intercepted the Arabian caravans and cut the roads to Gaza and Damascus. Petra, in the very heart of Edom, was in later times the capital of the Nabatean kingdom, whose commerce rivalled that of Phœnicia, scattering its inscriptions from Teyma in Central Arabia up to the very gates of Rome.³ The earlier Edomites were also traders, middlemen between Arabia and the Phœnicians; and they filled their caverns with the wealth both of East and West.⁴ There can be little doubt that it was this which first drew the envious hand of Israel upon a land so cut

¹ Amos i.: cf. Ezek. xxxv. 5.

² Obadiah 10.

³ C. I. S., II. i. 183 ff.

⁴ Obadiah 6.

off from their own and so difficult of invasion. Hear the exultation of the ancient prophet whose words Obadiah has borrowed: *How searched out is Esau, and his hidden treasures rifled!*¹ But the same is clear from the history. Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Amaziah, Uzziah and other Jewish invaders of Edom were all ambitious to command the Eastern trade through Elath and Ezion-geber. For this it was necessary to subdue Edom; and the frequent reduction of the country to a vassal state, with the revolts in which it broke free, were accompanied by terrible cruelties upon both sides.² Every century increased the tale of bitter memories between the brothers, and added the horrors of a war of revenge to those of a war for gold.

The deepest springs of their hate, however, bubbled in their blood. In genius, temper and ambition, the two peoples were of opposite extremes. It is very singular that we never hear in the Old Testament of the Edomite gods. Israel fell under the fascination of every neighbouring idolatry, but does not even mention that Edom had a religion. Such a silence cannot be accidental, and the inference which it suggests is confirmed by the picture drawn of Esau himself. Esau is a *profane person*³; with no conscience of a birthright, no faith in the future, no capacity for visions; dead to the unseen, and clamouring only for the satisfaction of his appetites. The same was probably the character of his descendants; who had, of course, their own gods, like every other people in that Semitic world,⁴

¹ Verse 6.

² See the details in Vol. I., pp. 129 f.

³ Heb. xii. 16.

⁴ We even know the names of some of these deities from the theophorous names of Edomites: e.g. Baal-chanan (Gen. xxxvi. 38), Hadad (*ib.* 35; 1 Kings xi. 14 ff.); Malikram, Kausmalaka, Kausgabri

but were essentially irreligious, living for food, spoil and vengeance, with no national conscience or ideals—a kind of people who deserved even more than the Philistines to have their name descend to our times as a symbol of hardness and obscurantism. It is no contradiction to all this that the one intellectual quality imputed to the Edomites should be that of shrewdness and a wisdom which was obviously worldly. *The wise men of Edom, the cleverness of Mount Esau*¹ were notorious. It is the race which has given to history only the Herods—clever, scheming, ruthless statesmen, as able as they were false and bitter, as shrewd in policy as they were destitute of ideals. *That fox*, cried Christ, and crying stamped the race.

But of such a national character Israel was in all points, save that of cunning, essentially the reverse. Who had such a passion for the ideal? Who such a hunger for the future, such hopes or such visions? Never more than in the day of their prostration, when Jerusalem and the sanctuary fell in ruins, did they feel and hate the hardness of the brother, who *stood aloof and made large his mouth*.²

It is, therefore, no mere passion for revenge, which inspires these few, hot verses of Obadiah. No doubt, bitter memories rankle in his heart. He eagerly repeats³ the voices of a day when Israel matched Edom in cruelty and was cruel for the sake of gold, when Judah's kings coveted Esau's treasures and were foiled.

(on Assyrian inscriptions: Schrader, *K.A.T.*² 150, 613); Κοσαδαρος, Κοσβαρος, Κοσγηρος, Κοσναταρος (*Rev. archéol.* 1870, I. pp. 109 ff., 170 ff.), Κοστοβαρος (*Jos., XV. Ant.* vii. 9). See Baethgen, *Beiträge zur Semit. Rel. Gesch.*, pp. 10 ff.

¹ Obadiah 8: cf. Jer. xlix. 7.

² Obadiah 11, 12: cf. Ezek. xxxv. 12 f.

³ 1-5 or 6. See above, pp. 167, 171 f.

No doubt there is exultation in the news he hears, that these treasures have been rifled by others; that all the cleverness of this proud people has not availed against its treacherous allies; and that it has been sent packing to its borders.¹ But beneath such savage tempers, there beats the heart which has fought and suffered for the highest things, and now in its martyrdom sees them baffled and mocked by a people without vision and without feeling. Justice, mercy and truth; the education of humanity in the law of God, the establishment of His will upon earth—these things, it is true, are not mentioned in the Book of Obadiah, but it is for the sake of some dim instinct of them that its wrath is poured upon foes whose treachery and malice seek to make them impossible by destroying the one people on earth who then believed and lived for them. Consider the situation. It was the darkest hour of Israel's history. City and Temple had fallen, the people had been carried away. Up over the empty land the waves of mocking heathen had flowed, there was none to beat them back. A Jew who had lived through these things, who had seen² the day of Jerusalem's fall and passed from her ruins under the mocking of her foes, dared to cry back into the large mouths they made: Our day is not spent; we shall return with the things we live for; the land shall yet be ours, and the kingdom our God's.

Brave, hot heart! It shall be as thou sayest; it shall be for a brief season. But in exile thy people and thou have first to learn many more things about the heathen than you can now feel. Mix with them on that far-off coast, from which thou criest. Learn what the world is, and that more beautiful and more

¹ Verse 7.

² See above, p. 171.

possible than the narrow rule which thou hast promised to Israel over her neighbours shall be that worldwide service of man, of which, in fifty years, all the best of thy people shall be dreaming.

The Book of Obadiah at the beginning of the Exile, and the great prophecy of the Servant at the end of it—how true was his word who said: *He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*

The subsequent history of Israel and Edom may be quickly traced. When the Jews returned from exile they found the Edomites in possession of all the Negeb, and of the Mountain of Judah far north of Hebron. The old warfare was resumed, and not till 130 B.C. (as has been already said) did a Jewish king bring the old enemies of his people beneath the Law of Jehovah. The Jewish scribes transferred the name of Edom to Rome, as if it were the perpetual symbol of that hostility of the heathen world, against which Israel had to work out her calling as the peculiar people of God. Yet Israel had not done with the Edomites themselves. Never did she encounter foes more dangerous to her higher interests than in her Idumean dynasty of the Herods; while the savage relentlessness of certain Edomites in the last struggles against Rome proved that the fire which had scorched her borders for a thousand years, now burned a still more fatal flame within her. More than anything else, this Edomite fanaticism provoked the splendid suicide of Israel, which beginning in Galilee was consummated upon the rocks of Masada, half-way between Jerusalem and Mount Esau.

*INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETS OF
THE PERSIAN PERIOD*

(539—331 B.C.)

"The exiles returned from Babylon to found not a kingdom but a church."

KIRKPATRICK.

"Israel is no longer a kingdom, but a colony" (p. 189).

CHAPTER XV

ISRAEL UNDER THE PERSIANS (539—331 B.C.)

THE next group of the Twelve Prophets—Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and perhaps Joel—fall within the period of the Persian Empire. The Persian Empire was founded on the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus in 539 B.C., and it fell in the defeat of Darius III. by Alexander the Great at the battle of Gaugamela, or Arbela, in 331. The period is thus one of a little more than two centuries.

During all this time Israel were the subjects of the Persian monarchs, and bound to them and their civilisation by the closest of ties. They owed them their liberty and revival as a separate community upon its own land. The Jewish State—if we may give that title to what is perhaps more truly described as a Congregation or Commune—was part of an empire which stretched from the Ægean to the Indus, and the provinces of which were held in close intercourse by the first system of roads and posts that ever brought different races together. Jews were scattered almost everywhere across this empire. A vast number still remained in Babylon, and there were many at Susa and Ecbatana, two of the royal capitals. Most of these were subject to the full influence of Aryan manners and religion; some were even members of the Persian Court and had access to the Royal Presence. In the

Delta of Egypt there were Jewish settlements, and Jews were found also throughout Syria and along the coasts, at least, of Asia Minor. Here they touched another civilisation, destined to impress them in the future even more deeply than the Persian. It is the period of the struggle between Asia and Europe, between Persia and Greece: the period of Marathon and Thermopylæ, of Salamis and Plataea, of Xenophon and the Ten Thousand. Greek fleets occupied Cyprus and visited the Delta. Greek armies—in the pay of Persia—trod for the first time the soil of Syria.¹

In such a world, dominated for the first time by the Aryan, Jews returned from exile, rebuilt their Temple and resumed its ritual, revived Prophecy and codified the Law: in short, restored and organised Israel as the people of God, and developed their religion to those ultimate forms in which it has accomplished its supreme service to the world.

In this period Prophecy does not maintain that lofty position which it has hitherto held in the life

¹ The chief authorities for this period are as follows:—A. Ancient: the inscriptions of Nabonidus, last native King of Babylon, Cyrus and Darius I.; the Hebrew writings which were composed in, or record the history of, the period; the Greek historians Herodotus, fragments of Ctesias in Diodorus Sic. etc., of Abydenus in Eusebius, Berosus. B. Modern: Meyer's and Duncker's Histories of Antiquity; art. "Ancient Persia" in *Encycl. Brit.*, by Nöldeke and Gutschmid; Sayce, *Anc. Empires*; the works of Kuenen, Van Hoonacker and Koster given on p. 192; recent histories of Israel, e.g. Stade's, Wellhausen's and Klostermann's; P. Hay Hunter, *After the Exile, a Hundred Years of Jewish History and Literature*, 2 Vols., Edin. 1890; W. Fairweather, *From the Exile to the Advent*, Edin. 1895. On Ezra and Nehemiah see especially Ryle's *Commentary* in the *Cambridge Bible for Schools*, and Bertheau-Ryssel's in *Kurzgefasstes Exegetisches Handbuch*: cf. also Charles C. Torrey, *The Composition and Historical Value of Ezra-Nehemiah*, in the *Beihfte zur Z.A.T.W.*, II., 1896.

of Israel, and the reasons for its decline are obvious. To begin with, the national life, from which it springs, is of a far poorer quality. Israel is no longer a kingdom, but a colony. The state is not independent: there is virtually no state. The community is poor and feeble, cut off from all the habit and prestige of their past, and beginning the rudiments of life again in hard struggle with nature and hostile tribes. To this level Prophecy has to descend, and occupy itself with these rudiments. We miss the civic atmosphere, the great spaces of public life, the large ethical issues. Instead we have tearful questions, raised by a grudging soil and bad seasons, with all the petty selfishness of hunger-bitten peasants. The religious duties of the colony are mainly ecclesiastical: the building of a temple, the arrangement of ritual, and the ceremonial discipline of the people in separation from their heathen neighbours. We miss, too, the clear outlook of the earlier prophets upon the history of the world, and their calm, rational grasp of its forces. The world is still seen, and even to further distances than before. The people abate no whit of their ideal to be the teachers of mankind. But it is all through another medium. The lurid air of Apocalypse envelops the future, and in their weakness to grapple either politically or philosophically with the problems which history offers, the prophets resort to the expectation of physical catastrophes and of the intervention of supernatural armies. Such an atmosphere is not the native air of Prophecy, and Prophecy yields its supreme office in Israel to other forms of religious development. On one side the ecclesiastic comes to the front—the legalist, the organiser of ritual, the priest; on another, the teacher, the moralist, the thinker

and the speculator. At the same time personal religion is perhaps more deeply cultivated than at any other stage of the people's history. A large number of lyrical pieces bear proof to the existence of a very genuine and beautiful piety throughout the period.

Unfortunately the Jewish records for this time are both fragmentary and confused ; they touch the general history of the world only at intervals, and give rise to a number of difficult questions, some of which are insoluble. The clearest and only consecutive line of data through the period is the list of the Persian monarchs. The Persian Empire, 539—331, was sustained through eleven reigns and two usurpations, of which the following is a chronological table :—

Cyrus (Kurush) the Great	539—529
Cambyses (Kambujiya)	529—522
Pseudo-Smerdis, or Baradis	522
Darius (Darayahush) I., Hystaspis	521—485
Xerxes (Kshayarsha) I.	485—464
Artaxerxes (Artakshathra) I., Longimanus	464—424
Xerxes II.	424—423
Sogdianus	423
Darius II., Nothus.	423—404
Artaxerxes II., Mnemon	404—358
Artaxerxes III., Ochus	358—338
Arses	338—335
Darius III., Codomanus.	335—331

Of these royal names, Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes (Ahasuerus) and Artaxerxes are given among the Biblical data ; but the fact that there are three Darius', two Xerxes' and three Artaxerxes' makes possible more

than one set of identifications, and has suggested different chronological schemes of Jewish history during this period. The simplest and most generally accepted identification of the Darius, Xerxes (Ahasuerus) and Artaxerxes of the Biblical history,¹ is that they were the first Persian monarchs of these names; and after needful rearrangement of the somewhat confused order of events in the narrative of the Book of Ezra, it was held as settled that, while the exiles returned under Cyrus about 537, Haggai and Zechariah prophesied and the Temple was built under Darius I. between the second and the sixth year of his reign, or from 520 to 516; that attempts were made to build the walls of Jerusalem under Xerxes I. (485—464), but especially under Artaxerxes I. (464—424), under whom first Ezra in 458 and then Nehemiah in 445 arrived at Jerusalem, promulgated the Law and reorganised Israel.

But this has by no means satisfied all modern critics. Some in the interests of the authenticity and correct order of the Book of Ezra, and some for other reasons, argue that the Darius under whom the Temple was built was Darius II., or Nothus, 423—404, and thus bring down the building of the Temple and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah a whole century later than the accepted theory;² and that therefore the Artaxerxes, under whom Ezra and Nehemiah laboured, was not the first Artaxerxes, or Longimanus

¹ Ezra iv. 5-7, etc., vi. 1-14, etc.

² Havet, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, XCIV. 799 ff. (art. *La Modernité des Prophètes*); Imbert (in defence of the historical character of the Book of Ezra), *Le Temple Reconstitué par Zorobabel*, extrait du *Muséon*, 1888-9 (this I have not seen); Sir Henry Howorth in the *Academy* for 1893—see especially pp. 326 ff.

(464—424), but the second, or Mnemon (404—358).¹ This arrangement of the history finds some support in the data, and especially in the *order* of the data, furnished by the Book of Ezra, which describes the building of the Temple under Darius *after* its record of events under Xerxes I. (Ahasuerus) and Artaxerxes I.² But, as we shall see in the next chapter, the Compiler of the Book of Ezra has seen fit, for some reason, to violate the chronological order of the data at his disposal, and nothing reliable can be built upon his arrangement. Unravel his somewhat confused history, take the contemporary data supplied in Haggai and Zechariah, add to them the historical probabilities of the time, and you will find, as the three Dutch scholars Kuenen, Van Hoonacker and Kusters have done,³ that the rebuilding of the Temple cannot possibly be dated so late as the reign of the second Darius (423—404), but must be left, according to the usual acceptation, under Darius I. (521—485). Haggai, for instance, plainly implies that among those who saw the Temple rising were men who had seen its predecessor destroyed in 586,⁴ and Zechariah declares that God's wrath on Jerusalem has just lasted seventy years.⁵ Nor (however much his confusion may give grounds to the contrary) can the Compiler of the Book of Ezra

¹ Another French writer, Bellangé, in the *Museon* for 1890, quoted by Kuenen (*Ges. Abhandl.*, p. 213), goes further, and places Ezra and Nehemiah under the *third* Artaxerxes, Ochus (358—338).

² Ezra iv. 6—v.

³ Kuenen, *De Chronologie van het Perzische Tijdvak der Joodsche Geschiedenis*, 1890, translated by Budde in Kuenen's *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, pp. 212 ff.; Van Hoonacker, *Zorobabel et le Second Temple* (1892); Kusters, *Het Herstel van Israel*, in *Het Perzische Tijdvak*, 1894, translated by Basedow, *Die Wiederherstellung Israels im Persischen Zeitalter*, 1896.

⁴ Hag. ii. 3.

⁵ Zech. i. 12.

have meant any other reign for the building of the Temple than that of Darius I. He mentions that nothing was done to the Temple *all the days of Cyrus and up to the reign of Darius*:¹ by this he cannot intend to pass over the first Darius and leap on three more reigns, or a century, to Darius II. He mentions Zerubbabel and Jeshua both as at the head of the exiles who returned under Cyrus, and as presiding at the building of the Temple under Darius.² If alive in 536, they may well have been alive in 521, but cannot have survived till 423.³ These data are fully supported by the historical probabilities. It is inconceivable that the Jews should have delayed the building of the Temple for more than a century from the time of Cyrus. That the Temple was built by Zerubbabel and Jeshua in the beginning of the reign of Darius I. may be considered as one of the unquestionable data of our period.

But if this be so, then there falls away a great part of the argument for placing the building of the walls of Jerusalem and the labours of Ezra and Nehemiah under Artaxerxes II. (404—358) instead of Artaxerxes I. It is true that some who accept the building of the Temple under Darius I. nevertheless put Ezra and Nehemiah under Artaxerxes II. The weakness of their case, however, has been clearly exposed by Kuenen,⁴ who proves that Nehemiah's mission to

¹ Ezra iv. 5.

² Ezra ii. 2, iv. 1 ff., v. 2.

³ As Kuenen shows, p. 226, nothing can be deduced from Ezra vi. 14.

⁴ P. 227; in answer to De Saulcy, *Étude Chronologique des Livres d'Esdras et de Nehémie* (1868), *Sept Siècles de l'Histoire Judaïque* (1874). De Saulcy's case rests on the account of Josephus (XI. *Ant.* vii. 2-8: cf. ix. 1), the untrustworthy character of which and its confusion of two distant eras Kuenen has no difficulty in showing.

Jerusalem must have fallen in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes I., or 445.¹ "On this fact there can be no further difference of opinion."²

These two dates then are fixed: the beginning of the Temple in 520 by Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and the arrival of Nehemiah at Jerusalem in 445. Other points are more difficult to establish, and in particular there rests a great obscurity on the date of the two visits of Ezra to Jerusalem. According to the Book of Ezra,³ he went there first in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I., or 458 B.C., thirteen years before the arrival of Nehemiah. He found many Jews married to heathen wives, laid it to heart, and called a general assembly of the people to drive the latter out of the community. Then we hear no more of him: neither in the negotiations with Artaxerxes about the building of the walls, nor upon the arrival of Nehemiah, nor in Nehemiah's treatment of the mixed marriages. He is absent from everything, till suddenly he appears again at the dedication of the walls by Nehemiah and at the reading of the Law.⁴ This "eclipse of Ezra," as Kuenen well calls it, taken with the mixed character of all the records left of him, has moved some to deny to him and his reforms and his promulgation of the Law any historical reality

¹ When Nehemiah came to Jerusalem Eliyashib was high priest, and he was grandson of Jeshua, who was high priest in 520, or seventy-five years before; but between 520 and the twentieth year of Artaxerxes II. lie one hundred and thirty-six years. And again, the Artaxerxes of Ezra iv. 8-23, under whom the walls of Jerusalem were begun, was the immediate follower of Xerxes (Ahasuerus), and therefore Artaxerxes I., and Van Hoonacker has shown that he must be the same as the Artaxerxes of Nehemiah.

² Kusters, p. 43.

³ vii. 1-8.

⁴ Neh. xii. 36, viii., x.

whatever;¹ while others, with a more sober and rational criticism, have sought to solve the difficulties by another arrangement of the events than that usually accepted. Van Hoonacker makes Ezra's *first* appearance in Jerusalem to be at the dedication of the walls and promulgation of the Law in 445, and refers his arrival described in Ezra vii. and his attempts to abolish the mixed marriages to a second visit to Jerusalem in the twentieth year, not of Artaxerxes I., but of Artaxerxes II., or 398 B.C. Kuenen has exposed the extreme unlikelihood, if not impossibility, of so late a date for Ezra, and in this Kusters holds with him.² But Kusters agrees with Van Hoonacker in placing Ezra's activity subsequent to Nehemiah's and to the dedication of the walls.

These questions about Ezra have little bearing on our present study of the prophets, and it is not our duty to discuss them. But Kuenen, in answer to Van Hoonacker, has shown very strong reasons³ for holding in the main to the generally accepted theory of Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem in 458, the seventh year of Artaxerxes I.; and though there are great difficulties about the narrative which follows, and especially about Ezra's sudden disappearance from the scene till after Nehemiah's arrival, reasons may be found for this.⁴

¹ Vernes, *Précis d'Histoire Juive depuis les Origines jusqu'à l'Époque Persane* (1889), pp. 579 ff. (not seen); more recently also Charles C. Torrey of Andover, *The Composition and Historical Value of Ezra-Nehemiah*, in the *Beihefte zur Z.A.T.W.*, II., 1896.

² Pages 113 ff.

³ Page 237.

⁴ The failure of his too hasty and impetuous attempts at so wholesale a measure as the banishment of the heathen wives; or his return to Babylon, having accomplished his end. See Ryle, *Ezra and Nehemiah*, in the *Cambridge Bible for Schools*. Introd., pp. xl. f.

We are therefore justified in holding, in the meantime, to the traditional arrangement of the great events in Israel in the fifth century before Christ. We may divide the whole Persian period by the two points we have found to be certain, the beginning of the Temple under Darius I. in 520 and the mission of Nehemiah to Jerusalem in 445, and by the other that we have found to be probable, Ezra's arrival in 458.

On these data the Persian period may be arranged under the following four sections, among which we place those prophets who respectively belong to them :—

1. From the Taking of Babylon by Cyrus to the Completion of the Temple in the sixth year of Darius I., 538—516 : Haggai and Zechariah in 520 ff.

2. From the Completion of the Temple under Darius I. to the arrival of Ezra in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I., 516—458 : sometimes called the period of silence, but probably yielding the Book of "Malachi."

3. The Work of Ezra and Nehemiah under Artaxerxes I., Longimanus, 458—425.

4. The Rest of the Period, Xerxes II. to Darius III., 425—331 : the prophet Joel and perhaps several other anonymous fragments of prophecy.

Of these four sections we must now examine the first, for it forms the necessary introduction to our study of Haggai and Zechariah, and above all it raises a question almost greater than any of those we have just been discussing. The fact recorded by the Book of Ezra, and till a few years ago accepted without doubt by tradition and modern criticism, the first Return of Exiles from Babylon under Cyrus, has lately been altogether denied ; and the builders of the

Temple in 520 have been asserted to be, not returned exiles, but the remnant of Jews left in Judah by Nebuchadrezzar in 586. The importance of this for our interpretation of Haggai and Zechariah, who instigated the building of the Temple, is obvious: we must discuss the question in detail.

CHAPTER XVI

FROM THE RETURN FROM BABYLON TO THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

(536—516 B.C.)

CYRUS the Great took Babylon and the Babylonian Empire in 539. Upon the eve of his conquest the Second Isaiah had hailed him as the Liberator of the people of God and the builder of their Temple. The Return of the Exiles and the Restoration both of Temple and City were predicted by the Second Isaiah for the immediate future; and a Jewish historian, the Compiler of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, who lived about 300 B.C., has taken up the story of how these events came to pass from the very first year of Cyrus onward. Before discussing the dates and proper order of these events, it will be well to have this Chronicler's narrative before us. It lies in the first and following chapters of our Book of Ezra.

According to this, Cyrus, soon after his conquest of Babylon, gave permission to the Jewish exiles to return to Palestine, and between forty and fifty thousand¹ did so return, bearing the vessels of Jehovah's house which the Chaldeans had taken away in 586.

¹ 42,360, *besides their servants*, is the total sum given in Ezra ii. 64; but the detailed figures in Ezra amount only to 29,818, those in Nehemiah to 31,089, and those in 1 Esdras to 30,143 (other MSS. 30,678). See Ryke on Ezra ii. 64.

These Cyrus delivered to *Sheshbazzar, prince of Judah*¹ (who is further described in an Aramaic document incorporated by the Compiler of the Book of Ezra as "Peḥah," or *provincial governor*,² and as laying the foundation of the Temple³), and there is also mentioned in command of the people a Tirshatha, probably the Persian Tarsâta,⁴ which also means *provincial governor*. Upon their arrival at Jerusalem, the date of which will be immediately discussed, the people are said to be under Jeshu'a ben Jōšadak⁵ and Zerubbabel ben She'alti'el,⁶ who had already been mentioned as the head of the returning exiles,⁷ and who is called by his contemporary Haggai Peḥah, or *governor, of Judah*.⁸ Are we to understand by Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel one and the same person? Most critics have answered in the affirmative, believing that Sheshbazzar is but the Babylonian or Persian name by which the Jew Zerubbabel was known at court;⁹ and this view is supported by the facts that Zerubbabel was of the house of David and is called Peḥah by Haggai, and by the argument that the command given by the Tirshatha to the Jews to abstain from *eating the most holy things*¹⁰ could only have been given by a

¹ Ezra i. 8.² *Ib.* 16.³ Ezra v. 14.⁴ Ezra ii. 63.⁵ יֵשׁוּעַ בֶּן-יֹשָׁדָק: Ezra iii. 2, like Ezra i. 1-8, from the Compiler of Ezra-Nehemiah.⁶ זְרֻבְבָל בֶּן-שְׁאֲלֵי־אֵל.⁷ Ezra ii. 2.⁸ Hag. i. 14, ii. 2, 21, and perhaps by Nehemiah (vii. 65-70). Nehemiah himself is styled both Peḥah (xiv. 20) and Tirshatha (viii. 9, x. 1).⁹ As Daniel and his three friends had also Babylonian names.¹⁰ Ezra ii. 63.

native Jew.¹ But others, arguing that Ezra v. 1, compared with vv. 14 and 16, implies that Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar were two different persons, take the former to have been the most prominent of the Jews themselves, but the latter an official, Persian or Babylonian, appointed by Cyrus to carry out such business in connection with the Return as could only be discharged by an imperial officer.² This is, on the whole, the more probable theory.

If it is right, Sheshbazzar, who superintended the Return, had disappeared from Jerusalem by 521, when Haggai commenced to prophesy, and had been succeeded as Peḥah, or governor, by Zerubbabel. But in that case the Compiler has been in error in calling Sheshbazzar *a prince of Judah*.³

The next point to fix is what the Compiler considers to have been the date of the Return. He names no year, but he recounts that the same people, whom he has just described as receiving the command of Cyrus to return, did immediately leave Babylon,⁴ and he says that they arrived at Jerusalem in *the seventh month*, but again without stating a year.⁵ In any case, he

¹ Cf. Ryle, xxxi ff.; and on Ezra i. 8, ii. 63.

² Stade, *Gesch. des Volkes Israel*, II. 98 ff.: cf. Kuenen, *Gesammelt. Abhandl.*, 220.

³ Ezra i. 8.

⁴ Ezra i. compared with ii. 1.

⁵ Some think to find this in 1 Esdras v. 1-6, where it is said that Darius, a name they take to be an error for that of Cyrus, brought up the exiles with an escort of a thousand cavalry, starting in the first month of the second year of the king's reign. This passage, however, is not beyond suspicion as a gloss (see Ryle on Ezra i. 11), and even if genuine may be intended to describe a second contingent of exiles despatched by Darius I. in his second year, 520. The names given include that of Jesua, son of Josedec, and instead of Zerubbabel's, that of his son Joacim.

obviously intends to imply that the Return followed immediately on reception of the permission to return, and that this was given by Cyrus very soon after his occupation of Babylon in 539-8. We may take it that the Compiler understood the year to be that we know as 537 B.C. He adds that, on the arrival of the caravans from Babylon, the Jews set up the altar on its old site and restored the morning and evening sacrifices; that they kept also the Feast of Tabernacles, and thereafter all the rest of the *feasts of Jehovah*; and further, that they engaged masons and carpenters for building the Temple, and Phœnicians to bring them cedar-wood from Lebanon.¹

Another section from the Compiler's hand states that the returned Jews set to work upon the Temple *in the second month of the second year* of their Return, presumably 536 B.C., laying the foundation-stone with due pomp, and amid the excitement of the whole people.² Whereupon certain *adversaries*, by whom the Compiler means Samaritans, demanded a share in the building of the Temple, and when Jeshua and Zerubbabel refused this, *the people of the land* frustrated the building of the Temple even until the reign of Darius, 521 ff.

This—the second year of Darius—is the point to which contemporary documents, the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, assign the beginning of new measures to build the Temple. Of these the Compiler of the Book of Ezra says in the meantime nothing, but after barely mentioning the reign of Darius leaps at once³ to further Samaritan obstructions—though not of the building of the Temple (be it noted), but of the building of the city

¹ Ezra iii. 3-7.

² *Ib.* 8-13.

³ Ezra iv. 7.

walls—in the reigns of Ahasuerus, that is Xerxes, presumably Xerxes I., the successor of Darius, 485—464, and of his successor Artaxerxes I., 464—424;¹ the account of the latter of which he gives not in his own language but in that of an Aramaic document, Ezra iv. 8 ff. And this document, after recounting how Artaxerxes empowered the Samaritans to stop the building of the walls of Jerusalem, records² that the building ceased *till the second year of the reign of Darius*, when the prophets Haggai and Zechariah stirred up Zerubbabel and Jeshua to rebuild, not the city walls, be it observed, but the Temple, and with the permission of Darius this building was at last completed in his sixth year.³ That is to say, this Aramaic document brings us back, with *the frustrated building of the walls* under Xerxes I. and Artaxerxes I. (485—424), to the same date under their predecessor Darius I., viz. 520, to which the Compiler had brought down *the frustrated building of the Temple*! The most reasonable explanation of this confusion, not only of chronology, but of two distinct processes—the erection of the Temple and the fortification of the city—is that the Compiler was misled by his desire to give as strong an impression as possible of the Samaritan obstructions by placing them all together. Attempts to harmonise the order of his narrative with the ascertained sequence of the Persian reigns have failed.⁴

¹ See above, p. 193.

² iv. 24.

³ Ezra iv. 24—vi. 15.

⁴ There are in the main two classes of such attempts. (a) Some have suggested that the Ahasuerus (Xerxes) and Artaxerxes mentioned in Ezra iv. 6 and 7 ff. are not the successors of Darius I. who bore these names, but titles of his predecessors Cambyses and the Pseudo-Smerdis (see above, p. 190). This view has been disposed of

Such then is the character of the compilation known to us as the Book of Ezra. If we add that in its present form it cannot be of earlier date than 300 B.C., or two hundred and thirty-six years after the Return, and that the Aramaic document which it incorporates is probably not earlier than 430, or one hundred years after the Return, while the List of Exiles which it gives (in chap. ii.) also contains elements that cannot be earlier than 430, we shall not wonder that grave doubts should have been raised concerning its trustworthiness as a narrative.

These doubts affect, with one exception, all the great facts which it professes to record. The exception is the building of the Temple between the second and sixth years of Darius I., 520—516, which we have already seen to be past doubt.¹ But all that the Book of Ezra relates before this has been called in question, and it has been successively alleged: (1) that there was no such attempt as the book describes to build the Temple before 520, (2) that there was no Return of Exiles at all under Cyrus, and that the Temple was not built by Jews who had come from Babylon, but by Jews who had never left Judah.

These conclusions, if justified, would have the most important bearing upon our interpretation of Haggai and Zechariah. It is therefore necessary to examine them with care. They were reached by critics in the order just stated, but as the second is the more

by Kuenen, *Ges. Abhandl.*, pp. 224 ff., and by Ryle, pp. 65 ff. (b) The attempt to prove that the Darius under whom the Temple was built was not Darius I. (521—485), the predecessor of Xerxes I. and Artaxerxes I. (485—424), but their successor once removed, Darius II., Nothus (423—401). So, in defence of the Book of Ezra, Imbert. For his theory and the answer to it see above, pp. 191 f.

¹ See above, pp. 192 ff.

sweeping and to some extent involves the other, we may take it first.

1. Is the Book of Ezra, then, right or wrong in asserting that there was a great return of Jews, headed by Zerubbabel and Jeshua, about the year 536, and that it was they who in 520—516 rebuilt the Temple?

The argument that in recounting these events the Book of Ezra is unhistorical has been fully stated by Professor Kusters of Leiden.¹ He reaches his conclusion along three lines of evidence: the Books of Haggai and Zechariah, the sources from which he believes the Aramaic narrative Ezra v. 1—vi. 18 to have been compiled, and the list of names in Ezra ii. In the Books of Haggai and Zechariah, he points out that the inhabitants of Jerusalem whom the prophets summon to build the Temple are not called by any name which implies that they are returned exiles; that nothing in the description of them would lead us to suppose this; that God's anger against Israel is represented as still unbroken; that neither prophet speaks of a Return as past, but that Zechariah seems to look for it as still to come.² The second line of evidence is an analysis of the Aramaic document, Ezra v. 6 ff., into two sources, neither of which implies a Return under Cyrus. But these two lines of proof cannot avail against the List of Returned Exiles offered us in Ezra ii. and

¹ For his work see above, p. 192, n. 3. I regret that neither Wellhausen's answer to it, nor Kusters' reply to Wellhausen, was accessible to me in preparing this chapter. Nor did I read Mr. Torrey's *resume* of Wellhausen's answer, or Wellhausen's notes to the second edition of his *Isr. u. Jud. Geschichte*, till the chapter was written. Previous to Kusters, the Return under Cyrus had been called in question only by the very arbitrary French scholar M. Vernes in 1889-90.

² ii. 6 ff. Eng., 10 ff. Heb.

Nehemiah vii., if the latter be genuine. On his third line of evidence, Dr. Kusters, therefore, disputes the genuineness of this List, and further denies that it even gives itself out as a List of Exiles returned under Cyrus. So he arrives at the conclusion that there was no Return from Babylon under Cyrus, nor any before the Temple was built in 520ff., but that the builders were *people of the land*, Jews who had never gone into exile.

The evidence which Dr. Kusters draws from the Book of Ezra least concerns us. Both because of this and because it is the weakest part of his case, we may take it first.

Dr. Kusters analyses the bulk of the Aramaic document, Ezra v.—vi. 18, into two constituents. His arguments for this are very precarious.¹ The first document, which he takes to consist of chap. v. 1-5 and 10, with perhaps vi. 6-15 (except a few phrases), relates that Thathnai, Satrap of the West of the Euphrates, asked Darius whether he might allow the Jews to proceed with the building of the Temple, and received command not only to allow but to help them, on the ground that Cyrus had already given them permission. The second, chap. v. 11-17, vi. 1-3, affirms that the building

¹ His chief grounds for this analysis are (1) that in v. 1-5 the Jews are said to have *begun* to build the Temple in the second year of Darius, while in v. 16 the foundation-stone is said to have been laid under Cyrus; (2) the frequent want of connection throughout the passage; (3) an alleged doublet: in v. 17—vi. 1 search is said to have been made for the edict of Cyrus *in Babylon*, while in vi. 2 the edict is said to have been found *in Ecbatana*. But (1) and (3) are capable of very obvious explanations, and (2) is far from conclusive.—The remainder of the Aramaic text, iv. 8-24, Kusters seeks to prove is by the Chronicler or Compiler himself. As Torrey (*op. cit.*, p. 11) has shown, this “is as unlikely as possible.” At the most he may have made additions to the Aramaic document.

had actually begun under Cyrus, who had sent Sheshbazzar, the Satrap, to see it carried out. Neither of these documents says a word about any order from Cyrus to the Jews to return; and the implication of the second, that the building had gone on uninterruptedly from the time of Cyrus' order to the second year of Darius,¹ is not in harmony with the evidence of the Compiler of the Book of Ezra, who, as we have seen,² states that Samaritan obstruction stayed the building till the second year of Darius.

But suppose we accept Koster's premisses and agree that these two documents really exist within Ezra v.—vi. 18. Their evidence is not irreconcilable. Both imply that Cyrus gave command to rebuild the Temple: if they were originally independent that would but strengthen the tradition of such a command, and render a little weaker Dr. Koster's contention that the tradition arose merely from a desire to find a fulfilment of the Second Isaiah's predictions³ that Cyrus would be the Temple's builder. That neither of the supposed documents mentions the Return itself is very natural, because both

¹ Ezra v. 16.

² Above, pp. 201 f.

³ Isa. xlv. 28, xlv. 1. According to Koster, the statement of the Aramaic document about the rebuilding of the Temple is therefore a pious invention of a literal fulfilment of prophecy. To this opinion Cheyne adheres (*Introd. to the Book of Isaiah*, 1895, p. xxxviii), and adds the further assumption that the Chronicler, being "shocked at the ascription to Cyrus (for the Judæan builders have no credit given them) of what must, he thought, have been at least equally due to the zeal of the exiles," invented his story in the earlier chapters of Ezra as to the part the exiles themselves took in the rebuilding. It will be noticed that these assumptions have precisely the value of such. They are merely the imputation of motives, more or less probable to the writers of certain statements, and may therefore be fairly met by probabilities from the other side. But of this more later on.

are concerned with the building of the Temple. For the Compiler of the Book of Ezra, who on Koster's argument put them together, the interest of the Return is over; he has already sufficiently dealt with it. But more—Koster's second document, which ascribes the building of the Temple to Cyrus, surely by that very statement implies a Return of Exiles during his reign. For is it at all probable that Cyrus would have committed the rebuilding of the Temple to a Persian magnate like Sheshbazzar, without sending with him a large number of those Babylonian Jews who must have instigated the king to give his order for rebuilding? We may conclude then that Ezra v.—vi. 18, whatever be its value and its date, contains no evidence, positive or negative, against a Return of the Jews under Cyrus, but, on the contrary, takes this for granted.

We turn now to Dr. Koster's treatment of the so-called List of the Returned Exiles. He holds this List to have been, not only borrowed for its place in Ezra ii. from Nehemiah vii.,¹ but even interpolated in the latter. His reasons for this latter conclusion are very improbable, as will be seen from the appended note, and really weaken his otherwise strong case.² As to the contents of the List, there are, it is true, many elements which date from Nehemiah's own time and even later. But these are not sufficient to prove

¹ This is the usual opinion of critics, who yet hold it to be genuine—*e.g.* Ryle.

² He seeks to argue that a List of Exiles returned under Cyrus in 536 could be of no use for Nehemiah's purpose to obtain in 445 a census of the inhabitants of Jerusalem; but surely, if in his efforts to make a census Nehemiah discovered the existence of such a List, it was natural for him to give it as the basis of his inquiry, or (because the List—see above, p. 203—contains elements from Nehemiah's own time) to enlarge it and bring it down to date. But Dr. Koster thinks

that the List was not originally a List of Exiles returned under Cyrus. The verses in which this is asserted—Ezra ii. 1, 2; Nehemiah vii. 6, 7—plainly intimate that those Jews who came up out of the Exile were the same who built the Temple under Darius. Dr. Kusters endeavours to destroy the force of this statement (if true so destructive of his theory) by pointing to the number of the leaders which the List assigns to the returning exiles. In fixing this number as twelve, the author, Kusters maintains, intended to make the leaders representative of the twelve tribes and the body of returned exiles as equivalent to All-Israel. But, he argues, neither Haggai nor Zechariah considers the builders of the Temple to be equivalent to All-Israel, nor was this conception realised in Judah till after the arrival of Ezra with his bands. The force of this argument is greatly weakened by remembering how natural it would have been for men, who felt the Return under Cyrus, however small, to be the fulfilment of the Second Isaiah's glorious predictions of a restoration of All-Israel, to appoint twelve leaders, and so make them representative of the nation as a whole. Kusters' argument against the naturalness of such an appointment in 537, and therefore against the truth of the statement of the List about it, falls to the ground.

But in the Books of Haggai and Zechariah Dr. Kusters

also that, as Nehemiah would never have broken the connection of his memoirs with such a List, the latter must have been inserted by the Compiler, who at this point grew weary of the discursiveness of the memoirs, broke from them, and then—inserted this lengthy List! This is simply incredible—that he should seek to atone for the diffuseness of Nehemiah's memoirs by the intrusion of a very long catalogue which had no relevance to the point at which he broke them off.

finds much more formidable witnesses for his thesis that there was no Return of exiles from Babylon before the building of the Temple under Darius. These books nowhere speak of a Return under Cyrus, nor do they call the community who built the Temple by the names of Gôlah or B'ne ha-Gôlah, *Captivity* or *Sons of the Captivity*, which are given after the Return of Ezra's bands; but they simply name them *this people*¹ or *remnant of the people*,² *people of the land*,³ *Judah* or *House of Judah*,⁴ names perfectly suitable to Jews who had never left the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. Even if we except from this list the phrase *the remnant of the people*, as intended by Haggai and Zechariah in the numerical sense of *the rest* or *all the others*,⁵ we have still to deal with the other titles, with the absence from them of any symptom descriptive of return from exile, and with the whole silence of our two prophets concerning such a return. These are very striking phenomena, and they undoubtedly afford considerable evidence for Dr. Koster's thesis.⁶ But it cannot escape notice that the

¹ Hag. i. 2, 12; ii. 14.

² Hag. i. 12, 14; ii. 2; Zech. viii. 6, 11, 12.

³ Hag. ii. 4; Zech. vii. 5.

⁴ Zech. ii. 16; viii. 13, 15.

⁵ It is used in Hag. i. 12, 14, ii. 2, only after the mention of the leaders; see, however, Pusey's note 9 to Hag. i. 12; while in Zech. viii. 6, 11, 18, it might be argued that it was employed in such a way as to cover not only Jews who had never left their land, but all Jews as well who were left of ancient Israel.

⁶ Compare Cheyne, *Introduction to the Book of Isaiah*, 1895, xxxv ff., who says that in the main points Koster's conclusions "appear so inevitable" that he has "constantly presupposed them" in dealing with chaps. lvi.—lxvi. of Isaiah; and Torrey, *op. cit.*, 1896, p. 53: "Koster has demonstrated, from the testimony of Haggai and Zechariah, that Zerubbabel and Jeshua were not returned exiles; and furthermore, that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah knew nothing of an important return of exiles from Babylonia." Cf. also Wildeboer, *Litteratur des A. T.*, pp. 291 ff

evidence they afford is mainly negative, and this raises two questions: (1) Can the phenomena in Haggai and Zechariah be accounted for? and (2) whether accounted for or not, can they be held to prevail against the mass of positive evidence in favour of a Return under Cyrus?

An explanation of the absence of all allusion in Haggai and Zechariah to the Return is certainly possible.

No one can fail to be struck with the spirituality of the teaching of Haggai and Zechariah. Their one ambition is to put courage from God into the poor hearts before them, that these out of their own resources may rebuild their Temple. As Zechariah puts it, *Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith Jehovah of Hosts.*¹ It is obvious why men of this temper should refrain from appealing to the Return, or to the royal power of Persia by which it had been achieved. We can understand why, while the annals employed in the Book of Ezra record the appeal of the political leaders of the Jews to Darius upon the strength of the edict of Cyrus, the prophets, in their effort to encourage the people to make the most of what they themselves were and to enforce the omnipotence of God's Spirit apart from all human aids, should be silent about the latter. We must also remember that Haggai and Zechariah were addressing a people to whom (whatever view we take of the transactions under Cyrus) the favour of Cyrus had been one vast disillusion in the light of the predictions of Second Isaiah.² The

¹ iv. 4.

² Of course it is always possible that, if there had been no great Return from Babylon under Cyrus, the community at Jerusalem in 520 had not heard of the prophecies of the Second Isaiah.

Persian magnate Sheshbazzar himself, invested with full power, had been unable to build the Temple for them, and had apparently disappeared from Judah, leaving his powers as Peḥah, or governor, to Zerubbabel. Was it not, then, as suitable to these circumstances, as it was essential to the prophets' own religious temper, that Haggai and Zechariah should refrain from alluding to any of the political advantages, to which their countrymen had hitherto trusted in vain ?¹

Another fact should be marked. If Haggai is silent about any return from exile in the past, he is equally silent about any in the future. If for him no return had yet taken place, would he not have been likely to predict it as certain to happen ?² At least his silence on the subject proves how absolutely he confined his thoughts to the circumstances before him, and to the needs of his people at the moment he addressed them. Koster, indeed, alleges that Zechariah describes the Return from Exile as still future—viz. in the lyric piece appended to his Third Vision.³ But, as we shall see when we come to it, this lyric piece is most probably an intrusion among the Visions, and is not to be assigned to Zechariah himself. Even, however, if it were from the same date and author as the Visions, it

¹ This argument, it is true, does not fully account for the curious fact that Haggai and Zechariah never call the Jewish community at Jerusalem by a name significant of their return from exile. But in reference to this it ought to be noted that even the Aramaic document in the Book of Ezra which records the Return under Cyrus does not call the builders of the Temple by any name which implies that they have come up from exile, but styles them simply *the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem* (Ezra v. 1), in contrast to the Jews who were in foreign lands.

Indeed, why does he ignore the whole Exile itself if no return from it has taken place ?

Zech. ii. 10-17 Heb., 6-13 Eng.

would not prove that no return from Babylon had taken place, but only that numbers of Jews still remained in Babylon.

But we may now take a further step. If there were these natural reasons for the silence of Haggai and Zechariah about a return of exiles under Cyrus, can that silence be allowed to prevail against the mass of testimony which we have that such a return took place? It is true that, while the Books of Haggai and Zechariah are contemporary with the period in question, some of the evidence for the Return, Ezra i. and iii.—iv. 7, is at least two centuries later, and upon the date of the rest, the List in Ezra ii. and the Aramaic document in Ezra iv. 8 ff., we have no certain information. But that the List is from a date very soon after Cyrus is allowed by a large number of the most advanced critics,¹ and even if we ignore it, we still have the Aramaic document, which agrees with Haggai and Zechariah in assigning the real, effectual beginning of the Temple-building to the second year of Darius and to the leadership of Zerubabel and Jeshua at the instigation of the two prophets. May we not trust the same document in its relation of the main facts concerning Cyrus? Again, in his memoirs Ezra² speaks of the transgressions of the Gôlah or B'ne ha-Gôlah in effecting marriages with the mixed people of the land, in a way which shows that he means by the name, not the Jews who had just come up with himself from Babylon, but the older community whom he found in Judah, and who had

¹ E.g. Stade, Kuenen (*op. cit.*, p. 216). So, too, Klostermann, *Gesch. des Volkes Israel*, München, 1896. Wellhausen, in the second edition of his *Gesch.*, does not admit that the List is one of exiles returned under Cyrus (p. 155, n.).

² ix. 4; x. 6, 7.

had time, as his own bands had not, to scatter over the land and enter into social relations with the heathen.

But, as Kuenen points out,¹ we have yet further evidence for the probability of a Return under Cyrus, in the explicit predictions of the Second Isaiah that Cyrus would be the builder of Jerusalem and the Temple. "If they express the expectation, nourished by the prophet and his contemporaries, then it is clear from their preservation for future generations that Cyrus did not disappoint the hope of the exiles, from whose midst this voice pealed forth to him." And this leads to other considerations. Whether was it more probable for the poverty-stricken *people of the land*, the dregs which Nebuchadrezzar had left behind, or for the body and flower of Israel in Babylon, to rebuild the Temple? Surely for the latter.² Among them had risen, as Cyrus drew near to Babylon, the hopes and the motives, nay, the glorious assurance of the Return and the Rebuilding; and with them was all the material for the latter. Is it credible that they took no advantage of their opportunity under Cyrus? Is it credible that they waited nearly a century before seeking to return to Jerusalem, and that the building of the Temple was left to people who were half-

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 216, where he also quotes the testimony of the Book of Daniel (ix. 25).

² Since writing the above I have seen the relevant notes to the second edition of Wellhausen's *Gesch.*, pp. 155 and 160. "The re-founding of Jerusalem and the Temple cannot have started from the Jews left behind in Palestine." "The remnant left in the land would have restored the old popular cultus of the high places. Instead of that we find even before Ezra the legitimate cultus and the hierocracy in Jerusalem: in the Temple-service proper Ezra discovers nothing to reform. Without the leaven of the Gôlah the Judaism of Palestine is in its origin incomprehensible."

heathen, and, in the eyes of the exiles, despicable and unholy? This would be credible only upon one condition, that Cyrus and his immediate successors disappointed the predictions of the Second Isaiah and refused to allow the exiles to leave Babylon. But the little we know of these Persian monarchs points all the other way: nothing is more probable, for nothing is more in harmony with Persian policy, than that Cyrus should permit the captives of the Babylon which he conquered to return to their own lands.¹

Moreover, we have another, and to the mind of the present writer an almost conclusive argument, that the Jews addressed by Haggai and Zechariah were Jews returned from Babylon. Neither prophet ever charges his people with idolatry; neither prophet so much as mentions idols. This is natural if the congregation addressed was composed of such pious and ardent adherents of Jehovah, as His word had brought back to Judah, when His servant Cyrus opened the way. But had Haggai and Zechariah been addressing *the people of the land*, who had never left the land, they could not have helped speaking of idolatry.

Such considerations may very justly be used against an argument which seeks to prove that the narratives of a Return under Cyrus were due to the pious invention of a Jewish writer who wished to record that the predictions of the Second Isaiah were fulfilled by Cyrus, their designated trustee.² They certainly

¹.The inscription of Cyrus is sometimes quoted to this effect: cf. P. Hay Hunter, *op. cit.*, I. 35. But it would seem that the statement of Cyrus is limited to the restoration of Assyrian idols and their worshippers to Assur and Akkad. Still, what he did in this case furnishes a strong argument for the probability of his having done the same in the case of the Jews.

² See above, p. 206, and especially n. 3.

possess a far higher degree of probability than that argument does.

Finally there is this consideration. If there was no return from Babylon under Cyrus, and the Temple, as Dr. Kusters alleges, was built by the poor people of the land, is it likely that the latter should have been regarded with such contempt as they were by the exiles who returned under Ezra and Nehemiah? Theirs would then have been the glory of reconstituting Israel, and their position very different from what we find it.

On all these grounds, therefore, we must hold that the attempt to discredit the tradition of an important return of exiles under Cyrus has not been successful; that such a return remains the more probable solution of an obscure and difficult problem; and that therefore the Jews who with Zerubbabel and Jeshua are represented in Haggai and Zechariah as building the Temple in the second year of Darius, 520, had come up from Babylon about 537.¹ Such a conclusion, of course, need not commit us to the various data offered by the Chronicler in his story of the Return, such as the Edict of Cyrus, nor to all of his details.

2. Many, however, who grant the correctness of the tradition that a large number of Jewish exiles returned under Cyrus to Jerusalem, deny the statement of the Compiler of the Book of Ezra that the returned exiles immediately prepared to build the Temple and laid the foundation-stone with solemn festival, but were

¹ Even Cheyne, after accepting Kusters' conclusions as in the main points inevitable (*op. cit.*, p. xxxv), considers (p. xxxviii) that "the earnestness of Haggai and Zechariah (who cannot have stood alone) implies the existence of a higher religious element at Jerusalem long before 432 B.C. Whence came this higher element but from its natural home among the more cultured Jews in Babylonia?"

hindered from proceeding with the building till the second year of Darius.¹ They maintain that this late narrative is contradicted by the contemporary statements of Haggai and Zechariah, who, according to them, imply that no foundation-stone was laid till 520 B.C.² For the interpretation of our prophets this is not a question of cardinal importance. But for clearness' sake we do well to lay it open.

We may at once concede that in Haggai and Zechariah there is nothing which necessarily implies that the Jews had made any beginning to build the Temple before the start recorded by Haggai in the year 520. The one passage, Haggai ii. 18, which is cited to prove this³ is at the best ambiguous, and many scholars claim it as a fixture of that date for the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month of 520.⁴ At the same time, and even granting that the latter interpretation of Haggai ii. 18 is correct, there is nothing in either Haggai or Zechariah to make it impossible that a foundation-stone had been laid some years before, but abandoned in consequence of the Samaritan obstruction, as alleged in Ezra iii. 8-11. If we keep in mind Haggai's and Zechariah's silence

¹ Ezra iii. 8-13.

² Schrader, "Ueber die Dauer des Tempelbaues," in *Stud. u. Krit.*, 1879, 460 ff.; Stade, *Gesch. des Volkes Israel*, II. 115 ff.; Kuenen, *op. cit.*, p. 222; Koster, *op. cit.*, Chap. I., § 1. To this opinion others have adhered: König (*Einleit. in das A. T.*), Ryssel (*op. cit.*) and Marti (2nd edition of Kayser's *Theol. des A. T.*, p. 200). Schrader (p. 563) argues that Ezra iii. 8-13 was not founded on a historical document, but is an imitation of Neh. vii. 73-viii.; and Stade that the Aramaic document in Ezra which ascribes the laying of the foundation-stone to Sheshbazzar, the legate of Cyrus, was not earlier than 430.

³ Ryle, *op. cit.*, p. xxx

⁴ Stade, Wellhausen, etc. See below, Chap. XVIII. on Hag. ii. 18.

about the Return from Babylon, and their very natural concentration upon their own circumstances,¹ we shall not be able to reckon their silence about previous attempts to build the Temple as a conclusive proof that these attempts never took place. Moreover the Aramaic document, which agrees with our two prophets in assigning the only effective start of the work on the Temple to 520,² does not deem it inconsistent with this to record that the Persian Satrap of the West of the Euphrates³ reported to Darius that, when he asked the Jews why they were rebuilding the Temple, they replied not only that a decree of Cyrus had granted them permission,⁴ but that his legate Sheshbazzar had actually laid the foundation-stone upon his arrival at Jerusalem, and that the building had gone on without interruption from that time to 520.⁵ This last assertion, which of course was false, may have been due either to a misunderstanding of the Jewish elders by the reporting Satrap, or else to the Jews themselves, anxious to make their case as strong as possible. The latter is the more probable alternative. As even Stade admits, it was a very natural assertion for the Jews to make, and so conceal that their effort of 520 was due to the instigation of their own prophets. But in any case the Aramaic document corroborates the statement of the Compiler that there was a foundation-stone laid in the early years of Cyrus, and does not conceive this to be inconsistent with its own narrative of a stone being laid in 520, and an effective start at last made upon the Temple works. So much does Stade feel the force of this, that he concedes not only that Sheshbazzar may have started some preparation

¹ See above, pp. 210f.

³ Ezra v. 6.

⁵ *Ib.* 16.

² Ezra iv. 24, v. 1

⁴ *Ib.* 13.

for building the Temple, but that he may even have laid the stone with ceremony.¹

And indeed, is it not in itself very probable that some early attempt was made by the exiles returned under Cyrus to rebuild the house of Jehovah? Cyrus had been predicted by the Second Isaiah not only as the redeemer of God's people, but with equal explicitness as the builder of the Temple; and all the argument which Kuenen draws from the Second Isaiah for the fact of the Return from Babylon² tells with almost equal force for the fact of some efforts to raise the fallen sanctuary of Israel immediately after the Return. Among the returned were many priests, and many no doubt of the most sanguine spirits in Israel. They came straight from the heart of Jewry, though that heart was in Babylon; they came with the impetus and obligation of the great Deliverance upon them; they were the representatives of a community which we know to have been comparatively wealthy. Is it credible that they should not have begun the Temple at the earliest possible moment?

Nor is the story of their frustration by the Samaritans any less natural.³ It is true that there were not any adversaries likely to dispute with the colonists the land in the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem. The Edomites had overrun the fruitful country about

¹ *Gesch.*, II., p. 123.

² See above, p. 213.

³ Ezra iv. 1-4. "That the relation of Ezra iv. 1-4 is historical seems to be established against objections which have been taken to it by the reference to Esarhaddon, which A. v. Gutschmidt has vindicated by an ingenious historical combination with the aid of the Assyrian monuments (*Neue Beiträge*, p. 145)."—Robertson Smith, art. "Haggai," *Encyc. Brit.*

Hebron, and part of the Shephelah. The Samaritans held the rich valleys of Ephraim, and probably the plain of Ajalon. But if any peasants struggled with the stony plateaus of Benjamin and Northern Judah, such must have been of the remnants of the Jewish population who were left behind by Nebuchadrezzar, and who clung to the sacred soil from habit or from motives of religion. Jerusalem was never a site to attract men, either for agriculture, or, now that its shrine was desolate and its population scattered, for the command of trade.¹ The returned exiles must have been at first undisturbed by the envy of their neighbours. The tale is, therefore, probable which attributes the hostility of the latter to purely religious causes—the refusal of the Jews to allow the half-heathen Samaritans to share in the construction of the Temple.² Now the Samaritans could prevent the building. While stones were to be had by the builders in profusion from the ruins of the city and the great quarry to the north of it, ordinary timber did not grow in their neighbourhood, and though the story be true that a contract was already made with Phœnicians to bring cedar to Joppa, it had to be carried thence for thirty-six miles. Here, then, was the opportunity of the Samaritans. They could obstruct the carriage both of the ordinary timber and of the cedar. To this state of affairs the present writer found an analogy in 1891 among the Circassian colonies settled by the Turkish Government a few years earlier in the vicinity of Gerasa and Rabbath-Ammon. The colonists had built their houses from the numerous ruins of these cities, but at Rabbath-Ammon they said their great difficulty had been about timber. And we

¹ Cf. *Hist. Geog.*, pp. 317 ff.

² Ezra iv.

could well understand how the Beduin, who resented the settlement of Circassians on lands they had used for ages, and with whom the Circassians were nearly always at variance,¹ did what they could to make the carriage of timber impossible. Similarly with the Jews and their Samaritan adversaries. The site might be cleared and the stone of the Temple laid, but if the timber was stopped there was little use in raising the walls, and the Jews, further discouraged by the failure of their impetuous hopes of what the Return would bring them, found cause for desisting from their efforts. Bad seasons followed, the labours for their own sustenance exhausted their strength, and in the sordid toil their hearts grew hard to higher interests. Cyrus died in 529, and his legate Sheshbazzar, having done nothing, but lay the stone, appears to have left Judæa.² Cambyses marched more than once through Palestine, and his army garrisoned Gaza, but he was not a monarch to have any consideration for Jewish ambitions. Therefore—although Samaritan opposition ceased on the stoppage of the Temple works and the Jews procured timber enough for their private dwellings³—is it wonderful that the site of the Temple should be neglected and the stone laid by Sheshbazzar forgotten, or that the disappointed Jews should seek to explain the disillusion of the Return, by arguing that God's time for the restoration of His house had not yet come?

¹ There was a sharp skirmish at Rabbath-Ammon the night we spent there, and at least one Circassian was shot.

² "Sheshbazzar presumably having taken up his task with the usual conscientiousness of an Oriental governor, that is having done nothing though the work was nominally in hand all along (Ezra v. 16)."—Robertson Smith, art. "Haggai," *Encyc. Brit.*

³ See below, Chap. XVIII.

The death of a cruel monarch is always in the East an occasion for the revival of shattered hopes, and the events which accompanied the suicide of Cambyses in 522 were particularly fraught with the possibilities of political change. Cambyses' throne had been usurped by one Gaumata, who pretended to be Smerdis or Barada, a son of Cyrus. In a few months Gaumata was slain by a conspiracy of seven Persian nobles, of whom Darius, the son of Hystaspes, both by virtue of his royal descent and by his own great ability, was raised to the throne in 521. The empire had been too profoundly shocked by the revolt of Gaumata to settle at once under the new king, and Darius found himself engaged by insurrections in all his provinces except Syria and Asia Minor.¹ The colonists in Jerusalem, like all their Syrian neighbours, remained loyal to the new king; so loyal that their Peḥah or Satrap was allowed to be one of themselves—Zerubbabel, son of She'alti'el,² a son of their royal house. Yet though they were quiet, the nations were rising against each other and the world was shaken. It was just such a crisis as had often before in Israel reawakened prophecy. Nor did it fail now; and when prophecy was roused what duty lay more clamant for its inspiration than the duty of building the Temple?

We are in touch with the first of our post-exilic prophets, Haggai and Zechariah.

¹ Herod., I. 130, III. 127.

² I Chron. iii. 19 makes him a son of Pedaiah, brother of She'alti'el, son of Jehoiachin, the king who was carried away by Nebuchadrezzar in 597 and remained captive till 561, when King Evil-Merodach set him in honour. It has been supposed that, She'alti'el dying childless, Pedaiah by levirate marriage with his widow became father of Zerubbabel.

HAGGAI

Go up into the mountain, and fetch wood, and build the House.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

THE Book of Haggai contains thirty-eight verses, which have been divided between two chapters.¹ The text is, for the prophets, a comparatively sound one. The Greek version affords a number of corrections, but has also the usual amount of misunderstandings, and, as in the case of other prophets, a few additions to the Hebrew text.² These and the variations in the other ancient versions will be noted in the translation below.³

The book consists of four sections, each recounting a message from Jehovah to the Jews in Jerusalem in 520 B.C., *the second year of Darius (Hystaspis), by the hand of the prophet Haggai.*

The *first*, chap. i., dated the first day of the sixth month, during our September, reproves the Jews for building their own *cieled houses*, while they say that *the time for building Jehovah's house has not yet come*;

¹ In the English Bible the division corresponds to that of the Hebrew, which gives fifteen verses to chap. i. The LXX. takes the fifteenth verse along with ver. 1 of chap. ii.

² ii. 9, 14 : see on these passages, pp. 243, n. 1, 246, n. 4.

³ Besides the general works on the text of the Twelve Prophets, already cited, M. Tony Andrée has published *État Critique du Texte d'Aggée : Quatre Tableaux Comparatifs* (Paris, 1893), which is also included in his general introduction and commentary on the prophet, quoted below.

affirms that this is the reason of their poverty and of a great drought which has afflicted them. A piece of narrative is added recounting how Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the heads of the community, were stirred by this word to lead the people to begin work on the Temple, on the twenty-fourth day of the same month.

The *second* section, chap. ii. 1-9, contains a message, dated the twenty-first day of the seventh month, during our October, in which the builders are encouraged for their work. Jehovah is about to shake all nations, these shall contribute of their wealth, and the latter glory of the Temple be greater than the former.

The *third* section, chap. ii. 10-19, contains a word of Jehovah which came to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, during our December. It is in the form of a parable based on certain ceremonial laws, according to which the touch of a holy thing does not sanctify so much as the touch of an unholy pollutes. Thus is the people polluted, and thus every work of their hands. Their sacrifices avail nought, and adversity has persisted: small increase of fruits, blasting, mildew and hail. But from this day God will bless.

The *fourth* section, chap. ii. 20-23, is a second word from the Lord to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. It is for Zerubbabel, and declares that God will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the forces of many of the Gentiles by war. In that day Zerubbabel, the Lord's elect servant, shall be as a signet to the Lord.

The authenticity of all these four sections was doubted by no one,¹ till ten years ago W. Böhme,

¹ Robertson Smith (*Encyc. Brit.*, art. "Haggai," 1880) does not even mention authenticity. "Without doubt from Haggai himself" (Kuenen). "The Book of Haggai is without doubt to be dated,

besides pointing out some useless repetitions of single words and phrases, cast suspicion on chap. i. 13, and questioned the whole of the *fourth* section, chap. ii. 20-23.¹ With regard to chap. i. 13, it is indeed curious that Haggai should be described as *the messenger of Jehovah*; while the message itself, *I am with you*, seems superfluous here, and if the verse be omitted, ver. 14 runs on naturally to ver. 12.² Böhme's reasons for disputing the authenticity of chap. ii. 20-23 are much less sufficient. He thinks he sees the hand of an editor in the phrase *for a second time* in ver. 20; notes the omission of the title "prophet"³ after Haggai's name, and the difference of the formula *the word came to Haggai* from that employed in the previous sections, *by the hand of Haggai*, and the repetition of ver. 6*b* in ver. 21; and otherwise concludes that the section is an insertion from a later hand. But the formula *the word came to Haggai* occurs also in ii. 10:⁴ the other points are trivial, and while it was most natural for Haggai the contemporary of Zerubbabel to entertain of the latter such hopes as the passage expresses, it is inconceivable that a later writer, who knew how they had not been fulfilled in Zerubbabel, should have invented them.⁵

Recently M. Tony Andrée, *privat-docent* in the University of Geneva, has issued a large work on Haggai,⁶ in which he has sought to prove that the *third* section of

according to its whole extant contents, from the prophet Haggai, whose work fell in the year 520" (König). So Driver, Kirkpatrick, Cornill, etc.

¹ *Z.A.T.W.*, 1887, 215 f.

³ Which occurs only in the LXX.

² So also Wellhausen.

⁴ See note on that verse.

⁵ Cf. Wildeboer, *Litter. des A. T.*, 294.

⁶ *Le Prophète Aggee, Introduction Critique et Commentaire*. Paris, Fischbacher, 1873.

the book, chap. ii. (10) 11-19, is from the hand of another writer than the rest. He admits¹ that in neither form, nor style, nor language is there anything to prove this distinction, and that the ideas of all the sections suit perfectly the condition of the Jews in the time soon after the Return. But he considers that chap. ii. (10) 11-19 interrupts the connection between the sections upon either side of it; that the author is a legalist or casuist, while the author of the other sections is a man whose only ecclesiastical interest is the rebuilding of the Temple; that there are obvious contradictions between chap. ii. (10) 11-19 and the rest of the book; and that there is a difference of vocabulary. Let us consider each of these reasons.

The first, that chap. ii. (10) 11-19 interrupts the connection between the sections on either side of it, is true only in so far as it has a different subject from that which the latter have more or less in common. But the second of the latter, chap. ii. 20-23, treats only of a corollary of the first, chap. ii. 1-9, and that corollary may well have formed the subject of a separate oracle. Besides, as we shall see, chap. ii. 10-19 is a natural development of chap. i.² The contradictions alleged by M. Andrée are two. He points out that while chap. i. speaks only of a *drought*,³ chap. ii. (10) 11-19 mentions⁴ as the plagues on the crops *shiddāphôn* and *yērākôn*, generally rendered *blasting* and *mildew* in our English Bible, and *bārād*, or *hail*; and these he reckons to be plagues due not to drought but to excessive moisture. But *shiddāphôn* and *yērākôn*, which are always connected in the Old Testament and are words of doubtful meaning, are not referred to damp in any of the passages in

¹ Page 151.

² Below, p. 249.

³ i. 10, 11.

⁴ ii. 17.

which they occur, but, on the contrary, appear to be the consequences of drought.¹ The other contradiction alleged refers to the ambiguous verse ii. 18, on which we have already seen it difficult to base any conclusion, and which will be treated when we come to it in the course of translation.² Finally, the differences in language which M. Andrée cites are largely imaginary, and it is hard to understand how a responsible critic has come to cite, far more to emphasise them, as he has done. We may relegate the discussion of them to a note,³ and need here only remark that there is among

¹ They follow drought in Amos iv. 9; and in the other passages where they occur—Deut. xxviii. 22; 1 Kings viii. 37; 2 Chron. vi. 28—they are mentioned in a list of possible plagues after famine, or pestilence, or fevers, all of which, with the doubtful exception of fevers, followed drought.

² Above, p. 216; below, p. 248, n. 2.

³ Some of M. Andrée's alleged differences need not be discussed at all, e.g. that between מִפְּנֵי and לְפָנָי. But here are the others. He asserts that while chap. i. calls *oil and wine* "yīshar and tīrōsh," chap. ii. (10) 11-19 calls them "yayin and shemen." But he overlooks the fact that the former pair of names, meaning the newly pressed oil and wine, suit their connection, in which the fruits of the earth are being catalogued, i. 11, while the latter pair, meaning the finished wine and oil, equally suit their connection, in which articles of food are being catalogued, ii. 12. Equally futile is the distinction drawn between i. 9, which speaks of bringing the crops *to the house*, or as we should say *home*, and ii. 19, which speaks of seed being *in the barn*. Again, what is to be said of a critic who adduces in evidence of distinction of authorship the fact that i. 6 employs the verb labhash, *to clothe*, while ii. 12 uses beged for *garment*, and who actually puts in brackets the root bagad, as if it anywhere in the Old Testament meant *to clothe*! Again, Andrée remarks that while ii. (10) 11-19 does not employ the epithet *Jehovah of Hosts*, but only *Jehovah*, the rest of the book frequently uses the former; but he omits to observe that the rest of the book, besides using *Jehovah of Hosts*, often uses the name *Jehovah* alone [the phrase in ii. (10) 11-19 is נָאִם יְהוָה, and occurs twice ii. 14, 17; but the rest of the book has also נָאִם יְהוָה, ii. 4; and besides יהוה יהוה, i. 1, ii. 1, ii. 20; אָמַר יְהוָה, i. 8; and מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה and אֱלֹהִים, i. 12]. Again, Andrée observes

them but one of any significance: while the rest of the book calls the Temple *the House* or *the House of Jehovah* (or *of Jehovah of Hosts*), chap. ii. (10) 11-19 styles it *palace*, or temple, of Jehovah.¹ On such a difference between two comparatively brief passages it would be unreasonable to decide for a distinction of authorship.

There is, therefore, no reason to disagree with the consensus of all other critics in the integrity of the Book of Haggai. The four sections are either from himself or from a contemporary of his. They probably represent,² not the full addresses given by him on the occasions stated, but abstracts or summaries of these. "It is never an easy task to persuade a whole population to make pecuniary sacrifices, or to postpone private to public interests; and the probability is, that in these brief remains of the prophet Haggai we have but one or two specimens of a ceaseless diligence and persistent determination, which upheld and animated the whole people till the work was accomplished."³

that while the rest of the book designates Israel always by **עַם** and the heathen by **גוֹי**, chap. ii. (10) 11-19, in ver. 14, uses both terms of Israel. Yet in this latter case **גוֹי** is used only in parallel to **עַם**, as frequently in other parts of the Old Testament. Again, that while in the rest of the book Haggai is called the prophet (the doubtful i. 13 may be omitted), he is simply named in ii. (10) 11-19, means nothing, for the name here occurs only in introducing his contribution to a conversation, in recording which it was natural to omit titles. Similarly insignificant is the fact that while the rest of the book mentions only *the High Priest*, chap. ii. (10) 11-19 talks only of *the priests*: because here again each is suitable to the connection.—Two or three of André's alleged grounds (such as that from the names for wine and oil and that from labhash and beged) are enough to discredit his whole case.

¹ ii. 15, 18.

² In this opinion, stated first by Eichhorn, most critics agree.

³ Marcus Dods, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi*, 1879, in *Handbooks for Bible Classes*: Edin., T. & T. Clark.

At the same time it must be noticed that the style of the book is not wholly of the bare, jejune prose which it is sometimes described to be. The passages of Haggai's own exhortation are in the well-known parallel rhythm of prophetic discourse: see especially chap. i., ver. 6.

The only other matter of Introduction to the prophet Haggai is his name. The precise form¹ is not elsewhere found in the Old Testament; but one of the clans of the tribe of Gad is called Haggi,² and the letters H G I occur as the consonants of a name on a Phœnician inscription.³ Some⁴ have taken Haggai to be a contraction of Haggiyah, the name of a Levitical family,⁵ but although the final *yod* of some proper names stands for Jehovah, we cannot certainly conclude that it is so in this case. Others⁶ see in Haggai a probable contraction for Hagariah,⁷ as Zaccai, the original of Zacchæus, is a contraction of Zechariah.⁸ A more general opinion⁹ takes the termination as adjectival,¹⁰ and the root to be "hag," *feast* or *festival*.¹¹ In that case Haggai would mean *festal*, and it has been supposed that the name would be given to him from

¹ חַגַּי, Greek 'Αγγαῖος.

² חַגַּי, Gen. xlvi. 16, Num. xxvi. 15; Greek 'Αγγει, 'Αγγεις. The feminine חַגַּיִת, Haggith, was the name of one of David's wives: 2 Sam. iii. 4.

³ No. 67 of the Phœnician inscriptions in *C. I. S.*

⁴ Hiller, *Onom. Sacrum*, Tüb., 1706 (quoted by Andrée), and Pusey.

⁵ חַגַּיָה, 1 Chron. vi. 15; Greek 'Αγγια, Lu. 'Αναια.

⁶ Köhler, *Nachexil. Proph.*, i. 2; Wellhausen in fourth edition of Bleek's *Einleitung*; Robertson Smith, *Encyc. Brit.*, art. "Haggai."

⁷ חַגַּיָה = *Jehovah hath girded*.

⁸ Derenbourg, *Hist. de la Palestine*, pp. 95, 150.

⁹ Jerome, Gesenius, and most moderns.

¹⁰ As in the names חַגַּי, חַגַּיִת, חַגַּיִת, etc.

¹¹ The radical double *g* of which appears in composition.

his birth on the day of some feast. It is impossible to decide with certainty among these alternatives. M. Andrée,¹ who accepts the meaning *festal*, ventures the hypothesis that, like "Malachi," Haggai is a symbolic title given by a later hand to the anonymous writer of the book, because of the coincidence of his various prophecies with solemn festivals.² But the name is too often and too naturally introduced into the book to present any analogy to that of "Malachi"; and the hypothesis may be dismissed as improbable and unnatural.

Nothing more is known of Haggai than his name and the facts given in his book. But as with the other prophets whom we have treated, so with this one, Jewish and Christian legends have been very busy. Other functions have been ascribed to him; a sketch of his biography has been invented. According to the Rabbis he was one of the men of the Great Synagogue, and with Zechariah and "Malachi" transmitted to that mythical body the tradition of the older prophets.³ He was the author of several ceremonial regulations, and with Zechariah and "Malachi" introduced into the alphabet the terminal forms of the five elongated letters.⁴ The Christian Fathers narrate that he was of the tribe of Levi,⁵ that with Zechariah he prophesied in exile of the Return,⁶ and was still young when he arrived in Jerusalem,⁷ where he died and was

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 8.

² i. 1, the new moon; ii. 1, the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles; ii. 18, the foundation of the Temple (?).

³ Baba-bathra, 15a, etc.

⁴ Megilla, 2b.

⁵ Hesychius: see above, p. 80, n.

⁶ Augustine, *Enarratio in Psalm cxlvii*.

⁷ Pseud-Epiphanius, *De Vitis Prophetarum*.

buried. A strange legend, founded on the doubtful verse which styles him *the messenger of Jehovah*, gave out that Haggai, as well as for similar reasons "Malachi" and John the Baptist, were not men, but angels in human shape.¹ With Zechariah Haggai appears on the titles of Psalms cxxxvii., cxlv.—cxlviii. in the Septuagint; cxi., cxlv., cxlvi. in the Vulgate; and cxxv., cxxvi. and cxlv.—cxlviii. in the Peshitto.² "In the Temple at Jerusalem he was the first who chanted the Hallelujah, . . . wherefore we say: Hallelujah, which is the hymn of Haggai and Zechariah."³ All these testimonies are, of course, devoid of value.

Finally, the modern inference from chap. ii. 3, that Haggai in his youth had seen the former Temple, had gone into exile, and was now returned a very old man,⁴ may be probable, but is not certain. We are quite ignorant of his age at the time the word of Jehovah came to him.

¹ Jerome on Hag. i. 13.

² Eusebius did not find these titles in the Hexaplar Septuagint. See Field's *Hexaplar* on Psalm cxlv. 1. The titles are of course wholly without authority.

³ Pseud-Epiphanius, as above.

⁴ So Ewald, Wildeboer (p. 295) and others.

CHAPTER XVIII

HAGGAI AND THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

HAGGAI i., ii

WE have seen that the most probable solution of the problems presented to us by the inadequate and confused records of the time is that a considerable number of Jewish exiles returned from Jerusalem to Babylon about 537, upon the permission of Cyrus, and that the Satrap whom he sent with them not only allowed them to raise the altar on its ancient site, but himself laid for them the foundation-stone of the Temple.¹

We have seen, too, why this attempt led to nothing, and we have followed the Samaritan obstructions, the failure of the Persian patronage, the drought and bad harvests, and all the disillusion of the fifteen years which succeeded the Return.² The hostility of the Samaritans was entirely due to the refusal of the Jews to give them a share in the construction of the

¹ See above, pp. 210-18, and emphasise specially the facts that the most pronounced adherents of Koster's theory seek to qualify his absolute negation of a Return under Cyrus, by the admission that some Jews did return; and that even Stade, who agrees in the main with Schrader that no attempt was made by the Jews to begin building the Temple till 520, admits the probability of a stone being laid by Sheshbazzar about 536.

² See above, pp. 218 ff.

Temple, and its virulence, probably shown by preventing the Jews from procuring timber, seems to have ceased when the Temple works were stopped. At least we find no mention of it in our prophets; and the Jews are furnished with enough of timber to panel and ciel their own houses.¹ But the Jews must have feared a renewal of Samaritan attacks if they resumed work on the Temple, and for the rest they were too sodden with adversity, and too weighted with the care of their own sustenance, to spring at higher interests. What immediately precedes our prophets is a miserable story of barren seasons and little income, money leaking fast away, and every man's sordid heart engrossed with his own household. Little wonder that critics have been led to deny the great Return of sixteen years back, with its grand ambitions for the Temple and glorious future of Israel. But the like collapse has often been experienced in history when bands of religious men, going forth, as they thought, to freedom and the immediate erection of a holy commonwealth, have found their unity wrecked and their enthusiasm dissipated by a few inclement seasons on a barren and a hostile shore. Nature and their barbarous fellow-men have frustrated what God had promised. Themselves, accustomed from a high stage of civilisation to plan still higher social structures, are suddenly reduced to the primitive necessities of tillage and defence against a savage foe. Statesmen, poets and idealists of sorts have to hoe the ground, quarry stones and stay up of nights to watch as sentinels. Destitute of the comforts and resources with which they have grown up, they live in constant battle with their bare and unsympathetic

¹ Hag. i. 4.

environs. It is a familiar tale in history, and we read it with ease in the case of Israel. The Jews enjoyed this advantage, that they came not to a strange land, but to one crowded with inspiring memories, and they had behind them the most glorious impetus of prophecy which ever sent a people forward to the future. Yet the very ardours of this hurried them past a due appreciation of the difficulties they would have to encounter, and when they found themselves on the stony soil of Judah, which they had been idealising for fifty years, and were further afflicted by barren seasons, their hearts must have suffered an even more bitter disillusion than has so frequently fallen to the lot of religious emigrants to an absolutely new coast.

I. THE CALL TO BUILD (Chap. i.).

It was to this situation, upon an autumn day, when the colonists felt another year of beggarly effort behind them and their wretched harvest had been brought home, that the prophet Haggai addressed himself. With rare sense he confined his efforts to the practical needs of the moment. The sneers of modern writers have not been spared upon a style that is crabbed and jejune, and they have esteemed this to be a collapse of the prophetic spirit, in which Haggai ignored all the achievements of prophecy and interpreted the word of God as only a call to hew wood and lay stone upon stone. But the man felt what the moment needed, and that is the supreme mark of the prophet. Set a prophet there, and what else could a prophet have done? It would have been futile to awaken those most splendid voices of the past, which had in part been the reason of the people's disappointment, and equally futile to interpret the mission of the great

world powers towards God's people. What God's people themselves could do for themselves—that was what needed telling at the moment; and if Haggai told it with a meagre and starved style, this also was in harmony with the occasion. One does not expect it otherwise when hungry men speak to each other of their duty.

Nor does Haggai deserve blame that he interpreted the duty as the material building of the Temple. This was no mere ecclesiastical function. Without the Temple the continuity of Israel's religion could not be maintained. An independent state, with the full courses of civic life, was then impossible. The ethical spirit, the regard for each other and God, could prevail over their material interests in no other way than by common devotion to the worship of the God of their fathers. In urging them to build the Temple from their own unaided resources, in abstaining from all hopes of imperial patronage, in making the business one, not of sentiment nor of comfortable assurance derived from the past promises of God, but of plain and hard duty—Haggai illustrated at once the sanity and the spiritual essence of prophecy in Israel.

Professor Robertson Smith has contrasted the central importance which Haggai attached to the Temple with the attitude of Isaiah and Jeremiah, to whom "the religion of Israel and the holiness of Jerusalem have little to do with the edifice of the Temple. The city is holy because it is the seat of Jehovah's sovereignty on earth, exerted in His dealings with and for the state of Judah and the kingdom of David."¹ At the same time it ought to be pointed out that even to Isaiah the

Temple was the dwelling-place of Jehovah, and if it had been lying in ruins at his feet, as it was at Haggai's, there is little doubt he would have been as earnest as Haggai in urging its reconstruction. Nor did the Second Isaiah, who has as lofty an idea of the spiritual destiny of the people as any other prophet, lay less emphasis upon the cardinal importance of the Temple to their life, and upon the certainty of its future glory.

In the second year of Darius¹ the king, in the sixth month and the first day of the month—that is, on the feast of the new moon—the word of Jehovah came by² Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel, son of She'alti'el,³ Satrap of Judah, and to Jehoshua', son of Jehoşadaq,⁴ the high priest—the civil and religious heads of the community—as follows⁵ :—

Thus hath Jehovah of Hosts spoken, saying: This people have said, Not yet⁶ is come the time for the building of Jehovah's House. Therefore Jehovah's word is come by Haggai the prophet, saying: Is it a time for you—you⁷—to be dwelling in houses cieled with planks,⁸ while this House is waste? And now thus saith Jehovah of Hosts: Lay to heart how things have gone with you.⁹ Ye

¹ Heb. Daryavesh.

⁴ See below, pp. 258, 279, 292 ff.

² Heb. *by the hand of*.

⁵ Heb. *saying*.

³ See above, pp. 199 f. and 221.

⁶ For לֹא עֵתָא לָבֹא = *not the time of coming* read with Hitzig and Wellhausen נִבְרָא עַתָּא לָא, *not now is come*; for עַתָּא cf. Ezek. xxiii. 4, Psalm lxxiv. 6.

⁷ The emphasis may be due only to the awkward grammatical construction.

⁸ סִפּוּנִים, from סָפַד, *to cover* with planks of cedar, 2 Kings vi. 9: cf. iii. 7.

⁹ Heb. *set your hearts* (see Vol. I., pp. 258, 275, 321, 323) *upon your ways*; but *your ways* cannot mean here, as elsewhere, *your conduct*, but obviously from what follows *the ways* you have been led, *the way* things have gone with you—the barren seasons and little income.

sowed much but had little income, ate and were not satisfied, drank and were not full, put on clothing and there was no warmth, while he that earned wages has earned them into a bag with holes.

Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts:¹ Go up into the mountain—the hill-country of Judah—and bring in timber, and build the House, that I may take pleasure in it, and show My glory, saith Jehovah. Ye looked for much and it has turned out little,² and what ye brought home I puffed at. On account of what?—oracle of Jehovah of Hosts—on account of My House which is waste, while ye are hurrying every man after his own house. Therefore³ hath heaven shut off the dew,⁴ and earth shut off her increase. And I have called drought upon the earth, both upon the mountains,⁵ and upon the corn, and upon the wine, and upon the oil, and upon what the ground brings forth, and upon man, and upon beast, and upon all the labour of the hands.

For ourselves, Haggai's appeal to the barren seasons and poverty of the people as proof of God's anger with their selfishness must raise questions. But we have already seen, not only that natural calamities were by the ancient world interpreted as the penal instruments of the Deity, but that all through history they have had a wonderful influence on the spirits of men, forcing them to search their own hearts and to believe that

¹ The Hebrew and Versions here insert *set your hearts upon your ways*, obviously a mere clerical repetition from ver. 5.

² For והנה למעט read with the LXX. והיה למעט or יהיה.

³ The עליכם here inserted in the Hebrew text is unparseable, not found in the LXX. and probably a clerical error by dittography from the preceding על-כן.

⁴ Heb. *heavens are shut from dew*. But perhaps the מ of מטל should be deleted. So Wellhausen. There is no instance of an intransitive Qal of בלל.

⁵ Query ?

Providence is conducted for other ends than those of our physical prosperity. "Have not those who have believed as Amos believed ever been the strong spirits of our race, making the very disasters which crushed them to the earth the tokens that God has great views about them?"¹ Haggai, therefore, takes no sordid view of Providence when he interprets the seasons, from which his countrymen had suffered, as God's anger upon their selfishness and delay in building His House.

The straight appeal to the conscience of the Jews had an immediate effect. Within three weeks they began work on the Temple.

*And Zerubbabel, son of She'alti'el, and Jehoshua', son of Jehoşadaq, the high priest, and all the rest of the people, hearkened to the voice of Jehovah their God, and to the words of Haggai the prophet, as Jehovah their God had sent him; and the people feared before the face of Jehovah. [And Haggai, the messenger of Jehovah, in Jehovah's mission to the people, spake, saying, I am with you—oracle of Jehovah.]*² *And Jehovah stirred the spirit of Zerubbabel, son of She'alti'el, Satrap of Judah, and the spirit of Jehoshua', son of Jehoşadaq, the high priest, and the spirit of all the rest of the people; and they went and did work in the House of Jehovah of Hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.*³

Note how the narrative emphasises that the new energy was, as it could not but be from Haggai's unflattering words, a purely spiritual result. It was

¹ Vol. I., pp. 162 ff.

² See above, p. 227.

³ The LXX. wrongly takes this last verse of chap. i. as the first half of the first verse of chap. ii.

the *spirit* of Zerubbabel, and the *spirit* of Jehoshua, and the *spirit* of all the rest of the people, which was stirred—their conscience and radical force of character. Not in vain had the people suffered their great disillusion under Cyrus, if now their history was to start again from sources so inward and so pure.

2. COURAGE, ZERUBBABEL! COURAGE, JEHOShUA AND ALL THE PEOPLE! (Chap. ii. 1-9).

The second occasion on which Haggai spoke to the people was another feast the same autumn, the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles,¹ the twenty-first of the seventh month. For nearly four weeks the work on the Temple had proceeded. Some progress must have been made, for comparisons became possible between the old Temple and the state of this one. Probably the outline and size of the building were visible. In any case it was enough to discourage the builders with their efforts and the means at their disposal. Haggai's new word is a very simple one of encouragement. The people's conscience had been stirred by his first; they needed now some hope. Consequently he appeals to what he had ignored before, the political possibilities which the present state of the world afforded—always a source of prophetic promise. But again he makes his former call upon their own courage and resources. The Hebrew text contains a reference to the Exodus which would be appropriate to a discourse delivered during the Feast of Tabernacles, but it is not found in the Septuagint, and is so impossible to construe that it has been justly suspected as a gloss, inserted by some later hand, only

¹ Lev. xxiii. 34, 36, 40-42.

because the passage had to do with the Feast of Tabernacles.

In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of Jehovah came by¹ Haggai the prophet, saying:—

Speak now to Zerubbabel, son of She'alti'el, Satrap of Judah, and to Jehoshua', son of Jehoşadaq, the high priest, and to the rest of the people, saying: Who among you is left that saw this House in its former glory, and how do ye see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes?² And now courage,³ O Zerubbabel—oracle of Jehovah—and courage, Jehoshua', son of Jehoşadaq, O high priest;⁴ and courage, all people of the land!—oracle of Jehovah; and get to work, for I am with you—oracle of Jehovah of Hosts⁵—and My Spirit is standing in your midst. Fear not! For thus saith Jehovah of Hosts: It is but a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the costly things⁶ of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this House with glory, saith

¹ *By the hand of.*

² הֲלֹא כְמוֹהוּ כִּי־אֵין בְּעֵינֵיכֶם. Literally, *is not the like of it as nothing in your eyes?* But that can hardly be the meaning. It might be equivalent to *is it not, as it stands, as nothing in your eyes?* But the fact is that in Hebrew construction of a simple, unemphasised comparison, the comparing particle כ stands before *both* objects compared: as, for instance, in the phrase (Gen. xliv. 18) בִּי כְמוֹדֵךְ בְּפַרְעֹה, *thou art as Pharaoh.*

³ Literally: *be strong.*

⁴ It is difficult to say whether *high priest* belongs to the text or not.

⁵ Here occurs the anacolouthic clause, introduced by an acc. without a verb, which is not found in the LXX. and is probably a gloss (see above, p. 241): *The promise which I made with you in your going forth from Egypt.*

⁶ Hebrew has singular, *costly thing* or *desirableness*, חֲמוּדָה (fem. for neut.), but the verb *shall come* is in the plural, and the LXX. has τὰ ἐκλεκτά, *the choice things.* See below, next page.

*Jehovah of Hosts. Mine is the silver and Mine the gold—oracle of Jehovah of Hosts. Greater shall the latter glory of this House be than the former, saith Jehovah of Hosts, and in this place will I give peace*¹—*oracle of Jehovah of Hosts.*

From the earliest times this passage, by the majority of the Christian Church, has been interpreted of the coming of Christ. The Vulgate renders ver. 7b, *Et veniet Desideratus cunctis gentibus*, and so a large number of the Latin Fathers, who are followed by Luther, *Der Trost aller Heiden*, and by our own Authorised Version, *And the Desire of all nations shall come*. This was not contrary to Jewish tradition, for Rabbi Akiba had defined the clause of the Messiah, and Jerome received the interpretation from his Jewish instructors. In itself the noun, as pointed in the Massoretic text, means *longing* or *object of longing*.² But the verb which goes with it is in the plural, and by a change of points the noun itself may be read as a plural.³ That this was the original reading is made extremely probable by the fact that it lay before the translators of the Septuagint, who render: *the picked*,

¹ The LXX. add a parallel clause *καὶ ἐρήνην ψυχῆς εἰς περιποίησιν παντὶ τῷ κτίζοντι τοῦ ἀναστήσαι τὸν ναὸν τοῦτου*, which would read in Hebrew הַשְׁלֵוֹת נַפְשֵׁי לְחַיֹּת כָּל-הַיִּסְדֵּר לְקוֹמָם הַהִיבֵל הַזֶּה. On הַיִּוֹת Wellhausen cites 1 Chron. xi. 8, = *restore* or *revive*.

² תְּמַדָּה = *longing*, 2 Chron. xxi. 2, and *object of longing*, Dan. xi. 37. It is the feminine or neuter, and might be rendered as a collective, *desirable things*. Pusey cites Cicero's address to his wife: *Valete, mea desideria, valete* (*Ep. ad Famil.*, xiv. 2 fin.).

³ תְּמַדָּה, plural feminine of pass. part., as in Gen. xxvii. 15, where it is an adjective, but used as a noun = *precious things*, Dan. xi. 38, 43, which use meets the objection of Pusey, *in loco*, where he wrongly maintains that *precious things*, if intended, must have been expressed by תְּמַדָּה.

or *chosen, things of the nations*.¹ So the old Italic version: *Et venient omnia electa gentium*.² Moreover this meaning suits the context, as the other does not. The next verse mentions silver and gold. "We may understand what he says," writes Calvin, "of Christ; we indeed know that Christ was the expectation of the whole world; . . . but as it immediately follows, *Mine is the silver and Mine is the gold*, the more simple meaning is that which I first stated: that the nations would come, bringing with them all their riches, that they might offer themselves and all their possessions a sacrifice to God."³

3. THE POWER OF THE UNCLEAN (Chap. ii. 10-19).

Haggai's third address to the people is based on a deliverance which he seeks from the priests. The Book of Deuteronomy had provided that, in all difficult cases not settled by its own code, the people shall seek a *deliverance* or *Torah* from the priests, and shall observe to do according to the deliverance which the priests deliver to thee.⁴ Both noun and verb, which may be thus literally translated, are also used for the completed and canonical Law in Israel, and they signify that in the time of the composition of the Book of Deuteronomy that Law was still regarded as in process of growth. So it is also in the time of Haggai: he

¹ ἤξει τὰ ἐκλεκτὰ πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν. Theodore of Mopsuestia takes it as *elect persons of all nations*, to which a few moderns adhere.

² Augustini *Contra Donatistas post Collationem*, cap. xx. 30 (Migne, *Latin Patrology*, XLIII., p. 671).

³ Calvin, *Comm. in Haggai*, ii. 6-9.

⁴ Deut. xvii. 8 ff.: עַל־פִּי הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר יוֹרִיךְ. Compare the expression בּוֹתֵן מוֹרָה, 2 Chron. xv. 3, and the duties of the teaching priests assigned by the Chronicler (2 Chron. xvii. 7-9) to the days of Jehoshaphat.

does not consult a code of laws, nor asks the priests what the canon says, as, for instance, our Lord does with the question, *how readest thou?* But he begs them to give him a Torah or *deliverance*,¹ based of course upon existing custom, but not yet committed to writing.² For the history of the Law in Israel this is, therefore, a passage of great interest.

On the twenty-fourth of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of Jehovah came to³ Haggai the prophet, saying: Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, Ask, I pray, of the priests a deliverance,⁴ saying:—

If a man be carrying flesh that is holy in the skirt of his robe, and with his skirt touch bread or pottage or wine or oil or any food, shall the latter become holy? And the priests gave answer and said, No! And Haggai said, If one unclean by a corpse⁵ touch any of these, shall the latter become unclean? And the priests gave answer and said, It shall. That is to say, holiness which passed from the source to an object immediately in touch with the latter did not spread further; but pollution infected not only the person who came into

¹ Note that it is not *the Torah*, but *a Torah*.

² The nearest passage to the *deliverance* of the priests to Haggai is Lev. vi. 20, 21 (Heb.), 27, 28 (Eng.). This is part of the Priestly Code not promulgated till 445 B.C., but based, of course, on long extant custom, some of it very ancient. *Everything that touches the flesh (of the sin-offering, which is holy) shall be holy—יִקְרָשׁ*, the verb used by the priests in their answer to Haggai—and when any of its blood has been sprinkled on a garment, that whereon it was sprinkled shall be washed in a holy place. The earthen vessel wherein it has been boiled shall be broken, and if it has been boiled in a brazen vessel, this shall be scoured and rinsed with water.

³ So several old edd. and many codd., and adopted by Baer (see his note *in loco*) in his text. But most of the edd. of the Massoretic text read בִּיר after Cod. Hill. For the importance of the question see above, p. 227.

⁴ Torah.

⁵ תִּמְאָה נֶפֶשׁ

contact with it, but whatever he touched.¹ "The flesh of the sacrifice hallowed whatever it should touch, but not further ;² but the human being who was defiled by touching a dead body, defiled all he might touch."³ *And Haggai answered and said: So is this people, and so is this nation before Me—oracle of Jehovah—and so is all the work of their hands, and what they offer there—at the altar erected on its old site—is unclean.*⁴ That is to say, while the Jews had expected their restored ritual to make them holy to the Lord, this had not been effective, while, on the contrary, their contact with sources of pollution had thoroughly polluted both themselves and their labour and their sacrifices. What these sources of pollution are is not explicitly stated, but Haggai, from his other messages, can only mean, either the people's want of energy in building the Temple, or the unbuilt Temple itself. Andrée goes so far as to compare the latter with the corpse, whose

¹ There does not appear to be the contrast between indirect contact with a holy thing and direct contact with a polluted which Wellhausen says there is. In either case the articles whose character is in question stand second from the source of holiness and pollution—the holy flesh and the corpse.

² See above, p. 245, n. 2.

³ Pusey, *in loco*.

⁴ The LXX. have here found inserted three other clauses: *ἐνεκεν τῶν λημμάτων αὐτῶν τῶν ὀρθρινῶν, ὀδυνηθήσονται ἀπὸ προσώπου πόνων αὐτῶν, καὶ ἐμισείτε ἐν πύλαις ἐλέγχοντας*. The first clause is a misreading (Wellhausen), *יַעַן לְקַחְתֶּם שֹׁחַד* for *יַעַן לְקַחְתֶּם שֹׁחַד*, *because ye take a bribe*, and goes well with the third clause, modified from Amos v. 10: *שָׂנְאוּ בְּשַׁעַר מוֹכֵיחַ*, *they hate him who reproves in the gate*. These may have been inserted into the Hebrew text by some one puzzled to know what the source of the people's pollution was, and who absurdly found it in sins which in Haggai's time it was impossible to impute to them. The middle clause, *יִתְעַנּוּ כֹפְרֵי* *עֲצָבֵיהֶם*, *they vex themselves with their labours*, is suitable to the sense of the Hebrew text of the verse, as Wellhausen points out, but besides gives a connection with what follows.

touch, according to the priests, spreads infection through more than one degree. In any case Haggai means to illustrate and enforce the building of the Temple without delay; and meantime he takes one instance of the effect he has already spoken of, *the work of their hands*, and shows how it has been spoilt by their neglect and delay. *And now, I pray, set your hearts backward from to-day,¹ before stone was laid upon stone in the Temple of Jehovah: . . .² when one came to a heap of grain of twenty measures, and it had become ten, or went to the winevat to draw fifty measures,³ and it had become twenty. I smote you with blasting and with withering,⁴ and with hail all the work of your hands, and . . .⁵—oracle of Jehovah. Lay now your hearts on the time before to-day⁶ (the twenty-fourth day of the*

¹ From this day and onward.

² Heb. literally *since they were*. A.V. *since those days were*.

³ Winevat, כַּבֵּי, is distinguished from winepress, תַּנּוּ, in Josh. ix. 13, and is translated by the Greek ὑπολήμιον Mark xii. 1, λημόν Matt. xxi. 33, *dug a pit for the winepress*; but the name is applied sometimes to the whole winepress—Hosea ix. 2 etc., Job xxiv. 11, *to tread the winepress*. The word translated *measures*, as in LXX. μετρητάς, is פַּיִרָה, and that is properly the vat in which the grapes were trodden (Isa. lxiii. 3), but here it can scarcely mean fifty *vatsfuls*, but must refer to some smaller measure—cask?

⁴ See above, pp. 228 f., n. 1.

⁵ The words omitted cannot be construed in the Hebrew, לֹא אִין אֶתְכֶם אֵין, literally *and not you (acc.) to Me*. Hitzig, etc., propose to read אֵין אֶתְכֶם and render *there was none with you who turned to Me*. Others propose אֵין אֶתְכֶם, *as if none of you turned to Me*. Others retain אֵין אֶתְכֶם and render *as for you*. The versions LXX. Syr., Vulg. *ye will not return or did not return to Me*, reading perhaps for אֵין אֶתְכֶם, לֹא אֵין אֶתְכֶם, which is found in Amos iv. 9, of which the rest of the verse is an echo. Wellhausen deletes the whole verse as a gloss. It is certainly suspicious, and remarkable in that the LXX. text has already introduced two citations from Amos. See above on ver. 14.

⁶ Heb. *from this day backwards*.

*ninth month*¹), before the day of the foundation of the Temple of Jehovah²—lay your hearts to that time! Is

¹ The date Wellhausen thinks was added by a later hand.

² This is the ambiguous clause on different interpretations of which so much has been founded: לָמֶן הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר יָסַד הַיְכָל יְהוָה. Does this clause, in simple parallel to the previous one, describe the day on which the prophet was speaking, *the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month*, the *terminus a quo* of the people's retrospect? In that case Haggai regards the foundation-stone of the Temple as laid on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month 520 B.C., and does not know, or at least ignores, any previous laying of a foundation-stone. So Kuenen, Kusters, Andrée, etc. Or does לָמֶן signify *up to the time the foundation-stone was laid*, and state a *terminus ad quem* for the people's retrospect? So Ewald and others, who therefore find in the verse a proof that Haggai knew of an earlier laying of the foundation-stone. But that לָמֶן is ever used for ועד cannot be proved, and indeed is disproved by Jer. vii. 7, where it occurs in contrast to ועד. Van Hoonacker finds the same, but in a more subtle translation of לָמֶן. לָמֶן, he says, is never used except of a date distant from the speaker or writer of it; לָמֶן (if I understand him aright) refers therefore to a date previous to Haggai to which the people's thoughts are directed by the ל and then brought back from it to the date at which he was speaking by means of the מן: "la preposition ל signifie la direction de l'esprit vers une époque du passé d'où il est ramené par la preposition מן." But surely מן can be used (as indeed Haggai has just used it) to signify extension backwards from the standpoint of the speaker; and although in the passages cited by Van Hoonacker of the use of לָמֶן it always refers to a past date—Deut. ix. 7, Judg. xix. 30, 2 Sam. vi. 11, Jer. vii. 7 and 25—still, as it is there nothing but a pleonastic form for מן, it surely might be employed as מן is sometimes employed for departure from the present backwards. Nor in any case is it used to express what Van Hoonacker seeks to draw from it here, the idea of direction of the mind to a past event and then an immediate return from that. Had Haggai wished to express that idea he would have phrased it thus: לָמֶן הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר יָסַד הַיְכָל יְהוָה ועד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה (as Kusters remarks). Besides, as Kusters has pointed out (pp. 7 ff. of the Germ. trans. of *Het Herstel*, etc.), even if Van Hoonacker's translation of לָמֶן were correct, the context would show that it might refer only to a laying of the foundation-stone since Haggai's first address to the people, and therefore the question of an earlier foundation-stone under Cyrus would remain unsolved. Consequently Haggai ii. 18 cannot be quoted as a proof of the latter. See above, p. 216.

there yet any seed in the barn? ¹ And as yet ² the vine, the fig-tree, the pomegranate and the olive have not borne fruit. From this day I will bless thee.

This then is the substance of the whole message. On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, somewhere in our December, the Jews had been discouraged that their attempts to build the Temple, begun three months before,³ had not turned the tide of their misfortunes and produced prosperity in their agriculture. Haggai tells them, there is not yet time for the change to work. If contact with a holy thing has only a slight effect, but contact with an unclean thing has a much greater effect (verses 11-13), then their attempts to build the Temple must have less good influence upon their condition than the bad influence of all their past devotion to themselves and their secular labours. That is why adversity still continues, but courage! from this day on God will bless. The whole message is, therefore, opportune to the date at which it was delivered, and comes naturally on the back of Haggai's previous oracles. Andrée's reason for assigning it to another writer, on the ground of its breaking the connection, does not exist.⁴

These poor colonists, in their hope deferred, were learning the old lesson, which humanity finds so hard to understand, that repentance and new-born zeal do not immediately work a change upon our material condition; but the natural consequences of sin often outweigh the influence of conversion, and though devoted to God and very industrious we may still

¹ Meaning *there is none*.

² וְעֵץ or וְעֵץ for וְעֵץ, after LXX. *καὶ εἰ ἔτι*.

³ The twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, according to chap. i. 15

⁴ See above, p. 228.

be punished for a sinful past. Evil has an infectious power greater than that of holiness. Its effects are more extensive and lasting.¹ It was no bit of casuistry which Haggai sought to illustrate by his appeal to the priests on the ceremonial law, but an ethical truth deeply embedded in human experience.

4. THE REINVESTMENT OF ISRAEL'S HOPE (Chap. ii. 20-23).

On the same day Haggai published another oracle, in which he put the climax to his own message by re-investing in Zerubbabel the ancient hopes of his people. When the monarchy fell the Messianic hopes were naturally no longer concentrated in the person of a king; and the great evangelist of the Exile found the elect and anointed Servant of Jehovah in the people as a whole, or in at least the pious part of them, with functions not of political government but of moral influence and instruction towards all the peoples of the earth. Yet in the Exile Ezekiel still predicted an individual Messiah, a son of the house of David; only it is significant that, in his latest prophecies delivered after the overthrow of Jerusalem, Ezekiel calls him not *king*² any more, but *prince*.³

¹ "For I believe the devil's voice
Sinks deeper in our ear,
Than any whisper sent from heaven,
However sweet and clear."

² Only in xxxiv. 24, xxxvii. 22, 24.

³ מֶלֶךְ: cf. Skinner, *Ezekiel* (Expositor's Bible Series), pp. 447 ff., who, however, attributes the diminution of the importance of the civil head in Israel, not to the feeling that he would henceforth always be subject to a foreign emperor, but to the conviction that in the future he will be "overshadowed by the personal presence of Jehovah in the midst of His people."

After the return of Sheshbazzar to Babylon this position was virtually filled by Zerubbabel, a grandson of Jehoiakin, the second last king of Judah, and appointed by the Persian king Peḥah or Satrap of Judah. Him Haggai now formally names the elect servant of Jehovah. In that overturning of the kingdoms of the world which Haggai had predicted two months before, and which he now explains as their mutual destruction by war, Jehovah of Hosts will make Zerubbabel His signet-ring, inseparable from Himself and the symbol of His authority.

And the word of Jehovah came a second time to¹ Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, saying: Speak to Zerubbabel, Satrap of Judah, saying: I am about to shake the heavens and the earth,² and I will overturn the thrones³ of kingdoms, and will shatter the power of the kingdoms of the Gentiles, and will overturn chariots⁴ and their riders, and horses and their riders will come down, every man by the sword of his brother. In that day—oracle of Jehovah of Hosts—I will take Zerubbabel, son of She'alti'el, My servant—oracle of Jehovah—and will make him like a signet-ring; for thee have I chosen—oracle of Jehovah of Hosts.

The wars and mutual destruction of the Gentiles, of which Haggai speaks, are doubtless those revolts of races and provinces, which threatened to disrupt the Persian Empire upon the accession of Darius in 521. Persians, Babylonians, Medes, Armenians, the Sacæ and others rose together or in succession. In four years Darius quelled them all, and reorganised his

¹ See above, p. 227.

² LXX. enlarges: *and the sea and the dry land.*

³ Heb. sing. collect. LXX. plural.

⁴ Again a sing. coll.

empire before the Jews finished their Temple. Like all the Syrian governors, Zerubbabel remained his poor lieutenant and submissive tributary. History rolled westward into Europe. Greek and Persian began their struggle for the control of its future, and the Jews fell into an obscurity and oblivion unbroken for centuries. The *signet-ring of Jehovah* was not acknowledged by the world—does not seem even to have challenged its briefest attention. But Haggai had at least succeeded in asserting the Messianic hope of Israel, always baffled, never quenched, in this re-opening of her life. He had delivered the ancient heritage of Israel to the care of the new Judaism.

Haggai's place in the succession of prophecy ought now to be clear to us. The meagreness of his words and their crabbed style, his occupation with the construction of the Temple, his unfulfilled hope in Zerubbabel, his silence on the great inheritance of truth delivered by his predecessors, and the absence from his prophesying of all visions of God's character and all emphasis upon the ethical elements of religion—these have moved some to depress his value as a prophet almost to the vanishing point. Nothing could be more unjust. In his opening message Haggai evinced the first indispensable power of the prophet: to speak to the situation of the moment, and to succeed in getting men to take up the duty at their feet; in another message he announced a great ethical principle; in his last he conserved the Messianic traditions of his religion, and though not less disappointed than Isaiah in the personality to whom he looked for their fulfilment, he succeeded in passing on their hope undiminished to future ages.

ZECHARIAH

(I.—VIII.)

Not by might, and not by force, but by My Spirit, saith Jehovah of Hosts.

Be not afraid, strengthen your hands ! Speak truth, every man to his neighbour ; truth and wholesome judgment judge ye in your gates, and in your hearts plan no evil for each other, nor take pleasure in false swearing, for all these things do I hate—oracle of Jehovah.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH (I.—VIII.)

THE Book of Zechariah, consisting of fourteen chapters, falls clearly into two divisions: *First*, chaps. i.—viii., ascribed to Zechariah himself and full of evidence for their authenticity; *Second*, chaps. ix.—xiv., which are not ascribed to Zechariah, and deal with conditions different from those upon which he worked. The full discussion of the date and character of this second section we shall reserve till we reach the period at which we believe it to have been written. Here an introduction is necessary only to chaps. i.—viii.

These chapters may be divided into five sections.

I. Chap. i. 1-6.—A Word of Jehovah which came to Zechariah in the eighth month of the second year of Darius, that is in November 520 B.C., or between the second and the third oracles of Haggai.¹ In this the prophet's place is affirmed in the succession of the prophets of Israel. The ancient prophets are gone, but their predictions have been fulfilled in the calamities of the Exile, and God's Word abides for ever.

II. Chap. i. 7—vi. 9.—A Word of Jehovah which came to Zechariah on the twenty-fourth of the eleventh month of the same year, that is January or February 519, and which he reproduces in the form of eight Visions by night. (1) The Vision of the Four Horsemen: God's new mercies to Jerusalem (chap. i. 7-17). (2) The Vision of the Four Horns, or Powers of the World, and the Four Smiths, who smite them down (ii. 1-4 Heb., but in the Septuagint and in the English

¹ See above, pp. 225 ff.

Version i. 18-21). (3) The Vision of the Man with the Measuring Rope : Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, no longer as a narrow fortress, but spread abroad for the multitude of her population (chap. ii. 5-9 Heb., ii. 1-5 LXX. and Eng.). To this Vision is appended a lyric piece of probably older date calling upon the Jews in Babylon to return, and celebrating the joining of many peoples to Jehovah, now that He takes up again His habitation in Jerusalem (chap. ii. 10-17 Heb., ii. 6-13 LXX. and Eng.). (4) The Vision of Joshua, the High Priest, and the Satan or Accuser : the Satan is rebuked, and Joshua is cleansed from his foul garments and clothed with a new turban and festal apparel ; the land is purged and secure (chap. iii.). (5) The Vision of the Seven-Branched Lamp and the Two Olive-Trees (chap. iv. 1-6*a*, 10*b*-14) : into the centre of this has been inserted a Word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel (vv. 6*b*-10*a*), which interrupts the Vision and ought probably to come at the close of it. (6) The Vision of the Flying Book : it is the curse of the land, which is being removed, but after destroying the houses of the wicked (chap. v. 1-4). (7) The Vision of the Bushel and the Woman : that is the guilt of the land and its wickedness ; they are carried off and planted in the land of Shinar (v. 5-11). (8) The Vision of the Four Chariots : they go forth from the Lord of all the earth, to traverse the earth and bring His Spirit, or anger, to bear on the North country (chap. vi. 1-8).

III. Chap. vi. 9-15.—A Word of Jehovah, undated (unless it is to be taken as of the same date as the Visions to which it is attached), giving directions as to the gifts sent to the community at Jerusalem from the Babylonian Jews. A crown is to be made from the silver and gold, and, according to the text, placed upon the head of Joshua. But, as we shall see,¹ the text gives evident signs of having been altered in the interest of the High Priest ; and probably the crown was meant for Zerubbabel, at whose right hand the priest is to stand, and there shall be a counsel of peace between the two of them. The far-away shall come and assist at the building of the Temple. This section breaks off in the middle of a sentence.

IV. Chap. vii.—The Word of Jehovah which came to Zechariah on the fourth of the ninth month of the fourth year of Darius, that is nearly two years after the date of the Visions. The Temple was approaching completion ; and an inquiry was addressed to the priests who were in it and to the prophets concerning the Fasts, which had been maintained during the Exile, while the Temple lay desolate (chap. vii. 1-3). This inquiry drew from Zechariah a historical explanation of how the Fasts arose (chap. vii. 4-14).

V. Chap. viii.—Ten short undated oracles, each introduced by

¹ Below, p. 308.

the same formula, *Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts*, and summarising all Zechariah's teaching since before the Temple began up to the question of the cessation of the Fasts upon its completion—with promises for the future. (1) A Word affirming Jehovah's new zeal for Jerusalem and His Return to her (vv. 1, 2). (2) Another of the same (ver. 3). (3) A Word promising fulness of old folk and children in her streets (vv. 4, 5). (4) A Word affirming that nothing is too wonderful for Jehovah (ver. 6). (5) A Word promising the return of the people from east and west (vv. 7, 8). (6 and 7) Two Words contrasting, in terms similar to Haggai i., the poverty of the people before the foundation of the Temple with their new prosperity: from a curse Israel shall become a blessing. This is due to God's anger having changed into a purpose of grace to Jerusalem. But the people themselves must do truth and justice, ceasing from perjury and thoughts of evil against each other (vv. 9-17). (8) A Word which recurs to the question of Fasting, and commands that the four great Fasts, instituted to commemorate the siege and overthrow of Jerusalem, and the murder of Gedaliah, be changed to joy and gladness (vv. 18, 19). (9) A Word predicting the coming of the Gentiles to the worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem (vv. 20-22). (10) Another of the same (ver. 23).

There can be little doubt that, apart from the few interpolations noted, these eight chapters are genuine prophecies of Zechariah, who is mentioned in the Book of Ezra as the colleague of Haggai, and contemporary of Zerubbabel and Joshua at the time of the rebuilding of the Temple.¹ Like the oracles of Haggai, these prophecies are dated according to the years of Darius the king, from his second year to his fourth. Although they may contain some of the exhortations to build the Temple, which the Book of Ezra informs us that Zechariah made along with Haggai, the most of them presuppose progress in the work, and seek to assist it by historical retrospect and by glowing hopes of the Messianic effects of its completion. Their allusions suit exactly the years to which they are

¹ Ezra v. i, vi. 14.

assigned. Darius is king. The Exile has lasted about seventy years.¹ Numbers of Jews remain in Babylon,² and are scattered over the rest of the world.³ The community at Jerusalem is small and weak: it is the mere colony of young men and men in middle life who came to it from Babylon; there are few children and old folk.⁴ Joshua and Zerubbabel are the heads of the community, and the pledges for its future.⁵ The exact conditions are recalled as recent which Haggai spoke of a few years before.⁶ Moreover, there is a steady and orderly progress throughout the prophecies, in harmony with the successive dates at which they were delivered. In November 520 they begin with a cry to repentance and lessons drawn from the past of prophecy.⁷ In January 519 Temple and City are still to be built.⁸ Zerubbabel has laid the foundation; the completion is yet future.⁹ The prophet's duty is to quiet the people's apprehensions about the state of the world,¹⁰ to provoke their zeal,¹¹ give them confidence in their great men,¹² and, above all, assure them that God is returned to them¹³ and their sin pardoned.¹⁴ But in December 518 the Temple is so far built that the priests are said to belong to it;¹⁵ there is no

¹ i. 12, vii. 5: reckoning in round numbers from 590, midway between the two Exiles of 597 and 586, that brings us to about 520, the second year of Darius.

² ii. 6 (Eng., Heb. 10). On the question whether the Book of Zechariah gives no evidence of a previous Return from Babylon see above, pp. 208 ff.

³ viii. 7, etc.

¹⁰ i. 7-21 (Eng., Heb. i. 7—ii. 4).

⁴ viii. 4, 5.

¹¹ iv. 6 ff.

⁵ iii. 1-10, iv. 6-10, vi. 11 ff.

¹² iii., iv.

⁶ viii. 9, 10.

¹³ i. 16.

⁷ i. 1-6.

¹⁴ v.

⁸ i. 7-17.

¹⁵ vii. 3.

⁹ iv. 6-10.

occasion for continuing the fasts of the Exile,¹ the future has opened and the horizon is bright with the Messianic hopes.² Most of all, it is felt that the hard struggle with the forces of nature is over, and the people are exhorted to the virtues of the civic life.³ They have time to lift their eyes from their work and see the nations coming from afar to Jerusalem.⁴

These features leave no room for doubt that the great bulk of the first eight chapters of the Book of Zechariah are by the prophet himself, and from the years to which he assigns them, November 520 to December 518. The point requires no argument.

There are, however, three passages which provoke further examination—two of them because of the signs they bear of an earlier date, and one because of the alteration it has suffered in the interests of a later day in Israel's history.

The lyric passage which is appended to the Second Vision (chap. ii. 10-17 Heb., 6-13 LXX. and Eng.) suggests questions by its singularity: there is no other such among the Visions. But in addition to this it speaks not only of the Return from Babylon as still future⁵—this might still be said after the First Return of the exiles in 536⁶—but it differs from the language of all the Visions proper in describing the return of Jehovah Himself to Zion as still future. The whole, too, has the ring of the great odes in Isaiah xl.—lv., and seems to reflect the same situation, upon the eve

¹ vii. 1-7, viii. 18, 19.

² viii. 16, 17.

³ viii. 20-23.

⁴ viii. 20-23.

⁵ ii. 10 f. Heb., 6 f. LXX. and Eng.

⁶ Though the expression *I have scattered you to the four winds of heaven* seems to imply the Exile before any return.

of Cyrus' conquest of Babylon. There can be little doubt that we have here inserted in Zechariah's Visions a song of twenty years earlier, but we must confess inability to decide whether it was adopted by Zechariah himself or added by a later hand.¹

Again, there are the two passages called the Word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel, chap. iv. 6b-10a; and the Word of Jehovah concerning the gifts which came to Jerusalem from the Jews in Babylon, chap. vi. 9-15. The first, as Wellhausen has shown,² is clearly out of place; it disturbs the narrative of the Vision, and is to be put at the end of the latter. The second is undated, and separate from the Visions. The second plainly affirms that the building of the Temple is still future. The man whose name is Branch or Shoot is designated: *and he shall build the Temple of Jehovah.* The first is in the same temper as the first two oracles of Haggai. It is possible then that these two passages are not, like the Visions with which they are taken, to be dated from 519, but represent that still earlier prophesying of Zechariah with which we are told he assisted Haggai in instigating the people to begin to build the Temple.

The style of the prophet Zechariah betrays special features almost only in the narrative of the Visions. Outside these his language is simple, direct and pure, as it could not but be, considering how much of it is drawn from, or modelled upon, the older prophets,³

¹ For the bearing of this on Koster's theory of the Return see pp. 211 f.

² See below, p. 300.

³ Outside the Visions the prophecies contain these echoes or repetitions of earlier writers: chap. i. 1-6 quotes the constant refrain

and chiefly Hosea and Jeremiah. Only one or two lapses into a careless and degenerate dialect show us how the prophet might have written, had he not been sustained by the music of the classical periods of the language.¹

This directness and pith is not shared by the language in which the Visions are narrated.² Here the style is involved and redundant. The syntax is loose; there is a frequent omission of the copula, and of other means by which, in better Hebrew, connection and conciseness are sustained. The formulas, *thus saith* and *saying*, are repeated to weariness. At the same time it is fair to ask, how much of this redundancy was due to Zechariah himself? Take the Septuagint version. The Hebrew text, which it followed, not only included a number of repetitions of the formulas, and of the designations of the personages introduced into the Visions, which do not occur in the Massoretic text,³

of prophetic preaching before the Exile, and in chap. vii. 7-14 (ver. 8 must be deleted) is given a summary of that preaching; in chap. viii. ver. 3 echoes Isa. i. 21, 26, *city of truth*, and Jer. xxxi. 23, *mountain of holiness* (there is really no connection, as Kuenen holds, between ver. 4 and Isa. lxxv. 20; it would create more interesting questions as to the date of the latter if there were); ver. 8 is based on Hosea ii. 15 Heb., 19 Eng., and Jer. xxxi. 33; ver. 12 is based on Hosea ii. 21 f. (Heb. 23 f.); with ver. 13 compare Jer. xlii. 18, *a curse*; vv. 21 ff. with Isa. ii. 3 and Micah iv. 2.

¹ E.g. vii. 5, לְאֵינִי אֲנִי for לְאֵינִי אֲנִי; cf. Ewald, *Syntax*, § 315b. The curious use of the acc. in the following verse is perhaps only apparent; part of the text may have fallen out.

² Though there are not wanting, of course, echoes here as in the other prophecies of older writings, e.g. i. 12, 17.

³ לְאֵינִי אֲנִי, *saying*, ii. 8 (Gr. ii. 4); iv. 5, *And the angel who spoke with me said*; i. 17, cf. vi. 5. *All* is inserted in i. 11, iii. 9; *lord* in ii. 2; *of hosts* (after *Jehovah*) viii. 17; and there are other instances of palpable expansion, e.g. i. 6, 8, ii. 4 bis, 6, viii. 19.

but omitted some which are found in the Massoretic text.¹ These two sets of phenomena prove that from an early date the copiers of the original text of Zechariah must have been busy in increasing its redundancies. Further, there are still earlier intrusions and expansions, for these are shared by both the Hebrew and the Greek texts: some of them very natural efforts to clear up the personages and conversations recorded in the dreams,² some of them stupid mistakes in understanding the drift of the argument.³ There must of course have been a certain amount of redundancy in the original to provoke such aggravations of it, and of obscurity or tortuousness of style to cause them to be deemed necessary. But it would be very unjust to charge all the faults of our present text to Zechariah himself, especially when we find such force and simplicity in the passages outside the Visions. Of course the involved and misty subjects of the latter naturally forced upon the description of them a laboriousness of art, to which there was no provocation in directly exhorting the people to a pure life, or in straightforward predictions of the Messianic era.

Beyond the corruptions due to these causes, the text of Zechariah i.—viii. has not suffered more than that of our other prophets. There are one or two clerical errors;⁴ an occasional preposition or person of a verb needs to be amended. Here and there the text has

¹ *E.g.* ii. 2, iv. 2, 13, v. 9, vi. 12 bis, vii. 8: cf. also vi. 13.

² i. 8 ff., iii. 4 ff.: cf. also vi. 3 with vv. 6 f.

³ *E.g.* (but this is outside the Visions) the very flagrant mis-
understanding to which the insertion of vii. 5 is due.

⁴ v. 6, עָנַע for עָנַע as in LXX., and the last word of v. 11 perhaps vi. 10; and almost certainly iii. 2a.

been disarranged;¹ and as already noticed, there has been one serious alteration of the original.²

From the foregoing paragraphs it must be apparent what help and hindrance in the reconstruction of the text is furnished by the Septuagint. A list of its variant readings and of its mistranslations is appended.³

¹ Chap. iv. On 6*a*, 10*b*-14 should immediately follow, and 6*b*-10*a* come after 14.

² vi. 11 ff. See below, pp. 308 f.

³ Chief variants: i. 8, 10; ii. 15; iii. 4; iv. 7, 12; v. 1, 3, 4, 9; vi. 10, 13; vii. 3; viii. 8, 9, 12, 20. Obvious mistranslations or misreadings: ii. 9, 10, 15, 17; iii. 4; iv. 7, 10; v. 1, 4, 9; vi. 10 cf. 14; vii. 3.

CHAPTER XX

ZECHARIAH THE PROPHET

ZECHARIAH i. 1-6, etc. ; EZRA v. 1, vi. 14

ZECHARIAH is one of the prophets whose personality as distinguished from their message exerts some degree of fascination on the student. This is not due, however, as in the case of Hosea or Jeremiah, to the facts of his life, for of these we know extremely little ; but to certain conflicting symptoms of character which appear through his prophecies.

His name was a very common one in Israel, *Zekher-Yah, Jehovah remembers*.¹ In his own book he is described as *the son of Berekh-Yah, the son of Iddo*,² and in the Aramaic document of the Book of Ezra as *the son of Iddo*.³ Some have explained this difference by supposing that Berekhyah was the actual father of the prophet, but that either he died early, leaving Zechariah to the care of the grandfather, or else that he was a man of no note, and Iddo was more naturally mentioned as the head of the family. There are several instances in the Old Testament of men being called the sons of their grandfathers :⁴ as in these cases the grandfather

¹ זְכַרְיָה ; LXX. *Zaxaptas*.

² i. 1 : בְּרֶכְיָהוּ בֶן־יְדֹהָנָן. In i. 7 : בֶּן־יְדֹהָנָן.

³ Ezra v. 1, vi. 14 : בְּרֶעְדֹהָנָן.

⁴ Gen. xxiv. 47, cf. xxix. 5 ; 1 Kings xix. 16, cf. 2 Kings ix. 14, 20.

was the reputed founder of the house, so in that of Zechariah Iddo was the head of his family when it came out of Babylon and was anew planted in Jerusalem. Others, however, have contested the genuineness of the words *son of Berekh-Yah*, and have traced their insertion to a confusion of the prophet with Zechariah son of Yěbherekh-Yahu, the contemporary of Isaiah.¹ This is precarious, while the other hypothesis is a very natural one.² Whichever be correct, the prophet Zechariah was a member of the priestly family of Iddo, that came up to Jerusalem from Babylon under Cyrus.³ The Book of Nehemiah adds that in the high-priesthood of Yoyakim, the son of Joshua, the head of the house of Iddo was a Zechariah.⁴ If this be our prophet, then he was probably a young man in 520,⁵ and had come up as a child in the caravans from Babylon. The Aramaic document of the Book of Ezra⁶ assigns to Zechariah a share with Haggai in the work of instigating Zerubbabel and Jeshua to begin the Temple. None of his oracles is dated previous to the beginning of the work in August 520, but we have seen⁷ that among those undated there are one or two which by referring to the building of the Temple as still future may

¹ Isa. viii. 2 : בְּנֵי יִבְרָכְיָהוּ. This confusion, which existed in early Jewish and Christian times, Knobel, Von Ortenberg, Bleek, Wellhausen and others take to be due to the effort to find a second Zechariah for the authorship of chaps. ix. ff.

² So Vatke, König and many others. Marti prefers it (*Der Prophet Sacharja*, p. 58). See also Ryle on Ezra v. 1.

³ Neh. xii. 4.

⁴ *Ib.* 16.

⁵ This is not proved, as Pusey, König (*Eint.*, p. 364) and others think, by נָעַר, or young man, of the Third Vision (ii. 8 Heb., ii. 4 LXX. and Eng.). Cf. Wright, *Zechariah and his Prophecies*, p. xvi.

⁶ v. 1, vi. 14.

⁷ Above, p. 260.

contain some relics of that first stage of his ministry. From November 520 we have the first of his dated oracles; his Visions followed in January 519, and his last recorded prophesying in December 518.¹

These are all the certain events of Zechariah's history. But in the well-attested prophecies he has left we discover, besides some obvious traits of character, certain problems of style and expression which suggest a personality of more than usual interest. Loyalty to the great voices of old, the temper which appeals to the experience, rather than to the dogmas, of the past, the gift of plain speech to his own times,

¹ More than this we do not know of Zechariah. The Jewish and Christian traditions of him are as unfounded as those of other prophets. According to the Jews he was, of course, a member of the mythical Great Synagogue. See above on Haggai, pp. 232 f. As in the case of the prophets we have already treated, the Christian traditions of Zechariah are found in (Pseud-)Epiphanius, *De Vitis Prophetarum*, Dorotheus, and Hesychius, as quoted above, p. 80. They amount to this, that Zechariah, after predicting in Babylon the birth of Zerubbabel, and to Cyrus his victory over Crœsus and his treatment of the Jews, came in his old age to Jerusalem, prophesied, died and was buried near Beit-Jibrin—another instance of the curious relegation by Christian tradition of the birth and burial places of so many of the prophets to that neighbourhood. Compare Beit-Zakharya, 12 miles from Beit-Jibrin. Hesychius says he was born in Gilead. Dorotheus confuses him, as the Jews did, with Zechariah of Isa. viii. 1. See above, p. 265, n. 1.

Zechariah was certainly not the Zechariah whom our Lord describes as slain between the Temple and the Altar (Matt. xxiii. 35; Luke xi. 51). In the former passage alone is this Zechariah called the son of Barachiah. In the *Evang. Nazar.* Jerome read *the son of Yehoyada*. Both readings may be insertions. According to 2 Chron. xxiv. 21, in the reign of Joash, Zechariah, the son of Yehoyada the priest, was stoned in the court of the Temple, and according to Josephus (*IV. Wars*, v. 4), in the year 68 A.D. Zechariah son of Baruch was assassinated in the Temple by two zealots. The latter murder may, as Marti remarks (pp. 58 f.), have led to the insertion of Barachiah into Matt. xxiii. 35.

a wistful anxiety about his reception as a prophet combined with the absence of all ambition to be original or anything but the clear voice of the lessons of the past and of the conscience of to-day—these are the qualities which characterise Zechariah's orations to the people. But how to reconcile them with the strained art and obscure truths of the Visions—it is this which invests with interest the study of his personality. We have proved that the obscurity and redundancy of the Visions cannot all have been due to himself. Later hands have exaggerated the repetitions and ravelled the processes of the original. But these gradual blemishes have not grown from nothing: the original style must have been sufficiently involved to provoke the interpolations of the scribes, and it certainly contained all the weird and shifting apparitions which we find so hard to make clear to ourselves. The problem, therefore, remains—how one who had gift of speech, so straight and clear, came to torture and tangle his style; how one who presented with all plainness the main issues of his people's history found it laid upon him to invent, for the further expression of these, symbols so laboured and intricate.

We begin with the oracle, which opens his book and illustrates those simple characteristics of the man that contrast so sharply with the temper of his Visions.

In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of Jehovah came to the prophet Zechariah, son of Berekhyah, son of Iddo,² saying: Jehovah was very wroth³ with your fathers. And thou shalt say unto them: Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts: Turn ye to Me—oracle of

¹ ii. 13, 15; iv. 9; vi. 15.

² LXX. Ἀδδω. See above, p. 264.

³ Heb. *angered with anger*; Gr. *with great anger*.

Jehovah of Hosts—that I may turn to you, saith Jehovah of Hosts! Be not like your fathers, to whom the former prophets preached, saying: “Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, Turn now from your evil ways and from¹ your evil deeds,” but they hearkened not, and paid no attention to Me—oracle of Jehovah. Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever? But² My words and My statutes, with which I charged My servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? till these turned and said, As Jehovah of Hosts did purpose to do unto us, according to our deeds and according to our ways, so hath He dealt with us.

It is a sign of the new age which we have reached, that its prophet should appeal to the older prophets with as much solemnity as they did to Moses himself. The history which led to the Exile has become to Israel as classic and sacred as her great days of deliverance from Egypt and of conquest in Canaan. But still more significant is what Zechariah seeks from that past; this we must carefully discover, if we would appreciate with exactness his rank as a prophet.

The development of religion may be said to consist of a struggle between two tempers, both of which indeed appeal to the past, but from very opposite motives. The one proves its devotion to the older prophets by adopting the exact formulas of their doctrine, counts these sacred to the letter, and would enforce them in detail upon the minds and circumstances of the new generation. It conceives that truth has been promulgated once for all in forms as enduring as the principles they contain. It fences ancient rites, cherishes old customs and institutions, and when these

¹ As in LXX.

² LXX. has misunderstood and expanded this verse,

are questioned it becomes alarmed and even savage. The other temper is no whit behind this one in its devotion to the past, but it seeks the ancient prophets not so much for what they have said as for what they have been, not for what they enforced but for what they encountered, suffered and confessed. It asks not for dogmas but for experience and testimony. He who can thus read the past and interpret it to his own day—he is the prophet. In his reading he finds nothing so clear, nothing so tragic, nothing so convincing as the working of the Word of God. He beholds how this came to men, haunted them and was entreated by them. He sees that it was their great opportunity, which being rejected became their judgment. He finds abused justice vindicated, proud wrong punished, and all God's neglected commonplaces achieving in time their triumph. He reads how men came to see this, and to confess their guilt. He is haunted by the remorse of generations who know how they might have obeyed the Divine call, but wilfully did not. And though they have perished, and the prophets have died and their formulas are no more applicable, the victorious Word itself still lives and cries to men with the terrible emphasis of their fathers' experience. All this is the vision of the true prophet, and it was the vision of Zechariah.

His generation was one whose chief temptation was to adopt towards the past the other attitude we have described. In their feebleness what could the poor remnant of Israel do but cling servilely to the former greatness? The vindication of the Exile had stamped the Divine authority of the earlier prophets. The habits, which the life in Babylon had perfected, of arranging and codifying the literature of the past, and

of employing it, in place of altar and ritual, in the stated service of God, had canonised Scripture and provoked men to the worship of its very letter. Had the real prophet not again been raised, these habits might have too early produced the belief that the Word of God was exhausted, and must have fastened upon the feeble life of Israel that mass of stiff and stark dogmas, the literal application of which Christ afterwards found crushing the liberty and the force of religion. Zechariah prevented this—for a time. He himself was mighty in the Scriptures of the past: no man in Israel makes larger use of them. But he employs them as witnesses, not as dogmas; he finds in them not authority, but experience.¹ He reads their testimony to the ever-living presence of God's Word with men. And seeing that, though the old forms and figures have perished with the hearts which shaped them, the Word itself in its bare truth has vindicated its life by fulfilment in history, he knows that it lives still, and hurls it upon his people, not in the forms published by this or that prophet of long ago, but in its essence and direct from God Himself, as His Word for to-day and now. *The fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever? But My words and My statutes, with which I charged My servants the prophets, have they not overtaken your fathers? Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, Be ye not like your fathers, but turn ye to Me that I may turn to you.*

The argument of this oracle might very naturally have been narrowed into a credential for the prophet himself as sent from God. About his reception as

¹ It is to be noticed that Zechariah appeals to the Torah of the prophets, and does not mention any Torah of the priests. Cf. Smend, *AT Rel. Gesch.*, pp. 176 f.

Jehovah's messenger Zechariah shows a repeated anxiety. Four times he concludes a prediction with the words, *And ye shall know that Jehovah hath sent me,*¹ as if after his first utterances he had encountered that suspicion and unbelief which a prophet never failed to suffer from his contemporaries. But in this oracle there is no trace of such personal anxiety. The oracle is pervaded only with the desire to prove the ancient Word of God as still alive, and to drive it home in its own sheer force. Like the greatest of his order, Zechariah appears with the call to repent: *Turn ye to Me—oracle of Jehovah of Hosts—that I may turn to you.* This is the pivot on which history has turned, the one condition on which God has been able to help men. Wherever it is read as the conclusion of all the past, wherever it is proclaimed as the conscience of the present, there the true prophet is found and the Word of God has been spoken.

The same possession by the ethical spirit reappears, as we shall see, in Zechariah's orations to the people after the anxieties of building are over and the completion of the Temple is in sight. In these he affirms again that the whole essence of God's Word by the older prophets has been moral—to judge true judgment, to practise mercy, to defend the widow and orphan, the stranger and poor, and to think no evil of one another. For the sad fasts of the Exile Zechariah enjoins gladness, with the duty of truth and the hope of peace. Again and again he enforces sincerity and the love without dissimulation. His ideals for Jerusalem are very high, including the conversion of the nations to her God. But warlike ambitions have vanished from them, and

¹ Page 267, n. 1.

his pictures of her future condition are homely and practical. Jerusalem shall be no more a fortress, but spread village-wise without walls.¹ Full families, unlike the present colony with its few children and its men worn out in middle life by harassing warfare with enemies and a sullen nature; streets rife with children playing and old folk sitting in the sun; the return of the exiles; happy harvests and springtimes of peace, solid gain of labour for every man, with no raiding neighbours to harass, nor the mutual envies of peasants in their selfish struggle with famine.

It is a simple, hearty, practical man whom such prophesying reveals, the spirit of him bent on justice and love, and yearning for the unharassed labour of the field and for happy homes. No prophet has more beautiful sympathies, a more direct word of righteousness, or a braver heart. *Fast not, but love truth and peace. Truth and wholesome justice set ye up in your gates. Be not afraid; strengthen your hands! Old men and women shall yet sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand for the fulness of their years; the city's streets shall be rife with boys and girls at play.*

¹ This picture is given in one of the Visions: the Third.

CHAPTER XXI

THE VISIONS OF ZECHARIAH

ZECHARIAH i. 7—vi.

THE Visions of Zechariah do not lack those large and simple views of religion which we have just seen to be the charm of his other prophecies. Indeed it is among the Visions that we find the most spiritual of all his utterances :¹ *Not by might, and not by force, but by My Spirit, saith Jehovah of Hosts.* The Visions express the need of the Divine forgiveness, emphasise the reality of sin, as a principle deeper than the civic crimes in which it is manifested, and declare the power of God to banish it from His people. The Visions also contain the remarkable prospect of Jerusalem as the City of Peace, her only wall the Lord Himself.² The overthrow of the heathen empires is predicted by the Lord's own hand, and from all the Visions there are absent both the turmoil and the glory of war.

We must also be struck by the absence of another element, which is a cause of complexity in the writings of many prophets—the polemic against idolatry. Zechariah nowhere mentions the idols. We have already seen what proof this silence bears for the fact that the community to which he spoke was not that

¹ iv. 6. Unless this be taken as an earlier prophecy. See above, p. 260.

² ii. 9, 10 Heb., 5, 6 LXX. and Eng.

half-heathen remnant of Israel which had remained in the land, but was composed of worshippers of Jehovah who at His word had returned from Babylon.¹ Here we have only to do with the bearing of the fact upon Zechariah's style. That bewildering confusion of the heathen pantheon and its rites, which forms so much of our difficulty in interpreting some of the prophecies of Ezekiel and the closing chapters of the Book of Isaiah, is not to blame for any of the complexity of Zechariah's Visions.

Nor can we attribute the latter to the fact that the Visions are dreams, and therefore bound to be more involved and obscure than the words of Jehovah which came to Zechariah in the open daylight of his people's public life. In chaps. i. 7—vi. we have not the narrative of actual dreams, but a series of conscious and artistic allegories—the deliberate translation into a carefully constructed symbolism of the Divine truths with which the prophet was entrusted by his God. Yet this only increases our problem—why a man with such gifts of direct speech, and such clear views of his people's character and history, should choose to express the latter by an imagery so artificial and involved? In his orations Zechariah is very like the prophets whom we have known before the Exile, thoroughly ethical and intent upon the public conscience of his time. He appreciates what they were, feels himself standing in their succession, and is endowed both with their spirit and their style. But none of them constructs the elaborate allegories which he does, or insists upon the religious symbolism which he enforces

¹ See above, p. 214, where this is stated as an argument against Koster's theory that there was no Return from Babylon in the reign of Cyrus.

as indispensable to the standing of Israel with God. Not only are their visions few and simple, but they look down upon the visionary temper as a rude stage of prophecy and inferior to their own, in which the Word of God is received by personal communion with Himself, and conveyed to His people by straight and plain words. Some of the earlier prophets even condemn all priesthood and ritual; none of them regards these as indispensable to Israel's right relations with Jehovah; and none employs those superhuman mediators of the Divine truth, by whom Zechariah is instructed in his Visions.

I. THE INFLUENCES WHICH MOULDED THE VISIONS.

The explanation of this change that has come over prophecy must be sought for in certain habits which the people formed in exile. During the Exile several causes conspired to develop among Hebrew writers the tempers both of symbolism and apocalypse. The chief of these was their separation from the realities of civic life, with the opportunity their political leisure afforded them of brooding and dreaming. Facts and Divine promises, which had previously to be dealt with by the conscience of the moment, were left to be worked out by the imagination. The exiles were not responsible citizens or statesmen, but dreamers. They were inspired by mighty hopes for the future, and not fettered by the practical necessities of a definite historical situation upon which these hopes had to be immediately realised. They had a far-off horizon to build upon, and they occupied the whole breadth of it. They had a long time to build, and they elaborated the minutest details of their architecture. Consequently their construction of the future of Israel, and their

description of the processes by which it was to be reached, became colossal, ornate and lavishly symbolic. Nor could the exiles fail to receive stimulus for all this from the rich imagery of Babylonian art by which they were surrounded.

Under these influences there were three strong developments in Israel. One was that development of Apocalypse the first beginnings of which we traced in Zephaniah—the representation of God's providence of the world and of His people, not by the ordinary political and military processes of history, but by awful convulsions and catastrophes, both in nature and in politics, in which God Himself appeared, either alone in sudden glory or by the mediation of heavenly armies. The second—and it was but a part of the first—was the development of a belief in Angels: superhuman beings who had not only a part to play in the apocalyptic wars and revolutions; but, in the growing sense, which characterises the period, of God's distance and awfulness, were believed to act as His agents in the communication of His Word to men. And, thirdly, there was the development of the Ritual. To some minds this may appear the strangest of all the effects of the Exile. The fall of the Temple, its hierarchy and sacrifices, might be supposed to enforce more spiritual conceptions of God and of His communion with His people. And no doubt it did. The impossibility of the legal sacrifices in exile opened the mind of Israel to the belief that God was satisfied with the sacrifices of the broken heart, and drew near, without mediation, to all who were humble and pure of heart. But no one in Israel therefore understood that these sacrifices were for ever abolished. Their interruption was regarded as merely temporary even by the most

spiritual of Jewish writers. The Fifty-First Psalm, for instance, which declares that *the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O Lord, Thou wilt not despise*, immediately follows this declaration by the assurance that *when God builds again the walls of Jerusalem, He will once more take delight in the legal sacrifices: burnt offering and whole burnt offering, the oblation of bullocks upon Thine altar.*¹ For men of such views the ruin of the Temple was not its abolition with the whole dispensation which it represented, but rather the occasion for its reconstruction upon wider lines and a more detailed system, for the planning of which the nation's exile afforded the leisure and the carefulness of art described above. The ancient liturgy, too, was insufficient for the stronger convictions of guilt and need of purgation, which sore punishment had impressed upon the people. Then, scattered among the heathen as they were, they learned to require stricter laws and more drastic ceremonies to restore and preserve their holiness. Their ritual, therefore, had to be expanded and detailed to a degree far beyond what we find in Israel's earlier systems of worship. With the fall of the monarchy and the absence of civic life the importance of the priesthood was proportionately enhanced; and the growing sense of God's aloofness from the world, already alluded to, made the more indispensable human, as well as super-human, mediators between Himself and His people. Consider these things, and it will be clear why prophecy, which with Amos had begun a war against all ritual, and with Jeremiah had achieved a religion absolutely independent of priesthood and Temple, should reappear

¹ Vv. 17 and 19.

after the Exile, insistent upon the building of the Temple, enforcing the need both of priesthood and sacrifice, and while it proclaimed the Messianic King and the High Priest as the great feeders of the national life and worship, finding no place beside them for the Prophet himself.¹

The force of these developments of Apocalypse, Angelology and the Ritual appears both in Ezekiel and in the exilic codification of the ritual which forms so large a part of the Pentateuch. Ezekiel carries Apocalypse far beyond the beginnings started by Zephaniah. He introduces, though not under the name of angels, superhuman mediators between himself and God. The Priestly Code does not mention angels, and has no Apocalypse; but like Ezekiel it develops, to an extraordinary degree, the ritual of Israel. Both its author and Ezekiel base on the older forms, but build as men who are not confined by the lines of an actually existing system. The changes they make, the innovations they introduce, are too numerous to mention here. To illustrate their influence upon Zechariah, it is enough to emphasise the large place they give in the ritual to the processes of propitiation and cleansing from sin, and the increased authority with which they invest the priesthood. In Ezekiel Israel has still a Prince, though he is not called King. He arranges the cultus,² and sacrifices are offered for him and the people,³ but the priests teach and judge the people.⁴ In the Priestly Code⁵ the priesthood is more rigorously fenced than by Ezekiel from the laity,

¹ See Zechariah's Fifth Vision. ² xlv. 22.

² xlv. 1 ff.

⁴ xlv. 23, 24.

⁵ Its origin was the Exile, whether its date be before or after the First Return under Cyrus in 537 B.C.

and more regularly graded. At its head appears a High Priest (as he does not in Ezekiel), and by his side the civil rulers are portrayed in lesser dignity and power. Sacrifices are made, no longer as with Ezekiel for Prince and People, but for Aaron and the Congregation; and throughout the narrative of ancient history, into the form of which this Code projects its legislation, the High Priest stands above the captain of the host, even when the latter is Joshua himself. God's enemies are defeated not so much by the wisdom and valour of the secular powers, as by the miracles of Jehovah Himself, mediated through the priesthood. Ezekiel and the Priestly Code both elaborate the sacrifices of atonement and sanctification beyond all the earlier uses.

2. GENERAL FEATURES OF THE VISIONS.

It was beneath these influences that Zechariah grew up, and to them we may trace, not only numerous details of his Visions, but the whole of their involved symbolism. He was himself a priest and the son of a priest, born and bred in the very order to which we owe the codification of the ritual, and the development of those ideas of guilt and uncleanness that led to its expansion and specialisation. The Visions in which he deals with these are the Third to the Seventh. As with Haggai there is a High Priest, in advance upon Ezekiel and in agreement with the Priestly Code. As in the latter the High Priest represents the people, and carries their guilt before God.¹ He and his colleagues are pledges and portents of the coming Messiah. But the civil power is not yet diminished

¹ Fourth Vision, chap. iii.

before the sacerdotal, as in the Priestly Code. We shall find indeed that a remarkable attempt has been made to alter the original text of a prophecy appended to the Visions,¹ in order to divert to the High Priest the coronation and Messianic rank there described. But any one who reads the passage carefully can see for himself that the crown (a single crown, as the verb which it governs proves²) which Zechariah was ordered to make was designed for Another than the priest, that the priest was but to stand at this Other's right hand, and that there was to be concord between the two of them. This Other can only have been the Messianic King, Zerubbabel, as was already proclaimed by Haggai.³ The altered text is due to a later period, when the High Priest became the civil as well as the religious head of the community. To Zechariah he was still only the right hand of the monarch in government; but, as we have seen, the religious life of the people was already gathered up and concentrated in him. It is the priests, too, who by their perpetual service and holy life bring on the Messianic era.⁴ Men come to the Temple to propitiate Jehovah, for which Zechariah uses the anthropomorphic expression *to make smooth* or *placid His face*.⁵ No more than this is made of the sacrificial system, which was not in full course when the Visions were announced. But the symbolism of the Fourth Vision is drawn from the furniture of the Temple. It is interesting that the great candelabrum seen by the prophet should be like, not

¹ vi. 9-15.

² ii. 20-23.

³ See ver. 11.

⁴ iii. 8.

⁵ חָלָה אֶסְפָּגְנֵי יְהוָה. The verb (Piel) originally means *to make weak* or *flaccid* (the Kal means *to be sick*), and so *to soften* or *weaken by flattery*. 1 Sam. xiii. 12; 1 Kings xiii. 6, etc.

the ten lights of the old Temple of Solomon, but the seven-branched candlestick described in the Priestly Code. In the Sixth and Seventh Visions, the strong convictions of guilt and uncleanness, which were engendered in Israel by the Exile, are not removed by the sacrificial means enforced in the Priestly Code, but by symbolic processes in the style of the visions of Ezekiel.

The Visions in which Zechariah treats of the outer history of the world are the first two and the last, and in these we notice the influence of the Apocalypse developed during the Exile. In Zechariah's day Israel had no stage for their history save the site of Jerusalem and its immediate neighbourhood. So long as he keeps to this Zechariah is as practical and matter-of-fact as any of the prophets, but when he has to go beyond it to describe the general overthrow of the heathen, he is unable to project that, as Amos or Isaiah did, in terms of historic battle, and has to call in the apocalyptic. A people such as that poor colony of exiles, with no issue upon history, is forced to take refuge in Apocalypse, and carries with it even those of its prophets whose conscience, like Zechariah's, is most strongly bent upon the practical present. Consequently these three historical Visions are the most vague of the eight. They reveal the whole earth under the care of Jehovah and the patrol of His angels. They definitely predict the overthrow of the heathen empires. But, unlike Amos or Isaiah, the prophet does not see by what political movements this is to be effected. The world *is* still *quiet and at peace*.¹ The time is hidden in the Divine counsels; the means, though clearly symbolised in *four smiths* who come forward to smite the horns of the

¹ First Vision, chap. i. 11.

heathen,¹ and in a chariot which carries God's wrath to the North,² are obscure. The prophet appears to have intended, not any definite individuals or political movements of the immediate future, but God's own supernatural forces. In other words, the Smiths and Chariots are not an allegory of history, but powers apocalyptic. The forms of the symbols were derived by Zechariah from different sources. Perhaps that of the *smiths* who destroy the horns in the Second Vision was suggested by *the smiths of destruction* threatened upon Ammon by Ezekiel.³ In the horsemen of the First Vision and the chariots of the Eighth, Ewald sees a reflection of the couriers and posts which Darius organised throughout the empire; they are more probably, as we shall see, a reflection of the military bands and patrols of the Persians. But from whatever quarter Zechariah derived the exact aspect of these Divine messengers, he found many precedents for them in the native beliefs of Israel. They are, in short, angels, incarnate as Hebrew angels always were, and in fashion like men. But this brings up the whole subject of the angels, whom he also sees employed as the mediators of God's Word to him; and that is large enough to be left to a chapter by itself.⁴

We have now before us all the influences which led Zechariah to the main form and chief features of his Visions.

3. EXPOSITION OF THE SEVERAL VISIONS.

For all the Visions there is one date, *in the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, the month Shebat, in the second*

¹ Second Vision, ii. 1-4 Heb., i. 18-21 LXX. and Eng.

² Eighth Vision, chap. vi. 1-8.

³ xxi. 36 Heb., 31 Eng. : *skilful to destroy*.

⁴ See next chapter.

year of Darius, that is January or February 519; and one Divine impulse, *the Word of Jehovah came to the prophet Zekharyah, son of Berekhyahu, son of Iddo, as follows.*

THE FIRST VISION: THE ANGEL-HORSEMEN (i. 7-17).

The seventy years which Jeremiah had fixed for the duration of the Babylonian servitude were drawing to a close. Four months had elapsed since Haggai promised that in a little while God would shake all nations.¹ But the world was not shaken: there was no political movement which promised to restore her glory to Jerusalem. A very natural disappointment must have been the result among the Jews. In this situation of affairs the Word came to Zechariah, and both situation and Word he expressed by his First Vision.

It was one of the myrtle-covered glens in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem:² Zechariah calls it *the Glen or Valley-Bottom*, either because it was known under that name to the Jews, or because he was himself wont to frequent it for prayer. He discovers in it what seems to be a rendezvous of Persian cavalry-scouts,³ the leader of the troop in front, and the rest behind him, having just come in with their reports. Soon, however, he is made aware that they are angels, and with that quick, dissolving change both of function

¹ Jer. xxv. 12; Hag. ii. 7.

² Myrtles were once common in the Holy Land, and have been recently found (Hasselquist, *Travels*). For their prevalence near Jerusalem see Neh. viii. 15. They do not appear to have any symbolic value in the Vision.

³ For a less probable explanation see above, p. 282.

and figure, which marks all angelic apparitions,¹ they explain to him their mission. Now it is an angel-interpreter at his side who speaks, and now the angel on the front horse. They are scouts of God come in from their survey of the whole earth. The world lies quiet. Whereupon *the angel of Jehovah* asks Him how long His anger must rest on Jerusalem and nothing be done to restore her; and the prophet hears a kind and comforting answer. The nations have done more evil to Israel than God empowered them to do. Their aggravations have changed His wrath against her to pity, and in pity He is come back to her. She shall soon be rebuilt and overflow with prosperity.

The only perplexity in all this is the angels' report that the whole earth lies quiet. How this could have been in 519 is difficult to understand. The great revolts against Darius were then in active progress, the result was uncertain and he took at least three more years to put them all down. They were confined, it is true, to the east and north-east of the empire, but some of them threatened Babylon, and we can hardly ascribe the report of the angels to such a limitation of the Jews' horizon at this time as shut out Mesopotamia or the lands to the north of her. There remain two alternatives. Either these far-away revolts made only more impressive the stagnancy of the tribes of the rest of the empire, and the helplessness of the Jews and their Syrian neighbours was convincingly shown by their inability to take advantage even of the desperate straits to which Darius was reduced; or else in that month of vision Darius had quelled one of the rebellions against him, and for the moment there was quiet in the world.

¹ See pp. 311, 313, etc.

By night I had a vision, and behold! a man riding a brown horse,¹ and he was standing between the myrtles that are in the Glen;² and behind him horses brown, bay³ and white. And I said, What are these, my lord? And the angel who talked with me said, I will show you what these are. And the man who was standing among the myrtles answered and said, These are they whom Jehovah hath sent to go to and fro through the earth. And they answered the angel of Jehovah who stood among the myrtles,⁴ and said, We have gone up and down through the earth, and lo! the whole earth is still and at peace.⁵ And the angel of Jehovah answered and said, Jehovah of Hosts, how long hast Thou no pity for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which⁶ Thou hast been wroth these seventy years? And Jehovah answered the angel who talked with me,⁷ kind words and comforting. And the angel who talked with me said to me, Proclaim now as follows: Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion, with a great zeal; but with great wrath am I wroth against the arrogant Gentiles. For I was but a little angry with Israel, but

¹ Ewald omits *riding a brown horse*, as "marring the lucidity of the description, and added from a misconception by an early hand." But we must not expect lucidity in a phantasmagoria like this.

² מִצְלָה, Meşullah, either *shadow* from צלל, or for מִצְיָלָה, *ravine*, or else a proper name. The LXX., which uniformly for הַרְפִּים, *myrtles*, reads הרים, *mountains*, renders אֵשֶׁר בְּמִצְלָה by τῶν κατασκλῶν. Ewald and Hitzig read מִצְלָה, Arab. mizhallah, *shadowing* or *tent*.

³ Heb. שְׂרָקִים, only here. For this LXX. gives two kinds, καὶ ψαροὶ καὶ ποικίλοι, and *dappled and piebald*. Wright gives a full treatment of the question, pp. 531 ff. He points out that the cognate word in Arabic means sorrel, or yellowish red.

⁴ *Who stood among the myrtles* omitted by Nowack.

⁵ Isa. xxxvii. 29; Jer. xlviii. 11; Psalm cxxiii. 4; Zeph. i. 12.

⁶ Or *for*.

Who talked with me omitted by Nowack.

they aggravated the evil.¹ Therefore thus saith Jehovah, I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies. My house shall be built in her—oracle of Jehovah of Hosts—and the measuring line shall be drawn over Jerusalem. Proclaim yet again, saying: Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, My cities shall yet overflow with prosperity, and Jehovah shall again comfort Zion, and again make choice of Jerusalem.

Two things are to be noted in this oracle. No political movement is indicated as the means of Jerusalem's restoration: this is to be the effect of God's free grace in returning to dwell in Jerusalem, which is the reward of the building of the Temple. And there is an interesting explanation of the motive for God's new grace: in executing His sentence upon Israel, the heathen had far exceeded their commission, and now themselves deserved punishment. That is to say, the restoration of Jerusalem and the resumption of the worship are not enough for the future of Israel. The heathen must be chastised. But Zechariah does not predict any overthrow of the world's power, either by earthly or by heavenly forces. This is entirely in harmony with the insistence upon peace which distinguishes him from other prophets.

THE SECOND VISION: THE FOUR HORNS AND THE FOUR SMITHS (ii. 1-4 Heb., i. 18-21 Eng.).

The Second Vision supplies what is lacking in the First, the destruction of the tyrants who have oppressed Israel. The prophet sees four horns, which, he is told by his interpreting angel, are the powers that have scattered Judah. The many attempts to identify these with four heathen nations are ingenious but futile.

¹ Heb. *helped for evil, or till it became a calamity.*

"Four horns were seen as representing the totality of Israel's enemies—her enemies from all quarters."¹ And to destroy these horns four smiths appear. Because in the Vision the horns are of iron, in Israel an old symbol of power, the first verb used of the action can hardly be, as in the Hebrew text, to terrify. The Greek reads *sharpen*, and probably some verb meaning *to cut* or *chisel* stood in the original.²

And I lifted mine eyes and looked, and lo! four horns. And I said to the angel who spoke with me, What are these? And he said to me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.³ And Jehovah showed me four smiths. And I said, What are these coming to do? And He spake, saying, These are the horns which scattered Judah, so that none lifted up his head;⁴ and these are come to . . .⁵ them, to strike down the horns of the nations, that lifted the horn against the land of Judah to scatter it.

THE THIRD VISION: THE CITY OF PEACE

(ii. 5-9 Heb., ii. 1-5 Eng.).

Like the Second Vision, the Third follows from the First, another, but a still more significant, supplement.

¹ Marcus Dods, *Hag., Zech. and Mal.*, p. 71. Orelli: "In distinction from Daniel, Zechariah is fond of a simultaneous survey, not the presenting of a succession."

² For the symbolism of iron horns see Micah iv. 13, and compare Orelli's note, in which it is pointed out that the destroyers must be smiths as in Isa. xlv. 12, *workmen of iron*, and not as in LXX. *carpenters*.

³ Wellhausen and Nowack delete *Israel and Jerusalem*; the latter does not occur in Codd. A, Q, of Septuagint.

⁴ Wellhausen reads, after Mal. ii. 9, כפי איטר, *so that it lifted not its head*; but in that case we should not find ראשנו, but ראשנה.

⁵ החריד, but LXX. read החריד, and either that or some verb of cutting must be read.

The First had promised the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and now the prophet beholds a *young man*—by this term he probably means a *servant* or *apprentice*—who is attempting to define the limits of the new city. In the light of what this attempt encounters, there can be little doubt that the prophet means to symbolise by it the intention of building the walls upon the old lines, so as to make Jerusalem again the mountain fortress she had previously been. Some have considered that the young man goes forth only to see, or to show, the extent of the city in the approaching future. But if this had been his motive, there would have been no reason in interrupting him with other orders. The point is, that he has narrow ideas of what the city should be, and is prepared to define it upon its old lines of a fortress. For the interpreting angel who *comes forward*¹ is told by another angel to run and tell the young man that in the future Jerusalem shall be a large unwallled town, and this, not only because of the multitude of its population, for even then it might still have been fortified like Niniveh, but because Jehovah Himself shall be its wall. The young man is prevented, not merely from making it small, but from making it a citadel. And this is in conformity with all the singular absence of war from Zechariah's Visions, both of the future deliverance of Jehovah's people and of their future duties before Him. It is indeed remarkable how Zechariah not only develops none of the warlike elements of earlier Messianic prophecies, but tells us here of how God Himself actually prevented their repetition, and insists again and again

¹ The Hebrew, literally *comes forth*, is the technical term throughout the Visions for the entrance of the figures upon the stage of vision.

only on those elements of ancient prediction which had filled the future of Israel with peace.

And I lifted mine eyes and looked, and lo! a man with a measuring rope in his hand. So I said, Whither art thou going? And he said to me, To measure Jerusalem: to see how much its breadth and how much its length should be. And lo! the angel who talked with me came forward,¹ and another angel came forward to meet him. And he said to him, Run and speak to yonder young man thus: Like a number of open villages shall Jerusalem remain, because of the multitude of men and cattle in the midst of her. And I Myself will be to her—oracle of Jehovah—a wall of fire round about, and for glory will I be in her midst.

In this Vision Zechariah gives us, with his prophecy, a lesson in the interpretation of prophecy. His contemporaries believed God's promise to rebuild Jerusalem, but they defined its limits by the conditions of an older and a narrower day. They brought forth their measuring rods, to measure the future by the sacred attainments of the past. Such literal fulfilment of His Word God prevented by that ministry of angels which Zechariah beheld. He would not be bound by those forms which His Word had assumed in suitability to the needs of ruder generations. The ideal of many of the returned exiles must have been that frowning citadel, those gates of everlastingness,² which some of them celebrated in Psalms, and from which the hosts of Sennacherib had been broken and swept back as the angry sea is swept from the fixed line of Canaan's coast.³ What had been enough for David and Isaiah was

¹ LXX. ἵστηκει, *stood up*: adopted by Nowack.

² Psalm xxiv.

³ Isa. xvii. 12-14.

enough for them, especially as so many prophets of the Lord had foretold a Messianic Jerusalem that should be a counterpart of the historical. But God breaks the letter of His Word to give its spirit a more glorious fulfilment. Jerusalem shall not *be builded as a city that is compact together*,¹ but open and spread abroad village-wise upon her high mountains, and God Himself her only wall.

The interest of this Vision is therefore not only historical. For ourselves it has an abiding doctrinal value. It is a lesson in the method of applying prophecy to the future. How much it is needed we must feel as we remember the readiness of men among ourselves to construct the Church of God upon the lines His own hand drew for our fathers, and to raise again the bulwarks behind which they sufficiently sheltered His shrine. Whether these ancient and sacred defences be dogmas or institutions, we have no right, God tells us, to cramp behind them His powers for the future. And the great men whom He raises to remind us of this, and to prevent by their ministry the timid measurements of the zealous but servile spirits who would confine everything to the exact letter of ancient Scripture—are they any less His angels to us than those ministering spirits whom Zechariah beheld preventing the narrow measures of the poor apprentice of his dream?

To the Third Vision there has been appended the only lyrical piece which breaks the prose narrative of the Visions. We have already seen that it is a piece of earlier date. Israel is addressed as still scattered to the four winds of heaven, and still inhabiting Babylon.

¹ Psalm cxxii. 3.

While in Zechariah's own oracles and visions Jehovah has returned to Jerusalem, His return according to this piece is still future. There is nothing about the Temple: God's holy dwelling from which He has roused Himself is Heaven. The piece was probably inserted by Zechariah himself: its lines are broken by what seems to be a piece of prose, in which the prophet asserts his mission, in words he twice uses elsewhere. But this is uncertain.

*Ho, ho! Flee from the Land of the North
(oracle of Jehovah);*

*For as the four winds have I spread you abroad¹
(oracle of Jehovah).*

Ho! to Zion escape, thou inhabitress of Babel.²

For thus saith Jehovah of Hosts³ to the nations that plunder you (for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye), that, lo! I am about to wave My hand over them, and they shall be plunder to their own servants, and ye shall know that Jehovah of Hosts hath sent me.

Sing out and rejoice, O daughter of Zion;

For, lo! I come, and will dwell in thy midst (oracle of Jehovah).

*And many nations shall join themselves to Jehovah
in that day,*

And shall be to Him⁴ a people.

¹ Some codd. read *with the four winds*. LXX. *from the four winds will I gather you* (συνάξω ὑμᾶς), and this is adopted by Wellhausen and Nowack. But it is probably a later change intended to adapt the poem to its new context.

² *Dweller of the daughter of Babel*. But בַּבֶּל, *daughter*, is mere dittography of the termination of the preceding word.

³ A curious phrase here occurs in the Heb. and versions, *After glory hath He sent me*, which we are probably right in omitting. In any case it is a parenthesis, and ought to go not with *sent me* but with *saith Jehovah of Hosts*. ⁴ So LXX. Heb. *to me*.

*And I will dwell in thy midst
 (And thou shalt know that Jehovah of Hosts hath
 sent me to thee).
 And Jehovah will make Judah His heritage,
 His portion shall be upon holy soil,
 And make choice once more of Jerusalem.
 Silence, all flesh, before Jehovah; ¹
 For He hath roused Himself up from His holy
 dwelling.*

THE FOURTH VISION: THE HIGH PRIEST AND THE SATAN (Chap. iii.).

The next Visions deal with the moral condition of Israel and their standing before God. The Fourth is a judgment scene. The Angel of Jehovah, who is not to be distinguished from Jehovah Himself,² stands for judgment, and there appear before him Joshua the High Priest and the Satan or Adversary who has come to accuse him. Now those who are accused by the Satan—see next chapter of this volume upon the Angels of the Visions—are, according to Jewish belief, those who have been overtaken by misfortune. The people who are standing at God's bar in the person of their High Priest still suffer from the adversity in which Haggai found them, and the continuance of which so disheartened them after the Temple had begun. The evil seasons and poor harvests tormented their hearts with the thought that the Satan still slandered them in the court of God. But Zechariah

¹ Cf. Zeph. i. 7; Hab. ii. 20. "Among the Arabians, after the slaughter of the sacrificial victim, the participants stood for some time in silence about the altar. That was the moment in which the Deity approached in order to take His share in the sacrifice" (Smend, *A. T. Rel. Gesch.*, p. 124). ² Cf. vv. 1 and 2.

comforts them with the vision of the Satan rebuked. Israel has indeed been sorely beset by calamity, a brand much burned, but now of God's grace plucked from the fire. The Satan's role is closed, and he disappears from the Vision.¹ Yet something remains: Israel is rescued, but not sanctified. The nation's troubles are over: their uncleanness has still to be removed. Zechariah sees that the High Priest is clothed in filthy garments, while he stands before the Angel of Judgment. The Angel orders his servants, those *that stand before him*,² to give him clean festal robes. And the prophet, breaking out in sympathy with what he sees, for the first time takes part in the Visions. *Then I said, Let them also put a clean turban on his head*—the turban being the headdress, in Ezekiel of the Prince of Israel, and in the Priestly Code of the High Priest.³ This is done, and the national effect of his cleansing is explained to the High Priest. If he remains loyal to the law of Jehovah, he, the representative of Israel, shall have right of entry to Jehovah's presence among the angels who stand there. But more, he and his colleagues the priests are a portent of the coming of the Messiah—*the Servant of Jehovah, the Branch*, as he has been called by many prophets.⁴ A stone has already been set before Joshua,

¹ See below, p. 318.

² In this Vision the verb *to stand before* is used in two technical senses: (a) of the appearance of plaintiff and defendant before their judge (vv. 1 and 3); (b) of servants before their masters (vv. 4 and 7).

³ See below, p. 294, n. 7.

⁴ Isa. iv. 2, xi. 1; Jer. xxiii. 5, xxxiii. 15; Isa. liii. 2. Stade (*Gesch. des Volkes Isr.*, II. 125), followed by Marti (*Der Proph. Sach.*, 85 n.), suspects the clause *I will bring in My Servant the Branch* as a later interpolation, entangling the construction and finding in this section no further justification.

with seven eyes upon it. God will engrave it with inscriptions, and on the same day take away the guilt of the land. Then shall be the peace upon which Zechariah loves to dwell.

And he showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the Angel of Jehovah, and the Satan¹ standing at his right hand to accuse him.² And Jehovah³ said to the Satan: Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan! Jehovah who makes choice of Jerusalem rebuke thee! Is not this a brand saved from the fire? But Joshua was clothed in foul garments while he stood before the Angel. And he—the Angel—answered and said to those who stood in his presence, Take the foul garments from off him (and he said to him, See, I have made thy guilt to pass away from thee),⁴ and clothe him⁵ in fresh clothing. And I said,⁶ Let them put a clean turban⁷ on his head.

¹ Or *Adversary*; see p. 317.

² To Satan him: slander, or accuse, him.

³ That is the *Angel of Jehovah*, which Wellhausen and Nowack read; but see below, p. 314.

⁴ This clause interrupts the Angel's speech to the servants. Wellh. and Nowack omit it. העביר: cf. 2 Sam. xii. 13; Job vii. 21.

⁵ So LXX. Heb. has a degraded grammatical form, *clothe thyself* which has obviously been made to suit the intrusion of the previous clause, and is therefore an argument against the authenticity of the latter.

⁶ LXX. omits *I said* and reads *Let them put* as another imperative, *Do ye put*, following on the two of the previous verse. Wellhausen adopts this (reading שימו for יימו). Though it is difficult to see how ואמר dropped out of the text if once there, it is equally so to understand why if not original it was inserted. The whole passage has been tampered with. If we accept the Massoretic text, then we have a sympathetic interference in the vision of the dreamer himself which is very natural; and he speaks, as is proper, not in the direct, but indirect, imperative, *Let them put*.

⁷ צָנִיף, the headdress of rich women (Isa. iii. 23), as of eminent men (Job xxix. 14), means something wound round and round the head (cf. the use of חָנָה to form like a ball in Isa. xxii. 18, and

And they put the clean turban upon his head, and clothea him with garments, the Angel of Jehovah standing up the while.¹ And the Angel of Jehovah certified unto Joshua, saying: Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, If in My ways thou walkest, and if My charges thou keepest in charge, then thou also shalt judge My house, and have charge of My courts, and I will give thee entry² among these who stand in My presence. Hearken now, O Joshua, high priest, thou and thy fellows who sit before thee are men of omen, that, lo! I am about to bring My servant, Branch. For see the stone which I have set before Joshua, one stone with seven eyes.³ Lo, I will etch the engraving upon it (oracle of Jehovah), and I will wash away the guilt of that land in one day. In that day (oracle of Jehovah of Hosts) ye will invite one another in under vine and under fig-tree.

The theological significance of the Vision is as clear as its consequences in the subsequent theology and symbolism of Judaism. The uncleanness of Israel which infests their representative before God is not defined. Some⁴ hold that it includes the guilt of

the use of חבֵּט (to wind) to express the putting on of the headdress (Ezek. xvi. 10, etc.). Hence *turban* seems to be the proper rendering. Another form from the same root, מְצַנֵּפֶת, is the name of the headdress of the Prince of Israel (Ezek. xxi. 31); and in the Priestly Codex of the Pentateuch the headdress of the high priest (Exod. xxviii. 37, etc.).

¹ Wellhausen takes the last words of ver. 5 with ver. 6, reads עָמַד and renders *And the Angel of Jehovah stood up* or *stepped forward*. But even if עָמַד be read, the order of the words would require translation in the pluperfect, which would come to the same as the original text. And if Wellhausen's proposal were correct the words *Angel of Jehovah* in ver. 6 would be superfluous.

² Read מִהֶלְכֵימָם (Smend, *A. T. Rel. Gesch.*, p. 324, n. 2).

³ Or *facets*.

⁴ E.g. Marti, *Der Prophet Sacharja*, p. 83.

Israel's idolatry. But they have to go back to Ezekiel for this, and we have seen that Zechariah nowhere mentions or feels the presence of idols among his people. The Vision itself supplies a better explanation. Joshua's filthy garments are replaced by festal and official robes. He is warned to walk in the whole law of the Lord, ruling the Temple and guarding Jehovah's court. The uncleanness was the opposite of all this. It was not ethical failure: covetousness, greed, immorality. It was, as Haggai protested, the neglect of the Temple, and of the whole worship of Jehovah. If this be now removed, in all fidelity to the law, the High Priest shall have access to God, and the Messiah will come. The High Priest himself shall not be the Messiah—this dogma is left to a later age to frame. But before God he will be as one of the angels, and himself and his faithful priesthood omens of the Messiah. We need not linger on the significance of this for the place of the priesthood in later Judaism. Note how the High Priest is already the religious representative of his people: their uncleanness is his; when he is pardoned and cleansed, *the uncleanness of the land* is purged away. In such a High Priest Christian theology has seen the prototype of Christ.

The stone is very difficult to explain. Some have thought of it as the foundation-stone of the Temple, which had already been employed as a symbol of the Messiah and which played so important a part in later Jewish symbolism.¹ Others prefer the top-stone of the Temple, mentioned in chap. iv. 7,² and others an altar or substitute for the ark.³ Again, some take it

¹ Hitzig, Wright and many others. On the place of this stone in the legends of Judaism see Wright, pp. 75 f.

² Ewald, Marcus Dods.

³ Von Orelli, Volck.

to be a jewel, either on the breastplate of the High Priest,¹ or upon the crown afterwards prepared for Zerubbabel.² To all of these there are objections. It is difficult to connect with the foundation-stone an engraving still to be made; neither the top-stone of the Temple, nor a jewel on the breastplate of the priest, nor a jewel on the king's crown, could properly be said to be set *before* the High Priest. We must rather suppose that the stone is symbolic of the finished Temple.³ The Temple is the full expression of God's providence and care—His *seven eyes*. Upon it shall His will be engraved, and by its sacrifices the uncleanness of the land shall be taken away.

THE FIFTH VISION: THE TEMPLE CANDLESTICK AND THE TWO OLIVE-TREES (Chap. iv.).

As the Fourth Vision unfolded the dignity and significance of the High Priest, so in the Fifth we find discovered the joint glory of himself and Zerubbabel, the civil head of Israel. And to this is appended a Word for Zerubbabel himself. In our present text this Word has become inserted in the middle of the Vision, vv. 6*b*-10*a*; in the translation which follows it has been removed to the end of the Vision, and the reasons for this will be found in the notes.

The Vision is of the great golden lamp which stood in the Temple. In the former Temple, light was supplied by ten several candlesticks.⁴ But the Levitical Code ordained one seven-branched lamp, and such appears to have stood in the Temple built while

¹ Bredenkamp.

² Wellhausen, *in loco*, and Smend, *A. T. Rel. Gesch.*, 345.

³ So Marti, p. 88.

⁴ 1 Kings vii. 49.

Zechariah was prophesying.¹ The lamp Zechariah sees has also seven branches, but differs in other respects, and especially in some curious fantastic details only possible in dream and symbol. Its seven lights were fed by seven pipes from a bowl or reservoir of oil which stood higher than themselves, and this was fed, either directly from two olive-trees which stood to the right and left of it, or, if ver. 12 be genuine, by two tubes which brought the oil from the trees. The seven lights are the seven eyes of Jehovah—if, as we ought, we run the second half of ver. 10 on to the first half of ver. 6. The pipes and reservoir are given no symbolic force; but the olive-trees which feed them are called *the two sons of oil which stand before the Lord of all the earth*. These can only be the two anointed heads of the community—Zerubbabel, the civil head, and Joshua, the religious head. Theirs was the equal and co-ordinate duty of sustaining the Temple, figured by the whole candelabrum, and ensuring the brightness of the sevenfold revelation. The Temple, that is to say, is nothing without the monarchy and the priesthood behind it; and these stand in the immediate presence of God. Therefore this Vision, which to the superficial eye might seem to be a glorification of the mere machinery of the Temple and its ritual, is rather to prove that the latter derive all their power from the national institutions which are behind them, from the two representatives of the people who in their turn stand before God Himself. The Temple so near completion will not of itself reveal God: let not the Jews put their trust in it, but in the life behind it. And for ourselves the lesson of the Vision is that which Christian theology

¹ 1 Macc. i. 21; iv. 49, 50. Josephus, XIV. *Ant.* iv. 4.

has been so slow to learn, that God's revelation under the old covenant shone not directly through the material framework, but was mediated by the national life, whose chief men stood and grew fruitful in His presence.

One thing is very remarkable. The two sources of revelation are the King and the Priest. The Prophet is not mentioned beside them. Nothing could prove more emphatically the sense in Israel that prophecy was exhausted.

The appointment of so responsible a position for Zerubbabel demanded for him a special promise of grace. And therefore, as Joshua had his promise in the Fourth Vision, we find Zerubbabel's appended to the Fifth. It is one of the great sayings of the Old Testament: there is none more spiritual and more comforting. Zerubbabel shall complete the Temple, and those who scoffed at its small beginnings in the day of small things shall frankly rejoice when they see him set the top-stone by plummet in its place. As the moral obstacles to the future were removed in the Fourth Vision by the vindication of Joshua and by his cleansing, so the political obstacles, all the hindrances described by the Book of Ezra in the building of the Temple, shall disappear. *Before Zerubbabel the great mountain shall become a plain.* And this, because he shall not work by his own strength, but the Spirit of Jehovah of Hosts shall do everything. Again we find that absence of expectation in human means, and that full trust in God's own direct action, which characterise all the prophesying of Zechariah.

Then the angel who talked with me returned and roused me like a man roused out of his sleep. And he said to me, What seest thou? And I said, I see, and lo! a

candlestick all of gold, and its bowl upon the top of it, and its seven lamps on it, and seven¹ pipes to the lamps which are upon it. And two olive-trees stood over against it, one on the right of the bowl,² and one on the left. And I began³ and said to the angel who talked with me,⁴ What be these, my lord? And the angel who talked with me answered and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord! And he answered and said to me,⁵ These seven are the eyes of Jehovah, which sweep through the whole earth. And I asked and said to him, What are these two olive-trees on the right of the candlestick and on its left? And again I asked and said to him, What are the two olive-branches which are beside the two golden tubes that pour forth the oil⁶ from them?⁷ And he said to me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord! And he said, These are the two sons of oil which stand before the Lord of all the earth.

This is Jehovah's Word to Zerubbabel, and it says: Not by might, and not by force, but by My Spirit, saith

¹ LXX. Heb. has *seven sevens* of pipes.

² Wellhausen reads *its right* and deletes *the bowl*.

³ אָנָּוּן אֲנִי is not only *to answer*, but to take part in a conversation, whether by starting or continuing it. LXX. rightly ἐπηρώρησα.

⁴ Heb. *saying*.

⁵ In the Hebrew text, followed by the ancient and modern versions, including the English Bible, there here follows 6b-10a, the Word to Zerubbabel. They obviously disturb the narrative of the Vision, and Wellhausen has rightly transferred them to the end of it, where they come in as naturally as the word of hope to Joshua comes in at the end of the preceding Vision. Take them away, and, as can be seen above, ver. 10b follows quite naturally upon 6a.

⁶ Heb. *gold*. So LXX.

⁷ Wellhausen omits the whole of this second question (ver. 12) as intruded and unnecessary. So also Smend as a doublet on ver. 11 (*A. T. Rel. Gesch.*, 343 n.). So also Nowack.

⁸ Heb. *saying*.

Jehovah of Hosts. What art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel be thou level! And he¹ shall bring forth the top-stone with shoutings, Grace, grace to it!² And the Word of Jehovah came to me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have founded this house, and his hands shall complete it, and thou shalt know that Jehovah of Hosts hath sent me to you. For whoever hath despised the day of small things, they shall rejoice when they see the plummet³ in the hand of Zerubbabel.

THE SIXTH VISION: THE WINGED VOLUME (Chap. v. 1-4).

The religious and political obstacles being now removed from the future of Israel, Zechariah in the next two Visions beholds the land purged of its crime and wickedness. These Visions are very simple, if somewhat after the ponderous fashion of Ezekiel.

The first of them is the Vision of the removal of the curse brought upon the land by its civic criminals, especially thieves and perjurers—the two forms which crime takes in a poor and rude community like the colony of the returned exiles. The prophet tells us he beheld a roll flying. He uses the ordinary Hebrew name for the rolls of skin or parchment upon which writing was set down. But the proportions of its colossal size—twenty cubits by ten—prove that it was not a cylindrical but an oblong shape which he saw. It consisted, therefore, of sheets laid on each other like

¹ LXX. *I.*

² Or *Fair, fair is it!* Nowack.

³ *The stone, the leaden.* Marti, *St. u. Kr.*, 1892, p. 213 n., takes the *leaden* for a gloss, and reads simply *the stone*, i.e. the top-stone; but the plummet is the last thing laid to the building to test the straightness of the top-stone.

our books, and as our word "volume," which originally meant, like his own term, a roll, means now an oblong article, we may use this in our translation. The volume is the record of the crime of the land, and Zechariah sees it flying from the land. But it is also the curse upon this crime, and so again he beholds it entering every thief's and perjurer's house and destroying it. Smend gives a possible explanation of this: "It appears that in ancient times curses were written on pieces of paper and sent down the wind into the houses"¹ of those against whom they were directed. But the figure seems rather to be of birds of prey.

And I turned and lifted my eyes and looked, and lo! a volume² flying. And he said unto me, What dost thou see? And I said, I see a volume flying, its length twenty cubits and its breadth ten. And he said unto me, This is the curse that is going out upon the face of all the land. For every thief is hereby purged away from hence,³ and every perjurer is hereby purged away

¹ *A. T. Rel. Gesch.*, 312 n.

² מְגִלָּה, roll or volume. LXX. δρέπανον, sickle, מִזָּה.

³ A group of difficult expressions. The verb נִקָּה is Ni. of a root which originally had the physical meaning to *clean out of a place*, and this Ni. is so used of a plundered town in Isa. iii. 26. But its more usual meaning is to be spoken free from guilt (Psalm xix. 14, etc.). Most commentators take it here in the physical sense, Hitzig quoting the use of καθάρω in Mark vii. 19. מִזָּה כְּמוֹהָ are variously rendered. מִזָּה is mostly understood as locative, *hence*, i.e. from the land just mentioned, but some take it with *steal* (Hitzig), some with *cleaned out* (Ewald, Orelli, etc.). כְּמוֹהָ is rendered *like it*—the flying roll (Ewald, Orelli), which cannot be, since the roll flies upon the face of the land, and the sinner is to be purged out of it; or in accordance with the roll or its curse (Jerome, Köhler). But Wellhausen reads כְּמִזָּה כְּמִזָּה, and takes נִקָּה in its usual meaning and in the past tense, and renders *Every thief has for long remained unpunished*; and so in the next clause. So, too, Nowack. LXX. *Every thief shall be condemned to death, ἕως θανάτου ἐκδιθήσεται.*

from hence. *I have sent it forth—oracle of Jehovah of Hosts—and it shall enter the thief's house, and the house of him that hath sworn falsely by My name, and it shall roost¹ in the midst of his house and consume it, with its beams and its stones.²*

THE SEVENTH VISION: THE WOMAN IN THE BARREL
(Chap. v. 5-11).

It is not enough that the curse fly from the land after destroying every criminal. The living principle of sin, the power of temptation, must be covered up and removed. This is the subject of the Seventh Vision.

The prophet sees an ephah, the largest vessel in use among the Jews, of more than seven gallons capacity, and round³ like a barrel. Presently the leaden top is lifted, and the prophet sees a woman inside. This is Wickedness, feminine because she figures the power of temptation. She is thrust back into the barrel, the leaden lid is pushed down, and the whole carried off by two other female figures, winged like the strong, far-flying stork, into the land of Shin'ar, "which at that time had the general significance of the counterpart of the Holy Land,"⁴ and was the proper home of all that was evil.

And the angel of Jehovah who spake with me came

¹ Heb. *lodge, pass the night*: cf. Zeph. ii. 14 (above, p. 65), *pelican and bittern shall roost upon the capitals*.

² Sinend sees a continuation of Ezekiel's idea of the guilt of man overtaking him (iii. 20, xxxiv.). Here God's curse does all.

³ This follows from the shape of the disc that fits into it. Seven gallons are seven-eighths of the English bushel: that in use in Canada and the United States is somewhat smaller.

⁴ Ewald.

forward¹ and said to me, Lift now thine eyes and see what this is that comes forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is a bushel coming forth. And he said, This is their transgression² in all the land.³ And behold! the round leaden top was lifted up, and lo!⁴ a woman sitting inside the bushel. And he said, This is the Wickedness, and he thrust her back into the bushel, and thrust the leaden disc upon the mouth of it. And I lifted mine eyes and looked, and lo! two women came forth with the wind in their wings, for they had wings like storks' wings, and they bore the bushel betwixt earth and heaven. And I said to the angel that talked with me, Whither do they carry the bushel? And he said to me, To build it a house in the land of Shinar, that it may be fixed and brought to rest there on a place of its own.⁵

We must not allow this curious imagery to hide from us its very spiritual teaching. If Zechariah is weighted in these Visions by the ponderous fashion of Ezekiel, he has also that prophet's truly moral spirit. He is not contented with the ritual atonement for sin,

¹ Upon the stage of vision.

² For Heb. עֲוֹנוֹם read עֲוֹנָם with LXX.

³ By inserting הַיּוֹצֵאת after מֵה in ver. 5, and deleting הַיּוֹצֵאת . . . וְיֵאמֵר in ver. 6, Wellhausen secures the more concise text: *And see what this bushel is that comes forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is the evil of the people in the whole land.* But to reduce the redundancies of the Visions is to delete the most characteristic feature of their style. Besides, Wellhausen's result gives no sense. The prophet would not be asked to see what a bushel is: the angel is there to tell him this. So Wellhausen in his translation has to omit the מֵה of ver. 5, while telling us in his note to replace הַיּוֹצֵאת after it. His emendation is, therefore, to be rejected. Nowack, however, accepts it.

⁴ LXX. Heb. *this*.

⁵ In the last clause the verbal forms are obscure if not corrupt. LXX. καὶ ἔτοιμασαι καὶ θήσουσιν αὐτὸ ἐκεῖ = לְהָבִיזוּ וְהִקְיָהוּ עָם; but see Ewald, *Syntax*, 131 d

nor with the legal punishment of crime. The living power of sin must be banished from Israel; and this cannot be done by any efforts of men themselves, but by God's action only, which is thorough and effectual. If the figures by which this is illustrated appear to us grotesque and heavy, let us remember how they would suit the imagination of the prophet's own day. Let us lay to heart their eternally valid doctrine, that sin is not a formal curse, nor only expressed in certain social crimes, nor exhausted by the punishment of these, but, as a power of attraction and temptation to all men, it must be banished from the heart, and can be banished only by God.

THE EIGHTH VISION: THE CHARIOTS OF THE FOUR WINDS (Chap. vi. 1-8).

As the series of Visions opened with one of the universal providence of God, so they close with another of the same. The First Vision had postponed God's overthrow of the nations till His own time, and this the Last Vision now describes as begun, the religious and moral needs of Israel having meanwhile been met by the Visions which come between, and every obstacle to God's action for the deliverance of His people being removed.

The prophet sees four chariots, with horses of different colour in each, coming out from between two mountains of brass. The horsemen of the First Vision were bringing in reports: these chariots are coming forth with their commissions from the presence of the Lord of all the earth. They are the four winds of heaven, servants of Him who maketh the winds His angels. They are destined for different quarters of the world. The prophet has not been admitted to

the Presence, and does not know what exactly they have been commissioned to do; that is to say, Zechariah is ignorant of the actual political processes by which the nations are to be overthrown and Israel glorified before them. But his Angel-interpreter tells him that the black horses go north, the white west, and the dappled south, while the horses of the fourth chariot, impatient because no direction is assigned to them, are ordered to roam up and down through the earth. It is striking that none are sent eastward.¹ This appears to mean that, in Zechariah's day, no power oppressed or threatened Israel from that direction; but in the north there was the centre of the Persian Empire, to the south Egypt, still a possible master of the world, and to the west the new forces of Europe that in less than a generation were to prove themselves a match for Persia. The horses of the fourth chariot are therefore given the charge to exercise supervision upon the whole earth—unless in ver. 7 we should translate, not *earth*, but *land*, and understand a commission to patrol the land of Israel. The centre of the world's power is in the north, and therefore the black horses, which are dispatched in that direction, are explicitly described as charged to bring God's spirit, that is His anger or His power, to bear on that quarter of the world.

And once more² I lifted mine eyes and looked, and lo! four chariots coming forward from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of brass. In

¹ Wellhausen suggests that in the direction assigned to the white horses, אֲחֻרָּיִם (ver. 6), which we have rendered *westward*, we might read אֶרֶץ הַקֶּדֶם, *land of the east*; and that from ver. 7 *the west* has probably fallen out after *they go forth*.

² Heb. *I turned again and*.

the first chariot were brown horses, and in the second chariot black horses, and in the third chariot white horses, and in the fourth chariot dappled . . .¹ horses. And I broke in and said to the angel who talked with me, *What are these, my lord?* And the angel answered and said to me, *These be the four winds of heaven that come forth from presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth.*² That with the black horses goes forth to the land of the north, while the white go out west³ (?), and the dappled go to the land of the south. And the . . .⁴ go forth and seek to go, to march up and down on the earth. And he said, *Go, march up and down on the earth; and they marched up and down on the earth.* And he called me and spake to me, saying, *See they that go forth to the land of the north have brought my spirit to bear*⁵ *on the land of the north.*

THE RESULT OF THE VISIONS: THE CROWNING OF THE KING OF ISRAEL (Chap. vi. 9-15).

The heathen being overthrown, Israel is free, and may have her king again. Therefore Zechariah is ordered—it would appear on the same day as that on which he received the Visions—to visit a certain deputation from the captivity in Babylon, Heldai, Tobiyah and Yedayah, at the house of Josiah the son

¹ Hebrew reads אַמְצִים, *strong*; LXX. ψαροί, *dappled*, and for the previous פֶּרְדִּים, *spotted* or *dappled*, it reads ποικίλοι, *piebald*. Perhaps we should read אַמְצִים (cf. Isa. lxiii. 1), *dark red* or *sorrel*, with *grey spots*. So Ewald and Orelli. Wright keeps *strong*.

² Wellhausen, supplying ה before אַרְבַּע, renders *These go forth to the four winds of heaven after they have presented themselves*, etc.

³ Heb. *behind them*.

⁴ אַמְצִים, the second epithet of the horses of the fourth chariot, ver. 3. See note there.

⁵ Or *anger to bear*, Heb. *rest*.

Lo! a man called Branch; from his roots shall a branch come, and he shall build the Temple of Jehovah. Yea, he shall build Jehovah's Temple,¹ and he shall wear the royal majesty and sit and rule upon his throne, and Joshua² shall be priest on his right hand,³ and there will be a counsel of peace between the two of them.⁴ And the crown shall be for Heldai⁵ and Tobiyah and Yeda'yah, and for the courtesy⁶ of the son of Şephanyah, for a memorial in the Temple of Jehovah. And the far-away shall come and build at the Temple of Jehovah, and ye shall know that Jehovah of Hosts hath sent me to you; and it shall be if ye hearken to the voice of Jehovah your God . . .!

Litteratur, p. 297.) But עטרות is to be rendered *crown*; see ver. 11 where it is followed by a singular verb. The plural form refers to the several circlets of which it was woven.

¹ Some critics omit the repetition.

² So Wellhausen proposes to insert. The name was at least understood in the original text.

³ So LXX. Heb. *on his throne*.

⁴ With this phrase, vouched for by both the Heb. and the Sept., the rest of the received text cannot be harmonised. There were two: one is the priest just mentioned who is to be at the right hand of the crowned. The received text makes this crowned one to be the high priest Joshua. But if there are two and the priest is only secondary, the crowned one must be Zerubbabel, whom Haggai has already designated as Messiah. Nor is it difficult to see why, in a later age, when the high priest was sovereign in Israel, Joshua's name should have been inserted in place of Zerubbabel's, and at the same time the phrase *priest at his right hand*, to which the LXX. testifies in harmony with *the two of them*, should have been altered to the reading of the received text, *priest upon his throne*. With the above agree Smend, *A. T. Rel. Gesch.*, 343 n., and Nowack.

⁵ Heb. הֵלְדַי, Hēlem, but the reading Heldai, הֵלְדַי, is proved by the previous occurrence of the name and by the LXX. reading here, τοῖς ὑπομένουσιν, *i.e.* from root הָלַךְ, *to last*.

⁶ הַךְ, but Wellhausen and others take it as abbreviation or misreading for the name of Yosiyahu (see ver. 10).

⁷ Here the verse and paragraph break suddenly off in the middle of a sentence. On the passage see Smend, 343 and 345.

CHAPTER XXII

THE ANGELS OF THE VISIONS

ZECHARIAH i. 7—vi. 8

AMONG the influences of the Exile which contributed the material of Zechariah's Visions we included a considerable development of Israel's belief in Angels. The general subject is in itself so large, and the Angels play so many parts in the Visions, that it is necessary to devote to them a separate chapter.

From the earliest times the Hebrews had conceived their Divine King to be surrounded by a court of ministers, who besides celebrating His glory went forth from His presence to execute His will upon earth. In this latter capacity they were called Messengers, Male'akim, which the Greeks translated Angeloi, and so gave us our Angels. The origin of this conception is wrapt in obscurity. It may have been partly due to a belief, shared by all early peoples, in the existence of superhuman beings inferior to the gods,¹ but even without this it must have sprung up in the natural tendency to provide the royal deity of a people with a court, an army and servants. In the pious minds of early Israel there must have been a kind of necessity to believe and develop this—a necessity imposed *firstly* by the belief in Jehovah's residence as confined to one

¹ So Robertson Smith, art. "Angels" in the *Encyc. Brit.*, 9th ed.

spot, Sinai or Jerusalem, from which He Himself went forth only upon great occasions to the deliverance of His people as a whole ; and *secondly* by the unwillingness to conceive of His personal appearance in missions of a menial nature, or to represent Him in the human form in which, according to primitive ideas, He could alone hold converse with men.

It can easily be understood how a religion, which was above all a religion of revelation, should accept such popular conceptions in its constant record of the appearance of God and His Word in human life. Accordingly, in the earliest documents of the Hebrews, we find angels who bring to Israel the blessings, curses and commands of Jehovah.¹ Apart from this duty and their human appearance, these beings are not conceived to be endowed either with character or, if we may judge by their namelessness,² with individuality. They are the Word of God personified. Acting as God's mouthpiece, they are merged in Him, and so completely that they often speak of themselves by the Divine *I*.³ "The *function* of an Angel so overshadows his *personality* that the Old Testament does not ask who or what this Angel is, but what he does. And the answer to the last question is, that he represents God to man so directly and fully that when he speaks or acts God Himself is felt to speak or act."⁴ Besides the carriage of the Divine Word, angels bring back to their Lord report of all that happens : kings are said, in popular language, to be *as wise as the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all the things that are in the earth*.⁵ They are also employed in the deliverance and discipline

¹ So already in Deborah's Song, Judg. v. 23, and throughout both J and E.

² Cf. especially Gen. xxxii. 29.

⁴ Robertson Smith, as above.

⁵ Judg. vi. 12 ff.

³ 2 Sam. xiv. 20.

of His people.¹ By them come the pestilence,² and the restraint of those who set themselves against God's will.³

Now the prophets before the Exile had so spiritual a conception of God, worked so immediately from His presence, and above all were so convinced of His personal and practical interest in the affairs of His people, that they felt no room for Angels between Him and their hearts, and they do not employ Angels, except when Isaiah in his inaugural vision penetrates to the heavenly palace and court of the Most High.⁴ Even when Amos sees a plummet laid to the walls of Jerusalem, it is by the hands of Jehovah Himself,⁵ and we have not encountered an Angel in the mediation of the Word to any of the prophets whom we have already studied. But Angels reappear, though not under the name, in the visions of Ezekiel, the first prophet of the Exile. They are in human form, and he calls them *Men*. Some execute God's wrath upon Jerusalem,⁶ and one, whose appearance is as the appearance of brass, acts as the interpreter of God's will to the prophet, and instructs him in the details of the building of City and Temple.⁷ When the glory of Jehovah appears and Jehovah Himself speaks to the prophet out of the Temple, this *Man* stands by the prophet,⁸ distinct from the Deity, and afterwards continues his work of explanation. "Therefore," as Dr. Davidson remarks, "it is not the sense of distance

¹ Exod. xiv. 19 (?), xxiii. 20, etc.; Josh. v. 13.

² 2 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17; 2 Kings xix. 35; Exod. xii. 23. In Eccles. v. 6 this destroying angel is the minister of God: cf. Psalm lxxviii. 49b, *hurtful angels*—Cheyne, *Origin of Psalter*, p. 157.

³ Balaam: Num. xxii. 23, 31. ⁶ ix.

⁴ vi. 2-6.

⁷ xl. 3 ff.

⁵ Vol. I., p. 114.

⁸ xliii. 6.

to which God is removed that causes Ezekiel to create these intermediaries." The necessity for them rather arises from the same natural feeling, which we have suggested as giving rise to the earliest conceptions of Angels: the unwillingness, namely, to engage the Person of God Himself in the subordinate task of explaining the details of the Temple. Note, too, how the Divine Voice, which speaks to Ezekiel out of the Temple, blends and becomes one with the *Man* standing at his side. Ezekiel's Angel-interpreter is simply one function of the Word of God.

Many of the features of Ezekiel's Angels appear in those of Zechariah. *The four smiths* or smiters of the four horns recall the six executioners of the wicked in Jerusalem.¹ Like Ezekiel's Interpreter, they are called *Men*,² and like him one appears as Zechariah's instructor and guide: *he who talked with me*.³ But while Zechariah calls these beings *Men*, he also gives them the ancient name, which Ezekiel had not used, of Male'akim, *messengers, angels*. The Instructor is *the Angel who talked with me*. In the First Vision, *the Man riding the brown horse, the Man that stood among the myrtles, is the Angel of Jehovah that stood among the myrtles*.⁴ The Interpreter is also called *the Angel of Jehovah*, and if our text of the First Vision be correct, the two of them are curiously mingled, as if both were functions of the same Word of God, and in personality not to be distinguished from each other. The Reporting Angel among the myrtles takes up the duty of the Interpreting

¹ Zech. i. 18 ff.; Ezek. ix. 1 ff.

² Zech. i. 8; so even in the Book of Daniel we have *the man Gabriel*—ix. 21.

³ i. 9, 19; ii. 3; iv. 1, 4, 5; v. 5, 10; vi. 4. But see above, pp. 261 f.

⁴ i. 8, 10, 11.

Angel and explains the Vision to the prophet. In the Fourth Vision this dissolving view is carried further, and the Angel of Jehovah is interchangeable with Jehovah Himself;¹ just as in the Vision of Ezekiel the Divine Voice from the Glory and the Man standing beside the prophet are curiously mingled. Again in the Fourth Vision we hear of those *who stand in the presence of Jehovah*,² and in the Eighth of executant angels coming out from His presence with commissions upon the whole earth.³

In the Visions of Zechariah, then, as in the earlier books, we see the Lord of all the earth, surrounded by a court of angels, whom He sends forth in human form to interpret His Word and execute His will, and in their doing of this there is the same indistinctness of individuality, the same predominance of function over personality. As with Ezekiel, one stands out more clearly than the rest, to be the prophet's interpreter, whom, as in the earlier visions of angels, Zechariah calls *my lord*,⁴ but even he melts into the figures of the rest. These are the old and borrowed elements in Zechariah's doctrine of Angels. But he has added to them in several important particulars, which make his Visions an intermediate stage between the Book of Ezekiel and the very intricate angelology of later Judaism.

In the first place, Zechariah is the earliest prophet who introduces orders and ranks among the angels. In his Fourth Vision the Angel of Jehovah is the Divine Judge *before whom*⁵ Joshua appears with the Adversary.

¹ iii. 1 compared with 2.

² vi. 5.

³ iii. 6, 7.

⁴ i. 9, etc.

⁵ iii. 1. *Stand before* is here used forensically: cf. the N.T. phrases to *stand before God*, Rev. xx. 12; *before the judgment-seat of Christ*, Rom. xiv. 10; and *be acquitted*, Luke xxi. 36.

He also has others standing *before him*¹ to execute his sentences. In the Third Vision, again, the Interpreting Angel does not communicate directly with Jehovah, but receives his words from another Angel who has come forth.² All these are symptoms, that even with a prophet, who so keenly felt as Zechariah did the ethical directness of God's word and its pervasiveness through public life, there had yet begun to increase those feelings of God's sublimity and awfulness, which in the later thought of Israel lifted Him to so far a distance from men, and created so complex a host of intermediaries, human and superhuman, between the worshipping heart and the Throne of Grace. We can best estimate the difference in this respect between Zechariah and the earlier prophets whom we have studied by remarking that his characteristic phrase *talked with me*, literally *spoke in or by me*, which he uses of the Interpreting Angel, is used by Habakkuk of God Himself.³ To the same awful impressions of the God-head is perhaps due the first appearance of the Angel as intercessor. Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah themselves directly interceded with God for the people; but with Zechariah it is the Interpreting Angel who intercedes, and who in return receives the Divine comfort.⁴ In this angelic function, the first of its kind in Scripture, we see the small and explicable beginnings of a belief destined to assume enormous dimensions in the development of the Church's worship. The supplication of Angels, the faith in their intercession and in

¹ iii. 4. Here the phrase is used domestically of servants in the presence of their master. See above, p. 293, n. 2.

² ii. 3, 4.

³ Hab. ii. 1: cf. also Num. xii. 6-9.

⁴ First Vision, i. 12.

the prevailing prayers of the righteous dead, which has been so egregiously multiplied in certain sections of Christendom, may be traced to the same increasing sense of the distance and awfulness of God, but is to be corrected by the faith Christ has taught us of the nearness of our Father in Heaven, and of His immediate care of His every human child.

The intercession of the Angel in the First Vision is also a step towards that identification of special Angels with different peoples which we find in the Book of Daniel. This tells us of heavenly princes not only for Israel—*Michael, your prince, the great prince which standeth up for the children of thy people*¹—but for the heathen nations, a conception the first beginnings of which we see in a prophecy that was perhaps not far from being contemporaneous with Zechariah.² Zechariah's Vision of a hierarchy among the angels was also destined to further development. The head of the patrol among the myrtles, and the Judge-Angel before whom Joshua appears, are the first Archangels. We know how these were further specialised, and had even personalities and names given them by both Jewish and Christian writers.³

Among the Angels described in the Old Testament, we have seen some charged with powers of hindrance and destruction—*a troop of angels of evil*.⁴ They too are the servants of God, who is the author of all evil as well as good,⁵ and the instruments of His wrath.

¹ x. 21, xii. 1.

² Isa. xxiv. 21.

³ Book of Daniel x., xii. ; Tobit xii. 15 ; Book of Enoch *passim* ; Jude 9 ; Rev. viii. 2, etc.

⁴ Psalm lxxviii. 49. See above, p. 312, n. 2.

⁵ Amos iii. 6.

But the temptation of men is also part of His Providence. Where wilful souls have to be misled, the *spirit* who does so, as in Ahab's case, comes from Jehovah's presence.¹ All these spirits are just as devoid of character and personality as the rest of the angelic host. They work evil as mere instruments: neither malice nor falseness is attributed to themselves. They are not rebel nor fallen angels, but obedient to Jehovah. Nay, like Ezekiel's and Zechariah's Angels of the Word, the Angel who tempts David to number the people is interchangeable with God Himself.² Kindred to the duty of tempting men is that of discipline, in its forms both of restraining or accusing the guilty, and of vexing the righteous in order to test them. For both of these the same verb is used, "to satan,"³ in the general sense of *withstanding*, or antagonising. The Angel of Jehovah stood in Balaam's way *to satan him*.⁴ The noun, *the Satan*, is used repeatedly of a human foe.⁵ But in two passages, of which Zechariah's Fourth Vision is one, and the other the Prologue to Job,⁶ the name is given to an Angel, one of *the sons of Elohim*, or Divine powers who receive their commission from Jehovah. The noun is not yet, what it afterwards became,⁷ a proper name; but has the definite article, *the Adversary* or *Accuser*—that is, the Angel to whom that function

¹ 1 Kings xxii. 20 ff.

² 2 Sam. xxiv. 1; 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Though here difference of age between the two documents may have caused the difference of view.

³ There are two forms of the verb, שָׂטָן, satan, and שָׂטַם, satam, the latter apparently the older.

⁴ Num. xxii. 22, 32.

⁵ 1 Sam. xxix. 4; 2 Sam. xix. 23 Heb., 22 Eng.; 1 Kings v. 18 xi. 14, etc.

⁶ Zech. iii. 1 ff.; Job i. 6 ff.

⁷ 1 Chron. xxi. 1.

was assigned. With Zechariah his business is the official one of prosecutor in the supreme court of Jehovah, and when his work is done he disappears. Yet, before he does so, we see for the first time in connection with any angel a gleam of character. This is revealed by the Lord's rebuke of him. There is something blameworthy in the accusation of Joshua: not indeed false witness, for Israel's guilt is patent in the foul garments of their High Priest, but hardness or malice, that would seek to prevent the Divine grace. In the Book of Job *the Satan* is also a function, even here not a fallen or rebel angel, but one of God's court,¹ the instrument of discipline or chastisement. Yet, in that he himself suggests his cruelties and is represented as forward and officious in their infliction, a character is imputed to him even more clearly than in Zechariah's Vision. But the Satan still shares that identification with his function which we have seen to characterise all the angels of the Old Testament, and therefore he disappears from the drama so soon as his place in its high argument is over.²

In this description of the development of Israel's doctrine of Angels, and of Zechariah's contributions to it, we have not touched upon the question whether the development was assisted by Israel's contact with the Persian religion and with the system of Angels which

¹ i. 6b.

² See Davidson in *Cambridge Bible for Schools* on Job i. 6-12, especially on ver. 9: "The Satan of this book may show the beginnings of a personal malevolence against man, but he is still rigidly subordinated to Heaven, and in all he does subserves its interests. His function is as the minister of God to try the sincerity of man; hence when his work of trial is over he is no more found, and no place is given him among the *dramatis personæ* of the poem."

the latter contains. For several reasons the question is a difficult one. But so far as present evidence goes, it makes for a negative answer. Scholars, who are in no way prejudiced against the theory of a large Persian influence upon Israel, declare that the religion of Persia affected the Jewish doctrine of Angels "only in secondary points," such as their "number and personality, and the existence of demons and evil spirits."¹ Our own discussion has shown us that Zechariah's Angels, in spite of the new features they introduce, are in substance one with the Angels of pre-exilic Israel. Even the Satan is primarily a function, and one of the servants of God. If he has developed an immoral character, this cannot be attributed to the influence of Persian belief in a Spirit of evil opposed to the Spirit of good in the universe, but may be explained by the native, or selfish, resentment of Israel against their prosecutor before the bar of Jehovah. Nor can we fail to remark that this character of evil appears in the Satan, not, as in the Persian religion, in general opposition to goodness, but as thwarting that saving grace which was so peculiarly Jehovah's own. And Jehovah said to the Satan, *Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan, yea, Jehovah who hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee! Is not this a brand plucked from the burning?*

¹ Cheyne, *The Origin of the Psalter*, p. 272. Read carefully on this point the very important remarks on pp. 270 ff. and 281 f.

CHAPTER XXIII

"THE SEED OF PEACE"

ZECHARIAH vii., viii.

THE Visions have revealed the removal of the guilt of the land, the restoration of Israel to their standing before God, the revival of the great national institutions, and God's will to destroy the heathen forces of the world. With the Temple built, Israel should be again in the position which she enjoyed before the Exile. Zechariah, therefore, proceeds to exhort his people to put away the fasts which the Exile had made necessary, and address themselves, as of old, to the virtues and duties of the civic life. And he introduces his orations to this end by a natural appeal to the experience of the former days.

The occasion came to him when the Temple had been building for two years, and when some of its services were probably resumed.¹ A deputation of Jews appeared in Jerusalem and raised the question of the continuance of the great Fast of the Exile. Who the deputation were is not certain: probably we ought to delete *Bethel* from the second verse, and read either *El-sar' eser sent Regem-Melekh and his men to the house of Jehovah to propitiate Jehovah*, or else *the house of El-sar' eser sent Regem-Melekh and his men to propitiate*

¹ Cf. chap. vii. 3: *the priests which were of the house of Jehovah.*

Jehovah. It has been thought that they came from the Jews in Babylon: this would agree with their arrival in the ninth month to inquire about a fast in the fifth month. But Zechariah's answer is addressed to Jews in Judæa. The deputation limited their inquiry to the fast of the fifth month, which commemorated the burning of the Temple and the City, now practically restored. But with a breadth of view which reveals the prophet rather than the priest, Zechariah replies, in the following chapter, upon all the fasts by which Israel for seventy years had bewailed her ruin and exile. He instances two, that of the fifth month, and that of the seventh month, the date of the murder of Gedaliah, when the last poor remnant of a Jewish state was swept away.¹ With a boldness which recalls Amos to the very letter, Zechariah asks his people whether in those fasts they fasted at all to their God. Jehovah had not charged them, and in fasting they had fasted for themselves, just as in eating and drinking they had eaten and drunken to themselves. They should rather hearken to the words He really sent them. In a passage, the meaning of which has been perverted by the intrusion of the eighth verse, that therefore ought to be deleted, Zechariah recalls what those words of Jehovah had been in the former times when the land was inhabited and the national life in full course. They were not ceremonial; they were ethical: they commanded justice, kindness, and the care of the helpless and the poor. And it was in consequence of the people's disobedience to those words that all the ruin came upon them for which they now annually mourned. The moral is obvious if unexpressed. Let them drop their fasts,

¹ Jer. xli. 2; 2 Kings xxv. 25.

and practise the virtues the neglect of which had made their fasts a necessity. It is a sane and practical word, and makes us feel how much Zechariah has inherited of the temper of Amos and Isaiah. He rests, as before, upon the letter of the ancient oracles, but only so as to bring out their spirit. With such an example of the use of ancient Scripture, it is deplorable that so many men, both among the Jews and the Christians, should have devoted themselves to the letter at the expense of the spirit.

And it came to pass in the fourth year of Darius the king, that the Word of Jehovah came to Zechariah on the fourth of the ninth month, Kislev. For there sent to the house of Jehovah, El-sar' eser and Regem-Melekh and his men,¹ to propitiate² Jehovah, to ask of the priests which were in the house of Jehovah of Hosts and of the prophets as follows: Shall I weep in the fifth month with fasting as I have now done so many years? And the Word of Jehovah of Hosts came to me: Speak now to all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying: When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and in the seventh month,³ and this for seventy years, did ye fast at all to Me? And when ye eat and when ye drink, are not ye the eaters and ye the drinkers? Are not these⁴ the

¹ The Hebrew text is difficult if not impossible to construe: *For Bethel sent Sar' eser* (without sign of accusative) *and Regem-Melekh and his men.* Wellhausen points out that Sar' eser is a defective name, requiring the name or title of deity in front of it, and Marti proposes to find this in the last syllable of Bethel, and to read 'El-sar' eser. It is tempting to find in the first syllable of Bethel the remnant of the phrase *to the house of Jehovah.*

² To stroke the face of.

³ The fifth month Jerusalem fell, the seventh month Gedaliah was murdered: Jer. lii. 12 f.; 2 Kings xxv. 8 f., 25.

⁴ So LXX. Heb. has acc. sign before *words*, perhaps implying *Is it not rather necessary to do the words?* etc

words which Jehovah proclaimed by the hand of the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and at peace, with her cities round about her, and the Negeb and the Shephelah were inhabited?

¹ Thus spake Jehovah of Hosts: Judge true judgment, and practise towards each other kindness and mercy; oppress neither widow nor orphan, stranger nor poor, and think not evil in your hearts towards one another. But they refused to hearken, and turned a rebellious shoulder,² and their ears they dulled from listening. And their heart they made adamant, so as not to hear the Torah and the words which Jehovah of Hosts sent through His Spirit by the hand of the former prophets; and there was great wrath from Jehovah of Hosts. And it came to pass that, as He had called and they heard not, so they shall call and I will not hear, said Jehovah of Hosts, but I will whirl³ them away among nations whom they know not. And the land was laid waste behind them, without any to pass to and fro, and they made the pleasant land desolate.

There follow upon this deliverance ten other short oracles: chap. viii. Whether all of this decalogue are to be dated from the same time as the answer to the deputation about the fasts is uncertain. Some of them appear rather to belong to an earlier date, for they reflect the situation, and even the words, of Haggai's oracles, and represent the advent of Jehovah to Jerusalem as still future. But they return to the

¹ Omit here ver. 8, *And the Word of Jehovah came to Zechariah, saying.* It is obviously a gloss by a scribe who did not notice that the וַיִּשְׁמַע of ver. 9 is God's statement by the former prophets.

² Cf. the phrase *with one shoulder*, i.e. unanimously.

³ So Heb. and LXX.; but perhaps we ought to point *and I whirled them away*, taking the clause with the next.

question of the fasts, treating it still more comprehensively than before, and they close with a promise, fitly spoken as the Temple grew to completion, of the coming of the heathen to worship at Jerusalem.

We have already noticed the tender charm and strong simplicity of these prophecies,¹ and there is little now to add except the translation of them. As with the older prophets, and especially the great Evangelist of the Exile, they start from the glowing love of Jehovah for His people, to which nothing is impossible;² they promise a complete return of the scattered Jews to their land, and are not content except with the assurance of a world converted to the faith of their God. With Haggai Zechariah promises the speedy end of the poverty of the little colony; and he adds his own characteristic notes of a reign of peace to be used for hearty labour, bringing forth a great prosperity. Only let men be true and just and kind, thinking no evil of each other, as in those hard days when hunger and the fierce rivalry for sustenance made every one's neighbour his enemy, and the petty life, devoid of large interests for the commonweal, filled their hearts with envy and malice. For ourselves the chief profit of these beautiful oracles is their lesson that the remedy for the sordid tempers and cruel hatreds, engendered by the fierce struggle for existence, is found in civic and religious hopes, in a noble ideal for the national life, and in the assurance that God's Love is at the back of all, with nothing impossible to it. Amid these glories, however, the heart will probably thank Zechariah most for his immortal picture of the

¹ See above, pp. 271 .

² Cf. especially Isa. xl. ff.

streets of the new Jerusalem: old men and women sitting in the sun, boys and girls playing in all the open places. The motive of it, as we have seen, was found in the circumstances of his own day. Like many another emigration, for religion's sake, from the heart of civilisation to a barren coast, the poor colony of Jerusalem consisted chiefly of men, young and in middle life. The barren years gave no encouragement to marriage. The constant warfare with neighbouring tribes allowed few to reach grey hairs. It was a rough and a hard society, unblessed by the two great benedictions of life, childhood and old age. But this should all be changed, and Jerusalem filled with placid old men and women, and with joyous boys and girls. The oracle, we say, had its motive in Zechariah's day. But what an oracle for these times of ours! Whether in the large cities of the old world, where so few of the workers may hope for a quiet old age, sitting in the sun, and the children's days of play are shortened by premature toil and knowledge of evil; or in the newest fringes of the new world, where men's hardness and coarseness are, in the struggle for gold, unawed by reverence for age and unsoftened by the fellowship of childhood,—Zechariah's great promise is equally needed. Even there shall it be fulfilled if men will remember his conditions—that the first regard of a community, however straitened in means, be the provision of religion, that truth and whole-hearted justice abound in the gates, with love and loyalty in every heart towards every other.

And the Word of Jehovah of Hosts came, saying:—

I. *Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts: I am jealous for Zion with a great jealousy, and with great anger am I jealous for her.*

2. Thus saith Jehovah: I am returned to Zion, and I dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth,¹ and the mountain of Jehovah of Hosts the Holy Mountain.

3. Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts: Old men and old women shall yet sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand, for fulness of days; and the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in her streets.

4. Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts: Because it seems too wonderful to the remnant of this people in those days, shall it also seem too wonderful to Me?—oracle of Jehovah of Hosts.

5. Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts: Lo! I am about to save My people out of the land of the rising and out of the land of the setting of the sun; and I will bring them home, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and they shall be to Me for a people,² and I will be to them for God, in truth and in righteousness.

6. Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts: Strengthen your hands, O ye who have heard in such days such words from the mouth of the prophets, since³ the day when the House of Jehovah of Hosts was founded: the sanctuary was to be built! For before those days there was no gain for man,⁴ and none to be made by cattle; and neither for him that went out nor for him that came in was there any peace from the adversary, and I set every man's hand against his neighbour. But not now as in the past

¹ Isa. i. 26.

² Not merely *My people* (Wellhausen), but their return shall constitute them a people once more. The quotation is from Hosea ii. 25.

³ So LXX.

⁴ *But he that made wages made them to put them into a bag with holes*, Haggai i. 6.

days am I towards the remnant of this people—oracle of Jehovah of Hosts. For I am sowing the seed of peace.¹ The vine shall yield her fruit, and the land yield her increase, and the heavens yield their dew, and I will give them all for a heritage to the remnant of this people. And it shall come to pass, that as ye have been a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you and ye shall be a blessing! Be not afraid, strengthen your hands!

7. For thus saith Jehovah of Hosts: As I have planned to do evil to you, for the provocation your fathers gave Me, saith Jehovah of Hosts, and did not relent, so have I turned and planned in these days to do good to Jerusalem and the house of Judah. Be not afraid! These are the things which ye shall do: Speak truth to one another; truth and wholesome judgment decree ye in your gates; and plan no evil to each other in your hearts, nor take pleasure in false swearing: for it is all these that I hate—oracle of Jehovah.

And the Word of Jehovah of Hosts came to me, saying:—

8. Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts: The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall become to the house of Judah joy and gladness and happy feasts.² But love ye truth and peace.

9. Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts: There shall yet come peoples and citizens of great cities; and the citizens of

¹ Read *השלום יזרע* for *כי זרע השלום* of the text, for the seed of peace. The LXX. makes *זרע* a verb. Cf. Hosea ii. 23 ff., which the next clauses show to be in the mind of our prophet. Klostermann and Nowack prefer *זרעה לשלום*, her (the remnant's) seed shall be peace.

² In the tenth month the siege of Jerusalem had begun (2 Kings xxv. 1); on the ninth of the fourth month Jerusalem was taken

one city¹ will go to another city, saying: "Let us go to propitiate Jehovah, and to seek Jehovah of Hosts!" "I will go too!" And many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Jehovah of Hosts in Jerusalem and to propitiate Jehovah.

10. Thus saith Jehovah of Hosts: In those days ten men, of all languages of the nations, shall take hold of the skirt of a Jew and say, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.

(Jer. xxxix. 2); on the seventh of the fifth City and Temple were burnt down (2 Kings xxv. 8); in the seventh month Gedaliah was assassinated and the poor relics of a Jewish state swept from the land (Jer. xli.). See above, pp. 30 ff.

¹ LXX. *the citizens of five cities will go to one.*

MALACHI

Have we not all One Father? Why then are we unfaithful to each other?

The lips of a Priest guard knowledge, and men seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the Angel of Jehovah of Hosts.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE BOOK OF "MALACHI"

THIS book, the last in the arrangement of the prophetic canon, bears the title: *Burden or Oracle of the Word of Jehovah to Israel by the hand of malě'akhi*. Since at least the second century of our era the word has been understood as a proper name, Malachi or Malachias. But there are strong objections to this, as well as to the genuineness of the whole title, and critics now almost universally agree that the book was originally anonymous.

It is true that neither in form nor in meaning is there any insuperable obstacle to our understanding "malě'akhi" as the name of a person. If so, however, it cannot have been, as some have suggested, an abbreviation of Malě'akhiyah, for, according to the analogy of other names of such formation, this could only express the impossible meaning *Jehovah is Angel*.¹ But, as it stands, it might have meant *My Angel* or *Messenger*, or it may be taken as an adjective,

¹ מלאכיה or מלאכיהו. To judge from the analogy of other cases of the same formation (*e.g.* Abiyah = Jehovah is Father, and not Father of Jehovah), this name, if ever extant, could not have borne the meaning, which Robertson Smith, Cornill, Kirkpatrick, etc., suppose it must have done, of *Angel of Jehovah*. These scholars, it should be added, oppose, for various reasons, the theory that it is a proper name.

Angelicus.¹ Either of these meanings would form a natural name for a Jewish child, and a very suitable one for a prophet. There is evidence, however, that some of the earliest Jewish interpreters did not think of the title as containing the name of a person. The Septuagint read *by the hand of His messenger*,² "malě'akho"; and the Targum of Jonathan, while retaining "malě'akhi," rendered it *My messenger*, adding that it was Ezra the Scribe who was thus designated.³ This opinion was adopted by Calvin.

Recent criticism has shown that, whether the word was originally intended as a personal name or not, it was a purely artificial one borrowed from chap. iii. 1, *Behold, I send My messenger*, "malě'akhi," for the title, which itself has been added by the editor of the Twelve Prophets in the form in which we now have them. The peculiar words of the title, *Burden or Oracle of the Word of Jehovah*, occur nowhere else than in the titles of the two prophecies which have been appended to the Book of Zechariah, chap. ix. 1 and chap. xii. 1, and immediately precede this Book of "Malachi." In chap. ix. 1 *the Word of Jehovah* belongs to the text; *Burden or Oracle* has been inserted before it as a title; then the whole phrase has been inserted as a title in chap. xii. 1. These two pieces are anonymous, and nothing is more likely than that another anonymous prophecy should

¹ Cf. the suggested meaning of Haggai, Festus. Above, p. 231.

² And added the words, *lay it to your hearts*: ἐν χειρὶ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ· θέσθε δὴ ἐπὶ τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν. Bachmann (*A. T. Untersuch.*, Berlin, 1894, pp. 109 ff.) takes this added clause as a translation of וְשִׁמוּ בְלֵב, and suggests that it may be a corruption of an original וְשִׁמוּ בְקֶלֶב, and his name was Kaleb. But the reading וְשִׁמוּ בְלֵב is not the exact equivalent of the Greek phrase.

³ מְלָאכִי דִּיתְקַרִי שְׁמִיָּה עֶזְרָא סִפְרָא

have received, when attached to them, the same heading.¹ The argument is not final, but it is the most probable explanation of the data, and agrees with the other facts. The cumulative force of all that we have stated—the improbability of malē'akhi being a personal name, the fact that the earliest versions do not treat it as such, the obvious suggestion for its invention in the malē'akhi of chap. iii. 1, the absence of a father's name and place of residence, and the character of the whole title—is enough for the opinion rapidly spreading among critics that our book was, like so much more in the Old Testament, originally anonymous.² The author attacks the religious authorities of his day; he belongs to a pious remnant of his people, who are overborne and

¹ See Stade, *Z.A.T.W.*, 1881, p. 14; 1882, p. 308; Cornill, *Einleitung*, 4th ed., pp. 207 f.

² So (besides Calvin, who takes it as a title) even Hengstenberg in his *Christology of the O. T.*, Ewald, Kuenen, Reuss, Stade, Rob. Smith, Cornill, Wellhausen, Kirkpatrick (probably), Wildeboer, Nowack. On the other side Hitzig, Vatke, Nägelsbach and Volck (in Herzog), Von Orelli, Pusey and Robertson hold it to be a personal name—Pusey with this qualification, "that the prophet may have framed it for himself," similarly Orelli. They support their opinion by the fact that even the LXX. entitle the book Μαλαχίας; that the word was regarded as a proper name in the early Church, and that it is a possible name for a Hebrew. In opposition to the hypothesis that it was borrowed from chap. iii. 1, Hitzig suggests the converse that in the latter the prophet plays upon his own name. None of these critics, however, meets the objections to the name drawn from the peculiar character of the title and its relations to Zech. ix. 1, xii. 1. The supposed name of the prophet gave rise to the legend supported by many of the Fathers that Malachi, like Haggai and John the Baptist, was an incarnate angel. This is stated and condemned by Jerome, *Comm. ad Hag.* i. 13, but held by Origen, Tertullian and others. The existence of such an opinion is itself proof for the impersonal character of the name. As in the case of the rest of the prophets, Christian tradition furnishes the prophet with the outline of a biography. See (Pseud-) Epiphanius and other writers quoted above, p. 232.

perhaps oppressed by the majority.¹ In these facts, which are all we know of his personality, he found sufficient reason for not attaching his name to his prophecy.

The book is also undated, but it reflects its period almost as clearly as do the dated Books of Haggai and Zechariah. The conquest of Edom by the Nabateans, which took place during the Exile,² is already past.³ The Jews are under a Persian viceroy.⁴ They are in touch with a heathen power, which does not tyrannise over them, for this book is the first to predict no judgment upon the heathen, and the first, moreover, to acknowledge that among the heathen the true God is worshipped *from the rising to the setting of the sun*.⁵ The only judgment predicted is one upon the false and disobedient portion of Israel, whose arrogance and success have cast true Israelites into despair.⁶ All this reveals a time when the Jews were favourably treated by their Persian lords. The reign must be that of Artaxerxes Longhand, 464—424.

The Temple has been finished,⁷ and years enough have elapsed to disappoint those fervid hopes with which about 518 Zechariah expected its completion. The congregation has grown worldly and careless. In particular the priests are corrupt and partial in the administration of the Law.⁸ There have been many

¹ iii. 16 ff.

² See above on Obadiah, p. 169, and below on the passage itself.

³ i. 2-5.

⁴ i. 8.

⁵ i. 11 : the verbs here are to be taken in the present, not as in A.V. in the future, tense.

⁶ *Passim* : especially iii. 13 ff., 24.

i. 10 ; iii. 1, 10.

⁸ ii. 1-9.

marriages with the heathen women of the land;¹ and the laity have failed to pay the tithes and other dues to the Temple.² These are the evils against which we find strenuous measures directed by Ezra, who returned from Babylon in 458,³ and by Nehemiah, who visited Jerusalem as its governor for the first time in 445 and for the second time in 433. Besides, "the religious spirit of the book is that of the prayers of Ezra and Nehemiah. A strong sense of the unique privileges of the children of Jacob, the objects of electing love,⁴ the children of the Divine Father,⁵ is combined with an equally strong assurance of Jehovah's righteousness amidst the many miseries that pressed on the unhappy inhabitants of Judæa. . . . Obedience to the Law is the sure path to blessedness."⁶ But the question still remains whether the Book of "Malachi" prepared for, assisted or followed up the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah. An ancient tradition already alluded to⁷ assigned the authorship to Ezra himself.

Recent criticism has been divided among the years immediately before Ezra's arrival in 458, those immediately before Nehemiah's first visit in 445, those between his first government and his second, and those after Nehemiah's disappearance from Jerusalem. But the years in which Nehemiah held office may be excluded, because the Jews are represented as bringing gifts to the governor, which Nehemiah tells us he did not allow to be brought to him.⁸ The whole question

¹ ii. 10-16.⁴ i. 2.² iii. 7-12.⁵ ii. 10.³ See above, pp. 195 f.⁶ ii. 17—iii. 12; iii. 22 f., Eng. iv. The above sentences are from Robertson Smith, art. "Malachi," *Encyc. Brit.*, 9th ed.⁷ Above, p. 332, n. 3.⁸ "Mal." i. 8; Neb. v.

depends upon what Law was in practice in Israel when the book was written. In 445 Ezra and Nehemiah, by solemn covenant between the people and Jehovah, instituted the code which we now know as the Priestly Code of the Pentateuch. Before that year the ritual and social life of the Jews appear to have been directed by the Deuteronomic Code. Now the Book of "Malachi" enforces a practice with regard to the tithes, which agrees more closely with the Priestly Code than it does with Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy commands that every third year the whole tithe is to be given to the Levites and the poor who reside *within the gates* of the giver, and is there to be eaten by them. "Malachi" commands that the whole tithe be brought into the storehouse of the Temple for the Levites in service there; and so does the Priestly Code.¹ On this ground many date the Book of "Malachi" after 445.² But "Malachi's" divergence from Deuteronomy on this point may be explained by the fact that in his time there were practically no Levites outside Jerusalem; and it is to be noticed that he joins the tithe with the *tērûmah* or heave-offering exactly as Deuteronomy does.³ On other points of the Law he agrees rather with Deuteronomy than with the Priestly Code. He follows Deuteronomy in calling the priests *sons of Levi*,⁴ while the Priestly Code limits the priesthood to the sons of Aaron. He seems to quote Deuteronomy

¹ Deut. xii. 11, xxvi. 12; "Mal." iii. 8, 10; Num. xviii. 21 ff. (P).

² Vatke (contemporaneous with Nehemiah), Schrader, Keil, Kuenen (perhaps in second governorship of Nehemiah, but see above, p. 335, for a decisive reason against this), Köhler, Driver, Von Orelli (between Nehemiah's first and second visit), Kirkpatrick, Robertson.

³ Deut. xii. 11. In P *tērûmah* is a due paid to priests as distinct from Levites.

⁴ ii. 4-8: cf. Deut. xxxiii. 8.

when forbidding the oblation of blind, lame and sick beasts;¹ appears to differ from the Priestly Code which allows the sacrificial beast to be male or female, when he assumes that it is a male;² follows the expressions of Deuteronomy and not those of the Priestly Code in detailing the sins of the people;³ and uses the Deuteronomic phrases *the Law of Moses, My servant Moses, statutes and judgments*, and *Horeb* for the Mount of the Law.⁴ For the rest, he echoes or implies only Ezekiel and that part of the Priestly Code⁵ which is regarded as earlier than the rest, and probably from the first years of exile. Moreover he describes the Torah as not yet fully codified.⁶ The priests still deliver it in a way improbable after 445. The trouble of the heathen marriages with which he deals (if indeed the verses on this subject be authentic and not a later intrusion⁷) was that which engaged Ezra's attention on his arrival in 458, but Ezra found that it had already for some time been vexing the heads of the community. While, therefore, we are obliged to date the Book of "Malachi" before 445 B.C., it is uncertain whether it preceded or

¹ i. 8; Deut. xv. 21.

² i. 14; Lev. iii. 1, 6.

³ iii. 5; Deut. v. 11 ff., xviii. 10, xxiv. 17 ff.; Lev. xix. 31, 33 f., xx. 6.

⁴ iii. 22 Heb., iv. 4 Eng. *Law of Moses* and *Moses My servant* are found only in the Deuteronomistic portions of the Hexateuch and historical books and here. In P Sinai is the Mount of the Law. To the above may be added *segullah*, iii. 17, which is found in the Pentateuch only outside P and in Psalm cxxxv. 4. All these resemblances between "Malachi" and Deuteronomy and "Malachi's" divergences from P are given in Robertson Smith's *Old Test. in the Jewish Church*, 2nd ed., 425 ff.: cf. 444 ff.

⁵ Lev. xvii.—xxvi. From this and Ezekiel he received the conception of the profanation of the sanctuary by the sins of the people—ii. 11: cf. also ii. 2, iii. 3, 4, for traces of Ezekiel's influence.

⁶ ii. 6 ff.

⁷ See below, pp. 340, 363, 365.

followed Ezra's attempts at reform in 458. Most critics now think that it preceded them.¹

The Book of "Malachi" is an argument with the prophet's contemporaries, not only with the wicked among them, who in forgetfulness of what Jehovah is corrupt the ritual, fail to give the Temple its dues, abuse justice, marry foreign wives,² divorce their own, and commit various other sins; but also with the pious, who, equally forgetful of God's character, are driven by the arrogance of the wicked to ask, whether He loves Israel, whether He is a God of justice, and to murmur that it is vain to serve Him. To these two classes of his contemporaries the prophet has the following answers. God does love Israel. He is worshipped everywhere among the heathen. He is the Father of all Israel. He will bless His people when they put away all abuses from their midst and pay their religious dues; and His Day of Judgment is coming, when the good shall be separated from the wicked. But before it come, Elijah the prophet will be sent to attempt the conversion of the wicked, or at least to call the nation to decide for Jehovah. This argument is pursued in seven or perhaps eight paragraphs, which do not show much consecutiveness, but are addressed, some to the wicked, and some to the despairing adherents of Jehovah.

1. Chap. i. 2-5.—To those who ask how God loves Israel, the proof of Jehovah's election of Israel is shown in the fall of the Edomites.

¹ Herzfeld, Bleek, Stade, Kautzsch (probably), Wellhausen (*Gesch.*, p. 125), Nowack before the arrival of Ezra, Cornill either soon before or soon after 458, Robertson Smith either before or soon after 445 Hitzig at first put it before 458, but was afterwards moved to date it after 358, as he took the overthrow of the Edomites described in chap. i. 2-5 to be due to a campaign in that year by Artaxerxes Ochus (cf. Euseb., *Chron.*, II. 221). ² But see below. pp. 340, 365

2. Chap. i. 6-14.—Charge against the people of dishonouring their God, whom even the heathen reverence.

3. Chap. ii. 1-9.—Charge against the priests, who have broken the covenant God made of old with Levi, and debased their high office by not reverencing Jehovah, by misleading the people and by perverting justice. A curse is therefore fallen on them—they are contemptible in the people's eyes.

4. Chap. ii. 10-16.—A charge against the people for their treachery to each other; instanced in the heathen marriages, if the two verses, 11 and 12, upon this be authentic, and in their divorce of their wives.

5. Chap. ii. 17—iii. 5 or 6.—Against those who in the midst of such evils grow sceptical about Jehovah. His Angel, or Himself, will come *first* to purge the priesthood and ritual that there may be pure sacrifices, and *second* to rid the land of its criminals and sinners.

6. Chap. iii. 6 or 7-12.—A charge against the people of neglecting tithes. Let these be paid, disasters shall cease and the land be blessed.

7. Chap. iii. 13-21 Heb., Chap. iii. 13—iv. 2 LXX. and Eng.—Another charge against the pious for saying it is vain to serve God. God will rise to action and separate between the good and bad in the terrible Day of His coming.

8. To this, Chap. iii. 22-24 Heb., Chap. iv. 3-5 Eng., adds a call to keep the Law, and a promise that Elijah will be sent to see whether he may not convert the people before the Day of the Lord comes upon them with its curse.

The authenticity of no part of the book has been till now in serious question. Böhme,¹ indeed, took the last three verses for a later addition, on account of their Deuteronomic character, but, as Kuenen points out, this is in agreement with other parts of the book. Sufficient attention has not yet been paid to the question of the integrity of the text. The Septuagint offers a few emendations.² There are other passages obviously or probably corrupt.³ The text of the title, as we have seen, is uncertain, and probably a later addition. Professor Robertson Smith has called attention to

¹ *Z.A.T.W.*, 1887, 210 ff.

² i. 11, for לִיגֵל δεδόξασται; perhaps ii. 12, עַר for עַר; perhaps iii. 8 ff. for עַרְבֵי קַבְעֵי; 16, for אֵן τὰτα.

³ i. 11 ff.; ii. 3, and perhaps 12, 15.

chap. ii. 16, where the Massoretic punctuation seems to have been determined with the desire to support the rendering of the Targum "if thou hatest her put her away," and so pervert into a permission to divorce a passage which forbids divorce almost as clearly as Christ Himself did. But in truth the whole of this passage, chap. ii. 10-16, is in such a curious state that we can hardly believe in its integrity. It opens with the statement that God is the Father of all us Israelites, and with the challenge, why then are we faithless to each other?—ver. 10. But vv. 11 and 12 do not give an instance of this: they describe the marriages with the heathen women of the land, which is not a proof of faithlessness between Israelites. Such a proof is furnished only by vv. 13-16, with their condemnation of those who divorce the wives of their youth. The verses, therefore, cannot lie in their proper order, and vv. 13-16 ought to follow immediately upon ver. 10. This raises the question of the authenticity of vv. 11 and 12, against the heathen marriages. If they bear such plain marks of having been intruded into their position, we can understand the possibility of such an intrusion in subsequent days, when the question of the heathen marriages came to the front with Ezra and Nehemiah. Besides, these verses 11 and 12 lack the characteristic mark of all the other oracles of the book: they do not state a general charge against the people, and then introduce the people's question as to the particulars of the charge. On the whole, therefore, these verses are suspicious. If not a later intrusion, they are at least out of place where they now lie. The peculiar remark in ver. 13, *and this secondly ye do*, must have been added by the editor to whom we owe the present arrangement.

CHAPTER XXV

FROM ZECHARIAH TO "MALACHI"

BETWEEN the completion of the Temple in 516 and the arrival of Ezra in 458, we have almost no record of the little colony round Mount Zion. The Jewish chronicles devote to the period but a few verses of unsupported tradition.¹ After 517 we have nothing from Zechariah himself; and if any other prophet appeared during the next half-century, his words have not survived. We are left to infer what was the true condition of affairs, not less from this ominous silence than from the hints which are given to us in the writings of "Malachi," Ezra and Nehemiah after the period was over. Beyond a partial attempt to rebuild the walls of the city in the reign of Artaxerxes I.,² there seems to have been nothing to record. It was a period of disillusion, disheartening and decay. The completion of the Temple did not bring in the Messianic era. Zerubbabel, whom Haggai and Zechariah had

¹ Ezra iv. 6-23.

² This is recorded in the Aramean document which has been incorporated in our Book of Ezra, and there is no reason to doubt its reality. In that document we have already found, in spite of its comparatively late date, much that is accurate history. See above, p. 212. And it is clear that, the Temple being finished, the Jews must have drawn upon themselves the same religious envy of the Samaritans which had previously delayed the construction of the

crowned as the promised King of Israel, died without reaching higher rank than a minor satrapy in the Persian Empire, and even in that he appears to have been succeeded by a Persian official.¹ The re-migrations from Babylon and elsewhere, which Zechariah predicted, did not take place. The small population of Jerusalem were still harassed by the hostility, and their morale sapped by the insidiousness, of their Samaritan neighbours: they were denied the stimulus, the purgation, the glory of a great persecution. Their Persian tyrants for the most part left them alone. The world left them alone. Nothing stirred in Palestine except the Samaritan intrigues. History rolled away westward, and destiny seemed to be settling on the Greeks. In 490 Miltiades defeated the Persians at Marathon. In 480 Thermopylæ was fought and the Persian fleet broken at Salamis. In 479 a Persian army was destroyed at Plataea, and Xerxes lost Europe and most of the Ionian coast. In 460 Athens sent an expedition to Egypt to assist the Egyptian revolt against Persia, and in 457 "her slain fell in Cyprus, in Egypt, in Phœnicia, at Haliæ, in Ægina, and in Megara in the same year."

Thus severely left to themselves and to the petty hostilities of their neighbours, the Jews appear to have sunk into a careless and sordid manner of life. They

Temple. To meet it, what more natural than that the Jews should have attempted to raise the walls of their city? It is almost impossible to believe that they who had achieved the construction of the Temple in 516 should not, in the next fifty years, make some effort to raise their fallen walls. And indeed Nehemiah's account of his own work almost necessarily implies that they had done so, for what he did after 445 was not to build new walls, but rather to repair shattered ones.

¹ See above, p. 335, n. 8, and below, p. 354, on "Mal." i. 8.

entered the period, it is true, with some sense of their distinction.¹ In exile they had suffered God's anger,² and had been purged by it. But out of discipline often springs pride, and there is no subtler temptation of the human heart. The returned Israel felt this to the quick, and it sorely unfitted them for encountering the disappointment and hardship which followed upon the completion of the Temple. The tide of hope, which rose to flood with that consummation, ebbed rapidly away, and left God's people struggling, like any ordinary tribe of peasants, with bad seasons and the cruelty of their envious neighbours. Their pride was set on edge, and they fell, not as at other periods of disappointment into despair, but into a bitter carelessness and a contempt of their duty to God. This was a curious temper, and, so far as we know, new in Israel. It led them to despise both His love and His holiness.³ They neglected their Temple dues, and impudently presented to their God polluted bread and blemished beasts which they would not have dared to offer to their Persian governor.⁴ Like people like priest: the priesthood lost not reverence only, but decency and all conscience of their office.⁵ They *despised the Table of the Lord*, ceased to instruct the people and grew partial in judgment. As a consequence they became contemptible in the eyes of the community. Immorality prevailed among all classes: *every man dealt treacherously with his brother*.⁶ Adultery, perjury, fraud and the oppression of the poor were very rife.

One particular fashion, in which the people's wounded

¹ Cf. Stade, *Gesch. des Volkes Israel*, II., pp. 128-138, the best account of this period.

⁴ *Id.* i. 7 f., 12-14.

² "Mal." iii. 14.

⁵ *Id.* i. 6 f., ii.

³ "Mal." i. 2, 6; iii. 8 f.

⁶ *Id.* ii. 10.

pride spited itself, was the custom of marriage which even the best families contracted with the half-heathen *people of the land*. Across Judah there were scattered the descendants of those Jews whom Nebuchadrezzar had not deemed worth removing to Babylon. Whether regarded from a social or a religious point of view, their fathers had been the dregs of the old community. Their own religion, cut off as they were from the main body of Israel and scattered among the old heathen shrines of the land, must have deteriorated still further; but in all probability they had secured for themselves the best portions of the vacant soil, and now enjoyed a comfort and a stability of welfare far beyond that which was yet attainable by the majority of the returned exiles. More numerous than these dregs of ancient Jewry were the very mixed race of the Samaritans. They possessed a rich land, which they had cultivated long enough for many of their families to be settled in comparative wealth. With all these half-pagan Jews and Samaritans, the families of the true Israel, as they regarded themselves, did not hesitate to form alliances, for in the precarious position of the colony, such alliances were the surest way both to wealth and to political influence. How much the Jews were mastered by their desire for them is seen from the fact that, when the relatives of their half-heathen brides made it a condition of the marriages that they should first put away their old wives, they readily did so. Divorce became very frequent, and great suffering was inflicted on the native Jewish women.¹

So the religious condition of Israel declined for nearly

¹ "Mal." ii. 10-16.

two generations, and then about 460 the Word of God, after long silence, broke once more through a prophet's lips.

We call this prophet "Malachi," following the error of an editor of his book, who, finding it nameless, inferred or invented that name from its description of the priest as the "Malē'ach," or *messenger, of the Lord of Hosts*.¹ But the prophet gave himself no name. Writing from the midst of a poor and persecuted group of the people, and attacking the authorities both of church and state, he preferred to publish his charge anonymously. His name was in *the Lord's own book of remembrance*.²

The unknown prophet addressed himself both to the sinners of his people, and to those querulous adherents of Jehovah whom the success of the sinners had tempted to despair in their service of God. His style shares the practical directness of his predecessors among the returned exiles. He takes up one point after another, and drives them home in a series of strong, plain paragraphs of prose. But it is sixty years since Haggai and Zechariah, and in the circumstances we have described, a prophet could no longer come forward as a public inspirer of his nation. Prophecy seems to have been driven from public life, from the sudden enforcement of truth in the face of the people to the more deliberate and ordered argument which marks the teacher who works in private. In the Book of "Malachi" there are many of the principles and much of the enthusiasm of the ancient Hebrew seer. But the discourse is broken up into formal

¹ For proof of this see above, pp. 331 f.

² "Mal." iii. 16.

paragraphs, each upon the same academic model. First a truth is pronounced, or a charge made against the people; then with the words *but ye will say* the prophet states some possible objection of his hearers, proceeds to answer it by detailed evidence, and only then drives home his truth, or his charge, in genuine prophetic fashion. To the student of prophecy this peculiarity of the book is of the greatest interest, for it is no merely personal idiosyncrasy. We rather feel that prophecy is now assuming the temper of the teacher. The method is the commencement of that which later on becomes the prevailing habit in Jewish literature. Just as with Zephaniah we saw prophecy passing into Apocalypse, and with Habakkuk into the speculation of the schools of Wisdom, so now in "Malachi" we perceive its transformation into the scholasticism of the Rabbis.

But the interest of this change of style must not prevent us from appreciating the genuine prophetic spirit of our book. Far more fully than, for instance, that of Haggai, to the style of which its practical simplicity is so akin, it enumerates the prophetic principles: the everlasting Love of Jehovah for Israel, the Fatherhood of Jehovah and His Holiness, His ancient Ideals for Priesthood and People, the need of a Repentance proved by deeds, the consequent Promise of Prosperity, the Day of the Lord, and Judgment between the evil and the righteous. Upon the last of these the book affords a striking proof of the delinquency of the people during the last half-century, and in connection with it the prophet introduces certain novel features. To Haggai and Zechariah the great Tribulation had closed with the Exile and the rebuilding of the Temple: Israel stood on the margin of the Messianic age. But

the Book of "Malachi" proclaims the need of another judgment as emphatically as the older prophets had predicted the Babylonian doom. "Malachi" repeats their name for it, *the great and terrible Day of Jehovah*. But he does not foresee it, as they did, in the shape of a historical process. His description of it is pure Apocalypse—*the fire of the smelter and the fuller's acid: the day that burns like a furnace*, when all wickedness is as stubble, and all evil men are devoured, but to the righteous *the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings*, and they shall tread the wicked under foot.¹ To this the prophet adds a novel promise. God is so much the God of love,² that before the Day comes He will give His people an opportunity of conversion. He will send them Elijah the prophet to change their hearts, that He may be prevented from striking the land with His Ban.

In one other point the book is original, and that is in its attitude towards the heathen. Among the heathen, it boldly says, Jehovah is held in higher reverence than among His own people.³ In such a statement we can hardly fail to feel the influence upon Israel of their contact, often close and personal, with their wise and mild tyrants the Persians. We may emphasise the verse as the first note of that recognition of the real religiousness of the heathen, which we shall find swelling to such fulness and tenderness in the Book of Jonah.

Such are in brief the style and the principles of the Book of "Malachi," whose separate prophecies we may now proceed to take up in detail.

¹ iii. 2, 19 ff. Heb., iv. 1 ff. Eng.

² iii. 6.

³ i. 11.

CHAPTER XXVI

PROPHECY WITHIN THE LAW

"MALACHI" i.—iv.

BENEATH this title we may gather all the eight sections of the Book of "Malachi." They contain many things of perennial interest and validity: their truth is applicable, their music is still musical, to ourselves. But their chief significance is historical. They illustrate the development of prophecy *within* the Law. Not *under* the Law, be it observed. For if one thing be more clear than another about "Malachi's" teaching, it is that the spirit of prophecy is not yet crushed by the legalism which finally killed it within Israel. "Malachi" observes and enforces the demands of the Deuteronomic law under which his people had lived since the Return from Exile. But he traces each of these to some spiritual principle, to some essential of religion in the character of Israel's God, which is either doubted or neglected by his contemporaries in their lax performance of the Law. That is why we may entitle his book Prophecy within the Law.

The essential principles of the religion of Israel which had been shaken or obscured by the delinquency of the people during the half-century after the rebuilding of

the Temple were three—the distinctive Love of Jehovah for His people, His Holiness, and His Righteousness. The Book of "Malachi" takes up each of these in turn, and proves or enforces it according as the people have formally doubted it or in their carelessness done it despite.

I. GOD'S LOVE FOR ISRAEL AND HATRED OF EDMOM (Chap. i. 2-5).

He begins with God's Love, and in answer to the disappointed¹ people's cry, *Wherein hast Thou loved us?* he does not, as the older prophets did, sweep the whole history of Israel, and gather proofs of Jehovah's grace and unfailing guidance in all the great events from the deliverance from Egypt to the deliverance from Babylon. But he confines himself to a comparison of Israel with the Gentile nation, which was most akin to Israel according to the flesh, their own brother Edom. It is possible, of course, to see in this a proof of our prophet's narrowness, as contrasted with Amos or Hosea or the great Evangelist of the Exile. But we must remember that out of all the history of Israel "Malachi" could not have chosen an instance which would more strongly appeal to the heart of his contemporaries. We have seen from the Book of Obadiah how ever since the beginning of the Exile Edom had come to be regarded by Israel as their great antithesis.² If we needed further proof of this we should find it in many Psalms of the Exile, which like the Book of Obadiah remember with bitterness the hostile part that Edom played in the day of Israel's calamity. The two nations were

¹ See above, p. 343.

² See above, Chapter XIV. on "Edom and Israel."

utterly opposed in genius and character. Edom was a people of as unspiritual and self-sufficient a temper as ever cursed any of God's human creatures. Like their ancestor they were *profane*,¹ without repentance, humility or ideals, and almost without religion. Apart, therefore, from the long history of war between the two peoples, it was a true instinct which led Israel to regard their brother as representative of that heathendom against which they had to realise their destiny in the world as God's own nation. In choosing the contrast of Edom's fate to illustrate Jehovah's love for Israel, "Malachi" was not only choosing what would appeal to the passions of his contemporaries, but what is the most striking and constant antithesis in the whole history of Israel: the absolutely diverse genius and destiny of these two Semitic nations who were nearest neighbours and, according to their traditions, twin-brethren after the flesh. If we keep this in mind we shall understand Paul's use of the antithesis in the passage in which he clenches it by a quotation from "Malachi": *as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*.² In these words the doctrine of the Divine election of individuals appears to be expressed as absolutely as possible. But it would be unfair to read the passage except in the light of Israel's history. In the Old Testament it is a matter of fact that the doctrine of the Divine preference of Israel to Esau appeared only after the respective characters of the nations were manifested in history, and that it grew more defined and absolute only as history discovered

¹ Heb. xii. 16.

² Romans ix. 13. The citation is from the LXX.: τὸν Ἰακώβ ἠγάπησα, τὸν δὲ Ἡσαὺ ἐμίσησα.

more of the fundamental contrast between the two in genius and destiny.¹ In the Old Testament, therefore, the doctrine is the result, not of an arbitrary belief in God's bare fiat, but of historical experience; although, of course, the distinction which experience proves is traced back, with everything else of good or evil that happens, to the sovereign will and purpose of God. Nor let us forget that the Old Testament doctrine of election is of election to service only. That is to say, the Divine intention in electing covers not the elect individual or nation only, but the whole world and its needs of God and His truth.

The event to which "Malachi" appeals as evidence for God's rejection of Edom is *the desolation of the latter's ancient heritage, and the abandonment of it to the jackals of the desert*. Scholars used to think that these vague phrases referred to some act of the Persian kings: some removal of the Edomites from the lands of the Jews in order to make room for the returned exiles.² But "Malachi" says expressly that it was Edom's own *heritage* which was laid desolate. This can only be Mount Esau or Se'ir, and the statement that it was delivered *to the jackals of the desert* proves that the reference is to that same expulsion of Edom from their territory by the Nabatean Arabs which we have already seen the Book of Obadiah relate about the beginning of the Exile.³

¹ This was mainly *after* the beginning of exile. Shortly before that Deut. xxiii. 7 says: *Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother.*

² So even so recently as 1888, Stade, *Gesch. des Volkes Israel*, II., p. 112.

³ See above, p. 169. This interpretation is there said to be Wellhausen's; but Cheyne, in a note contributed to the *Z.A.T.W.*,

But it is now time to give in full the opening passage of "Malachi," in which he appeals to this important event as proof of God's distinctive love for Israel, and, "Malachi" adds, of His power beyond Israel's border ("Mal." chap. i. 2-5).

I have loved you, saith Jehovah. But ye say, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" Is not Esau brother to Jacob?—oracle of Jehovah—and I have loved Jacob and Esau have I hated. I have made his mountains desolate, and given his heritage to the jackals of the desert. Should the people of Edom say,¹ "We are destroyed, but we will rebuild the waste places," thus saith Jehovah of Hosts, They may build, but I will pull down: men shall call them "The Border of Wickedness" and "The People with whom Jehovah is wroth for ever." And your eyes shall see it, and yourselves shall say, "Great is Jehovah beyond Israel's border."

2. "HONOUR THY FATHER" (Chap. i. 6-14).

From God's Love, which Israel have doubted, the prophet passes to His Majesty or Holiness, which they have wronged. Now it is very remarkable that the relation of God to the Jews in which the prophet should see His Majesty illustrated is not only His lordship over them but His Fatherhood: *A son honours a father, and a servant his lord; but if I be Father, where is My honour? and if I be Lord, where is there*

1894, p. 142, points out that Grätz, in an article "Die Anfänge der Nabatäer-Herrschaft" in the *Monatschrift für Wissenschaft u. Geschichte des Judenthums*, 1875, pp. 60-66, had already explained "Mal." i. 1-5 as describing the conquest of Edom by the Nabateans. This is adopted by Buhl in his *Gesch. der Edomiter*, p. 79.

¹ The verb in the feminine indicates that the population of Edom is meant.

*reverence for Me? saith Jehovah of Hosts.*¹ We are so accustomed to associate with the Divine Fatherhood only ideas of love and pity that the use of the relation to illustrate not love but Majesty, and the setting of it in parallel to the Divine Kingship, may seem to us strange. Yet this was very natural to Israel. In the old Semitic world, even to the human parent, honour was due before love. *Honour thy father and thy mother*, said the Fifth Commandment; and when, after long shyness to do so, Israel at last ventured to claim Jehovah as the Father of His people, it was at first rather with the view of increasing their sense of His authority and their duty of reverencing Him, than with the view of bringing Him near to their hearts and assuring them of His tenderness. The latter elements, it is true, were not absent from the conception. But even in the Psalter, in which we find the most intimate and tender fellowship of the believer with God, there is only one passage in which His love for His own is compared to the love of a human father.² And in the other very few passages of the Old Testament where He is revealed or appealed to as the Father of the nation, it is, with two exceptions,³ in order either to emphasise His creation of Israel or His discipline. So in Jeremiah,⁴ and in an anonymous prophet of the same period perhaps as "Malachi."⁵ This hesitation to ascribe to God the name of Father, and

¹ i. 6.

² Psalm ciii. 9. In Psalm lxxiii. 15 believers are called *His children*; but elsewhere sonship is claimed only for the king—ii. 7, lxxxix. 27 f.

³ Hosea xi. 1 ff. (though even here the idea of discipline is present) and Isa. lxiii. 16. ⁴ iii. 4.

⁵ Isa. lxiv. 8, cf. Deut. xxxii. 11 where the discipline of Israel by

this severe conception of what Fatherhood meant, was perhaps needful for Israel in face of the sensuous ideas of the Divine Fatherhood cherished by their heathen neighbours.¹ But, however this may be, the infrequency and austerity of Israel's conception of God's Fatherhood, in contrast with that of Christianity, enables us to understand why "Malachi" should employ the relation as proof, not of the Love, but of the Majesty and Holiness of Jehovah.

This Majesty and this Holiness have been wronged, he says, by low thoughts of God's altar, and by offering upon it, with untroubled conscience, cheap and blemished sacrifices. The people would have been ashamed to present such to their Persian governor: how can God be pleased with them? Better that sacrifice should cease than that such offerings should be presented in such a spirit! *Is there no one*, cries the prophet, *to close the doors of the Temple altogether, so that the altar smoke not in vain?*

The passage shows us what a change has passed over the spirit of Israel since prophecy first attacked the sacrificial ritual. We remember how Amos would have swept it all away as an abomination to God.² So, too, Isaiah and Jeremiah. But their reason for this was very different from "Malachi's." Their contemporaries were assiduous and lavish in sacrificing, and were devoted to the Temple and the ritual with a fanaticism which made them forget that Jehovah's demands upon His people were righteousness and

Jehovah, shaking them out of their desert circumstance and tempting them to their great career in Palestine, is likened to the father-eagle's training of his new-fledged brood to fly: A.V. mother-eagle.

¹ Cf. Cheyne, *Origin of the Psalter*, p. 305, n. O.

² Vol. I., Chap. IX.

the service of the weak. But "Malachi" condemns his generation for depreciating the Temple, and for being stingy and fraudulent in their offerings. Certainly the post-exilic prophet assumes a different attitude to the ritual from that of his predecessors in ancient Israel. They wished it all abolished, and placed the chief duties of Israel towards God in civic justice and mercy. But he emphasises it as the first duty of the people towards God, and sees in their neglect the reason of their misfortunes and the cause of their coming doom. In this change which has come over prophecy we must admit the growing influence of the Law. From Ezekiel onwards the prophets become more ecclesiastical and legal. And though at first they do not become less ethical, yet the influence which was at work upon them was of such a character as was bound in time to engross their interest, and lead them to remit the ethical elements of their religion to a place secondary to the ceremonial. We see symptoms of this even in "Malachi," we shall find more in Joel, and we know how aggravated these symptoms afterwards became in all the leaders of Jewish religion. At the same time we ought to remember that this change of emphasis, which many will think to be for the worse, was largely rendered necessary by the change of temper in the people to whom the prophets ministered. "Malachi" found among his contemporaries a habit of religious performance which was not only slovenly and indecent, but mean and fraudulent, and it became his first practical duty to attack this. Moreover the neglect of the Temple was not due to those spiritual conceptions of Jehovah and those moral duties He demanded, in the interests of which the older prophets had

condemned the ritual. At bottom the neglect of the Temple was due to the very same reasons as the superstitious zeal and fanaticism in sacrificing which the older prophets had attacked—false ideas, namely, of God Himself, and of what was due to Him from His people. And on these grounds, therefore, we may say that “Malachi” was performing for his generation as needful and as Divine a work as Amos and Isaiah had performed for theirs. Only, be it admitted, the direction of “Malachi’s” emphasis was more dangerous for religion than that of the emphasis of Amos or Isaiah. How liable the practice he inculcated was to exaggeration and abuse is sadly proved in the later history of his people: it was against that exaggeration, grown great and obdurate through three centuries, that Jesus delivered His most unsparing words.

A son honours a father, and a servant his lord. But if I am Father, where is My honour? and if I am Lord, where is reverence for Me? saith Jehovah of Hosts to you, O priests, who despise My Name. Ye say, “How then have we despised Thy Name?” Ye are bringing polluted food to Mine Altar. Ye say, “How have we polluted Thee?”¹ By saying,² “The Table of Jehovah may be despised”; and when ye bring a blind beast to sacrifice, “No harm!” or when ye bring a lame or sick one, “No harm!”³ Pray, take it to thy Satrap: will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith

¹ Or used polluted things with respect to Thee. For similar construction see Zech. vii. 5: צמתוני. This in answer to Wellhausen, who, on the ground that the phrase gives לנאל a wrong object and destroys the connection, deletes it. Further he takes מנאל, not in the sense of pollution, but as equivalent to נבזה, despised.

² Obviously in their hearts = thinking.

³ LXX. is there no harm?

Jehovah of Hosts. But now, propitiate¹ God, that He may be gracious to us. When things like this come from your hands, can He accept your persons? saith Jehovah of Hosts. Who is there among you to close the doors of the Temple altogether, that ye kindle not Mine Altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you, saith Jehovah of Hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hands. For from the rising of the sun and to its setting My Name is glorified² among the nations; and in every sacred place³ incense is offered to My Name, and a pure offering;⁴ for great is My Name among the nations, saith Jehovah of Hosts. But ye are profaning it, in that ye think⁵ that the Table of the Lord is polluted, and⁶ its food contemptible. And ye say, What a weariness! and ye sniff at it,⁷ saith Jehovah of Hosts. When ye bring what has been plundered,⁸ and the lame and the diseased, yea, when ye⁹ so bring an offering, can I accept it with grace from your hands? saith Jehovah. Cursed be the cheat in whose flock is a male beast and he vows it,⁹ and

¹ *Pacify the face of*, as in Zechariah.

² So LXX. Heb. *is great*, but the phrase is probably written by mistake from the instance further on: *is glorified* could scarcely have been used in the very literal version of the LXX. unless it had been found in the original.

³ מִקּוֹם, here to be taken in the sense it bears in Arabic of *sacred place*. See on Zeph. ii. 11: above, p. 64, n. 8.

⁴ Wellhausen deletes מִנְשׁ as a gloss on מִקְטֹרֶת, and the vau before מִנְחָה.

⁵ Heb. *say*.

⁶ Heb. also has נִבְזָה, found besides only in Keri of Isa. lvii. 19. But Robertson Smith (*O.T.J.C.*, 2, p. 444) is probably right in considering this an error for נִבְזָה, which has kept its place after the correction was inserted.

This clause is obscure, and comes in awkwardly before that which follows it. Wellhausen omits.

⁷ מִנְחָה. Wellhausen emends מִנְחָה־עֵנִי, borrowing the first three letters from the previous word. LXX. ἀρπάγματα.

• LXX.

*slays for the Lord a miserable beast.*¹ *For a great King am I, saith Jehovah of Hosts, and My Name is revered among the nations.*

Before we pass from this passage we must notice in it one very remarkable feature—perhaps the most original contribution which the Book of “Malachi” makes to the development of prophecy. In contrast to the irreverence of Israel and the wrong they do to Jehovah’s Holiness, He Himself asserts that not only is *His Name great and glorified among the heathen, from the rising to the setting of the sun*, but that *in every sacred place incense and a pure offering are offered to His Name*. This is so novel a statement, and, we may truly say, so startling, that it is not wonderful that the attempt should have been made to interpret it, not of the prophet’s own day, but of the Messianic age and the kingdom of Christ. So, many of the Christian Fathers, from Justin and Irenæus to Theodoret and Augustine;² so, our own Authorised Version, which boldly throws the verbs into the future; and so, many modern interpreters like Pusey, who declares that the style is “a vivid present such as is often used to describe the future; but the things spoken of show it to be future.” All these take the passage to be an anticipation of Christ’s parables declaring the rejection of the Jews and ingathering of the Gentiles to the kingdom of heaven, and of the argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that the bleeding and defective offerings of the Jews were abrogated by the sacrifice of the Cross. But such an exegesis is only possible by perverting the text and misreading the whole argument of the prophet. Not only are the verbs of the original

¹ Cf. Lev. iii. 1, 6.

² Quoted by Pusey, *in loco*.

in the present tense—so also in the early versions—but the prophet is obviously contrasting the contempt of God's own people for Himself and His institutions with the reverence paid to His Name among the heathen. It is not the mere question of there being righteous people in every nation, well-pleasing to Jehovah because of their lives. The very sacrifices of the heathen are pure and acceptable to Him. Never have we had in prophecy, even the most far-seeing and evangelical, a statement so generous and so catholic as this. Why it should appear only now in the history of prophecy is a question we are unable to answer with certainty. Many have seen in it the result of Israel's intercourse with their tolerant and religious masters the Persians. None of the Persian kings had up to this time persecuted the Jews, and numbers of pious and large-minded Israelites must have had opportunity of acquaintance with the very pure doctrines of the Persian religion, among which it is said that there was already numbered the recognition of true piety in men of all religions.¹ If Paul derived from his Hellenic culture the knowledge which made it possible for him to speak as he did in Athens of the religiousness of the Gentiles, it was just as probable that Jews who had come within the experience of a still purer Aryan faith should utter an even more emphatic acknowledgment that the One True God had those who served Him in spirit and in truth all over the world. But, whatever foreign influences may have ripened such a faith in Israel, we must not forget that its roots were struck deep in the native soil of their religion. From the first they had known their God as

¹ See Cheyne, *Origin of the Psalter*, 292 and 305 f.

a God of a grace so infinite that it was impossible it should be exhausted on themselves. If His righteousness, as Amos showed, was over all the Syrian states, and His pity and His power to convert, as Isaiah showed, covered even the cities of Phœnicia, the great Evangelist of the Exile could declare that He quenched not the smoking wicks of the dim heathen faiths.

As interesting, however, as the origin of "Malachi's" attitude to the heathen, are two other points about it. In the first place, it is remarkable that it should occur, especially in the form of emphasising the purity of heathen sacrifices, in a book which lays such heavy stress upon the Jewish Temple and ritual. This is a warning to us not to judge harshly the so-called legal age of Jewish religion, nor to despise the prophets who have come under the influence of the Law. And in the second place, we perceive in this statement a step towards the fuller acknowledgment of Gentile religiousness which we find in the Book of Jonah. It is strange that none of the post-exilic Psalms strike the same note. They often predict the conversion of the heathen; but they do not recognise their native reverence and piety. Perhaps the reason is that in a body of song, collected for the national service, such a feature would be out of place.

3. THE PRIESTHOOD OF KNOWLEDGE (Chap. ii. 1-9).

In the third section of his book "Malachi" addresses himself to the priests. He charges them not only with irreverence and slovenliness in their discharge of the Temple service—for this he appears to intend by the phrase *filth of your feasts*—but with the neglect of their intellectual duties to the people. *The lips of a priest guard knowledge, and men seek instruction from*

his mouth, for he is the Angel—the revealing Angel—of Jehovah of Hosts. Once more, what a remarkable saying to come from the legal age of Israel's religion, and from a writer who so emphasises the ceremonial law! In all the range of prophecy there is not any more in harmony with the prophetic ideal. How needed it is in our own age!—needed against those two extremes of religion from which we suffer, the limitation of the ideal of priesthood to the communication of a magic grace, and its evaporation in a vague religiosity from which the intellect is excluded as if it were perilous, worldly and devilish.¹ "Surrender of the intellect" indeed! This is the burial of the talent in the napkin, and, as in the parable of Christ, it is still in our day preached and practised by the men of one talent. Religion needs all the brains we poor mortals can put into it. There is a priesthood of knowledge, a priesthood of the intellect, says "Malachi," and he makes this a large part of God's covenant with Levi. Every priest of God is a priest of truth; and it is very largely by the Christian ministry's neglect of their intellectual duties that so much irreligion prevails. As in "Malachi's" day, so now, "the laity take hurt and hindrance by our negligence."² And just as he points out, so with ourselves, the consequence is the growing indifference with which large bodies of the Christian ministry are regarded by the thoughtful portions both of our labouring and professional classes. Were the ministers of all the Churches to awake to their ideal

¹ *Isaiah i.—xxxix.* (Expositor's Bible), p. 188.

² See most admirable remarks on this subject in Archdeacon Wilson's *Essays and Addresses*, No. III. "The Need of giving Higher Biblical Teaching, and Instruction on the Fundamental Questions of Religion and Christianity." London: Macmillan, 1887.

in this matter, there would surely come a very great revival of religion among us.

And now this Charge for you, O priests: If ye hear not, and lay not to heart to give glory to My Name, saith Jehovah of Hosts, I will send upon you the curse, and will curse your blessings—yea, I have cursed them¹—for none of you layeth it to heart. Behold, I . . . you . . .² and I will scatter filth in your faces, the filth of your feasts. . . .³ And ye shall know that I have sent to you this Charge, to be My covenant with Levi,⁴ saith Jehovah of Hosts. My covenant was with him life and peace,⁵ and I gave them to him, fear and he feared Me, and humbled himself before My Name.⁶ The revelation of truth was in his mouth, and wickedness was not found upon his lips. In whole-heartedness⁷ and integrity he walked with Me, and turned many from iniquity. For the lips of a priest guard knowledge, and men seek instruction⁸ from his mouth, for he is the Angel of

¹ Doubtful. LXX. adds *καὶ διεσκεδάσω τὴν εὐλόγιαν ὑμῶν καὶ οὐκ ἔσται ἐν ὑμῶν*: obvious redundancy, if not mere dittography.

² An obscure phrase, *הִנְנִי גֹעַר לְכֶם אֶת־הַיָּדָאֵר*, *Behold, I rebuke you the seed*. LXX. *Behold, I separate from you the arm or shoulder*, reading *זָרַע* for *זָרַע* and perhaps *גֹּעַר* for *גֹּעַר*, both of which readings Wellhausen adopts, and Ewald the former. The reference may be to the arm of the priest raised in blessing. Orelli reads *seed=posterity*. It may mean the whole *seed* or *class* or *kind* of the priests. The next clause tempts one to suppose that *אֶת־הַזֹּרַע* contains the verb of this one, as if scattering something.

³ Heb. *וְנִשְׂא אֶתְכֶם אֵלָיו*, *and one shall bear you to it*. Hitzig: *filth shall be cast on them, and they on the filth*.

⁴ Others would render *My covenant being with Levi*. Wellhausen: *for My covenant was with Levi*. But this new Charge or covenant seems contrasted with a former covenant in the next verse.

⁵ Num. xxv. 12.

⁶ This sentence is a literal translation of the Hebrew. With other punctuation Wellhausen renders *My covenant was with him, life and peace I gave them to him, fear . . .*

⁷ Or *peace*, *שְׁלוֹם*.

⁸ Or *revelation*, *Torah*.

Jehovah of Hosts. But ye have turned from the way, ye have tripped up many by the Torah, ye have spoiled the covenant of Levi, saith Jehovah of Hosts. And I on My part¹ have made you contemptible to all the people, and abased in proportion as ye kept not My ways and had respect of persons in delivering your Torah.

4. THE CRUELTY OF DIVORCE (Chap. ii. 10-17).

In his fourth section, upon his countrymen's frequent divorce of their native wives in order to marry into the influential families of their half-heathen neighbours,² "Malachi" makes another of those wide and spiritual utterances which so distinguish his prophecy and redeem his age from the charge of legalism that is so often brought against it. To him the Fatherhood of God is not merely a relation of power and authority, requiring reverence from the nation. It constitutes the members of the nation one close brotherhood, and against this divorce is a crime and unnatural cruelty. Jehovah makes the *wife of a man's youth his mate for life and his wife by covenant*. He *hates divorce*, and His altar is so wetted by the tears of the wronged women of Israel that the gifts upon it are no more acceptable in His sight. No higher word on marriage was spoken except by Christ Himself. It breathes the spirit of our Lord's utterance: if we were sure of the text of ver. 15, we might almost say that it anticipated the letter. Certain verses, 11-13*a*, which disturb the argument by bringing in the marriages with heathen wives are omitted in the following translation, and will be given separately.

Have we not all One Father? Hath not One God

¹ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ : cf. Amos iv.

² See above, p. 344.

created us? Why then are we unfaithful to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers? . . .¹ Ye cover with tears the altar of Jehovah, with weeping and with groaning, because respect is no longer had to the offering, and acceptable gifts are not taken from your hands. And ye say, "Why?" Because Jehovah has been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, with whom thou hast broken faith, though she is thy mate² and thy wife by covenant. And . . .³ And what is the one seeking? A Divine Seed. Take heed, then, to your spirit, and be not unfaithful to the wife of thy youth.⁴ For I hate

¹ Here occur the two verses and a clause, 11-13a, upon the foreign marriages, which seem to be an intrusion.

² See Vol. I., p. 259.

³ Heb. literally: *And not one did, and a remnant of spirit was his*; which (1) A.V. renders: *And did not he make one? Yet he had the residue of the spirit*, which Pusey accepts and applies to Adam and Eve, interpreting the second clause as *the breath of life*, by which Adam became a living soul (Gen. ii. 7). In Gen. i. 27 Adam and Eve are called one. In that case the meaning would be that the law of marriage was prior to that of divorce, as in the words of our Lord, Matt. xix. 4-6. (2) The Hebrew might be rendered, *Not one has done this who had any spirit left in him*. So Hitzig and Orelli. In that case the following clauses of the verse are referred to Abraham. "But what about the One?" (LXX. insert *ye say* after *But*)—the one who did put away his wife. Answer: *He was seeking a Divine seed*. The objection to this interpretation is that Abraham did not cast off the wife of his youth, Sarah, but the foreigner Hagar. (3) Ewald made a very different proposal: *And has not One created them, and all the Spirit (cf. Zeph. i. 4) is His? And what doth the One seek? A Divine seed*. So Reinke. Similarly Kirkpatrick (*Doct. of the Proph.*, p. 502): *And did not One make [you both]? And why [did] the One [do so]? Seeking a goodly seed*. (4) Wellhausen goes further along the same line. Reading אלה for אלו, and וישאר, and לנו for לו, he translates: *Hath not the same God created and sustained your (? our) breath? And what does He desire? A seed of God*.

⁴ Literally: *let none be unfaithful to the wife of thy youth*, a curious instance of the Hebrew habit of mixing the pronominal references. Wellhausen's emendation is unnecessary.

divorce, saith Jehovah, God of Israel, and that a man cover his clothing¹ with cruelty, saith Jehovah of Hosts. So take heed to your spirit, and deal not faithlessly.

The verses omitted in the above translation treat of the foreign marriages, which led to this frequent divorce by the Jews of their native wives. So far, of course, they are relevant to the subject of the passage. But they obviously disturb its argument, as already pointed out.² They have nothing to do with the principle from which it starts that Jehovah is the Father of the whole of Israel. Remove them and the awkward clause in ver. 13*a*, by which some editor has tried to connect them with the rest of the paragraph, and the latter runs smoothly. The motive of their later addition is apparent, if not justifiable. Here they are by themselves:—

Judah was faithless, and abomination was practised in Israel³ and in Jerusalem, for Judah hath defiled the sanctuary of Jehovah, which was dear to Him, and hath married the daughter of a strange god. May Jehovah cut off from the man, who doeth this, witness and champion⁴ from the tents of Jacob, and offerer of sacrifices to Jehovah of Hosts.⁵

5. "WHERE IS THE GOD OF JUDGMENT?"

(Chap. ii. 17—iii. 5).

In this section "Malachi" turns from the sinners of his people to those who weary Jehovah with the

¹ See Gesenius and Ewald for Arabic analogies for the use of clothing = wife.

² See above, p. 340.

³ Wellhausen omits.

⁴ Heb. וְעֵד וְחֹמֶה, *caller and answerer*. But LXX. read עֵד, *witness* (see iii. 5), though it pointed it differently.

⁵ 13*a*, *But secondly ye do this*, is the obvious addition of the editor in order to connect his intrusion with what follows.

complaint that sin is successful, or, as they put it, *Every one that does evil is good in the eyes of Jehovah, and He delighteth in them*; and again, *Where is the God of Judgment?* The answer is, The Lord Himself shall come. His Angel shall prepare His way before Him, and suddenly shall the Lord come to His Temple. His coming shall be for judgment, terrible and searching. Its first object (note the order) shall be the cleansing of the priesthood, that proper sacrifices may be established, and its second the purging of the immorality of the people. Mark that although the coming of the Angel is said to precede that of Jehovah Himself, there is the same blending of the two as we have seen in previous accounts of angels.¹ It is uncertain whether this section closes with ver. 5 or 6: the latter goes equally well with it and with the following section.

Ye have wearied Jehovah with your words; and ye say, "In what have we wearied Him?" In that ye say, "Every one that does evil is good in the eyes of Jehovah, and He delighteth in them"; or else, "Where is the God of Judgment?" Behold, I will send My Angel, to prepare the way before Me, and suddenly shall come to His Temple the Lord whom ye seek and the Angel of the Covenant whom ye desire. Behold, He comes! saith Jehovah of Hosts. But who may bear the day of His coming, and who stand when He appears? For He is like the fire of the smelter and the acid of the fullers. He takes His scat to smelt and to purge;² and He will purge the sons of Levi, and wash them out like gold or silver,

¹ See above, pp. 311, 313 f.

² Delete *silver*: the longer LXX. text shows how easily it was added.

and they shall be to Jehovah bringers of an offering in righteousness. And the offering of Judah and Jerusalem shall be pleasing to Jehovah, as in the days of old and as in long past years. And I will come near you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and the adulterers and the perjurers, and against those who wrong the hireling in his wage, and the widow and the orphan, and oppress the stranger, and fear not Me, saith Jehovah of Hosts.

6. REPENTANCE BY TITHES (Chap. iii. 6-12).

This section ought perhaps to follow on to the preceding. Those whom it blames for not paying the Temple tithes may be the sceptics addressed in the previous section, who have stopped their dues to Jehovah out of sheer disappointment that He does nothing. And ver. 6, which goes well with either section, may be the joint between the two. However this be, the new section enforces the need of the people's repentance and return to God, if He is to return to them. And when they ask, how are they to return, "Malachi" plainly answers, By the payment of the tithes they have not paid. In withholding these they robbed God, and to this, their crime, are due the locusts and bad seasons which have afflicted them. In our temptation to see in this a purely legal spirit, let us remember that the neglect to pay the tithes was due to a religious cause, unbelief in Jehovah, and that the return to belief in Him could not therefore be shown in a more practical way than by the payment of tithes. This is not prophecy subject to the Law, but prophecy employing the means and vehicles of grace with which the Law at that time provided the people.

For I Jehovah have not changed, but ye sons of Jacob have not done with (?).¹ In the days of your fathers ye turned from My statutes and did not keep them. Return to Me, and I will return to you, saith Jehovah of Hosts. But you say, "How then shall we return?" Can a man rob² God? yet ye are robbing Me. But ye say, "In what have we robbed Thee?" In the tithe and the tribute.³ With the curse are ye cursed, and yet Me ye are robbing, the whole people of you. Bring in the whole tithe to the storehouse, that there may be provision⁴ in My House, and pray, prove Me in this, saith Jehovah of Hosts—whether I will not open to you the windows of heaven, and pour blessing upon you till there is no more need. And I will check for you the devourer,⁵ and he shall not destroy for you the fruit of the ground, nor the vine in the field miscarry, saith Jehovah of Hosts. And all nations shall call you happy, for ye shall be a land of delight, saith Jehovah of Hosts.

¹ Made an end of, reading the verb as Piel (Orelli). LXX. *refrain from*. Your sins are understood, the sins which have always characterised the people. LXX. connects the opening of the next verse with this, and with a different reading of the first word translates *from the sins of your fathers*.

² Hcb. עִקֵּב, only here and Prov. xxii. 32. LXX. read עִקֵּב, *supplant, cheat*, which Wellhausen adopts.

³ תְּרוּמָה, *the heave offering*, the tax or tribute given to the sanctuary or priests and associates with the tithes, as here in Deut. xii. 11, to be eaten by the offerer (*ib.* 17), but in Ezekiel by the priests (xliv. 30); taken by the people and the Levites to the Temple treasury for the priests (Neh. x. 38, xii. 44): corn, wine and oil. In the Priestly Writing it signifies the part of each sacrifice which was the priests' due. Ezekiel also uses it of the part of the Holy Land that fell to the prince and priests.

⁴ טָרֵף in its later meaning: cf. Job xxiv. 5; Prov. xxxi. 15.

⁵ *I.e.* locust.

7. THE JUDGMENT TO COME

(Chap. iii. 13-21 Heb., iii. 13—iv. 2 Eng.).

This is another charge to the doubters among the pious remnant of Israel, who, seeing the success of the wicked, said it is vain to serve God. Deuteronomy was their Canon, and Deuteronomy said that if men sinned they decayed, if they were righteous they prospered. How different were the facts of experience! The evil men succeeded: the good won no gain by their goodness, nor did their mourning for the sins of their people work any effect. Bitterest of all, they had to congratulate wickedness in high places, and Jehovah Himself suffered it to go unpunished. *Such things*, says "Malachi," *spake they that feared God to each other*—tempted thereto by the dogmatic form of their religion, and forgetful of all that Jeremiah and the Evangelist of the Exile had taught them of the value of righteous sufferings. Nor does "Malachi" remind them of this. His message is that the Lord remembers them, has their names written before Him, and when the day of His action comes they shall be separated from the wicked and spared. This is simply to transfer the fulfilment of the promise of Deuteronomy to the future and to another dispensation. Prophecy still works within the Law.

The Apocalypse of this last judgment is one of the grandest in all Scripture. To the wicked it shall be a terrible fire, root and branch shall they be burned out, but to the righteous a fair morning of God, as when dawn comes to those who have been sick and sleepless through the black night, and its beams bring healing, even as to the popular belief of Israel it was

the rays of the morning sun which distilled the dew.¹ They break into life and energy, like young calves leaping from the dark pen into the early sunshine. To this morning landscape a grim figure is added. They shall tread down the wicked and the arrogant like ashes beneath their feet.

Your words are hard upon Me, saith Jehovah. Ye say, "What have we said against Thee?" Ye have said, "It is vain to serve God," and "What gain is it to us to have kept His charge, or to have walked in funeral garb before Jehovah of Hosts? Even now we have got to congratulate the arrogant; yea, the workers of wickedness are fortified; yea, they tempt God and escape!" Such things² spake they that fear Jehovah to each other. But Jehovah gave ear and heard, and a book of remembrance³ was written before Him about those who fear Jehovah, and those who keep in mind⁴ His Name. And they shall be Mine own property, saith Jehovah of Hosts, in the day when I rise to action,⁵ and I will spare them even as a man spares his son that serves him. And ye shall once more see the difference between righteous and wicked, between him that serves God and him that does not serve Him.

For, lo! the day is coming that shall burn like a furnace, and all the overweening and every one that works wickedness shall be as stubble, and the day that is coming shall devour them, saith Jehovah of Hosts, so

¹ *A dew of lights.* See Isaiah i.—xxix. (Expositor's Bible), pp. 448 f.

² So LXX.; Heb. *then*.

³ Ezek. xiii. 9.

⁴ חשב, *to think, plan*, has much the same meaning as here in Isa. xiii. 17, xxxiii. 8, liii. 3.

⁵ Heb. *when I am doing*; but in the sense in which the word is used of Jehovah's decisive and final doing, Psalms xx., xxxii., etc.

that there be left them neither root nor branch. But to you that fear My Name the Sun of Righteousness shall rise with healing in His wings, and ye shall go forth and leap¹ like calves of the stall.² And ye shall tread down the wicked, for they shall be as ashes³ beneath the soles of your feet, in the day that I begin to do, saith Jehovah of Hosts.

8. THE RETURN OF ELIJAH

(Chap. iii. 22-24 Heb., iv. 3-5 Eng.).

With his last word the prophet significantly calls upon the people to remember the Law. This is their one hope before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. But, in order that the Law may have full effect, Prophecy will be sent to bring it home to the hearts of the people—Prophecy in the person of her founder and most drastic representative. Nothing could better gather up than this conjunction does that mingling of Law and of Prophecy which we have seen to be so characteristic of the work of "Malachi." Only we must not overlook the fact that "Malachi" expects this prophecy, which with the Law is to work the conversion of the people, not in the continuance of the prophetic succession by the appearance of original personalities, developing further the great principles of their order, but in the return of the first prophet Elijah. This is surely the confession of Prophecy that the number of her servants is exhausted and her message to Israel fulfilled. She can now do no more for the people than she has done. But she will summon up

¹ Hab. i. 8.

² See note to Amos vi. 4: Vol. I., p. 174, n. 3

³ Or *dust*.

her old energy and fire in the return of her most powerful personality, and make one grand effort to convert the nation before the Lord come and strike it with judgment.

Remember the Torah of Moses, My servant, with which I charged him in Horeb for all Israel: statutes and judgments. Lo! I am sending to you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and terrible day of Jehovah. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers, ere I come and strike the land with the Ban.

“Malachi” makes this promise of the Law in the dialect of Deuteronomy: *statutes and judgments with which Jehovah charged Moses for Israel.* But the Law he enforces is not that which God delivered to Moses on the plains of Shittim, but that which He gave him in Mount Horeb. And so it came to pass. In a very few years after “Malachi” prophesied Ezra the Scribe brought from Babylon the great Levitical Code, which appears to have been arranged there, while the colony in Jerusalem were still organising their life under the Deuteronomic legislation. In 444 B.C. this Levitical Code, along with Deuteronomy, became by covenant between the people and their God their Canon and Law. And in the next of our prophets, Joel, we shall find its full influence at work

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*The Day of Jehovah is great and very awful, and who may abide it?
But now the oracle of Jehovah—Turn ye to Me with all your heart,
and with fasting and with weeping and with mourning. And rend
your hearts and not your garments, and turn to Jehovah your God,
for gracious and merciful is He, long-suffering and abounding in
love.*

CHAPTER XXVII

THE BOOK OF JOEL.

IN the criticism of the Book of Joel there exist differences of opinion—upon its date, the exact reference of its statements and its relation to parallel passages in other prophets—as wide as even those by which the Book of Obadiah has been assigned to every century between the tenth and the fourth before Christ.¹ As in the case of Obadiah, the problem is not entangled with any doctrinal issue or question of accuracy; but while we saw that Obadiah was not involved in the central controversy of the Old Testament, the date of the Law, not a little in Joel turns upon the latter. And, besides, certain descriptions raise the large question between a literal and an allegorical interpretation. Thus the Book of Joel carries the student further into the problems of Old Testament Criticism, and forms an even more excellent introduction to the latter, than does the Book of Obadiah.

I. THE DATE OF THE BOOK.

In the history of prophecy the Book of Joel must be either very early or very late, and with few exceptions the leading critics place it either before 800 B.C. or after 500. So great a difference is due to most

¹ See above, Chap. XIII.

substantial reasons. Unlike every other prophet, except Haggai, "Malachi" and "Zechariah" ix.—xiv., Joel mentions neither Assyria, which emerged upon the prophetic horizon about 760,¹ nor the Babylonian Empire, which had fallen by 537. The presumption is that he wrote before 760 or after 537. Unlike all the prophets, too,² Joel does not charge his people with civic or national sins; nor does his book bear any trace of the struggle between the righteous and unrighteous in Israel, nor of that between the spiritual worshippers of Jehovah and the idolaters. The book addresses an undivided nation, who know no God but Jehovah; and again the presumption is that Joel wrote before Amos and his successors had started the spiritual antagonisms which rent Israel in twain, or after the Law had been accepted by the whole people under Nehemiah.³ The same wide alternative is suggested by the style and phraseology. Joel's Hebrew is simple and direct. Either he is an early writer, or imitates early writers. His book contains a number of phrases and verses identical, or nearly identical, with those of prophets from Amos to "Malachi." Either they all borrowed from Joel, or he borrowed from them.⁴

Of this alternative modern criticism at first preferred the earlier solution, and dated Joel before Amos. So Credner in his Commentary in 1831, and following

¹ See Vol. I. The Assyria of "Zech." x. 11 is Syria. See below.

² The two exceptions, Nahum and Habakkuk, are not relevant to this question. Their dates are fixed by their references to Assyria and Babylon.

³ See Rob. Smith, art. "Joel," *Encyc. Brit.*

⁴ So obvious is this alternative that all critics may be said to grant it, except König (*Einl.*), on whose reasons for placing Joel in the end of the seventh century see below, p. 386, n. 5. Kessner (*Das Zeitalter der Proph. Joel* (1888)) deems the date unprovable.

him Hitzig, Bleek, Ewald, Delitzsch, Keil, Kuenen (up to 1864),¹ Pusey and others. So, too, at first some living critics of the first rank, who, like Kuenen, have since changed their opinion. And so, even still, Kirkpatrick (on the whole), Von Orelli, Robertson,² Stanley Leathes and Sinkler.³ The reasons which these scholars have given for the early date of Joel are roughly as follows.⁴ His book occurs among the earliest of the Twelve: while it is recognised that the order of these is not strictly chronological, it is alleged that there is a division between the pre-exilic and post-exilic prophets, and that Joel is found among the former. The vagueness of his representations in general, and of his pictures of the Day of Jehovah in particular, is attributed to the simplicity of the earlier religion of Israel, and to the want of that analysis of its leading conceptions which was the work of later prophets.⁵ His horror of the interruption of the daily offerings in the Temple, caused by the plague of locusts,⁶ is ascribed to a fear which pervaded the primitive ages of all peoples.⁷ In Joel's attitude towards other nations, whom he condemns to judgment, Ewald saw "the old unsubdued warlike spirit of the times of Deborah and David." The prophet's absorption in the ravages of the locusts is held to reflect the feeling of a purely agricultural community, such as Israel was

¹ See *The Religion of Israel*, Vol. I., pp. 86 f.

² *The O.T. and its Contents*, p. 105.

³ *Lex Mosaica*, pp. 422, 450.

⁴ See especially Ewald on Joel in his *Prophets of the O.T.*, and Kirkpatrick's very fair argument in *Doctrine of the Prophets*, pp. 57 ff.

⁵ On Joel's picture of the Day of Jehovah Ewald says: "We have it here in its first simple and clear form, nor has it become a subject of ridicule as in Amos."

⁶ i. 9, 13, 16, ii. 14.

⁷ So Ewald.

before the eighth century. The absence of the name of Assyria from the book is assigned to the same unwillingness to give the name as we see in Amos and the earlier prophecies of Isaiah, and it is thought by some that, though not named, the Assyrians are symbolised by the locusts. The absence of all mention of the Law is also held by some to prove an early date: though other critics, who believe that the Levitical legislation was extant in Israel from the earliest times, find proof of this in Joel's insistence upon the daily offering. The absence of all mention of a king and the prominence given to the priests are explained by assigning the prophecy to the minority of King Joash of Judah, when Jehoyada the priest was regent;¹ the charge against Egypt and Edom of spilling innocent blood by Shishak's invasion of Judah,² and by the revolt of the Edomites under Jehoram;³ the charge against the Philistines and Phœnicians by the Chronicler's account of Philistine raids⁴ in the reign of Jehoram of Judah, and by the oracles of Amos against both nations;⁵ and the mention of the Vale of Jehoshaphat by that king's defeat of Moab, Ammon and Edom in the Vale of Berakhah.⁶ These allusions being recognised, it was deduced from them that the parallels between Joel and Amos were due to Amos having quoted from Joel.⁷

¹ 2 Kings xi. 4-21.

² 1 Kings xiv. 25 f.: cf. Joel iii. 17b, 19.

³ 2 Kings viii. 20-22: cf. Joel iii. 19.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxi. 16, 17, xxii. 1: cf. Joel iii. 4-6.

⁵ Amos i.: cf. Joel iii. 4-6.

⁶ 2 Chron. xx., especially 26: cf. Joel iii. 2.

⁷ Joel iii. (Eng.; iv. Heb.) 16; Amos i. 2. For a list of the various periods to which Joel has been assigned by supporters of this early date see Kuenen, § 68.

These reasons are not all equally cogent,¹ and even the strongest of them do not prove more than the possibility of an early date for Joel.² Nor do they meet every historical difficulty. The minority of Joash, upon which they converge, fell at a time when Aram was not only prominent to the thoughts of Israel, but had already been felt to be an enemy as powerful as the Philistines or Edomites. But the Book of Joel does not mention Aram. It mentions the Greeks,³ and, although we have no right to say that such a notice was impossible in Israel in the ninth century, it was not only improbable, but no other Hebrew document from before the Exile speaks of Greece, and in particular Amos does not when describing the Phœnicians as slave-traders.⁴ The argument that the Book of Joel must be early because it was placed among the first six of the Twelve Prophets by the arrangers of the Prophetic Canon, who could not have forgotten Joel's date had he lived after 450, loses all force from the fact that in the same group of pre-exilic prophets we find the exilic Obadiah and the post-exilic Jonah, both of them in precedence to Micah.

The argument for the early date of Joel is, therefore, not conclusive. But there are besides serious objections to it, which make for the other solution of the alternative we started from, and lead us to place Joel after the establishment of the Law by Ezra and Nehemiah in 444 B.C.

¹ The reference of Egypt in iii. 19 to Shishak's invasion appears particularly weak.

² Cf. Robertson, *O. T. and its Contents*, 105, and Kirkpatrick's cautious, though convinced, statement of the reasons for an early date.

³ iii. 6 (Heb. iv. 6).

⁴ Amos i. 9.

A post-exilic date was first proposed by Vatke,¹ and then defended by Hilgenfeld,² and by Duhm in 1875.³ From this time the theory made rapid way, winning over many who had previously held the early date of Joel, like Oort,⁴ Kuenen,⁵ A. B. Davidson,⁶ Driver and Cheyne,⁷ perhaps also Wellhausen,⁸ and finding acceptance and new proofs from a gradually increasing majority of younger critics, Merx,⁹ Robertson Smith,¹⁰ Stade,¹¹ Matthes and Scholz,¹² Holzinger,¹³ Farrar,¹⁴ Kautzsch,¹⁵ Cornill,¹⁶ Wildeboer,¹⁷ G. B. Gray¹⁸ and Nowack.¹⁹ The reasons which have led to this formidable change of opinion in favour of the late date of the Book of Joel are as follows.

In the first place, the Exile of Judah appears in it as already past. This is proved, not by the ambiguous phrase, *when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah*

¹ *Bibl. Theol.*, I., p. 462; *Einl.*, pp. 675 ff.

² *Ztschr. f. wissenschaft. Theol.*, X., Heft 4.

³ *Theol. der Proph.*, pp. 275 ff.

⁴ *Theol. Tijds.*, 1876, pp. 362 ff. (not seen).

⁵ *Onders.*, § 68.

⁶ *Expositor*, 1888, Jan.—June, pp. 198 ff.

⁷ See Cheyne, *Origin of Psalter*, xx.; Driver, *Introd.*, in the sixth edition of which, 1897, he supports the late date of Joel more strongly than in the first edition, 1892.

⁸ Wellhausen allowed the theory of the early date of Joel to stand in his edition of Bleek's *Einleitung*, but adopts the late date in his own *Kleine Propheten*.

⁹ *Die Prophetie des Joels u. ihre Ausleger*, 1879.

¹⁰ *Encyc. Brit.*, art. "Joel," 1881.

¹¹ *Gesch.*, II. 207.

¹² *Theol. Tijdschr.*, 1885, p. 151; *Comm.*, 1885 (neither seen).

¹³ "Sprachcharakter u. Abfassungszeit des B. Joels" in *Z.A.T.W.*, 1889, pp. 89 ff.

¹⁴ *Minor Prophets*.

¹⁵ *Litteratur des A. T.*

¹⁶ *Bibel*.

¹⁷ *Expositor*, September 1893.

¹⁸ *Einleit.*

¹⁹ *Comm.*, 1897.

and Jerusalem,¹ but by the plain statement that *the heathen have scattered Israel among the nations and divided their land.*² The plunder of the Temple seems also to be implied.³ Moreover, no great world-power is pictured as either threatening or actually persecuting God's people; but Israel's active enemies and enslavers are represented as her own neighbours, Edomites, Philistines and Phœnicians, and the last are represented as selling Jewish captives to the Greeks. All this suits, if it does not absolutely prove, the Persian age, before the reign of Artaxerxes Ochus, who was the first Persian king to treat the Jews with cruelty.⁴ The Greeks, Javan, do not appear in any Hebrew writer before the Exile;⁵ the form in which their name is given by Joel, B'ne ha-Jevanim, has admittedly a late sound about it,⁶ and we know from other sources that it was in the fifth and fourth centuries that Syrian slaves were in demand in Greece.⁷ Similarly with the internal condition of the Jews as reflected in Joel. No king is

¹ iv. (Heb.; iii. Eng.) 1. For this may only mean *turn again the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem.*

² iv. (Heb.; iii. Eng.) 2. The supporters of a pre-exilic date either passed this over or understood it of incursions by the heathen into Israel's territories in the ninth century. It is, however, too universal to suit these.

³ iv. (Heb.; iii. Eng.) 5.

⁴ Kautzsch dates after Artaxerxes Ochus, and *c.* 350.

⁵ Ezckiel (xxvii. 13, 19) is the first to give the name Javan, *i.e.* Ιαῶνα, or Ionian (earlier writers name Egypt, Edom, Arabia and Phœnicia as the great slave-markets: Amos i.; Isa. xi. 11; Deut. xxviii. 68); and Greeks are also mentioned in Isa. lxvi. 19 (a post-exilic passage); Zech. ix. 13; Dan. viii. 21, x. 20, xi. 2; 1 Chron. i. 5, 7, and Gen. x. 2. See below, Chap. XXXI.

⁶ בני הקרחים instead of בני יון, just as the Chronicler gives בני קרח for בני קרח: see Wildeboer, p. 348, and Matthes, quoted by Holzinger, p. 94.

⁷ Movers, *Phön. Alterthum.*, II. 1, pp. 70 *sqq.*: which reference I owe to R. Smith's art. in the *Encyc. Brit.*

mentioned; but the priests are prominent, and the elders are introduced at least once.¹ It is an agricultural calamity, and that alone, unmixed with any political alarm, which is the omen of the coming Day of the Lord. All this suits the state of Jerusalem under the Persians. Take again the religious temper and emphasis of the book. The latter is laid, as we have seen, very remarkably upon the horror of the interruption by the plague of locusts of the daily meal and drink offerings, and in the later history of Israel the proofs are many of the exceeding importance with which the regularity of this was regarded.² This, says Professor A. B. Davidson, "is very unlike the way in which all other prophets down to Jeremiah speak of the sacrificial service." The priests, too, are called to take the initiative; and the summons to a solemn and formal fast, without any notice of the particular sins of the people or exhortations to distinct virtues, contrasts with the attitude to fasts of the earlier prophets, and with their insistence upon a change of life as the only acceptable form of penitence.³ And another contrast with the earliest prophets is seen in the general apocalyptic atmosphere and colouring of the Book of Joel, as well

¹ With these might be taken the use of לָקַח (ii. 16) in its sense of a gathering for public worship. The word itself was old in Hebrew, but as time went on it came more and more to mean the convocation of the nation for worship or deliberation. Holzinger, pp. 105 f.

² Cf. Neh. x. 33; Dan. viii. 11, xi. 31, xii. 11. Also Acts xxvi. 7: τὸ δωδεκάφυλον ἡμῶν ἐν ἐκτενεῖα νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν λατρεύον. Also the passages in Jos., XIV. *Ant.* iv. 3, xvi. 2, in which Josephus mentions the horror caused by the interruption of the daily sacrifice by famine in the last siege of Jerusalem, and adds that it had happened in no previous siege of the city.

³ Cf. Jer. xiv. 12; Isa lviii. 6; Zech. vii. 5, vi. 11, 19, with Neh. i. 4, ix. 1; Ezra viii. 21; Jonah iii. 5, 7; Esther iv. 3, 16, ix. 31; Dan. ix. 3.

as in some of the particular figures in which this is expressed, and which are derived from later prophets like Zephaniah and Ezekiel.¹

These evidences for a late date are supported, on the whole, by the language of the book. Of this Merx furnishes many details, and by a careful examination, which makes due allowance for the poetic form of the book and for possible glosses, Holzinger has shown that there are symptoms in vocabulary, grammar and syntax which at least are more reconcilable with a late than with an early date.² There are a number of Aramaic words, of Hebrew words used in the sense in which they are used by Aramaic, but by no other Hebrew, writers, and several terms and constructions which appear only in the later books of the Old Testament or very seldom in the early ones.³ It is true that these do not stand in a large proportion to the rest of Joel's vocabulary and grammar, which is classic and suitable to an early period of the literature; but this may be accounted for by the large use which the prophet makes of the very words of earlier writers.

¹ The gathering of the Gentiles to judgment, Zeph. iii. 8 (see above, p. 69) and Ezek. xxxviii. 22; the stream issuing from the Temple to fill the Wady ha-Shittim, Ezek. xlvi. 1 ff., cf. Zech. xiv. 8; the outpouring of the Spirit, Ezek. xxxix. 29.

² *Z.A.T.W.*, 1889, pp. 89-136. Holzinger's own conclusion is stated more emphatically than above.

³ For an exhaustive list the reader must be referred to Holzinger's article (cf. Driver, *Introd.*, sixth edition; *Joel and Amos*, p. 24; G. B. Gray, *Expositor*, September 1893, p. 212). But the following (a few of which are not given by Holzinger) are sufficient to prove the conclusion come to above: i. 2, iv. 4, $\text{𐤁𐤍} \dots \text{𐤁}$ —this is the form of the disjunctive interrogative in later O. T. writings, replacing the earlier $\text{𐤁𐤍} \dots \text{𐤁}$; i. 8, 𐤁𐤍 only here in O. T., but frequent in Aram.; 13, 𐤁𐤍 in Ni. only from Jeremiah onwards, Qal only in two passages before Jeremiah and in a number after him; 18, 𐤁𐤍 , if

Take this large use into account, and the unmistakable Aramaisms of the book become even more emphatic in their proof of a late date.

The literary parallels between Joel and other writers are unusually many for so small a book. They number at least twenty in seventy-two verses. The other books of the Old Testament in which they occur are about twelve. Where one writer has parallels with many, we do not necessarily conclude that he is the borrower, unless we find that some of the phrases common to both are characteristic of the other writers, or that, in his text of them, there are differences from theirs which may reasonably be reckoned to be of a later origin. But that both of these conditions are found in the parallels between Joel and other prophets has been shown by Prof. Driver and Mr. G. B. Gray. "Several of the parallels—either in their entirety or by virtue of certain words which they contain—have their affinities solely or chiefly in the later writings. But the significance [of this] is increased when the very difference between a passage in Joel and its

the correct reading, occurs only in the latest O. T. writings, the Qal only in these and Aram.; ii. 2, iv. (Heb.; iii. Eng.) 20, רור ודור first in Deut. xxxii. 7, and then exilic and post-exilic frequently; 8, שלח, a late word, only in Job xxxiii. 18, xxxvi. 12, 2 Chron. xxiii. 10, xxxii. 5, Neh. iii. 15, iv. 11, 17; 20, סוף, *end*, only in 2 Chron. xx. 16 and Ecces., Aram. of Daniel, and post Bibl. Aram. and Heb.; iv. (Heb.; iii. Eng.) 4, גמול על, cf. 2 Chron. xx. 11; 10, רמח, see below on this verse; 11, הנחת, Aram.; 13, בשל, in Hebrew to cook (cf. Ezek. xxiv. 5), and in other forms always with that meaning down to the Priestly Writing and "Zech." ix.—xiv., is used here in the sense of *ripen*, which is frequent in Aram., but does not occur elsewhere in O. T. Besides, Joel uses for the first personal pronoun אני—ii. 27 (*bis*), iv. 10, 17—which is by far the most usual form with later writers, and not אנכי, preferred by pre-exilic writers. (See below on the language of Jonah.)

parallel in another book consists in a word or phrase characteristic of the later centuries. That a passage in a writer of the ninth century should differ from its parallel in a subsequent writer by the presence of a word elsewhere confined to the later literature would be strange; a single instance would not, indeed, be inexplicable in view of the scantiness of extant writings; but every additional instance—though itself not very convincing—renders the strangeness greater." And again, "the variations in some of the parallels as found in Joel have other common peculiarities. This also finds its natural explanation in the fact that Joel quotes: for that the *same* author even when quoting from different sources should quote with variations of the same character is natural, but that *different* authors quoting from a common source should follow the same method of quotation is improbable."¹ "While in some of the parallels a comparison discloses indications that the phrase in Joel is probably the later, in other cases, even though the expression may in itself be met with earlier, it becomes frequent only in a later age, and the use of it by Joel increases the presumption that he stands by the side of the later writers."²

In face of so many converging lines of evidence, we shall not wonder that there should have come about so great a change in the opinion of the majority of critics on the date of Joel, and that it should now be assigned by them to a post-exilic date. Some place it in the sixth century before Christ,³ some in the first

¹ G. B. Gray, *Expositor*, September 1893, pp. 213 f. For the above conclusions ample proof is given in Mr. Gray's detailed examination of the parallels: pp. 214 ff.

² Driver, *Joel and Amos*, p. 27.

³ Scholz and Rosenzweig (not seen)

half of the fifth before "Malachi" and Nehemiah,¹ but the most after the full establishment of the Law by Ezra and Nehemiah in 444 B.C.² It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to decide. Nothing certain can be deduced from the mention of the *city wall* in chap. ii. 9, from which Robertson Smith and Cornill infer that Nehemiah's walls were already built. Nor can we be sure that Joel quotes the phrase, *before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come*, from "Malachi,"³ although this is rendered probable by the character of Joel's other parallels. But the absence of all reference to the prophets as a class, the promise of the rigorous exclusion of foreigners from Jerusalem,⁴ the condemnation to judgment of all the heathen, and the strong apocalyptic character of the book, would incline us to place it after Ezra rather than before. How far after, it is impossible to say, but the absence of feeling against Persia requires a date before the cruelties inflicted by Artaxerxes about 360.⁵

¹ Hilgenfeld, Duhm, Oort. Driver puts it "most safely shortly after Haggai and Zechariah i.—viii., c. 500 B.C."

² Vernes, Robertson Smith, Kuenen, Matties, Cornill, Nowack, etc.

³ Joel iii. 4 (Heb.; Eng. ii. 31); "Mal." iv. 5.

⁴ iii. (Eng.; iv. Heb.) 17.

⁵ Perhaps this is the most convenient place to refer to König's proposal to place Joel in the last years of Josiah. Some of his arguments (*e.g.* that Joel is placed among the first of the Twelve) we have already answered. He thinks that i. 17-20 suit the great drought in Josiah's reign (Jer. xiv. 2-6), that the name given to the locusts, הַצְפוּנִי, ii. 20, is due to Jeremiah's enemy *from the north*, and that the phrases *return with all your heart*, ii. 12, and *return to Jehovah your God*, 13, imply a period of apostasy. None of these conclusions is necessary. The absence of reference to the *high places* finds an analogy in Isa. i. 13; the מִנְחָה is mentioned in Isa. i. 13: if Amos viii. 5 testifies to observance of the Sabbath, and Nahum ii. 1 to other festivals, who can say a pre-exilic prophet would not be interested in the meal and drink offerings? But surely no pre-exilic prophet

One solution, which has lately been offered for the problems of date presented by the Book of Joel, deserves some notice. In his German translation of Driver's *Introduction to the Old Testament*,¹ Rothstein questions the integrity of the prophecy, and alleges reasons for dividing it into two sections. Chaps. i. and ii. (Heb. ; i.—ii. 27 Eng.) he assigns to an early author, writing in the minority of King Joash, but chaps. iii. and iv. (Heb. ; ii. 28—iii. Eng.) to a date after the Exile, while ii. 20, which, it will be remembered, Robertson Smith takes as a gloss, he attributes to the editor who has joined the two sections together. His reasons are that chaps. i. and ii. are entirely taken up with the physical plague of locusts, and no troubles from heathen are mentioned; while chaps. iii. and iv. say nothing of a physical plague, but the evils they deplore for Israel are entirely political, the assaults of enemies. Now it is quite within the bounds of possibility that chaps. iii. and iv. are from another hand than chaps. i. and ii. : we have nothing to disprove that. But, on the other hand, there is nothing to prove it. On the

would have so emphasised these as Joel has done. Nor is König's explanation of iv. 2 as of the Assyrian and Egyptian invasion of Judah so probable as that which refers the verse to the Babylonian exile. Nor are König's objections to a date after "Malachi" convincing. They are that a prophet near "Malachi's" time must have specified as "Malachi" did the reasons for the repentance to which he summoned the people, while Joel gives none, but is quite general (ii. 13*a*). But the change of attitude may be accounted for by the covenant and Law of 444. "Malachi" i. 11 speaks of the Gentiles worshipping Jehovah, but not even in Jonah iii. 5 is any relation of the Gentiles to Jehovah predicated. Again, the greater exclusiveness of Ezra and his Law may be the cause. Joel, it is true, as König says, does not mention the Law, while "Malachi" does (ii. 8, etc.); but this was not necessary if the people had accepted it in 444. Professor Ryle (*Canon of O.T.*, 106 n.) leaves the question of Joel's date open.

¹ Pages 333 f. n.

contrary, the possibility of all four chapters being from the same hand is very obvious. Joel mentions no heathen in the first chapter, because he is engrossed with the plague of locusts. But when this has passed, it is quite natural that he should take up the standing problem of Israel's history—their relation to heathen peoples. There is no discrepancy between the two different subjects, nor between the styles in which they are respectively treated. Rothstein's arguments for an early date for chaps. i. and ii. have been already answered, and when we come to the exposition of them we shall find still stronger reasons for assigning them to the end of the fifth century before Christ. The assault on the integrity of the prophecy may therefore be said to have failed, though no one who remembers the composite character of the prophetic books can deny that the question is still open.¹

2. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BOOK: IS IT DESCRIPTION, ALLEGORY OR APOCALYPSE?

Another question to which we must address ourselves before we can pass to the exposition of Joel's prophecies is of the attitude and intention of the prophet. Does he describe or predict? Does he give history or allegory?

Joel starts from a great plague of locusts, which he

¹ Vernes, *Histoire des Idées Messianiques depuis Alexandre*, pp. 13 ff., had already asserted that chaps. i. and ii. must be by a different author from chaps. iii. and iv., because the former has to do wholly with the writer's present, with which the latter has no connection whatever, but it is entirely eschatological. But in his *Mélanges de Crit. Relig.*, pp. 218 ff., Vernes allows that his arguments are not conclusive, and that all four chapters may have come from the same hand.

describes not only in the ravages they commit upon the land, but in their ominous foreshadowing of the Day of the Lord. They are the heralds of God's near judgment upon the nation. Let the latter repent instantly with a day of fasting and prayer. Peradventure Jehovah will relent, and spare His people. So far chap. i. 2—ii. 17. Then comes a break. An uncertain interval appears to elapse; and in chap. ii. 18 we are told that Jehovah's zeal for Israel has been stirred, and He has had pity on His folk. Promises follow, *first*, of deliverance from the plague and of restoration of the harvests it has consumed, and *second*, of the outpouring of the Spirit on all classes of the community: chap. ii. 17-32 (Eng.; ii. 17—iii. Heb.). Chap. iii. (Eng.; iv. Heb.) gives another picture of the Day of Jehovah, this time described as a judgment upon the heathen enemies of Israel. They shall be brought together, condemned judicially by Him, and slain by His hosts, His "supernatural" hosts. Jerusalem shall be freed from the feet of strangers, and the fertility of the land restored.

These are the contents of the book. Do they describe an actual plague of locusts, already experienced by the people? Or do they predict this as still to come? And again, are the locusts which they describe real locusts, or a symbol and allegory of the human foes of Israel? To these two questions, which in a measure cross and involve each other, three kinds of answer have been given.

A large and growing majority of critics of all schools¹ hold that Joel starts, like other prophets, from the facts of experience. His locusts, though described

¹ *I.e.* Hitzig, Vatke, Ewald, Robertson Smith, Kuenen, Kirkpatrick, Driver, Davidson, Nowack, etc.

with poetic hyperbole—for are they not the vanguard of the awful Day of God's judgment?—are real locusts; their plague has just been felt by his contemporaries, whom he summons to repent, and to whom, when they have repented, he brings promises of the restoration of their ruined harvests, the outpouring of the Spirit, and judgment upon their foes. Prediction is therefore found only in the second half of the book (ii. 18 onwards): it rests upon a basis of narrative and exhortation which fills the first half.

But a number of other critics have argued (and with great force) that the prophet's language about the locusts is too aggravated and too ominous to be limited to the natural plague which these insects periodically inflicted upon Palestine. Joel (they reason) would hardly have connected so common an adversity with so singular and ultimate a crisis as the Day of the Lord. Under the figure of locusts he must be describing some more fateful agency of God's wrath upon Israel. More than one trait of his description appears to imply a human army. It can only be one or other, or all, of those heathen powers whom at different periods God raised up to chastise His delinquent people; and this opinion is held to be supported by the facts that chap. ii. 20 speaks of them as the Northern and chap. iii. (Eng.; iv. Heb.) deals with the heathen. The locusts of chaps. i. and ii. are the same as the heathen of chap. iii. In chaps. i. and ii. they are described as threatening Israel, but on condition of Israel repenting (chap. ii. 18 ff.) the Day of the Lord which they herald shall be their destruction and not Israel's (chap. iii.).¹

¹ This allegorical interpretation was a favourite one with the early Christian Fathers: cf. Jerome.

The supporters of this allegorical interpretation of Joel are, however, divided among themselves as to whether the heathen powers symbolised by the locusts are described as having already afflicted Israel or are predicted as still to come. Hilgenfeld,¹ for instance, says that the prophet in chaps. i. and ii. speaks of their ravages as already past. To him their fourfold plague described in chap. i. 4 symbolises four Persian assaults upon Palestine, after the last of which in 358 the prophecy must therefore have been written.² Others read them as still to come. In our own country Pusey has been the strongest supporter of this theory.³ To him the whole book, written before Amos, is prediction. "It extends from the prophet's own day to the end of time." Joel calls the scourge the Northern: he directs the priests to pray for its removal, that *the heathen may not rule over God's heritage*;⁴ he describes the agent as a responsible one;⁵ his imagery goes far beyond the effects of locusts, and threatens drought, fire and plague,⁶ the assault of cities and the terrifying of peoples.⁷ The scourge is to be destroyed in a way physically inapplicable to locusts;⁸ and the promises of its removal include the remedy of ravages which mere locusts could not inflict: the captivity of Judah is to be turned, and the land recovered from foreigners who

¹ *Zeitschr. für wissensch. Theologie*, 1860, pp. 412 ff.

² Cambyses 525, Xerxes 484, Artaxerxes Ochus 460 and 458.

³ In Germany, among other representatives of this opinion, are Bertholdt (*Einl.*) and Hengstenberg (*Christol.*, III. 352 ff.), the latter of whom saw in the four kinds of locusts the Assyrian-Babylonian, the Persian, the Greek and the Roman tyrants of Israel.

⁴ ii. 17.

⁶ i. 19, 20.

⁵ ii. 20.

⁸ ii. 20.

⁷ Plur. ii. 6.

are to be banished from it.¹ Pusey thus reckons as future the relenting of God, consequent upon the people's penitence : chap. ii. 18 ff. The past tenses in which it is related, he takes as instances of the well-known prophetic perfect, according to which the prophets express their assurance of things to come by describing them as if they had already happened.

This is undoubtedly a strong case for the predictive and allegorical character of the Book of Joel; but a little consideration will show us that the facts on which it is grounded are capable of a different explanation than that which it assumes, and that Pusey has overlooked a number of other facts which force us to a literal interpretation of the locusts as a plague already past, even though we feel they are described in the language of poetical hyperbole.

For, in the first place, Pusey's theory implies that the prophecy is addressed to a future generation, who shall be alive when the predicted invasions of heathen come upon the land. Whereas Joel obviously addresses his own contemporaries. The prophet and his hearers are one. *Before our eyes*, he says, *the food has been cut off.*² As obviously, he speaks of the plague of locusts as of something that has just happened. His hearers can compare its effects with past disasters, which it has far exceeded;³ and it is their duty to hand down the story of it to future generations.⁴ Again, his description is that of a physical, not of a political, plague. Fields and gardens, vines and figs, are devastated by being stripped and gnawed. Drought accompanies the locusts, the seed shrivels beneath the clods, the trees languish, the cattle pant for want of water.⁵ These are

¹ iii. (Heb. iv.) 1 f., 17.

² i. 2 f.

³ i. 17 ff.

⁴ i. 16.

⁵ i. 3.

not the trail which an invading army leave behind them. In support of his theory that human hosts are meant, Pusey points to the verses which bid the people pray *that the heathen rule not over them*, and which describe the invaders as attacking cities.¹ But the former phrase may be rendered with equal propriety, *that the heathen make not satirical songs about them*;² and as to the latter, not only do locusts invade towns exactly as Joel describes, but his words that the invader steals into houses like *a thief* are far more applicable to the insidious entrance of locusts than to the bold and noisy assault of a storming party. Moreover Pusey and the other allegorical interpreters of the book overlook the fact that Joel never so much as hints at the invariable effects of a human invasion, massacre and plunder. He describes no slaying and no looting; but when he comes to the promise that Jehovah will restore the losses which have been sustained by His people, he defines them as the years which His army has *eaten*.³ But all this proof is clenched by the fact that Joel compares the locusts to actual soldiers.⁴ They are *like* horsemen, the sound of them is *like* chariots, they run *like* horses, and *like* men of war they leap upon the wall. Joel could never have compared a real army to itself!

The allegorical interpretation is therefore untenable. But some critics, while admitting this, are yet not disposed to take the first part of the book for narrative. They admit that the prophet means a plague of locusts, but they deny that he is speaking of a plague already past, and hold that his locusts are still to come, that they are as much a part of the future as the pouring out of the

¹ ii. 17, ii. 9 ff.

³ A. B. Davidson, *Expos.*, 1888, pp. 200 f.

² לְכִישָׁל בָּם

⁴ ii. 4 ff.

Spirit¹ and the judgment of the heathen in the Valley of Jehoshaphat.² All alike, they are signs or accompaniments of the Day of Jehovah, and that Day has still to break. The prophet's scenery is apocalyptic; the locusts are "eschatological locusts," not historical ones. This interpretation of Joel has been elaborated by Dr. Adalbert Merx, and the following is a summary of his opinions.³

After examining the book along all the lines of exposition which have been proposed, Merx finds himself unable to trace any plan or even sign of a plan; and his only escape from perplexity is the belief that no plan can ever have been meant by the author. Joel weaves in one past, present and future, paints situations only to blot them out and put others in their place, starts many processes but develops none. His book shows no insight into God's plan with Israel, but is purely external; the bearing and the end of it is the material prosperity of the little land of Judah. From this Merx concludes that the book is not an original work, but a mere summary of passages from previous prophets, that with a few reflections of the life of the Jews after the Return lead us to assign it to that period of literary culture which Nehemiah inaugurated by the collection of national writings and which was favoured by the cessation of all political disturbance. Joel gathered up the pictures of the Messianic age in the older prophets, and welded them together in one long prayer by the fervid belief that that age was near. But while the older prophets spoke upon the ground of actual fact and rose from this to a majestic picture of the last punishment, the still life of Joel's time had nothing such to offer him and he had to seek another basis for his prophetic flight. It is probable that he sought this in the relation of Type and Antitype. The Antitype he found in the liberation from Egypt, the darkness and the locusts of which he transferred to his canvas from Exodus x. 4-6. The locusts, therefore, are neither real nor symbolic, but ideal. This is the method of the Midrash and Haggada in Jewish literature, which constantly placed over against each other the deliverance from Egypt and the last judgment. It is

¹ Eng. ii. 28 ff., Heb. iii.

² Eng. iii., Heb. iv.

³ *Die Prophetie des Joel u. ihre Ausleger*, 1879. The following summary and criticism of Merx's views I take from an (unpublished) review of his work which I wrote in 1881.

a method that is already found in such portions of the Old Testament as Ezekiel xxxvii. and Psalm lxxviii. Joel's locusts are borrowed from the Egyptian plagues, but are presented as the signs of the Last Day. They will bring it near to Israel by famine, drought and the interruption of worship described in chap. i. Chap. ii., which Merx keeps distinct from chap. i., is based on a study of Ezekiel, from whom Joel has borrowed, among other things, the expressions *the garden of Eden* and *the Northerner*. The two verses generally held to be historic, 18 and 19, Merx takes to be the continuation of the prayer of the priests, pointing the verbs so as to turn them from perfects into futures.¹ The rest of the book, Merx strives to show, is pieced together from many prophets, chiefly Isaiah and Ezekiel, but without the tender spiritual feeling of the one, or the colossal magnificence of the other. Special nations are mentioned, but in this portion of the work we have to do not with events already past, but with general views, and these not original, but conditioned by the expressions of earlier writers. There is no history in the book: it is all ideal, mystical, apocalyptic. That is to say, according to Merx, there is no real prophet or prophetic fire, only an old man warming his feeble hands over a few embers that he has scraped together from the ashes of ancient fires, now nearly wholly dead.

Merx has traced Joel's relations to other prophets, and reflection of a late date in Israel's history, with care and ingenuity; but his treatment of the text and exegesis of the prophet's meaning are alike forced and fanciful. In face of the support which the Massoretic reading of the hinge of the book, chap. ii. 18 ff., receives from the ancient versions, and of its inherent probability and harmony with the context, Merx's textual emendation is unnecessary, besides being in itself unnatural.² While the very same objections which we have already found valid against the allegorical interpretation equally dispose of this mystical one. Merx outrages the evident features of the book almost as much as Hengstenberg and Pusey have done. He has lifted out of time altogether that which plainly purports to be historical. His literary criticism is as unsound as his textual. It is only by ignoring the beautiful poetry of chap. i. that he transplants it to the future. Joel's figures are too vivid, too actual, to be predictive or mystical. And the whole interpretation wrecks itself in

¹ For נִקְרָא etc. he reads נִקְרָא etc.

² "The proposal of Merx, to change the pointing so as to transform the perfects into futures, . . . is an exegetical monstrosity."—Robertson Smith, art. "Joel," *Encyc. Brit.*

the same verse as the allegorical, the verse, viz., in which Joel plainly speaks of himself as having suffered with his hearers the plague he describes.¹

We may, therefore, with confidence conclude that the allegorical and mystical interpretations of Joel are impossible; and that the only reasonable view of our prophet is that which regards him as calling, in chap. i. 2—ii. 17, upon his contemporaries to repent in face of a plague of locusts, so unusually severe that he has felt it to be ominous of even the Day of the Lord; and in the rest of his book, as promising material, political and spiritual triumphs to Israel in consequence of their repentance, either already consummated, or anticipated by the prophet as certain.

It is true that the account of the locusts appears to bear features which conflict with the literal interpretation. Some of these, however, vanish upon a fuller knowledge of the awful degree which such a plague has been testified to reach by competent observers within our own era.² Those that remain may be attributed partly to the poetic hyperbole of Joel's style, and partly to the fact that he sees in the plague far more than itself. The locusts are signs of the Day of Jehovah. Joel treats them as we found Zephaniah treating the Scythian hordes of his day. They are as real as the latter, but on them as on the latter the lurid glare of Apocalypse has fallen, magnifying them and investing them with that air of ominousness which is the sole justification of the allegorical and mystic interpretation of their appearance.

¹ i. 16.

² Even the comparison of the ravages of the locusts to burning by fire. But probably also Joel means that they were accompanied by drought and forest fires. See below.

To the same sense of their office as heralds of the last day, we owe the description of the locusts as *the Northerner*.¹ The North is not the quarter from which locusts usually reach Palestine, nor is there any reason to suppose that by naming the North Joel meant only to emphasise the unusual character of these swarms. Rather he takes a name employed in Israel since Jeremiah's time to express the instruments of Jehovah's wrath in the day of His judgment of Israel. The name is typical of Doom, and therefore Joel applies it to his fateful locusts.

3. STATE OF THE TEXT AND THE STYLE OF THE BOOK.

Joel's style is fluent and clear, both when he is describing the locusts, in which part of his book he is most original, and when he is predicting, in apocalyptic language largely borrowed from earlier prophets, the Day of Jehovah. To the ease of understanding him we may attribute the sound state of the text and its freedom from glosses. In this, like most of the books of the post-exilic prophets, especially the Books of Haggai, "Malachi" and Jonah, Joel's book contrasts very favourably with those of the older prophets; and that also, to some degree, is proof of the lateness of his date. The Greek translators have, on the whole, understood Joel easily and with little error. In their version there are the usual differences of grammatical construction, especially in the pronominal suffixes and verbs, and of punctuation; but very few bits of expansion and no real additions. These are all noted in the translation below.

¹ ii. 20.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE LOCUSTS AND THE DAY OF THE LORD

JOEL i.—ii. 17

JOEL, as we have seen, found the motive of his prophecy in a recent plague of locusts, the appearance of which and the havoc they worked are described by him in full detail. Writing not only as a poet but as a seer, who reads in the locusts signs of the great Day of the Lord, Joel has necessarily put into his picture several features which carry the imagination beyond the limits of experience. And yet, if we ourselves had lived through such a plague, we should be able to recognise how little license the poet has taken, and that the seer, so far from unduly mixing with his facts the colours of Apocalypse, must have experienced in the terrible plague itself enough to provoke all the religious and monitory use which he makes of it.

The present writer has seen but one swarm of locusts, in which, though it was small and soon swept away by the wind, he felt not only many of the features that Joel describes, but even some degree of that singular helplessness before a calamity of portent far beyond itself, something of that supernatural edge and accent, which, by the confession of so many observers, characterise the locust-plague and the earthquake above

all other physical disasters. One summer afternoon, upon the plain of Hauran, a long bank of mist grew rapidly from the western horizon. The day was dull, and as the mist rose athwart the sunbeams, struggling through clouds, it gleamed cold and white, like the front of a distant snow-storm. When it came near, it seemed to be more than a mile broad, and was dense enough to turn the atmosphere raw and dirty, with a chill as of a summer sea-fog, only that this was not due to any fall in the temperature. Nor was there the silence of a mist. We were enveloped by a noise, less like the whirring of wings than the rattle of hail or the crackling of bush on fire. Myriads upon myriads of locusts were about us, covering the ground, and shutting out the view in all directions. Though they drifted before the wind, there was no confusion in their ranks. They sailed in unbroken lines, sometimes straight, sometimes wavy; and when they passed pushing through our caravan, they left almost no stragglers, except from the last battalion, and only the few dead which we had caught in our hands. After several minutes they were again but a lustre on the air, and so melted away into some heavy clouds in the east.

Modern travellers furnish us with terrible impressions of the innumerable multitudes of a locust-plague, the succession of their swarms through days and weeks, and the utter desolation they leave behind them. Mr. Doughty writes:¹ "There hopped before our feet a minute brood of second locusts, of a leaden colour, with budding wings like the spring leaves, and born of those gay swarms which a few weeks before had passed over and despoiled the desert. After forty days these

¹ *Arabia Deserta*, p. 307.

also would fly as a pestilence, yet more hungry than the former, and fill the atmosphere." And later: "The clouds of the second locust brood which the Arab call 'Am'dan, *pillars*, flew over us for some days, invaded the booths and for blind hunger even bit our shins."¹ It was "a storm of rustling wings."² "This year was remembered for the locust swarms and great summer heat."³ A traveller in South Africa⁴ says: "For the space of ten miles on each side of the Sea-Cow river and eighty or ninety miles in length, an area of sixteen or eighteen hundred square miles, the whole surface might literally be said to be covered with them." In his recently published book on South Africa, Mr. Bryce writes:—⁵

"It is a strange sight, beautiful if you can forget the destruction it brings with it. The whole air, to twelve or even eighteen feet above the ground, is filled with the insects, reddish brown in body, with bright, gauzy wings. When the sun's rays catch them it is like the sea sparkling with light. When you see them against a cloud they are like the dense flakes of a driving snow-storm. You feel as if you had never before realised immensity in number. Vast crowds of men gathered at a festival, countless tree-tops rising along the slope of a forest ridge, the chimneys of London houses from the top of St. Paul's—all are as nothing to the myriads of insects that blot out the sun above and cover the ground beneath and fill the air whichever way one looks. The breeze carries them swiftly past, but they come on in fresh clouds, a host of which there is no end, each of them a harmless

¹ *Arabia Deserta*, p. 335.

² *Id.*, 396.

³ *Id.*, 335.

⁴ Barrow, *South Africa*, p. 257, quoted by Pusey.

⁵ *Impressions of South Africa*, by James Bryce: Macmillans, 1897.

creature which you can catch and crush in your hand, but appalling in their power of collective devastation."

And take three testimonies from Syria: "The quantity of these insects is a thing incredible to any one who has not seen it himself; the ground is covered by them for several leagues."¹ "The whole face of the mountain² was black with them. On they came like a living deluge. We dug trenches and kindled fires, and beat and burnt to death heaps upon heaps, but the effort was utterly useless. They rolled up the mountain-side, and poured over rocks, walls, ditches and hedges, those behind covering up and passing over the masses already killed. For some days they continued to pass. The noise made by them in marching and foraging was like that of a heavy shower falling upon a distant forest."³ "The roads were covered with them, all marching and in regular lines, like armies of soldiers, with their leaders in front; and all the opposition of man to resist their progress was in vain." Having consumed the plantations in the country, they entered the towns and villages. "When they approached our garden all the farm servants were employed to keep them off, but to no avail; though our men broke their ranks for a moment, no sooner had they passed the men, than they closed again, and marched forward through hedges and ditches as before. Our garden finished, they continued their march toward the town, devastating one garden after another. They have also penetrated into most of our rooms: whatever one is doing one hears their noise from without, like

¹ Volney, *Voyage en Syrie*, I. 277, quoted by Pusey.

² Lebanon.

³ Abridged from Thomson's *The Land and the Book*, ed. 1877, Northern Palestine, pp. 416 ff.

the noise of armed hosts, or the running of many waters. When in an erect position their appearance at a little distance is like that of a well-armed horseman."¹

Locusts are notoriously adapted for a plague, "since to strength incredible for so small a creature, they add saw-like teeth, admirably calculated to eat up all the herbs in the land."² They are the incarnation of hunger. No voracity is like theirs, the voracity of little creatures, whose million separate appetites nothing is too minute to escape. They devour first grass and leaves, fruit and foliage, everything that is green and juicy. Then they attack the young branches of trees, and then the hard bark of the trunks.³ "After eating up the corn, they fell upon the vines, the pulse, the willows, and even the hemp, notwithstanding its great bitterness."⁴ "The bark of figs, pomegranates and oranges, bitter, hard and corrosive, escaped not their voracity."⁵ "They are particularly injurious to the palm-trees; these they strip of every leaf and green particle, the trees remaining like skeletons with bare branches."⁶ "For eighty or ninety miles they devoured every green herb and every blade of grass."⁷ "The gardens outside Jaffa are now completely stripped, even the bark

¹ From Driver's abridgment (*Joel and Amos*, p. 90) of an account in the *Journ. of Sacred Lit.*, October 1865, pp. 235 f.

² Morier, *A Second Journey through Persia*, p. 99, quoted by Pusey, from whose notes and Driver's excursus upon locusts in *Joel and Amos* the following quotations have been borrowed.

³ Shaw's *Travels in Barbary*, 1738, pp. 236-8; Jackson's *Travels to Morocco*.

⁴ Adansson, *Voyage au Senegal*, p. 88.

⁵ Chénier, *Recherches Historiques sur les Maures*, III., p. 496.

⁶ Burckhardt, *Notes*, II. 90.

⁷ Barrow, *South Africa*, p. 257.

of the young trees having been devoured, and look like a birch-tree forest in winter."¹ "The bushes were eaten quite bare, though the animals could not have been long on the spot. They sat by hundreds on a bush gnawing the rind and the woody fibres."² "Bamboo groves have been stripped of their leaves and left standing like saplings after a rapid bush fire, and grass has been devoured so that the bare ground appeared as if burned."³ "The country did not seem to be burnt, but to be much covered with snow through the whiteness of the trees and the dryness of the herbs."⁴ The fields finished, they invade towns and houses, in search of stores. Victual of all kinds, hay, straw, and even linen and woollen clothes and leather bottles, they consume or tear in pieces.⁵ They flood through the open, unglazed windows and lattices: nothing can keep them out.

These extracts prove to us what little need Joel had of hyperbole in order to read his locusts as signs of the Day of Jehovah; especially if we keep in mind that locusts are worst in very hot summers, and often accompany an absolute drought along with its consequence of prairie and forest fires. Some have thought that, in introducing the effects of fire, Joel only means to paint the burnt look of a land after locusts have ravaged it. But locusts do not drink up the streams, nor cause the seed to shrivel in the earth.⁶ By these the prophet must mean drought, and by *the flame that has burned all the trees of the field*,⁷ the forest fire, finding

¹ *Journ. of Sac. Lit.*, October 1865.

² Lichtenstein, *Travels in South Africa*.

³ *Standard*, December 25th, 1896.

⁴ Fr. Alvarez.

⁵ Barheb., *Chron. Syr.*, p. 784; Burckhardt, *Notes*, II. 90.

⁶ i. 20, 17.

⁷ i. 19.

an easy prey in the trees which have been reduced to firewood by the locusts' teeth.

Even in the great passage in which he passes from history to Apocalypse, from the gloom and terror of the locusts to the lurid dawn of Jehovah's Day, Joel keeps within the actual facts of experience :—

*Day of darkness and murk,
Day of cloud and heavy mist,
Like dawn scattered on the mountains,
A people many and powerful.*

No one who has seen a cloud of locusts can question the realism even of this picture: the heavy gloom of the immeasurable mass of them, shot by gleams of light where a few of the sun's imprisoned beams have broken through or across the storm of lustrous wings. This is like dawn beaten down upon the hilltops, and crushed by rolling masses of cloud, in conspiracy to prolong the night. No: the only point at which Joel leaves absolute fact for the wilder combinations of Apocalypse is at the very close of his description, chap. ii. 10 and 11, and just before his call to repentance. Here we find, mixed with the locusts, earthquake and thunderstorm; and Joel has borrowed these from the classic pictures of the Day of the Lord, using some of the very phrases of the latter :—

*Earth trembles before them,
Heaven quakes,
Sun and moon become black,
The stars withdraw their shining,
And Jehovah utters His voice before His army.*

Joel, then, describes, and does not unduly enhance, the terrors of an actual plague. At first his whole

strength is so bent to make his people feel these, that, though about to call to repentance, he does not detail the national sins which require it. In his opening verses he summons the drunkards,¹ but that is merely to lend vividness to his picture of facts, because men of such habits will be the first to feel a plague of this kind. Nor does Joel yet ask his hearers what the calamity portends. At first he only demands that they shall feel it, in its uniqueness and its own sheer force.

Hence the peculiar style of the passage. Letter for letter, this is one of the heaviest passages in prophecy. The proportion in Hebrew of liquids to the other letters is not large; but here it is smaller than ever. The explosives and dentals are very numerous. There are several keywords, with hard consonants and long vowels, used again and again: Shuddadh, 'ābhlah, 'umlal, hōbhish. The longer lines into which Hebrew parallelism tends to run are replaced by a rapid series of short, heavy phrases, falling like blows. Critics have called it rhetoric. But it is rhetoric of a very high order and perfectly suited to the prophet's purpose. Look at chap. i. 10: Shuddadh sadheh, 'ābhlah 'adhamah, shuddadh daghan, hōbhish tîrōsh, 'umlal yiṣṣar.² Joel loads his clauses with the most leaden letters he can find, and drops them in quick succession, repeating the same heavy word again and again, as if he would stun the careless people into some sense of the bare, brutal weight of the calamity which has befallen them.

Now Joel does this because he believes that, if his people feel the plague in its proper violence, they must be convinced that it comes from Jehovah. The keynote

¹ i. 5.² Cf i. 12, 13, and many verses in chap. ii.

of this part of the prophecy is found in chap. i. 15 :
 “Keshôdh mishshaddhai,” *like violence from the All-violent doth it come.* “If you feel this as it is, you will feel Jehovah Himself in it. By these very blows, He and His Day are near. We had been forgetting how near.” Joel mentions no crime, nor enforces any virtue: how could he have done so in so strong a sense that “the Judge was at the door”? To make men feel that they had forgotten they were in reach of that Almighty Hand, which could strike so suddenly and so hard—Joel had time only to make men feel that, and to call them to repentance. In this we probably see some reflection of the age: an age when men’s thoughts were thrusting the Deity further and further from their life; when they put His Law and Temple between Him and themselves; and when their religion, devoid of the sense of His Presence, had become a set of formal observances, the rending of garments and not of hearts. But He, whom His own ordinances had hidden from His people, has burst forth through nature and in sheer force of calamity. He has revealed Himself, El-Shaddhai, God All-violent, as He was known to their fathers, who had no elaborate law or ritual to put between their fearful hearts and His terrible strength, but cowered before Him, helpless on the stripped soil, and naked beneath His thunder. By just these means did Elijah and Amos bring God home to the hearts of ancient Israel. In Joel we see the revival of the old nature-religion, and the revenge that it was bound to take upon the elaborate systems which had displaced it, but which by their formalism and their artificial completeness had made men forget that near presence and direct action of the Almighty which it is nature’s own office to enforce upon the heart.

The thing is true, and permanently valid. Only the great natural processes can break up the systems of dogma and ritual in which we make ourselves comfortable and formal, and drive us out into God's open air of reality. In the crash of nature's forces even our particular sins are forgotten, and we feel, as in the immediate presence of God, our whole, deep need of repentance. So far from blaming the absence of special ethics in Joel's sermon, we accept it as natural and proper to the occasion.

Such, then, appears to be the explanation of the first part of the prophecy, and its development towards the call to repentance, which follows it. If we are correct, the assertion¹ is false that no plan was meant by the prophet. For not only is there a plan, but the plan is most suitable to the requirements of Israel, after their adoption of the whole Law in 445, and forms one of the most necessary and interesting developments of all religion: the revival, in an artificial period, of those primitive forces of religion which nature alone supplies, and which are needed to correct formalism and the forgetfulness of the near presence of the Almighty. We see in this, too, the reason of Joel's archaic style, both of conception and expression: that likeness of his to early prophets which has led so many to place him between Elijah and Amos.² They are wrong. Joel's simplicity is that not of early prophecy, but of the austere forces of this revived and applied to the artificiality of a later age.

One other proof of Joel's conviction of the religious meaning of the plague might also have been pled by the earlier prophets, but certainly not in the terms in

¹ Of Merx and others: see above, p. 394.

² See above, p. 377.

which Joel expresses it. Amos and Hosea had both described the destruction of the country's fertility in their day as God's displeasure on His people and (as Hosea puts it) His divorce of His Bride from Himself.¹ But by them the physical calamities were not threatened alone: banishment from the land and from enjoyment of its fruits was to follow upon drought, locusts and famine. In threatening no captivity Joel differs entirely from the early prophets. It is a mark of his late date. And he also describes the divorce between Jehovah and Israel, through the interruption of the ritual by the plague, in terms and with an accent which could hardly have been employed in Israel before the Exile. After the rebuilding of the Temple and restoration of the daily sacrifices morning and evening, the regular performance of the latter was regarded by the Jews with a most superstitious sense of its indispensableness to the national life. Before the Exile, Jeremiah, for instance, attaches no importance to it, in circumstances in which it would have been not unnatural for him, priest as he was, to do so.² But after the Exile, the greater scrupulousness of the religious life, and its absorption in ritual, laid extraordinary emphasis upon the daily offering, which increased to a most painful degree of anxiety as the centuries went on.³ The New Testament speaks of *the Twelve Tribes constantly serving God day and night*;⁴ and Josephus, while declaring that in no siege of Jerusalem before the last did the interruption ever take place in spite of the stress of famine and war combined, records the

¹ See Vol. I., pp. 242, 245 f.

² Jer. xiv.

³ Cf. Ezek. xlvi. 15 on the *Thamid*, and Neh. x. 33; Dan. viii. 11, xi. 31, xii. 11: cf. p. 382.

⁴ Acts xxvi. 7.

awful impression made alike on Jew and heathen by the giving up of the daily sacrifice on the 17th of July, A.D. 70, during the investment of the city by Titus.¹ This disaster, which Judaism so painfully feared at every crisis in its history, actually happened, Joel tells us, during the famine caused by the locusts. *Cut off are the meal and the drink offerings from the house of Jehovah.*² *Is not food cut off from our eyes, joy and gladness from the house of our God?*³ *Perhaps He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him, meal and drink offering for Jehovah our God.*⁴ The break "of the continual symbol of gracious intercourse between Jehovah and His people, and the main office of religion," means divorce between Jehovah and Israel. *Wail like a bride girt in sackcloth for the husband of her youth! Wail, O ministers of the altar, O ministers of God!*⁵ This then was another reason for reading in the plague of locusts more than a physical meaning. This was another proof, only too intelligible to scrupulous Jews, that the great and terrible Day of the Lord was at hand.

Thus Joel reaches the climax of his argument. Jehovah is near, His Day is about to break. From this it is impossible to escape on the narrow path of disaster by which the prophet has led up to it. But beneath that path the prophet passes the ground of a broad truth, and on that truth, while judgment remains still as real, there is room for the people to turn from it. If experience has shown that God is in the present, near and inevitable, faith remembers that He is there not willingly for judgment, but with all His ancient

¹ XIV. *Antt.* iv. 3, xvi. 2; VI. *Wars* ii. 1.

² i. 9, 13.

³ i. 16.

⁴ ii. 14.

⁵ i. 8, 13.

feeling for Israel and His zeal to save her. If the people choose to turn, Jehovah, as their God and as one who works for their sake, will save them. Of this God assures them by His own word. For the first time in the prophecy He speaks for Himself. Hitherto the prophet has been describing the plague and summoning to penitence. *But now oracle of Jehovah of Hosts.*¹ The great covenant name, *Jehovah your God*, is solemnly repeated as if symbolic of the historic origin and age-long endurance of Jehovah's relation to Israel; and the very words of blessing are repeated which were given when Israel was called at Sinai and the covenant ratified:—

*For He is gracious and merciful,
Long-suffering and plenteous in leal love,
And relents Him of the evil*

He has threatened upon you. Once more the nation is summoned to try Him by prayer: the solemn prayer of all Israel, pleading that He should not give His people to reproach.

*The Word of Jehovah
which came to Jo'el the son of Pethu'el.*²

*Hear this, ye old men,
And give ear, all inhabitants of the land!
Has the like been in your days,
Or in the days of your fathers?
Tell it to your children,
And your children to their children,
And their children to the generation that follows.*

¹ ii. 12.

² LXX. Βαθουήλ.

*That which the Shearer left the Swarmer hath eaten,
And that which the Swarmer left the Lapper hath eaten,
And that which the Lapper left the Devourer hath eaten.*

These are four different names for locusts, which it is best to translate by their literal meaning. Some think that they represent one swarm of locusts in four stages of development, but this cannot be, because the same swarm never returns upon its path, to complete the work of destruction which it had begun in an earlier stage of its growth. Nor can the first-named be the adult brood from whose eggs the others spring, as Doughty has described,¹ for that would account only for two of the four names. Joel rather describes successive swarms of the insect, without reference to the stages of its growth, and he does so as a poet, using, in order to bring out the full force of its devastation, several of the Hebrew names, that were given to the locust as epithets of various aspects of its destructive power. The names, it is true, cannot be said to rise in climax, but at least the most sinister is reserved to the last.²

*Rouse ye, drunkards, and weep,
And wail, all ye bibbers of wine !
The new wine is cut off from your mouth !
For a nation is come up on My land,
Powerful and numberless ;*

¹ See above, pp. 399 f.

² חסיל from חסל, used in the O.T. only in Deut. xxviii. 38, to devour; but in post-biblical Hebrew to utterly destroy, bring to an end. *Talmud Jerus.*: Taanith III. 66d, "Why is the locust called חסיל? Because it brings everything to an end."

*His teeth are the teeth of the lion,
And the fangs¹ of the lioness his.
My vine he has turned to waste,
And My fig-tree to splinters ;
He hath peeled it and strawed it,
Bleached are its branches !*

*Wail as a bride girt in sackcloth for the spouse of
her youth.*

*Cut off are the meal and drink offerings from the
house of Jehovah !*

In grief are the priests, the ministers of Jehovah.

The fields are blasted, the ground is in grief,

*Blasted is the corn, abashed is the new wine, the oil
pines away.*

Be ye abashed, O ploughmen !

Wail, O vine-dressers,

For the wheat and the barley ;

The harvest is lost from the field !

The vine is abashed, and the fig-tree is drooping ;

Pomegranate, palm too and apple,

All trees of the field are dried up :

*Yea, joy is abashed and away from the children of
men.*

In this passage the same feeling is attributed to men and to the fruits of the land: *In grief are the priests, the ground is in grief.* And it is repeatedly said that all alike are *abashed*. By this heavy word we have sought to render the effect of the similarly sounding "hōbhīsha," that our English version renders *ashamed*. It signifies to be frustrated, and so dis-

¹ A.V. *cheek-teeth*, R.V. *jaw-teeth*, or *eye-teeth*. "Possibly (from the Arabic) *projectors*": Driver.

heartened, put out: soured would be an equivalent, applicable to the vine and to joy and to men's hearts.

*Put on mourning, O priests, beat the breast;
Wail, ye ministers of the altar;
Come, lie down in sackcloth, O ministers of my God:
For meal-offering and drink-offering are cut off
from the house of your God.*

*Hallow a fast, summon an assembly,
Gather¹ all the inhabitants of the land to the house
of your God;
And cry to Jehovah:
"Alas for the Day! At hand is the Day of
Jehovah!*

*And as vehemence from the Vehement² doth it come."
Is not food cut off from before us,
Gladness and joy from the house of our God?
The grains shrivel under their hoes,³
The garner are desolate, the barns broken down,
For the corn is withered—what shall we put in
them?⁴*

*The herds of cattle huddle together,⁵ for they have
no pasture;*

¹ Heb. text inserts *elders*, which may be taken as vocative, or with the LXX. as accusative, but after the latter we should expect *and*. Wellhausen suggests its deletion, and Nowack regards it as an intrusion. For מִסְפּוֹ Wellhausen reads הִתְמַסְפוּ, *be ye gathered*.

² Keshōdh mishshaddhai (Isa. xiii. 6); Driver, *as overpowering from the Overpowerer*.

³ A.V. *clods*. מִגְרֵפוֹתֶיהֶם: the meaning is doubtful, but the corresponding Arabic word means *besoin* or *shovel* or (*P.E.F.Q.*, 1891, p. 111, with plate) *hoe*, and the Aram. *shovel*. See Driver's note.

⁴ Reading, after the LXX. τί ἀποθήσομεν ἐαυτοῖς (probably an error for ἐν αὐτοῖς), מַה נִּיחָה בְהֵם for the Massoretic מַה נִּיחָה בְהֵמָה
How the beasts sob! to which A.V. and Driver adhere.

⁵ Lit. *press themselves* in perplexity.

*Yea, the flocks of sheep are forlorn.¹
 To Thee, Jehovah, do I cry :
 For fire has devoured the pastures of the steppes,²
 And the flame hath scorched all the trees of the field
 The wild beasts pant up to Thee :
 For the watercourses are dry,
 And fire has devoured the pastures of the steppes.*

Here, with the close of chap. i., Joel's discourse takes pause, and in chap. ii. he begins a second with another call to repentance in face of the same plague. But the plague has progressed. The locusts are described now in their invasion not of the country but of the towns, to which they pass after the country is stripped. For illustration of the latter see above, p. 401. The *horn* which is to be blown, ver. 1, is an *alarm horn*,³ to warn the people of the approach of the Day of the Lord, and not the Shophar which called the people to a general assembly, as in ver. 15.

*Blow a horn in Zion,
 Sound the alarm in My holy mountain !
 Let all inhabitants of the land tremble,
 For the Day of Jehovah comes—it is near !
 Day of darkness and murk, day of cloud and
 heavy mist.⁴
 Like dawn scattered⁵ on the mountains,*

¹ Reading, with Wellhausen and Nowack ("perhaps rightly," Driver) נשמו for נאשמו, are guilty or punished.

² מדבר, usually rendered *wilderness* or *desert*, but literally *place where the sheep are driven*, land not cultivated. See *Hist. Geog.*, p. 656.

³ See on Amos iii. 6 : Vol. 1., p. 82.

⁴ Zeph. i. 15. See above, p. 58.

⁵ פריט in Qal to spread abroad, but the passive is here to be taken in the same sense as the Ni. in Ezek. xvii. 21, *dispersed*. The figure

*A people many and powerful ;
Its like has not been from of old,
And shall not again be for years of generation upon
generation.*

*Before it the fire devours,¹
And behind the flame consumes.
Like the garden of Eden² is the land in front,
And behind it a desolate desert ;
Yea, it lets nothing escape.
Their visage is the visage of horses,
And like horsemen they run.
They rattle like chariots over the tops of the hills,
Like the crackle of flames devouring stubble,
Like a powerful people prepared for battle.
Peoples are writhing before them,
Every face gathers blackness.*

*Like warriors they run,
Like fighting-men they come up the wall ;
They march every man by himself,³
And they ravel⁴ not their paths.
None jostles his comrade,
They march every man on his track,⁵
And plunge through the missiles unbroken.⁶*

is of dawn crushed by and struggling with a mass of cloud and mist, and expresses the gleams of white which so often break through a locust cloud. See above, p. 404.

¹ So travellers have described the effect of locusts. See above, p. 403.

² Ezek. xxxvi. 35.

³ Heb. *in his own ways*.

⁴ עֲבַטוֹן, an impossible metaphor, so that most read יַעֲבֹתוֹן, a root found only in Micah vii. 3 (see Vol. I., p. 428), to twist or tangle ; but Wellhausen reads יַעֲבֹתוֹן, twist, Eccles. vii. 13.

⁵ Heb. *highroad*, as if defined and heaped up for him alone.

⁶ See above, p. 401.

*They scour the city, run upon the walls,
Climb into the houses, and enter the windows like a
thief.*

*Earth trembles before them,
Heaven quakes,
Sun and moon become black,
The stars withdraw their shining.
And Jehovah utters His voice before His army:
For very great is His host;
Yea, powerful is He that performeth His word.
Great is the Day of Jehovah, and very awful:
Who may abide it? ¹*

*But now hear the oracle of Jehovah:
Turn ye to Me with all your heart,
And with fasting and weeping and mourning.
Rend ye your hearts and not your garments,
And turn to Jehovah your God:
For He is gracious and merciful,
Long-suffering and plenteous in love,
And relents of the evil.
Who knows but He will turn and relent,
And leave behind Him a blessing,
Meal-offering and drink-offering to Jehovah your
God?*

*Blow a horn in Zion,
Hallow a fast, summon the assembly!
Gather the people, hallow the congregation,
Assemble the old men,² gather the children, and
infants at the breast;
Let the bridegroom come forth-from his chamber,*

¹ Zeph. i. 14; "Mal." iii. 2.

² So (and not *elders*) in contrast to children.

And the bride from her bower.¹

*Let the priests, the ministers of Jehovah, weep
between porch and altar;*

Let them say, Spare, O Jehovah, Thy people,

*And give not Thine heritage to dishonour, for the
heathen to mock them:²*

*Why should it be said among the nations, Where is
their God?*

¹ *Canopy or pavilion, bridal tent.*

² לְמִיטַל בָּם, which may mean either *rule over them* or *mock them*, but the parallelism decides for the latter.

CHAPTER XXIX

PROSPERITY AND THE SPIRIT

JOEL ii. 18-32 (Eng.; ii. 18—iii. Heb.)

THEN did Jehovah become jealous for His land, and took pity upon His people—with these words Joel opens the second half of his book. Our Authorised Version renders them in the future tense, as the continuation of the prophet's discourse, which had threatened the Day of the Lord, urged the people to penitence, and now promises that their penitence shall be followed by the Lord's mercy. But such a rendering forces the grammar;¹ and the Revised English Version is right in taking the verbs, as the vast majority of critics do, in the past. Joel's call to repentance has closed, and has been successful. The fast has been hallowed, the

¹ A.V., adhering to the Massoretic text, in which the verbs are pointed for the past, has evidently understood them as instances of the prophetic perfect. But "this is grammatically indefensible": Driver, *in loco*; see his *Heb. Tenses*, § 82, *Obs.* Calvin and others, who take the verbs of ver. 18 as future, accept those of the next verse as past and with it begin the narrative. But if God's answer to His people's prayer be in the past, so must His jealousy and pity. All these verbs are in the same sequence of time. Merx proposes to change the vowel-points of the verbs and turn them into futures. But see above, p. 395. Ver. 21 shows that Jehovah's action is past, and Nowack points out the very unusual character of the construction that would follow from Merx's emendation. Ewald, Hitzig, Kuenen, Robertson Smith, Davidson, Robertson, Steiner, Weilhausen, Driver, Nowack, etc., all take the verbs in the past.

prayers are heard. Probably an interval has elapsed between vv. 17 and 18, but in any case, the people having repented, nothing more is said of their need of doing so, and instead we have from God Himself a series of promises, vv. 19-27, in answer to their cry for mercy. These promises relate to the physical calamity which has been suffered. God will destroy the locusts, still impending on the land, and restore the years which His great army has eaten. There follows in vv. 28-32 (Eng.; Heb. chap. iii.) the promise of a great outpouring of the Spirit on all Israel, amid terrible manifestations in heaven and earth.

I. THE RETURN OF PROSPERITY (ii. 19-27).

And Jehovah answered and said to His people :

Lo, I will send you corn and wine and oil,

And your fill shall ye have of them ;

*And I will not again make you a reproach among
the heathen.*

And the Northern Foe¹ will I remove far from you ;

And I will push him into a land barren and waste,

*His van to the eastern sea and his rear to the
western,²*

Till the stench of him rises,³

Because he hath done greatly.

¹ This is scarcely a name for the locusts, who, though they might reach Palestine from the N.E. under certain circumstances, came generally from E. and S.E. But see above, p. 397 : so Kuenen, Wellhausen, Nowack. W. R. Smith suggests the whole verse as an allegorising gloss. Hitzig thought of the locusts only, and rendered הצפוני ὁ τυφωνικός, Acts xxvii. 14 ; but this is not proved.

² *I.e.* the Dead Sea (Ezek. xlvii. 18 ; Zech. xiv. 8) and the Mediterranean.

³ The construction shows that the clause preceding this, ועלה באשו, is a gloss. So Driver. But Nowack gives the other clause as the gloss.

Locusts disappear with the same suddenness as they arrive. A wind springs up and they are gone.¹ Dead Sea and Mediterranean are at the extremes of the compass, but there is no reason to suppose that the prophet has abandoned the realism which has hitherto distinguished his treatment of the locusts. The plague covered the whole land, on whose high watershed the winds suddenly veer and change. The dispersion of the locusts upon the deserts and the opposite seas was therefore possible at one and the same time. Jerome vouches for an instance in his own day. The other detail is also true to life. Jerome says that the beaches of the two seas were strewn with putrifying locusts, and Augustine² quotes heathen writers in evidence of large masses of locusts, driven from Africa upon the sea, and then cast up on the shore, which gave rise to a pestilence. "The south and east winds," says Volney of Syria, "drive the clouds of locusts with violence into the Mediterranean, and drown them in such quantities, that when their dead are cast on the shore they infect the air to a great distance."³ The prophet continues, celebrating this destruction of the locusts as if it were already realised—*the Lord hath done greatly*, ver. 21. That among the blessings he mentions a full supply of rain proves that we were right in interpreting him to have spoken of drought as accompanying the locusts.⁴

*Fear not, O Land! Rejoice and be glad,
For Jehovah hath done greatly.⁵
Fear not, O beasts of the field!*

¹ Nah. iii. 17; Exod. x. 19.

² *De Civitate Dei*, III. 31.

³ I. 278, quoted by Pusey.

⁴ i. 17-20: see above, p. 403.

⁵ Prophetic past: Driver.

For the pastures of the steppes are springing with
 new grass,
 The trees bear their fruit,
 Fig-tree and vine yield their substance.
 O sons of Zion, be glad,
 And rejoice in Jehovah your God:
 For He hath given you the early rain in normal
 measure,¹

¹ Opinion is divided as to the meaning of this phrase: לצדקה = for righteousness. A. There are those who take it as having a moral reference; and (1) this is so emphatic to some that they render the word for early rain, מורה, which also means teacher or revealer, in the latter significance. So (some of them applying it to the Messiah) Targum, Symmachus, the Vulgate, *doctorem justitiæ*, some Jews, e.g. Rashi and Abarbanel, and some moderns, e.g. (at opposite extremes) Pusey and Merx. But, as Calvin points out (this is another instance of his sanity as an exegete, and refusal to be led by theological presuppositions: he says, "I do not love strained expositions"), this does not agree with the context, which speaks not of spiritual but wholly of physical blessings. (2) Some, who take מורה as early rain, give לצדקה the meaning for righteousness, ad justitiam, either in the sense that God will give the rain as a token of His own righteousness, or in order to restore or vindicate the people's righteousness (so Davidson, *Expositor*, 1888, I., p. 203 n.), in the frequent sense in which צדקה is employed in Isa. xl. ff. (see *Isaiah xl.—lxvi.*, *Expositor's Bible*, pp. 219 ff.). Cf. Hosea x. 13, צדק; above, Vol. I., p. 289, n. 2. This of course is possible, especially in view of Israel having been made by their plagues a reproach among the heathen. Still, if Joel had intended this meaning, he would have applied the phrase, not to the early rain only, but to the whole series of blessings by which the people were restored to their standing before God. B. It seems, therefore, right to take לצדקה in a purely physical sense, of the measure or quality of the early rain. So even Calvin, rain according to what is just or fit; A.V. moderately (inexact); R.V. in just measure; Siegfried-Stade sufficient. The root-meaning of צדק is probably according to norm (cf. *Isaiah xl.—lxvi.*, p. 215), and in that case the meaning would be rain of normal quantity. This too suits the parallel in the next clause: as formerly. In Himyaritic the word is applied to good harvests. A man prays to God for אפקל ואתמר אפקלם צדקם, full or good harvests and fruits: *Corp. Inscr. Sem.*, Pars Quarta, Tomus I., No. 2, lin. 1-5; cf. the note.

And poured¹ on you winter rain² and latter rain as before.³

*And the threshing-floors shall be full of wheat,
And the vats stream over with new wine and oil.*

*And I will restore to you the years which the
Swarmers has eaten,*

*The Lapper, the Devourer and the Shearer,
My great army whom I sent among you.*

And ye shall eat your food and be full,

*And praise the Name of Jehovah your God,
Who hath dealt so wondrously with you ;*

And My people shall be abashed nevermore.

Ye shall know I am in the midst of Israel,

That I am Jehovah your God and none else ;

And nevermore shall My people be abashed.

2. THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT

(ii. 28-32 Eng. ; iii. Heb.).

Upon these promises of physical blessing there follows another of the pouring forth of the Spirit : the prophecy by which Joel became the Prophet of Pentecost, and through which his book is best known among Christians.

When fertility has been restored to the land, the seasons again run their normal courses, and the people eat their food and be full—*It shall come to pass after these things, I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh.* The order of events makes us pause to question : does Joel mean to imply that physical prosperity must

¹ Driver, *in loco*.

² Heb. also repeats here *early rain*, but redundantly.

³ בראשון, *in the first*. A.V. adds *month*. But LXX. and Syr. read בראשונה, which is probably the correct reading, *as before* or *formerly*.

precede spiritual fulness? It would be unfair to assert that he does, without remembering what he understands by the physical blessings. To Joel these are the token that God has returned to His people. The drought and the famine produced by the locusts were signs of His anger and of His divorce of the land. The proofs that He has relented, and taken Israel back into a spiritual relation to Himself, can, therefore, from Joel's point of view, only be given by the healing of the people's wounds. In plenteous rains and full harvests God sets His seal to man's penitence. Rain and harvest are not merely physical benefits, but religious sacraments: signs that God has returned to His people, and that His zeal is again stirred on their behalf.¹ This has to be made clear before there can be talk of any higher blessing. God has to return to His people and to show His love for them before He pours forth His Spirit upon them. That is what Joel intends by the order he pursues, and not that a certain stage of physical comfort is indispensable to a high degree of spiritual feeling and experience. The early and latter rains, the fulness of corn, wine and oil, are as purely religious to Joel, though not so highly religious, as the phenomena of the Spirit in men.

But though that be an adequate answer to our question so far as Joel himself is concerned, it does not exhaust the question with regard to history in general. From Joel's own standpoint physical blessings may have been as religious as spiritual; but we must go further, and assert that for Joel's anticipation of the baptism of the Spirit by a return of prosperity

¹ i. 18.

there is an ethical reason and one which is permanently valid in history. A certain degree of prosperity, and even of comfort, is an indispensable condition of that universal and lavish exercise of the religious faculties, which Joel pictures under the pouring forth of God's Spirit.

The history of prophecy itself furnishes us with proofs of this. When did prophecy most flourish in Israel? When had the Spirit of God most freedom in developing the intellectual and moral nature of Israel? Not when the nation was struggling with the conquest and settlement of the land, not when it was engaged with the embarrassments and privations of the Syrian wars; but an Amos, a Hosea, an Isaiah came forth at the end of the long, peaceful and prosperous reigns of Jeroboam II. and Uzziah. The intellectual strength and liberty of the great Prophet of the Exile, his deep insight into God's purposes and his large view of the future, had not been possible without the security and comparative prosperity of the Jews in Babylon, from among whom he wrote. In Haggai and Zechariah, on the other hand, who worked in the hunger-bitten colony of returned exiles, there was no such fulness of the Spirit. Prophecy, we saw,¹ was then starved by the poverty and meanness of the national life from which it rose. All this is very explicable. When men are stunned by such a calamity as Joel describes, or when they are engrossed by the daily struggle with bitter enemies and a succession of bad seasons, they may feel the need of penitence and be able to speak with decision upon the practical duty of the moment, to a degree not attainable in better

¹ Above, p. 189.

days, but they lack the leisure, the freedom and the resources amid which their various faculties of mind and soul can alone respond to the Spirit's influence.

Has it been otherwise in the history of Christianity? Our Lord Himself found His first disciples, not in a hungry and ragged community, but amid the prosperity and opulence of Galilee. They left all to follow Him and achieved their ministry in poverty and persecution, but they brought to that ministry the force of minds and bodies trained in a very fertile land and by a prosperous commerce.¹ Paul, in his apostolate, sustained himself by the labour of his hands, but he was the child of a rich civilisation and the citizen of a great empire. The Reformation was preceded by the Renaissance, and on the Continent of Europe drew its forces, not from the enslaved and impoverished populations of Italy and Southern Austria, but from the large civic and commercial centres of Germany. An acute historian, in his recent lectures on the *Economic Interpretation of History*,² observes that every religious revival in England has happened upon a basis of comparative prosperity. He has proved "the opulence of Norfolk during the epoch of Lollardy," and pointed out that "the Puritan movement was essentially and originally one of the middle classes, of the traders in towns and of the farmers in the country"; that the religious state of the Church of England was never so low as among the servile and beggarly clergy of the seventeenth and part of the eighteenth centuries; that the Nonconformist bodies who kept religion alive during this period were closely identified with the

¹ Cf. *Hist. Geog.*, Chap. XXI., especially p. 463.

² By Thorold Rogers, pp. 80 ff.

leading movements of trade and finance ;¹ and that even Wesley's great revival of religion among the labouring classes of England took place at a time when prices were far lower than in the previous century, wages had slightly risen and "most labourers were small occupiers ; there was therefore in the comparative plenty of the time an opening for a religious movement among the poor, and Wesley was equal to the occasion." He might have added that the great missionary movement of the nineteenth century is contemporaneous with the enormous advance of our commerce and our empire.

On the whole, then, the witness of history is uniform. Poverty and persecution, *famine, nakedness, peril and sword*, put a keenness upon the spirit of religion, while luxury rots its very fibres ; but a stable basis of prosperity is indispensable to every social and religious reform, and God's Spirit finds fullest course in communities of a certain degree of civilisation and of freedom from sordidness.

We may draw from this an impressive lesson for our own day. Joel predicts that, upon the new prosperity of his land, the lowest classes of society shall be permeated by the spirit of prophecy. Is it not part of the secret of the failure of Christianity to enlist large portions of our population, that the basis of their life is so sordid and insecure ? Have we not yet to learn from the Hebrew prophets, that some amount of freedom in a people and some amount of health are indispensable to a revival of religion ? Lives which are strained and starved, lives which are passed in rank discomfort and under grinding poverty, without the

¹ *E.g.* the Quakers and the Independents. The Independents of the seventeenth century "were the founders of the Bank of England."

possibility of the independence of the individual or of the sacredness of the home, cannot be religious except in the most rudimentary sense of the word. For the revival of energetic religion among such lives we must wait for a better distribution, not of wealth, but of the bare means of comfort, leisure and security. When, to our penitence and our striving, God restores the years which the locust has eaten, when the social plagues of rich men's selfishness and the poverty of the very poor are lifted from us, then may we look for the fulfilment of Joel's prediction—*even upon all the slaves and upon the handmaidens will I pour out My Spirit in those days.*

The economic problem, therefore, has also its place in the warfare for the kingdom of God.

*And it shall be that after such things, I will pour out
My Spirit on all flesh ;*

*And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your old men shall dream dreams,
Your young men shall see visions :*

*And even upon all the slaves and the handmaidens
in those days will I pour out My Spirit.*

*And I will set signs in heaven and on earth,
Blood and fire and pillars of smoke.*

*The sun shall be turned to darkness,
And the moon to blood,*

*Before the coming of the Day of Jehovah, the great
and the awful.*

*And it shall be that every one who calls on the name
of Jehovah shall be saved :*

*For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be a
remnant, as Jehovah hath spoken,*

And among the fugitives those whom Jehovah calleth.

This prophecy divides into two parts—the outpouring of the Spirit, and the appearance of the terrible Day of the Lord.

The Spirit of God is to be poured *on all flesh*, says the prophet. By this term, which is sometimes applied to all things that breathe, and sometimes to mankind as a whole,¹ Joel means Israel only: the heathen are to be destroyed.² Nor did Peter, when he quoted the passage at the Day of Pentecost, mean anything more. He spoke to Jews and proselytes: *for the promise is to you and your children, and to them that are afar off*: it was not till afterwards that he discovered that the Holy Ghost was granted to the Gentiles, and then he was unready for the revelation and surprised by it.³ But within Joel's Israel the operation of the Spirit was to be at once thorough and universal. All classes would be affected, and affected so that the simplest and rudest would become prophets.

The limitation was therefore not without its advantages. In the earlier stages of all religions, it is impossible to be both extensive and intensive. With a few exceptions, the Israel of Joel's time was a narrow and exclusive body, hated and hating other peoples. Behind the Law it kept itself strictly aloof. But without doing so, Israel could hardly have survived or prepared itself at that time for its influence on the world. Heathenism threatened it from all sides with the most insidious of infections; and there awaited it in the near future a still more subtle and powerful means of disintegration. In the wake of Alexander's

¹ All living things, Gen. vi. 17, 19, etc.; mankind, Isa. xl. 5, xlix. 26. See Driver's note.

² Next chapter.

³ Acts x. 45.

expeditions, Hellenism poured across all the East. There was not a community nor a religion, save Israel's, which was not Hellenised. That Israel remained Israel, in spite of Greek arms and the Greek mind, was due to the legalism of Ezra and Nehemiah, and to what we call the narrow enthusiasm of Joel. The hearts which kept their passion so confined felt all the deeper for its limits. They would be satisfied with nothing less than the inspiration of every Israelite, the fulfilment of the prayer of Moses: *Would to God that all Jehovah's people were prophets!* And of itself this carries Joel's prediction to a wider fulfilment. A nation of prophets is meant for the world. But even the best of men do not see the full force of the truth God gives to them, nor follow it even to its immediate consequences. Few of the prophets did so, and at first none of the apostles. Joel does not hesitate to say that the heathen shall be destroyed. He does not think of Israel's mission as foretold by the Second Isaiah; nor of "Malachi's" vision of the heathen waiting upon Jehovah. But in the near future of Israel there was waiting another prophet to carry Joel's doctrine to its full effect upon the world, to rescue the gospel of God's grace from the narrowness of legalism and the awful pressure of Apocalypse, and by the parable of Jonah, the type of the prophet nation, to show to Israel that God had granted to the Gentiles also repentance unto life.

That it was the lurid clouds of Apocalypse, which thus hemmed in our prophet's view, is clear from the next verses. They bring the terrible manifestations of God's wrath in nature very closely upon the lavish outpouring of the Spirit: *the sun turned to darkness and the moon to blood, the great and terrible Day*

of the Lord. Apocalypse must always paralyse the missionary energies of religion. Who can think of converting the world, when the world is about to be convulsed? There is only time for a remnant to be saved.

But when we get rid of Apocalypse, as the Book of Jonah does, then we have time and space opened up again, and the essential forces of such a prophecy of the Spirit as Joel has given us burst their national and temporary confines, and are seen to be applicable to all mankind.

CHAPTER XXX

THE JUDGMENT OF THE HEATHEN

JOEL iii. (Eng. ; iv. Heb.)

HITHERTO Joel has spoken no syllable of the heathen, except to pray that God by His plagues will not give Israel to be mocked by them. But in the last chapter of the Book we have Israel's captivity to the heathen taken for granted, a promise made that it will be removed and their land set free from the foreigner. Certain nations are singled out for judgment, which is described in the terms of Apocalypse ; and the Book closes with the vision, already familiar in prophecy, of a supernatural fertility for the land.

It is quite another horizon and far different interests from those of the preceding chapter. Here for the first time we may suspect the unity of the Book, and listen to suggestions of another authorship than Joel's. But these can scarcely be regarded as conclusive. Every prophet, however national his interests, feels it his duty to express himself upon the subject of foreign peoples, and Joel may well have done so. Only, in that case, his last chapter was delivered by him at another time and in different circumstances from the rest of his prophecies. Chaps. i.—ii. (Eng. ; i.—iii. Heb.) are complete in themselves. Chap. iii. (Eng. ;

iv. Heb.) opens without any connection of time or subject with those that precede it.¹

The time of the prophecy is a time when Israel's fortunes are at low ebb,² her sons scattered among the heathen, her land, in part at least, held by foreigners. But it would appear (though this is not expressly said, and must rather be inferred from the general proofs of a post-exilic date) that Jerusalem is inhabited. Nothing is said to imply that the city needs to be restored.³

All the heathen nations are to be brought together for judgment into a certain valley, which the prophet calls first the Vale of Jehoshaphat and then the Vale of Decision. The second name leads us to infer that the first, which means *Jehovah-judges*, is also symbolic. That is to say, the prophet does not single out a definite valley already called Jehoshaphat. In all probability, however, he has in his mind's eye some vale in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, for since Ezekiel⁴ the judgment of the heathen in face of Jerusalem has been a standing feature in Israel's vision of the last things; and as no valley about that city lends itself to the picture of judgment so well as the valley of the Kedron with the slopes of Olivet, the name Jehoshaphat has naturally been applied to it.⁵ Cer-

¹ I am unable to feel Driver's and Nowack's arguments for a connection conclusive. The only reason Davidson gives is (p. 204) that the judgment of the heathen is an essential element in the Day of Jehovah, a reason which does not make Joel's authorship of the last chapter certain, but only possible.

² The phrase of ver. 1, *when I turn again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem*, may be rendered *when I restore the fortunes of Israel*.

³ See above, p. 386, especially n. 5. ⁴ xxxviii.

⁵ Some have unnecessarily thought of the Vale of Berakhah, in which Jehoshaphat defeated Moab, Ammon and Edom (2 Chron. xx.).

tain nations are singled out by name. These are not Assyria and Babylon, which had long ago perished, nor the Samaritans, Moab and Ammon, which harassed the Jews in the early days of the Return from Babylon, but Tyre, Sidon, Philistia, Edom and Egypt. The crime of the first three is the robbery of Jewish treasures, not necessarily those of the Temple, and the selling into slavery of many Jews. The crime of Edom and Egypt is that they have shed the innocent blood of Jews. To what precise events these charges refer we have no means of knowing in our present ignorance of Syrian history after Nehemiah. That the chapter has no explicit reference to the cruelties of Artaxerxes Ochus in 360 would seem to imply for it a date earlier than that year. But it is possible that ver. 17 refers to that, the prophet refraining from accusing the Persians for the very good reason that Israel was still under their rule.

Another feature worthy of notice is that the Phœnicians are accused of selling Jews to the sons of the Jevanîm, Ionians or Greeks.¹ The latter lie on the far horizon of the prophet,² and we know from classical writers that from the fifth century onwards numbers of Syrian slaves were brought to Greece. The other features of the chapter are borrowed from earlier prophets.

*For, behold, in those days and in that time,
When I bring again the captivity³ of Judah and
Jerusalem,
I will also gather all the nations,
And bring them down to the Vale of Jehoshaphat;⁴*

¹ See above, p. 381, nn. 5, 6. ³ Or *turn again the fortunes*.

² Ver. 6b.

⁴ *Jehovah-judges*. See above, p. 432.

*And I will enter into judgment with them there,
For My people and for My heritage Israel,
Whom they have scattered among the heathen,
And My land have they divided.*

And they have cast lots for My people :¹

They have given a boy for a harlot,²

And a girl have they sold for wine and drunk it.

*And again, what are ye to Me, Tyre and Sidon and
all circuits of Philistia ?³*

Is it any deed of Mine ye are repaying ?

Or are ye doing anything to Me ?⁴

*Swiftly, speedily will I return your deed on your
head,*

Who have taken My silver and My gold,

*And My goodly jewels ye have brought into your
palaces.*

*The sons of Judah and the sons of Jerusalem have
ye sold to the sons of the Greeks,*

*In order that ye might set them as far as possible
from their own border.*

*Lo ! I will stir them up from the place to which ye
have sold them,*

And I will return your deed upon your head.

*I will sell your sons and your daughters into the
hands of the sons of Judah,*

And they shall sell them to the Shebans,⁵

To a nation far off ; for Jehovah hath spoken.

¹ See above, Obadiah 11 and Nahum iii. 10.

² בַּזוֹנָה. Oort suggests בְּכֹזֶן, for food.

³ Gelilôth, the plural feminine of Galilee—the circuit (of the Gen-
tes). *Hist. Geog.*, p. 413.

⁴ Soil, that I must repay.

⁵ LXX. they shall give them into captivity.

*Proclaim this among the heathen, hallow a war,
Wake up the warriors, let all the fighting-men
muster and go up.¹*

*Beat your ploughshares into swords,
And your pruning-hooks into lances.*

Let the weakling say, I am strong.

*. . . ²and come, all ye nations round about,
And gather yourselves together.*

Thither bring down Thy warriors, Jehovah.

Let the heathen be roused,

And come up to the Vale of Jehoshaphat,

*For there will I sit to judge all the nations round
about.*

Put in the sickle,³ for ripe is the harvest.

Come, get you down; for the press is full,

The vats overflow, great is their wickedness.

Multitudes, multitudes in the Vale of Decision!

For near is Jehovah's day in the Vale of Decision.

Sun and moon have turned black,

And the stars withdrawn their shining.

Jehovah thunders from Zion,

And from Jerusalem gives⁴ forth His voice:

Heaven and earth do quake.

But Jehovah is a refuge to His people,

And for a fortress to the sons of Israel.

And ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God,

Who dwell in Zion, the mount of My holiness;

And Jerusalem shall be holy,

Strangers shall not pass through her again.

¹ Technical use of עלה, to go up to war.

² עושו, not found elsewhere, but supposed to mean *gather*. Cf. Zeph. ii. 1. Others read הושו, *hasten* (Driver); Wellhausen עורו.

³ מנול, only here and in Jer. l. 16: other Heb. word for sickle hermesh (Deut. xvi. 9, xxiii. 26).

⁴ Driver, future.

*And it shall be on that day
 The mountains shall drop sweet wine,
 And the hills be liquid with milk,
 And all the channels of Judah flow with water;
 A fountain shall spring from the house of Jehovah,
 And shall water the Wady of Shittim.¹
 Egypt shall be desolation,
 And Edom desert-land,
 For the outrage done to the children of Judah,
 Because they shed innocent blood in their land.
 Judah shall abide peopled for ever,
 And Jerusalem for generation upon generation.
 And I will declare innocent their blood,² which I have
 not declared innocent,
 By³ Jehovah who dwelleth in Zion.*

¹ Not the well-known scene of early Israel's camp across Jordan, but it must be some dry and desert valley near Jerusalem (so most comm.). Nowack thinks of the Wadi el Sant on the way to Askalon but this did not need watering and is called the Vale of Elah.

² Merx applies this to the Jews of the Messianic era. LXX. read ἐκζητήσω = ונקמתו. So Syr. Cf. 2 Kings ix. 7.

Steiner: *Shall I leave their blood unpunished? I will not leave it unpunished.* Nowack deems this to be unlikely, and suggests, *I will avenge their blood; I will not leave unpunished the shedders of it.*

³ Heb. construction is found also in Hosea xii. 5.

*INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETS OF
THE GRECIAN PERIOD*

(331— B.C.)

CHAPTER XXXI

ISRAEL AND THE GREEKS

A PART from the author of the tenth chapter of Genesis, who defines Javan or Greece as the father of Elishah and Tarshish, of Kittim or Cyprus and Rodanim or Rhodes,¹ the first Hebrew writer who mentions the Greeks is Ezekiel,² *c.* 580 B.C. He describes them as engaged in commerce with the Phœnicians, who bought slaves from them. Even while Ezekiel wrote in Babylonia, the Babylonians were in touch with the Ionian Greeks through the Lydians.³ The latter were overthrown by Cyrus about 545, and by the beginning of the next century the Persian lords of Israel were in close struggle with the Greeks for the supremacy of the world, and had virtually been defeated so far as concerned Europe, the west of Asia Minor, and the sovereignty of the Mediterranean and Black Seas. In 460 Athens sent an expedition to Egypt to assist a revolt against Persia, and even before that Greek fleets had scoured the

¹ Gen. x. 2, 4. יָוָן, Javan, is *Iafon*, or *Iawn*, the older form of the name of the Ionians, the first of the Greek race with whom Eastern peoples came into contact. They are perhaps named on the Tell-el-Amarna tablets as "Yivana," serving "in the country of Tyre" (*c.* 1400 B.C.); and on an inscription of Sargon (*c.* 709) Cyprus is called Yāvanu.

² xxvii. 13.

³ *Isaiah xl.—lxvi.* (Expositor's Bible), 108 f.

Levant and Greek soldiers, though in the pay of Persia, had trodden the soil of Syria. Still Joel, writing towards 400 B.C., mentions Greece¹ only as a market to which the Phœnicians carried Jewish slaves; and in a prophecy which some take to be contemporary with Joel, Isaiah lxvi., the coasts of Greece are among the most distant of Gentile lands.² In 401 the younger Cyrus brought to the Euphrates to fight against Artaxerxes Mnemon the ten thousand Greeks whom, after the battle of Cunaxa, Xenophon led north to the Black Sea. For nearly seventy years thereafter Athenian trade slowly spread eastward, but nothing was yet done by Greece to advertise her to the peoples of Asia as a claimant for the world's throne. Then suddenly in 334 Alexander of Macedon crossed the Hellespont, spent a year in the conquest of Asia Minor, defeated Darius at Issus in 332, took Damascus, Tyre and Gaza, overran the Delta and founded Alex-

¹ iii. 6 (Eng.; iv. 6 Heb.).

² The sense of distance between the two peoples was mutual. Writing in the middle of the fifth century B.C., Herodotus has heard of the Jews only as a people that practise circumcision and were defeated by Pharaoh Necho at Megiddo (II. 104, 159; on the latter passage see *Hist. Geog.*, p. 405 n.). He does not even know them by name. The fragment of Chærilos of Samos, from the end of the fifth century, which Josephus cites (*Contra Apionem*, I. 22) as a reference to the Jews, is probably of a people in Asia Minor. Even in the last half of the fourth century and before Alexander's campaigns, Aristotle knows of the Dead Sea only by a vague report (*Meteor.*, II. iii. 39). His pupil Theophrastus (*d.* 287) names and describes the Jews (Porphyr. *de Abstinencia*, II. 26; Eusebius, *Prepar. Evang.*, IX. 2: cf. Josephus, *C. Apion.*, I. 22); and another pupil, Clearchus of Soli, records the mention by Aristotle of a travelled Jew of Cœle-Syria, but "Greek in soul as in tongue," whom the great philosopher had met, and learned from him that the Jews were descended from the philosophers of India (quoted by Josephus, *C. Apion.*, I. 22).

andria. In 331 he marched back over Syria, crossed the Euphrates, overthrew the Persian Empire on the field of Arbela, and for the next seven years till his death in 324 extended his conquests to the Oxus and the Indus. The story, that on his second passage of Syria Alexander visited Jerusalem,¹ is probably false. But he must have encamped repeatedly within forty miles of it, and he visited Samaria.² It is impossible that he received no embassy from a people who had not known political independence for centuries and must have been only too ready to come to terms with the new lord of the world. Alexander left behind him colonies of his veterans, both to the east and west of the Jordan, and in his wake there poured into all the cities of the Syrian seaboard a considerable volume of Greek immigration.³ It is from this time onward that we find in Greek writers the earliest mention of the Jews by name. Theophrastus and Clearchus of Soli, disciples of Aristotle, both speak of them; but while the former gives evidence of some knowledge of their habits, the latter reports that in the perspective of his great master they had been so distant and vague as to be confounded with the Brahmins of India, a confusion which long survived among the Greeks.⁴

Alexander's death delivered his empire to the ambitions of his generals, of whom four contested for the mastery of Asia and Egypt—Antigonus, Ptolemy, Lysimachus and Seleucus. Of these Ptolemy and Seleucus emerged victorious, the one in possession of Egypt, the other of Northern Syria and the rest of

¹ Jos., XI. *Antt.* iv. 5.

² *Hist. Geog.*, p. 347.

³ *Hist. Geog.*, pp. 593 f.

⁴ See above, p. 440, n. 2.

Asia. Palestine lay between them, and both in the wars which led to the establishment of the two kingdoms and in those which for centuries followed, Palestine became the battle-field of the Greeks.

Ptolemy gained Egypt within two years of Alexander's death, and from its definite and strongly entrenched territory he had by 320 conquered Syria and Cyprus. In 315 or 314 Syria was taken from him by Antigonus, who also expelled Seleucus from Babylon. Seleucus fled to Egypt and stirred up Ptolemy to the reconquest of Syria. In 312 Ptolemy defeated Demetrius, the general of Antigonus, at Gaza, but the next year was driven back into Egypt by Antigonus himself. Meanwhile Seleucus regained Babylon.¹ In 311 the three made peace with each other, but Antigonus retained Syria. In 306 they assumed the title of kings, and in the same year renewed their quarrel. After a naval battle Antigonus wrested Cyprus from Ptolemy, but in 301 he was defeated and slain by Seleucus and Lysimachus at the battle of Ipsus in Phrygia. His son Demetrius retained Cyprus and part of the Phœnician coast till 287, when he was forced to yield them to Seleucus, who had moved the centre of his power from Babylon to the new Antioch on the Orontes, with a seaport at Seleucia. Meanwhile in 301 Ptolemy had regained what the Greeks then knew as Cœle-Syria, that is all Syria to the south of Lebanon except the Phœnician coast.² Damascus belonged to Seleucus. But Ptolemy was not allowed to retain Palestine in peace, for in 297 Demetrius appears to have invaded it, and Seleucus, especially

¹ Hence the Seleucid era dates from 312.

² *Hist. Geog.*, 538.

after his marriage with Stratonike, the daughter of Demetrius, never wholly resigned his claims to it.¹ Ptolemy, however, established a hold upon the land, which continued practically unbroken for a century, and yet during all that time had to be maintained by frequent wars, in the course of which the land itself must have severely suffered (264—248).

Therefore, as in the days of their earliest prophets, the people of Israel once more lay between two rival empires. And as Hosea and Isaiah pictured them in the eighth century, the possible prey either of Egypt or Assyria, so now in these last years of the fourth they were tossed between Ptolemy and Antigonos, and in the opening years of the third were equally wooed by Ptolemy and Seleucus. Upon this new alternative of tyranny the Jews appear to have bestowed the actual names of their old oppressors. Ptolemy was Egypt to them; Seleucus, with one of his capitals at Babylon, was still Assyria, from which came in time the abbreviated Greek form of Syria.² But, unlike the ancient empires, these new rival lords were of one race. Whether the tyranny came from Asia or Africa, its quality was Greek; and in the sons of Javan the Jews saw the successors of those world-powers of Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia, in

¹ Cf. Ewald, *Hist.* (Eng. Ed.), V. 226 f.

² Asshur or Assyria fell in 607 (as we have seen), but her name was transferred to her successor Babylon (2 Kings xxiii. 29; Jer. ii. 18; Lam. v. 6), and even to Babylon's successor Persia (*Ezra* vi. 22). When Seleucus secured what was virtually the old Assyrian Empire with large extensions to Phrygia on the west and the Punjab on the east, the name would naturally be continued to his dominion, especially as his first capital was Babylon, from his capture of which in 312 the Seleucid era took its start. There is actual record of this. Brugsch (*Gesch. Aeg.*, p. 218) states that in the

which had been concentrated against themselves the whole force of the heathen world. Our records of the times are fragmentary, but though Alexander spared the Jews it appears that they had not long to wait before feeling the force of Greek arms. Josephus quotes¹ from Agatharchides of Cnidos (180—145 B.C.) to the effect that Ptolemy I. surprised Jerusalem on a Sabbath day and easily took it; and he adds that at the same time he took a great many captives from the hill-country of Judæa, from Jerusalem and from Samaria, and led them into Egypt. Whether this was in 320 or 312 or 301² we cannot tell. It is possible that the Jews suffered in each of these Egyptian invasions of Syria, as well as during the southward marches of Demetrius and Antigonus. The later policy, both of the Ptolemies, who were their lords, and of the Seleucids, was for a long time exceedingly friendly to Israel. Their sufferings from the Greeks were therefore probably over by 280, although they cannot have remained unscathed by the wars between 264 and 248.

The Greek invasion, however, was not like the Assyrian and Babylonian, of arms alone; but of a force of intellect and culture far surpassing even the influences which the Persians had impressed upon the

hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Ptolemæan period the kingdom of the Seleucids is called Asharu (cf. Stade, *Z.A.T.W.*, 1882, p. 292, and Cheyne, *Book of Psalms*, p. 253, and *Introd. to Book of Isaiah* p. 107, n. 3). As the Seleucid kingdom shrank to this side of the Euphrates, it drew the name Assyria with it. But in Greek mouths this had long ago (cf. Herod.) been shortened to Syria: Herodotus also appears to have applied it only to the west of the Euphrates. Cf. *Hist. Geog.*, pp. 3 f.

¹ XII. *Antt.* i.: cf. *Con. Apion.*, I. 22.

² See above, p. 442. Eusebius, *Chron. Arm.*, II. 225, assigns it to 320.

religion and mental attitude of Israel. The ancient empires had transplanted the nations of Palestine to Assyria and Babylonia. The Greeks did not need to remove them to Greece; for they brought Greece to Palestine. "The Orient," says Wellhausen, "became their America." They poured into Syria, infecting, exploiting, assimilating its peoples. With dismay the Jews must have seen themselves surrounded by new Greek colonies, and still more by the old Palestinian cities Hellenised in polity and religion. The Greek translator of Isaiah ix. 12 renders Philistines by Hellenes. Israel were compassed and penetrated by influences as subtle as the atmosphere: not as of old uprooted from their fatherland, but with their fatherland itself infected and altered beyond all powers of resistance. The full alarm of this, however, was not felt for many years to come. It was at first the policy both of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies to flatter and foster the Jews. They encouraged them to feel that their religion had its own place beside the forces of Greece, and was worth interpreting to the world. Seleucus I. gave to Jews the rights of citizenship in Asia Minor and Northern Syria; and Ptolemy I. atoned for his previous violence by granting them the same in Alexandria. In the matter of the consequent tribute Seleucus respected their religious scruples; and it was under Ptolemy Philadelphus (283—247), if not at his instigation, that the Law was first translated into Greek.

To prophecy, before it finally expired, there was granted the opportunity to assert itself, upon at least the threshold of this new era of Israel's history.

We have from the first half-century of the era perhaps three or four, but certainly two, prophetic

pieces. By many critics Isaiah xxiv.—xxvii. are assigned to the years immediately following Alexander's campaigns. Others assign Isaiah xix. 16-25 to the last years of Ptolemy I.¹ And of our Book of the Twelve Prophets, the chapters attached to the genuine prophecies of Zechariah, or chaps. ix.—xiv. of his book, most probably fall to be dated from the contests of Syria and Egypt for the possession of Palestine; while somewhere about 300 is the most likely date for the Book of Jonah.

In "Zech." ix.—xiv. we see prophecy perhaps at its lowest ebb. The clash with the new foes produces a really terrible thirst for the blood of the heathen: there are schisms and intrigues within Israel which in our ignorance of her history during this time it is not possible for us to follow: the brighter gleams, which contrast so forcibly with the rest, may be more ancient oracles that the writer has incorporated with his own stern and dark Apocalypse.

In the Book of Jonah, on the other hand, we find a spirit and a style in which prophecy may not unjustly be said to have given its highest utterance. And this alone suffices, in our uncertainty as to the exact date of the book, to take it last of all our Twelve. For "in this book," as Cornill has finely said, "the prophecy of Israel quits the scene of battle as victor, and as victor in its severest struggle—that against self."

¹ Cheyne, *Introd. to Book of Isaiah*, p. 105.

"ZECHARIAH"

(IX.—XIV.)

Lo, thy King cometh to thee, vindicated and victorious, meek and riding on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass.

Up, Sword, against My Shepherd! . . . Smite the Shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered!

And I will pour upon the house of David and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplication, and they shall look to Him whom they have pierced; and they shall lament for Him, as with lamentation for an only son, and bitterly grieve for Him, as with grief for a first-born.

CHAPTER XXXII

CHAPTERS IX.—XIV. OF "ZECHARIAH"

WE saw that the first eight chapters of the Book of Zechariah were, with the exception of a few verses, from the prophet himself. No one has ever doubted this. No one could doubt it: they are obviously from the years of the building of the Temple, 520—516 B.C. They hang together with a consistency exhibited by few other groups of chapters in the Old Testament.

But when we pass into chap. ix. we find ourselves in circumstances and an atmosphere altogether different. Israel is upon a new situation of history, and the words addressed to her breathe another spirit. There is not the faintest allusion to the building of the Temple—the subject from which all the first eight chapters depend. There is not a single certain reflection of the Persian period, under the shadow of which the first eight chapters were all evidently written. We have names of heathen powers mentioned, which not only do not occur in the first eight chapters, but of which it is not possible to think that they had any interest whatever for Israel between 520 and 516: Damascus, Hadrach, Hamath, Assyria, Egypt and Greece. The peace, and the love of peace, in which Zechariah wrote, has disappeared.¹ Nearly everything

¹ Except in the passage ix. 10-12, which seems strangely out of place in the rest of ix.—xiv.

breathes of war actual or imminent. The heathen are spoken of with a ferocity which finds few parallels in the Old Testament. There is a revelling in their blood, of which the student of the authentic prophecies of Zechariah will at once perceive that gentle lover of peace could not have been capable. And one passage figures the imminence of a thorough judgment upon Jerusalem, very different from Zechariah's outlook upon his people's future from the eve of the completion of the Temple. It is not surprising, therefore, that one of the earliest efforts of Old Testament criticism should have been to prove another author than Zechariah for chaps. ix.—xiv. of the book called by his name.

The very first attempt of this kind was made so far back as 1632 by the Cambridge theologian Joseph Mede,¹ who was moved thereto by the desire to vindicate the correctness of St. Matthew's ascription² of "Zech." xi. 13 to the prophet Jeremiah. Mede's effort was developed by other English exegetes. Hammond assigned chaps. x.—xii., Bishop Kidder³ and William Whiston, the translator of Josephus, chaps. ix.—xiv., to Jeremiah. Archbishop Newcome⁴ divided them, and sought to prove that while chaps. ix.—xi. must have been written before 721, or a century earlier than Jeremiah, because of the heathen powers they name, and the divisions between Judah and Israel, chaps. xii.—xiv. reflect the imminence of the Fall of Jerusalem. In 1784 Flügge⁵ offered independent proof

¹ *Works*, 4th ed. 1677, pp. 786 ff. (1632), 834. Mede died 1638.

² Matt. xxvii. 9.

³ *Demonstration of the Messiah*, 1700.

⁴ *An Attempt towards an Improved Version of the Twelve Minor Prophets*, 1785 (not seen). See also Wright on Archbishop Secker.

⁵ *Die Weissagungen, welche bei den Schriften des Proph. Scharja beygebogen sind, übersetzt*, etc., Hamburg (not seen).

that chaps. ix.—xiv. were by Jeremiah; and in 1814 Bertholdt¹ suggested that chaps. ix.—xi. might be by Zechariah the contemporary of Isaiah,² and on that account attached to the prophecies of his younger namesake. These opinions gave the trend to the main volume of criticism, which, till fifteen years ago, deemed "Zech." ix.—xiv. to be pre-exilic. So Hitzig, who at first took the whole to be from one hand, but afterwards placed xii.—xiv. by a different author under Manasseh. So Ewald, Bleek, Kuenen (at first), Samuel Davidson, Schrader, Duhm (in 1875), and more recently König and Orelli, who assign chaps. ix.—xi. to the reign of Ahaz, but xii.—xiv. to the eve of the Fall of Jerusalem, or even a little later.

Some critics, however, remained unmoved by the evidence offered for a pre-exilic date. They pointed out in particular that the geographical references were equally suitable to the centuries after the Exile. Damascus, Hadrach and Hamath,³ though politically obsolete by 720, entered history again with the campaigns of Alexander the Great in 332—331, and the establishment of the Seleucid kingdom in Northern Syria.⁴ Egypt and Assyria⁵ were names used after the Exile for the kingdom of the Ptolemies, and for those powers which still threatened Israel from the north, or Assyrian quarter. Judah and Joseph or Ephraim⁶ were names still used after the Exile to express the whole of God's Israel; and in chaps. ix.—xiv. they are presented, not divided as before 721, but united. None of the chapters give a hint of any king in Jerusalem; and all of them, while representing

¹ *Einleitung in A. u. N. T.* (not seen). ⁴ See above, Chap. XXXI.

² Isa. viii. 2. See above, p. 265.

⁵ x. 10.

³ ix. 1.

⁶ ix. 10, 13, etc.

the great Exile of Judah as already begun, show a certain dependence in style and even in language upon Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Isaiah xl.—lxvi. Moreover the language is post-exilic, sprinkled with Aramaisms and with other words and phrases used only, or mainly, by Hebrew writers from Jeremiah onwards.

But though many critics judged these grounds to be sufficient to prove the post-exilic origin of "Zech." ix.—xiv., they differed as to the author and exact date of these chapters. Conservatives like Hengstenberg,¹ Delitzsch, Keil, Köhler and Pusey used the evidence to prove the authorship of Zechariah himself after 516, and interpreted the references to the Greek period as pure prediction. Pusey says² that chaps. ix.—xi. extend from the completion of the Temple and its deliverance during the invasion of Alexander, and from the victories of the Maccabees, to the rejection of the true shepherd and the curse upon the false; and chaps. xi.—xii. "from a future repentance for the death of Christ to the final conversion of the Jews and Gentiles."³

But on the same grounds Eichhorn saw in the chapters not a prediction but a reflection of the Greek period. He assigned chaps. ix. and x. to an author in the time of Alexander the Great; xi.—xiii. 6 he placed a little later, and brought down xiii. 7—xiv. to the Maccabean period. Böttcher⁴ placed the whole in the wars of Ptolemy and Seleucus after Alexander's death; and Vatke, who had at first selected a date in the reign of Artaxerxes Longhand, 464—425, finally decided for the Maccabean period, 170 ff.⁵

¹ *Dan. u. Sacharja.*

⁴ *Einl.* in the beginning of the century.

² Page 503.

⁵ *Neue Exeg. krit. Aehrenlese z. A. T.*, 1864.

³ See Addenda, p. 462. ⁶ *Einl.*, 1882, p. 709.

In recent times the most thorough examination of the chapters has been that by Stade,¹ and the conclusion he comes to is that chaps. ix.—xiv. are all from one author, who must have written during the early wars between the Ptolemies and Seleucids about 280 B.C., but employed, especially in chaps. ix., x., an earlier prophecy. A criticism and modification of Stade's theory is given by Kuenen. He allows that the present form of chaps. ix.—xiv. must be of post-exilic origin: this is obvious from the mention of the Greeks as a world-power; the description of a siege of Jerusalem by *all* the heathen; the way in which (chaps. ix. 11 f., but especially x. 6-9) the captivity is presupposed, if not of all Israel, yet of Ephraim; the fact that the House of David are not represented as governing; and the thoroughly priestly character of all the chapters. But Kuenen holds that an ancient prophecy of the eighth century underlies chaps. ix.—xi., xiii. 7-9, in which several actual phrases of it survive;² and that in their present form xii.—xiv. are older than ix.—xi., and probably by a contemporary of Joel, about 400 B.C.

In the main Cheyne,³ Cornill,⁴ Wildeboer⁵ and Staerk⁶ adhere to Stade's conclusions. Cheyne proves the unity of the six chapters and their date *before* the Maccabean period. Staerk brings down xi. 4-17 and

¹ *Z.A.T.W.*, 1881, 1882. See further proof of the late character of language and style, and of the unity, by Eckardt, *Z.A.T.W.*, 1893, pp. 76 ff.

² § 81, n. 3, 10. See p. 457, end of note 2.

³ *Jewish Quart. Review*, 1889.

⁴ *Einl.*⁴

⁵ *A. T. Litt.*

⁶ *Untersuchung über die Komposition u. Abfassungszeit von Zach.* 9-14, etc. Halle, 1891 (not seen).

xiii. 7-9 to 171 B.C. Wellhausen argues for the unity, and assigns it to the Maccabean times. Driver judges ix.—xi., with its natural continuation xiii. 7-9, as not earlier than 333; and the rest of xii.—xiv. as certainly post-exilic, and probably from 432—300. Rubinkam¹ places ix. 1-10 in Alexander's time, the rest in that of the Maccabees, but Zeydner² all of it to the latter. Kirkpatrick,³ after showing the post-exilic character of all the chapters, favours assigning ix.—xi. to a different author from xii.—xiv. Asserting that to the question of the exact date it is impossible to give a definite answer, he thinks that the whole may be with considerable probability assigned to the first sixty or seventy years of the Exile, and is therefore in its proper place between Zechariah and "Malachi." The reference to the sons of Javan he takes to be a gloss, probably added in Maccabean times.⁴

It will be seen from this catalogue of conclusions that the prevailing trend of recent criticism has been to assign "Zech." ix.—xiv. to post-exilic times, and to a different author from chaps. i.—viii.; and that while a few critics maintain a date soon after the Return, the bulk are divided between the years following Alexander's campaigns and the time of the Maccabean struggles.⁵

There are, in fact, in recent years only two attempts to support the conservative position of Pusey and Hengstenberg that the whole book is a genuine work of Zechariah the son of Iddo. One of these is by C. H. H. Wright in his Bampton Lectures. The

¹ 1892: quoted by Wildeboer. ² 1893: quoted by Wildeboer.

³ *Doctrine of the Prophets*, 438 ff., in which the English reader will find a singularly lucid and fair treatment of the question. See, too, Wright.

⁴ Page 472, Note A.

⁵ Kautzsch— the Greek period.

other is by George L. Robinson, now Professor at Toronto, in a reprint (1896) from the *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, which offers a valuable history of the discussion of the whole question from the days of Mede, with a careful argument of all the evidence on both sides. The very original conclusion is reached that the chapters reflect the history of the years 518—516 B.C.

In discussing the question, for which our treatment of other prophets has left us too little space, we need not open that part of it which lies between a pre-exilic and a post-exilic date. Recent criticism of all schools and at both extremes has tended to establish the latter upon reasons which we have already stated,¹ and for further details of which the student may be referred to Stade's and Eckardt's investigations in the *Zeitschrift für A. T. Wissenschaft* and to Kirkpatrick's impartial summary. There remain the questions of the unity of chaps. ix.—xiv. ; their exact date or dates after the Exile, and as a consequence of this their relation to the authentic prophecies of Zechariah in chaps. i.—viii.

On the question of unity we take first chaps. ix.—xi., to which must be added (as by most critics since Ewald) xiii. 7-9, which has got out of its place as the natural continuation and conclusion of chap. xi.

Chap. ix. 1-8 predicts the overthrow of heathen neighbours of Israel, their possession by Jehovah and His safeguard of Jerusalem. Vv. 9-12 follow with a prediction of the Messianic King as the Prince of Peace ; but then come vv. 13-17, with no mention of the King, but Jehovah appears alone as the hero of

¹ Above, pp. 451 f.

His people against the Greeks, and there is indeed sufficiency of war and blood. Chap. x. makes a new start: the people are warned to seek their blessings from Jehovah, and not from Teraphim and diviners, whom their false shepherds follow. Jehovah, visiting His flock, shall punish these, give proper rulers, make the people strong and gather in their exiles to fill Gilead and Lebanon. Chap. xi. opens with a burst of war on Lebanon and Bashan and the overthrow of the heathen (vv. 1-3), and follows with an allegory, in which the prophet first takes charge from Jehovah of the people as their shepherd, but is contemptuously treated by them (4-14), and then taking the guise of an evil shepherd represents what they must suffer from their next ruler (15-17). This tyrant, however, shall receive punishment, two-thirds of the nation shall be scattered, but the rest, further purified, shall be God's own people (xiii. 7-9).

In the course of this prophesying there is no conclusive proof of a double authorship. The only passage which offers strong evidence for this is chap. ix. The verses predicting the peaceful coming of Messiah (9-12) do not accord in spirit with those which follow predicting the appearance of Jehovah with war and great shedding of blood. Nor is the difference altogether explained, as Stade thinks, by the similar order of events in chap. x., where Judah and Joseph are first represented as saved and brought back in ver. 6, and then we have the process of their redemption and return described in vv. 7 ff. Why did the same writer give statements of such very different temper as chap. ix. 9-12 and 13-17? Or, if these be from different hands, why were they ever put together? Otherwise there is no reason for breaking

up chaps. ix.—xi., xiii. 7-9. Rubinkam, who separates ix. 1-10 by a hundred and fifty years from the rest; Bleek, who divides ix. from x.; and Staerk, who separates ix.—xi. 3 from the rest, have been answered by Robinson and others.¹ On the ground of language, grammar and syntax, Eckardt has fully proved that ix.—xi. are from the same author of a late date, who, however, may have occasionally followed earlier models and even introduced their very phrases.²

More supporters have been found for a division of authorship between chaps. ix.—xi., xiii. 7-9, and chaps. xii.—xiv. (less xiii. 7-9). Chap. xii. opens with a title of its own. A strange element is introduced into the historical relation. Jerusalem is assaulted not by the heathen only, but by Judah, who, however, turns on finding that Jehovah fights for Jerusalem, and is saved by Jehovah before Jerusalem in order that the latter may not boast over it (xii. 1-9). A spirit of grace and supplication is poured upon the guilty city, a fountain opened for uncleanness, idols abolished, and the prophets, who are put on a level with them, abolished too, where they do not disown their profession (xii. 10—xiii. 6). Another assault of the heathen on Jerusalem is described, half of the people being taken captive. Jehovah appears, and by a great earthquake saves the rest. The land is transformed. And then the prophet goes back to the defeat of the heathen assault on the city, in which Judah is again described as taking part; and the surviving heathen are converted, or, if they refuse to be, punished by the withholding of rain.

¹ Robinson, pp. 76 ff.

² *Z.A.T.W.*, 1893, 76 ff. See also the summaries of linguistic evidence given by Robinson. Kuenen finds in ix.—xi. the following pre-exilic elements: ix. 1-5, 8-10, 13a (?); x. 1 f., 10 f.; xi. 4-14 or 17.

Jerusalem is holy to the Lord (xiv.). In all this there is more that differs from chaps. ix.—xi., xiii. 7-9, than the strange opposition of Judah and Jerusalem. Ephraim, or Joseph, is not mentioned, nor any return of exiles, nor punishment of the shepherds, nor coming of the Messiah,¹ the latter's place being taken by Jehovah. But in answer to this we may remember that the Messiah, after being described in ix. 9-12, is immediately lost behind the warlike coming of Jehovah. Both sections speak of idolatry, and of the heathen, their punishment and conversion, and do so in the same apocalyptic style. Nor does the language of the two differ in any decisive fashion. On the contrary, as Eckardt² and Kuiper have shown, the language is on the whole an argument for unity of authorship.³ There is, then, nothing conclusive against the position, which Stade so clearly laid down and strongly fortified, that chaps. ix.—xiv. are from the same hand, although, as he admits, this cannot be proved with absolute certainty. So also Cheyne: "With perhaps one or two exceptions, chaps. ix.—xi. and xii.—xiv. are so closely welded together that even analysis is impossible."⁴

The next questions we have to decide are whether chaps. ix.—xiv. offer any evidence of being by Zechariah, the author of chaps. i.—viii., and if not to what other post-exilic date they may be assigned.

It must be admitted that in language and in style the two parts of the Book of Zechariah have features in common. But that these have been exaggerated by defenders of the unity there can be no doubt. We

¹ Kuenen.

² See above, p. 453, n. 1.

³ See also Robinson.

⁴ *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1889, p. 81.

cannot infer anything from the fact¹ that both parts contain specimens of clumsy diction, of the repetition of the same word, of phrases (not the same phrases) unused by other writers;² or that each is lavish in vocatives; or that each is variable in his spelling. Resemblances of that kind they share with other books: some of them are due to the fact that both sections are post-exilic. On the other hand, as Eckardt has clearly shown, there exists a still greater number of differences between the two sections, both in language and in style.³ Not only do characteristic words occur in each which are not found in the other, not only do chaps. ix.—xiv. contain many more Aramaisms than chaps. i.—viii., and therefore symptoms of a later date; but both parts use the same words with more or less different meanings, and apply different terms to the same objects. There are also differences of grammar, of favourite formulas, and of other features of the phraseology, which, if there be any need, complete the proof of a distinction of dialect so great as to require to account for it distinction of authorship.

The same impression is sustained by the contrast of the historical circumstances reflected in each of the two sections. Zech. i.—viii. were written during the building of the Temple. There is no echo of the latter in "Zech." ix.—xiv. Zech. i.—viii. picture the whole earth as at peace, which was true at least of all Syria: they portend no danger to Jerusalem from the heathen, but describe her peace and fruitful expansion in terms most suitable to the circumstances imposed upon her

¹ As Robinson, *e.g.*, does.

² *E.g. holy land*, ii. 16, and *Mount of Olives*, xiv. 4.

³ *Op. cit.*, 103-109: cf. Driver, *Introd.*⁶, 354.

by the solid and clement policy of the earlier Persian kings. This is all changed in "Zech." ix.—xiv. The nations are restless; a siege of Jerusalem is imminent, and her salvation is to be assured only by much war and a terrible shedding of blood. We know exactly how Israel fared and felt in the early sections of the Persian period: her interests in the politics of the world, her feelings towards her governors and her whole attitude to the heathen were not at that time those which are reflected in "Zech." ix.—xiv.

Nor is there any such resemblance between the religious principles of the two sections of the Book of Zechariah as could prove identity of origin. That both are spiritual, or that they have a similar expectation of the ultimate position of Israel in the history of the world, proves only that both were late offshoots from the same religious development, and worked upon the same ancient models. Within these outlines, there are not a few divergences. Zech. i.—viii. were written before Ezra and Nehemiah had imposed the Levitical legislation upon Israel; but Eckardt has shown the dependence on the latter of "Zech." ix.—xiv.

We may, therefore, adhere to Canon Driver's assertion, that Zechariah in chaps. i.—viii. "uses a different phraseology, evinces different interests and moves in a different circle of ideas from those which prevail in chaps. ix.—xiv."¹ Criticism has indeed been justified in separating, by the vast and growing majority of its opinions, the two sections from each other. This was one of the earliest results which modern criticism achieved, and the latest researches have but established it on a firmer basis.

¹ *Introd.*⁶, p. 354.

If, then, chaps. ix.—xiv. be not Zechariah's, to what date may we assign them? We have already seen that they bear evidence of being upon the whole later than Zechariah, though they appear to contain fragments from an earlier period. Perhaps this is all we can with certainty affirm. Yet something more definite is at least probable. The mention of the Greeks, not as Joel mentions them about 400, the most distant nation to which Jewish slaves could be carried, but as the chief of the heathen powers, and a foe with whom the Jews are in touch and must soon cross swords,¹ appears to imply that the Syrian campaign of Alexander is happening or has happened, or even that the Greek kingdoms of Syria and Egypt are already contending for the possession of Palestine. With this agrees the mention of Damascus, Hadrach and Hamath, the localities where the Seleucids had their chief seats.² In that case Asshur would signify the Seleucids and Egypt the Ptolemies:³ it is these, and not Greece itself, from whom the Jewish exiles have still to be redeemed. All this makes probable the date which Stade has proposed for the chapters, between 300 and 280 B.C. To bring them further down, to the time of the Maccabees, as some have tried to do, would not be impossible so far as the historical allusions are concerned; but had they been of so late a date as that, viz. 170 or 160, we may assert that they could not have found a place in the prophetic canon, which was closed by 200, but must have fallen along with Daniel into the Hagiographa.

The appearance of these prophecies at the close of the Book of Zechariah has been explained, not quite satisfactorily, as follows. With the Book of "Malachi"

¹ ix. 13.² ix. 1f.³ x. 11. See above, p. 451.

they formed originally three anonymous pieces,¹ which because of their anonymity were set at the end of the Book of the Twelve. The first of them begins with the very peculiar construction "Massa' Dēbar Jehovah," *oracle of the word of Jehovah*, which, though partly belonging to the text, the editor read as a title, and attached as a title to each of the others. It occurs nowhere else. The Book of "Malachi" was too distinct in character to be attached to another book, and soon came to have the supposed name of its author added to its title.² But the other two pieces fell, like all anonymous works, to the nearest writing with an author's name. Perhaps the attachment was hastened by the desire to make the round number of Twelve Prophets.

¹ See above, pp. 331 ff., for proof of the original anonymity of the Book of "Malachi."

² Above, p. 331.

ADDENDA.

Whiston's work (p. 450) is *An Essay towards restoring the True Text of the O. T. and for vindicating the Citations made thence in the N. T.*, 1722, pp. 93 ff. (not seen). Besides those mentioned on p. 452 (see n. 3) as supporting the unity of Zechariah there ought to be named De Wette, Umbreit, von Hoffmann, Ebrard, etc. Kuiper's work (p. 458) is *Zacharia* 9-14, Utrecht, 1894 (not seen). Nowack's conclusions are: ix.—xi. 3 date from the Greek period (we cannot date them more exactly, unless ix. 8 refers to Ptolemy's capture of Jerusalem in 320); xi., xiii. 7-9, are post-exilic; xii.—xiii. 6 long after Exile; xiv. long after Exile, later than "Malachi."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE CONTENTS OF "ZECHARIAH" IX.—XIV

FROM the number of conflicting opinions which prevail upon the subject, we have seen how impossible it is to decide upon a scheme of division for "Zech." ix.—xiv. These chapters consist of a number of separate oracles, which their language and general conceptions lead us on the whole to believe were put together by one hand, and which, with the possible exception of some older fragments, reflect the troubled times in Palestine that followed on the invasion of Alexander the Great. But though the most of them are probably due to one date and possibly come from the same author, these oracles do not always exhibit a connection, and indeed sometimes show no relevance to each other. It will therefore be simplest to take them piece by piece, and, before giving the translation of each, to explain the difficulties in it and indicate the ruling ideas.

I. THE COMING OF THE GREEKS (ix. 1-8).

This passage runs exactly in the style of the early prophets. It figures the progress of war from the north of Syria southwards by the valley of the Orontes to Damascus, and then along the coasts of Phœnicia and the Philistines. All these shall be devastated, but Jehovah will camp about His own House and

it shall be inviolate. This is exactly how Amos or Isaiah might have pictured an Assyrian campaign, or Zephaniah a Scythian. It is not surprising, therefore, that even some of those who take the bulk of "Zech." ix.—xiv. as post-exilic should regard ix. 1-5 as earlier even than Amos, with post-exilic additions only in vv. 6-8.¹ This is possible. Vv. 6-8 are certainly post-exilic, because of their mention of the half-breeds, and their intimation that Jehovah will take unclean food out of the mouth of the heathen; but the allusions in vv. 1-5 suit an early date. They equally suit, however, a date in the Greek period. The progress of war from the Orontes valley by Damascus and thence down the coast of Palestine follows the line of Alexander's campaign in 332, which must also have been the line of Demetrius in 315 and of Antigonus in 311. The evidence of language is mostly in favour of a late date.² If Ptolemy I. took Jerusalem in 320,³ then the promise, no assailant shall return (ver. 8), is probably later than that.

In face then of Alexander's invasion of Palestine, or of another campaign on the same line, this oracle repeats the ancient confidence of Isaiah. God rules: His providence is awake alike for the heathen and for Israel. *Jehovah hath an eye for mankind, and all the tribes of Israel.*⁴ The heathen shall be destroyed, but Jerusalem rest secure; and the remnant of the heathen be converted, according to the Levitical notice, by having unclean foods taken out of their mouths.

¹ So Staerk, who thinks Amos I. made use of vv. 1-5.

² ix. 1, אדם, *mankind*, in contrast to the tribes of Israel; 3, חרוץ, *gold*; 5, ישב as passive, cf. xii. 6; הוביש, Hi. of ביש, in passive sense only after Jeremiah (cf. above, p. 412, on Joel); in 2 Sam. xix. 6 Hosea ii. 7, it is active. ³ See p. 442. ⁴ ix. 1.

Oracle.

*The Word of Jehovah is on the land of Hadrach, and Damascus is its goal*¹—for Jehovah hath an eye upon the heathen,² and all the tribes of Israel—and on³ Hamath, which borders upon it, Tyre and Sidon, for they were very wise.⁴ And Tyre built her a fortress, and heaped up silver like dust, and gold like the dirt of the streets. Lo, the Lord will dispossess her, and strike her rampart⁵ into the sea, and she shall be consumed in fire. Ashkelon shall see and shall fear, and Gaza writhe in anguish, and Ekron, for her confidence⁶ is abashed, and the king shall perish from Gaza and Ashkelon lie uninhabited. Half-breeds⁷ shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut down the pride of the Philistines. And I will take their blood from their mouth and their abominations from between their teeth,⁸ and even they shall be left for our God, and shall become like a clan in Judah, and Ekron shall be as the Jebusite. And I shall encamp for a guard⁹ to My House, so that none pass by or return, and no

¹ Heb. *resting-place* : cf. Zech. vi. 8, *bring Mine anger to rest*. This meets the objection of Bredenkamp and others, that מנוחה is otherwise used of Jehovah alone, in consequence of which they refer the suffix to Him.

² The expression *hath an eye* is so unusual that Klostermann, *Theo. Litt. Zeit.*, 1879, 566 (quoted by Nowack), proposes to read for עין ערי, *Jehovah's are the cities of the heathen*. For אדם, *mankind*, as = *heathen* cf. Jer. xxxii. 20.

³ Cf. Nahum iii. 8 ; Isa. xxvi. 1.

⁴ So LXX. : Heb. *also*.

⁵ Read מִבְּטָחָהּ.

⁶ So LXX. : Heb. has verb in sing. ⁷ Deut. xxiii. 3 (Heb., 2 Eng.).

⁸ The prepositions refer to the half-breeds. Ezekiel uses the term *to eat upon the blood*, i.e. meat eaten without being ritually slain and consecrated, for illegal sacrifices (xxxiii. 35 : cf. 1 Sam. xiv. 32 f. ; Lev. xix. 26, xvii. 11-14).

⁹ מִצְבָּה for מִן־צָבָה ; but to be amended to מִצְבָּה, 1 Sam. xiv. 12, a *military post*. Ewald reads מִצְבָּה, *rampart*. LXX. ἀνδρομα = מִצְבָּה.

assailant again pass upon them, for now do I regard it with Mine eyes.

2. THE PRINCE OF PEACE (ix. 9-12).

This beautiful picture, applied by the Evangelist with such fitness to our Lord upon His entry to Jerusalem, must also be of post-exilic date. It contrasts with the warlike portraits of the Messiah drawn in pre-exilic times, for it clothes Him with humility and with peace. The coming King of Israel has the attributes already imputed to the Servant of Jehovah by the prophet of the Babylonian captivity. The next verses also imply the Exile as already a fact. On the whole, too, the language is of a late rather than of an early date.¹ Nothing in the passage betrays the exact point of its origin after the Exile.

The epithets applied to the Messiah are of very great interest. He does not bring victory or salvation, but is the passive recipient of it.² This determines the meaning of the preceding adjective, *righteous*, which has not the moral sense of *justice*, but rather that of *vindication*, in which *righteousness* and *righteous* are so frequently used in Isa. xl.—lv.³ He is *lowly*, like the Servant of Jehovah; and comes riding not the horse, an animal for war, because the next verse says that horses and chariots are to be removed from Israel,⁴

¹ ix. 10, מִשָּׁל, cf. Dan. xi. 4; מִסִּי אֶרֶץ only in late writings (unless Deut. xxxiii. 17 be early)—see Eckardt, p. 80; 12, בְּצֵרוֹן is ἄπαξ λεγόμενον; the last clause of 12 is based on Isa. lxi. 7. If our interpretation of צִדִּיק and נוֹשָׁע be right, they are also symptoms of a late date.

² נוֹשָׁע (ver. 9): the passive participle.

³ Cf. *Isaiah xl.—lxvi.* (Expositor's Bible), p. 219.

⁴ Why chariot from Ephraim and horse from Jerusalem is explained in *Hist. Geog.*, pp. 329-331.

but the ass, the animal not of lowliness, as some have interpreted, but of peace. To this day in the East asses are used, as they are represented in the Song of Deborah, by great officials, but only when these are upon civil, and not upon military, duty.

It is possible that this oracle closes with ver. 10, and that we should take vv. 11 and 12, on the deliverance from exile, with the next.

Rejoice mightily, daughter of Zion! shout aloud, daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, thy King cometh to thee, vindicated and victorious,¹ meek and riding on an ass,² and on a colt the she-ass' foal.³ And I⁴ will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem, and the war-bow shall be cut off, and He shall speak peace to the nations, and His rule shall be from sea to sea and from the river even to the ends of the earth. Thou, too,—by thy covenant-blood,⁵ I have set free thy prisoners from the pit.⁶ Return to the fortress, ye prisoners of hope; even to-day do I proclaim: Double will I return to thee.⁷

3. THE SLAUGHTER OF THE GREEKS (ix. 13-17).

The next oracle seems singularly out of keeping with the spirit of the last, which declared the arrival of the Messianic peace, while this represents Jehovah as using Israel for His weapons in the slaughter of

¹ See above.

² Son of she-asses.

³ Symbol of peace as the horse was of war. ⁴ Mass.: LXX. *He*.

⁵ Heb. *blood of thy covenant*, but the suffix refers to the whole phrase (Duhm, *Theol. der Proph.*, p. 143). The covenant is Jehovah's; the blood, that which the people shed in sacrifice to ratify the covenant.

⁶ Heb. adds *there is no water in it*, but this is either a gloss, or perhaps an attempt to make sense out of a dittography of מַבּוּר, or a corruption of *none shall be ashamed*. ⁷ Isa. lxi. 7.

the Greeks and heathens, in whose blood they shall revel. But Stade has pointed out how often in chaps. ix.—xiv. a result is first stated and then the oracle goes on to describe the process by which it is achieved. Accordingly we have no ground for affirming ix. 13-17 to be by another hand than ix. 9-12. The apocalyptic character of the means by which the heathen are to be overthrown, and the exultation displayed in their slaughter, as in a great sacrifice (ver. 15), betray Israel in a state of absolute political weakness, and therefore suit a date after Alexander's campaigns, which is also made sure by the reference to the *sons of Javan*, as if Israel were now in immediate contact with them. Kirkpatrick's note should be read, in which he seeks to prove *the sons of Javan* a late gloss;¹ but his reasons do not appear conclusive. The language bears several traces of lateness.²

For I have drawn Judah for My bow, I have charged it with Ephraim; and I will urge thy sons, O Zion, against the sons of³ Javan, and make thee like the sword of a hero. Then will Jehovah appear above them, and His shaft shall go forth like lightning; and the Lord Jehovah shall blow a blast on the trumpet, and travel in the storms of the south.⁴ Jehovah will protect them, and they shall devour (?)⁵ and trample . . . ;⁶ and they

¹ *Doctrine of the Prophets*, Note A, p. 472.

² 14, on תימן see Eckardt; 15, זיוות, Aramaism; כבש is late; 17, התנוסס, only here and Psalm lx. 6; נוב, probably late.

³ So LXX. : Heb. reads, *thy sons, O Javan*.

⁴ LXX. ἐν σάλῳ τῆς ἀπειλῆς αὐτοῦ, *in the tossing of His threat*, בשער הערו (?) or בשער נערו. It is natural to see here a reference to the Theophanies of Hab. iii. 3, Deut. xxxiii. (see above, pp. 150 f.).

⁵ Perhaps יִכְלֹו, *overcome them*. LXX. καταναλώσουσιν.

⁶ Heb. *stones of a sling*, אבני קלע. Wellhausen and Nowack read *sons*, בני, but what then is קלע ?

shall drink their blood¹ like wine, and be drenched with it, like a bowl and like the corners of the altar. And Jehovah their God will give them victory in that day. . . .² How good it³ is, and how beautiful! Corn shall make the young men flourish and new wine the maidens.

4. AGAINST THE TERAPHIM AND SORCERERS (x. 1, 2).

This little piece is connected with the previous one only through the latter's conclusion upon the fertility of the land, while this opens with rain, the requisite of fertility. It is connected with the piece that follows only by its mention of the shepherdless state of the people, the piece that follows being against the false shepherds. These connections are extremely slight. Perhaps the piece is an independent one. The subject of it gives no clue to the date. Sorcerers are condemned both by the earlier prophets, and by the later.⁴ Stade points out that this is the only passage of the Old Testament in which the Teraphim are said to speak.⁵ The language has one symptom of a late period.⁶

After emphasising the futility of images, enchantments and dreams, this little oracle says, therefore the

¹ Reading דָּמָם for Heb. דָּמָו, and roar.

² Heb. *like a flock of sheep His people*, (but how is one to construe this with the context?) for (? like) *stones of a diadem lifting themselves up (? shimmering) over His land*. Wellhausen and Nowack delete for *stones . . . shimmering* as a gloss. This would leave *like a flock of sheep His people in His land*, to which it is proposed to add *He will feed*. This gives good sense.

³ Wellhausen, reading טוֹבָה, fem. suffix for neuter. Ewald and others *He*. Hitzig and others *they*, the people.

⁴ Of these cf. "Mal." iii. 5; the late Jer. xlv. 8 ff.; Isa. lxx. 3-5; and, in the Priestly Law, Lev. xix. 31, xx. 6.

⁵ *Z.A.T.W.*, I. 60. He compares this verse with 1 Sam. xv. 23. In Ezek. xxi. 26 they give oracles.

⁶ חוּי, *lightning-flash*, only here and in Job xxviii. 26, xxxviii. 25.

people wander like sheep: they have no shepherd. Shepherd in this connection cannot mean civil ruler, but must be religious director.

Ask from Jehovah rain in the time of the latter rain.¹ Jehovah is the maker of the lightning-flashes, and the winter rain He gives to them—to every man herbage in the field. But the Teraphim speak nothingness, and the sorcerers see lies, and dreams discourse vanity, and they comfort in vain. Wherefore they wander (?)² like a flock of sheep, and flee about,³ for there is no shepherd.

5. AGAINST EVIL SHEPHERDS (x. 3-12).

The unity of this section is more apparent than its connection with the preceding, which had spoken of the want of a shepherd, or religious director, of Israel, while this is directed against their shepherds and leaders, meaning their foreign tyrants.⁴ The figure is taken from Jeremiah xxiii. 1 ff., where, besides, *to visit upon*⁶ is used in a sense of punishment, but the simple *visit*⁶ in the sense of to look after, just as within ver. 3 of this tenth chapter. Who these foreign tyrants are is not explicitly stated, but the reference to Egypt and Assyria as lands whence the Jewish captives shall be brought home, while at the same time there is a Jewish nation in Judah, suits only the Greek period, after Ptolemy had taken so many Jews to

¹ LXX. read: *in season early rain and latter rain.*

² נסעו, used of a nomadic life in Jer. xxxi. 24 (23), and so it is possible that in a later stage of the language it had come to mean to wander or stray. But this is doubtful, and there may be a false reading, as appears from LXX. ἐξηράνθησαν.

³ For יענו read וינעו. The LXX. ἐκακώθησαν read וירעו.

⁴ There can therefore be none of that connection between the two pieces which Kirkpatrick assumes (p. 454 and note 2).

⁵ פקד על

⁶ פקד את

Egypt,¹ and there were numbers still scattered throughout the other great empire in the north, to which, as we have already seen, the Jews applied the name of Assyria. The reference can hardly suit the years after Seleucus and Ptolemy granted to the Jews in their territories the rights of citizens. The captive Jews are to be brought back to Gilead and Lebanon. Why exactly these are mentioned, and neither Samaria nor Galilee, forms a difficulty, to whatever age we assign the chapter. The language of x. 3-12 has several late features.² Joseph or Ephraim, here and elsewhere in these chapters, is used of the portion of Israel still in captivity, in contrast to Judah, the returned community.

The passage predicts that Jehovah will change His poor leaderless sheep, the Jews, into war-horses, and give them strong chiefs and weapons of war. They shall overthrow the heathen, and Jehovah will bring back His exiles. The passage is therefore one with chap. ix.

My wrath is hot against the shepherds, and I will make visitation on the he-goats: ³ yea, Jehovah of Hosts will⁴ visit His flock, the house of Judah, and will make them like His splendid war-horses. From Him the corner-stone, from Him the stay,⁵ from Him the war-bow, from Him the oppressor—shall go forth together. And in battle shall they trample on heroes as on the dirt

¹ See above, p. 444.

² x. 5, בּוֹס, Eckardt, p. 82; 6, 12, נָבֵר, Pi., cf. Eccles. x. 10, where it alone occurs besides here; 5, 11, הַבִּישָׁו in passive sense.

³ As we should say, *bell-wethers*: cf. Isa. xiv. 9, also a late meaning.

⁴ So LXX., reading כִּי־פָקֵד for כִּי־פָקֵד.

⁵ *Corner-stone* as name for a chief: cf. Judg. xx. 2; 1 Sam. xiv. 38; Isa. xix. 13. *Stay* or *tent-pin*, Isa. xxii. 23. *From Him*, others *from them*.

of the streets,¹ and fight, for Jehovah is with them, and the riders on horses shall be abashed. And the house of Judah will I make strong and work salvation for the house of Joseph, and bring them back,² for I have pity for them,³ and they shall be as though I had not put them away,³ for I am Jehovah their God³ and I will hold converse with them.³ And Ephraim shall be as heroes,⁴ and their heart shall be glad as with wine, and their children shall behold and be glad: their heart shall rejoice in Jehovah. I will whistle for them and gather them in, for I have redeemed them, and they shall be as many as they once were. I scattered them⁵ among the nations, but among the far-away they think of Me, and they will bring up⁶ their children, and come back. And I will fetch them home from the land of Miṣraim, and from Asshur⁷ will I gather them, and to the land of Gilead and Lebānon will I bring them in, though these be not found sufficient for them. And they⁸ shall pass through the sea of Egypt,⁹ and He shall smite the sea of breakers, and all the deeps of the Nile shall be dried, and the pride of Assyria brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt swept aside. And their strength¹⁰ shall

¹ Read *בְּנִבְרִים* and *בְּטִיט* (Wellhausen).

² Read *וְהוֹשִׁיבוֹתֵימ* for the Mass. *וְהוֹשִׁיבוֹתֵים*, and I will make them to dwell.

³ *וְרַחֲמֵימ* and *וְזַנְחֵימ* and *אֱלֹהֵימ* and *אֵעֲנֵם*, key-words of Hosea i.—iii.

⁴ LXX. ; sing. Heb.

⁵ Changing the Heb. points which make the verb future. See Nowack's note.

⁶ With LXX. read *וְהָיִי* for Mass. *וְהָיִי*.

⁷ See above, pp. 451, 471.

⁸ So LXX. ; Mass. sing.

⁹ Heb. *צָרָה*, narrow sea: so LXX., but Wellhausen suggests *מִצְרַיִם*, which Nowack adopts.

¹⁰ *גְּבוּרַתֵם* for *גְּבוֹרַתֵם*.

*be in Jehovah, and in His Name shall they boast themselves*¹—*oracle of Jehovah.*

6. WAR UPON THE SYRIAN TYRANTS (xi. 1-3).

This is taken by some with the previous chapter, by others with the passage following. Either connection seems precarious. No conclusion as to date can be drawn from the language. But the localities threatened were on the southward front of the Seleucid kingdom. *Open, Lebānon, thy doors* suits the Egyptian invasions of that kingdom. To which of these the passage refers cannot of course be determined. The shepherds are the rulers.

*Open, Lebānon, thy doors, that the fire may devour in thy cedars. Wail, O pine-tree, for the cedar is fallen;*² *wail, O oaks of Bashan, for fallen is the impenetrable*³ *wood. Hark to the wailing of the shepherds! for their glory is destroyed. Hark how the lions roar! for blasted is the pride*⁴ *of Jordan.*

7. THE REJECTION AND MURDER OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD (xi. 4-17, xiii. 7-9).

There follows now, in the rest of chap. xi., a longer oracle, to which Ewald and most critics after him have suitably attached chap. xiii. 7-9.

This passage appears to rise from circumstances similar to those of the preceding and from the same circle of ideas. Jehovah's people are His flock and

¹ For יתהללו read יתהללו, with LXX. and Syr.

² Heb. adds here a difficult clause, *for nobles are wasted*. Probably a gloss.

³ After the Keri.

⁴ I.e. *rankness*; applied to the thick vegetation in the larger bed of the stream: see *Hist. Geog.*, p. 484.

have suffered. Their rulers are their shepherds; and the rulers of other peoples are their shepherds. A true shepherd is sought for Israel in place of the evil ones which have distressed them. The language shows traces of a late date.¹ No historical allusion is obvious in the passage. The *buyers* and *sellers* of God's sheep might reflect the Seleucids and Ptolemies between whom Israel were exchanged for many years, but probably mean their native leaders. The *three shepherds cut off in a month* were interpreted by the supporters of the pre-exilic date of the chapters as Zechariah and Shallum (2 Kings xv. 8-13), and another whom these critics assume to have followed them to death, but of him the history has no trace. The supporters of a Maccabean date for the prophecy recall the quick succession of high priests before the Maccabean rising. The *one month* probably means nothing more than a very short time.

The allegory which our passage unfolds is given, like so many more in Hebrew prophecy, to the prophet himself to enact. It recalls the pictures in Jeremiah and Ezekiel of the overthrow of the false shepherds of Israel, and the appointment of a true shepherd.² Jehovah commissions the prophet to become shepherd to His sheep that have been so cruelly abused by their guides and rulers. Like the shepherds of Palestine,

¹ xi. 5, וַאֲעִיֵּץ, Hiph., but intransitive, *grow rich*; 6, כְּמִצְיָא, 7, יו, נַעַם (?); 8, בְּהִל, Aram.; 13, יִקָּר, Aram., Jer. xx. 5, Ezek. xxii. 25, Job xxviii. 10; in Esther ten, in Daniel four times (Eckardt); xiii. 7, עֲמִית, one of the marks of the affinity of the language of "Zech." ix.—xiv. to that of the Priestly Code (cf. Lev. v. 21, xviii. 20, etc.), but in P it is concrete, here abstract; 8, לְעֵרִים; 8, גֹּוע, see Eckardt, p. 85.

² Jer. xxiii. 1-8; Ezek. xxxiv., xxxvii. 24 ff.: cf. Kirkpatrick p. 462.

the prophet took two staves to herd his flock. He called one *Grace*, the other *Union*. In a month he cut off three shepherds—both *month* and *three* are probably formal terms. But he did not get on well with his charge. They were wilful and quarrelsome. So he broke his staff *Grace*, in token that his engagement was dissolved. The dealers of the sheep saw that he acted for God. He asked for his wage, if they cared to give it. They gave him thirty pieces of silver, the price of an injured slave,¹ which by God's command he cast into the treasury of the Temple, as if in token that it was God Himself whom they paid with so wretched a sum. And then he broke his other staff, to signify that the brotherhood between Judah and Israel was broken. Then, to show the people that by their rejection of the good shepherd they must fall a prey to an evil one, the prophet assumed the character of the latter. But another judgment follows. In chap. xiii. 7-9 the good shepherd is smitten and the flock dispersed.

The spiritual principles which underlie this allegory are obvious. God's own sheep, persecuted and helpless though they be, are yet obstinate, and their obstinacy not only renders God's good-will to them futile, but causes the death of the one man who could have done them good. The guilty sacrifice the innocent, but in this execute their own doom. That is a summary of the history of Israel. But had the writer of this allegory any special part of that history in view? Who were the *dealers of the flock*?

*Thus saith Jehovah my God:*² *Shepherd the flock of slaughter, whose purchasers slaughter them impenitently,*

¹ Exod. xxi. 32.

² LXX. *God of Hosts.*

and whose sellers say,¹ *Blessed be Jehovah, for I am rich!*—and their shepherds do not spare them. [For I will no more spare the inhabitants of the land—oracle of Jehovah; but lo! I am about to give mankind² over, each into the hand of his shepherd,³ and into the hand of his king; and they shall destroy the land, and I will not secure it from their hands.⁴] And I shepherded the flock of slaughter for the sheep merchants,⁵ and I took to me two staves—the one I called *Grace*, and the other I called *Union*⁶—and so I shepherded the sheep. And I destroyed the three shepherds in one month. Then was my soul vexed with them, and they on their part were displeased with me. And I said: *I will not shepherd you: what is dead, let it die; and what is destroyed, let it be destroyed; and those that survive, let them devour one another's flesh!* And I took my staff *Grace*, and I brake it so as to annul my covenant which I made with all the peoples.⁷ And in that day it was annulled, and the dealers of the sheep,⁸ who watched me, knew that it was Jehovah's word. And I

¹ Read plural with LXX.

² That is the late Hebrew name for the heathen: cf. ix. 1.

³ Heb. רֵעֵהוּ, *neighbour*; read רֵעֵהוּ.

⁴ Many take this verse as an intrusion. It certainly seems to add nothing to the sense and to interrupt the connection, which is clear when it is removed.

⁵ Heb. לָכֵן עֲנִי הַצֵּיִן, *wherefore the miserable of the flock*, which makes no sense. But LXX. read εἰς τὴν Χαναάνιτην, and this suggests the Heb. לַכְנַעֲנִי, *to the Canaanites*, i.e. *merchants, of the sheep*: so in ver. 11.

⁶ Lit. *Bands*.

⁷ The sense is here obscure. Is the text sound? In harmony with the context עַמִּים ought to mean *tribes of Israel*. But every passage in the O.T. in which עַמִּים might mean *tribes* has been shown to have a doubtful text: Deut. xxxii. 8, xxxiii. 3; Hosea x. 14 Micah i. 2.

⁸ See above, note 5, on the same mis-read phrase in ver. 7.

said to them, *If it be good in your sight, give me my wage, and if it be not good, let it go! And they weighed out my wage, thirty pieces of silver. Then said Jehovah to me, Throw it into the treasury¹ (the precious wage at which I² had been valued of them). So I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the House of Jehovah, to the treasury.³ And I brake my second staff, Union, so as to dissolve the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.⁴ And Jehovah said to me: Take again to thee the implements of a worthless shepherd: for lo! I am about to appoint a shepherd over the land; the destroyed he will not visit, the . . .⁵ he will not seek out, the wounded he will not heal, the . . .⁶ he will not cherish, but he will devour the flesh of the fat and . . .⁷*

Woe to My worthless⁸ shepherd, that deserts the flock! The sword be upon his arm and his right eye! May his arm wither, and his right eye be blinded.

Upon this follows the section xiii. 7-9, which develops the tragedy of the nation to its climax in the murder of the good shepherd.

Up, Sword, against My shepherd and the man My

¹ Heb. הַיִּצֵּר, *the potter*. LXX. χωνεστήριον, *smelting furnace*. Read הַיִּצֵּר by change of נ for י: the two are often confounded; see n. 3.

² Wellhausen and Nowack read *thou hast been valued of them*. But there is no need of this. The clause is a sarcastic parenthesis spoken by the prophet himself.

³ Again Heb. *the potter*, LXX. *the smelting furnace*, as above in ver. 13. The additional clause *House of God* proves how right it is to read *the treasury*, and disposes of the idea that *to throw to the potter* was a proverb for throwing away.

⁴ Two codd. read *Jerusalem*, which Wellhausen and Nowack adopt.

⁵ Heb. הַנִּעֵר, *the scattered*. LXX. τὸν ἐσκοπισμένον.

⁶ הַנִּצְבָּה, obscure: some translate *the sound* or *stable*.

⁷ Heb. *and their hoofs he will tear (?)*.

⁸ For Heb. הַאֲלִיל read as in ver. 15 הַאֲלִילִי.

*compatriot*¹—oracle of Jehovah of Hosts. *Smite*² the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered; and I will turn My hand against the little ones.³ And it shall come to pass in all the land—oracle of Jehovah—that two-thirds shall be cut off in it, and perish, but a third shall be left in it. And I shall bring the third into the fire, and smelt it as men smelt silver and try it as men try gold. It shall call upon My Name, and I will answer it. And I will⁴ say, It is My people, and it will say, Jehovah my God!

8. JUDAH versus JERUSALEM (xii. 1-7).

A title, though probably of later date than the text,⁵ introduces with the beginning of chap. xii. an oracle plainly from circumstances different from those of the preceding chapters. The nations, not particularised as they have been, gather to the siege of Jerusalem, and, very singularly, Judah is gathered with them against her own capital. But God makes the city like one of those great boulders, deeply embedded, which husbandmen try to pull up from their fields, but it tears and wounds the hands of those who would remove it. Moreover God strikes with panic all the besiegers, save only Judah, who, her eyes being opened, perceives that God is with Jerusalem and turns to her help. Jerusalem remains in her place; but the glory of the victory is first Judah's, so that the house of David may not have too much fame nor boast over the country districts. The writer doubtless alludes to some temporary schism between the capital and country caused

¹ עמית : only in Lev. and here.

² הך. Perhaps we should read אָקָה, *I smite*, with Matt. xxvi. 31.

³ Some take this as a promise : *turn My hand towards the little ones*.

⁴ LXX. Heb. אָמַרְתִּי, but the ם has fallen from the front of it.

⁵ See above, p. 462.

by the arrogance of the former. But we have no means of knowing when this took place. It must often have been imminent in the days both before and especially after the Exile, when Jerusalem had absorbed all the religious privilege and influence of the nation. The language is undoubtedly late.¹

The figure of Jerusalem as a boulder, deeply bedded in the soil, which tears the hands that seek to remove it, is a most true and expressive summary of the history of heathen assaults upon her. Till she herself was rent by internal dissensions, and the Romans at last succeeded in tearing her loose, she remained planted on her own site.² This was very true of all the Greek period. Seleucids and Ptolemies alike wounded themselves upon her. But at what period did either of them induce Judah to take part against her? Not in the Maccabean.

Oracle of the Word of Jehovah upon Israel.

Oracle of Jehovah, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth, and formed the spirit of man within him: Lo, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of reeling for all the surrounding peoples, and even Judah³ shall

¹ xii. 2, רָעַל, a noun not found elsewhere in O. T. We found the verb in Nahum ii. 4 (see above, p. 106), and probably in Hab. ii. 16 for וְהָעָרָל (see above, p. 147, n. 3): it is common in Aramean; other forms belong to later Hebrew (cf. Eckardt, p. 85). 3, שָׁרַט is used in classic Heb. only of intentional cutting and tattooing of oneself; in the sense of *wounding* which it has here it is frequent in Aramean. 3 has besides מַעֲמֹסָה, not found elsewhere. 4 has three nouns terminating in יָן, two of them—תַּמְהוֹן, *panic*, and עִוְרוֹן, *judicial blindness*—in O. T. only found here and in Deut. xxviii. 28, the former also in Aramean. 7, לִמְעַן לֵא, is also cited by Eckardt as used only in Ezk. k. xix. 6, xxvi. 20, and four times in Psalms.

² xii. 6, תַּחֲתֶיהָ.

³ The text reads *against* Judah, as if it with Jerusalem suffered

be at the siege of Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in that day that I will make Jerusalem a stone to be lifted¹ by all the peoples—all who lift it do indeed wound² themselves—and there are gathered against it all nations of the earth. In that day—oracle of Jehovah—I will smite every horse with panic, and their riders with madness; but as for the house of Judah, I will open its³ eyes, though every horse of the peoples I smite with blindness. Then shall the chiefs⁴ of Judah say in their hearts, . . .⁵ the inhabitants of Jerusalem through Jehovah of Hosts their God. In that day will I make the districts of Judah like a pan of fire among timber and like a torch among sheaves, so that they devour right and left all the peoples round about, but Jerusalem shall still abide on its

the siege of the heathen. But (1) this makes an unconstruable clause, and (2) the context shows that Judah was *against* Jerusalem. Therefore Geiger (*Urschrift*, p. 58) is right in deleting לַע, and restoring to the clause both sense in itself and harmony with the context. It is easy to see why לַע was afterwards introduced. LXX. καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ.

¹ Since Jerome, commentators have thought of a stone by throwing or lifting which men try their strength, what we call a "putting stone." But is not the idea rather of one of the large stones half-buried in the earth which it is the effort of the husbandman to tear from its bed and carry out of his field before he ploughs it? Keil and Wright think of a heavy stone for building. This is not so likely.

² שָׂרַט, elsewhere only in Lev. xxi. 5, is there used of intentional cutting of oneself as a sign of mourning. Nowack takes the clause as a later intrusion; but there is no real reason for this.

³ Heb. *upon Judah will I keep My eyes open* to protect him, and this has analogies, Job xiv. 3, Jer. xxxii. 19. But the reading *its eyes*, which is made by inserting a ם that might easily have dropped out through confusion with the initial ם of the next word, has also analogies (Isa. xlii. 7, etc.), and stands in better parallel to the next clause, as well as to the clauses describing the panic of the heathen.

⁴ Others read אֲלָפִים, *thousands*, i.e. *districts*.

⁵ Heb. *I will find me*; LXX. εὐρήσομεν ἑαυτοῖς.

own site.¹ And Jehovah shall first give victory to the tents² of Judah, so that the fame of the house of David and the fame of the inhabitants of Jerusalem be not too great in contrast to Judah.

9. FOUR RESULTS OF JERUSALEM'S DELIVERANCE (xii. 8—xiii. 6).

Upon the deliverance of Jerusalem, by the help of the converted Judah, there follow four results, each introduced by the words that it happened *in that day* (xii. 8, 9, xiii. 1, 2). First, the people of Jerusalem shall themselves be strengthened. Second, the hostile heathen shall be destroyed, but on the house of David and all Jerusalem the spirit of penitence shall be poured, and they will lament for the good shepherd whom they slew. Third, a fountain for sin and uncleanness shall be opened. Fourth, the idols, the unclean spirit, and prophecy, now so degraded, shall all be abolished. The connection of these oracles with the preceding is obvious, as well as with the oracle describing the murder of the good shepherd (xiii. 7-9). When we see how this is presupposed by xii. 9 ff., we feel more than ever that its right place is between chaps. xi. and xii. There are no historical allusions. But again the language gives evidence of a late date.³ And throughout the passage there is a repetition of formal phrases

¹ Hebrew adds a gloss: *in Jerusalem*.

² The population in time of war.

³ xii. 10, שִׁפְךָ רוּחַ, not earlier than Ezek. xxxix. 29, Joel iii. 1, 2 (Heb.); תַּחֲנוּנִים, only in Job, Proverbs, Psalms and Daniel; הַמֵּר, an intrans. Hiph.; xiii. 1, בְּמִקְוֵה, *fountain*, before Jeremiah only in Hosea xiii. 15 (perhaps a late intrusion), but several times in post-exilic writings instead of pre-exilic בְּאֵר (Eckardt); גִּדְּוָה, only after Ezekiel; 3, cf. xii. 10, רִקְרָה, chiefly, but not only, in post-exilic writings.

which recalls the Priestly Code and the general style of the post-exilic age.¹ Notice that no king is mentioned, although there are several points at which, had he existed, he must have been introduced.

1. The first of the four effects of Jerusalem's deliverance from the heathen is the promotion of her weaklings to the strength of her heroes, and of her heroes to divine rank (xii. 8). *In that day Jehovah will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the lame among them shall in that day be like David himself, and the house of David like God, like the Angel of Jehovah before them.*

2. The second paragraph of this series very remarkably emphasises that upon her deliverance Jerusalem shall not give way to rejoicing, but to penitent lamentation for the murder of him whom she has pierced—the good shepherd whom her people have rejected and slain. This is one of the few ethical strains which run through these apocalyptic chapters. It forms their highest interest for us. Jerusalem's mourning is compared to that for *Hadad-Rimmon in the valley or plain of Megiddo*. This is the classic battle-field of the land, and the theatre upon which Apocalypse has placed the last contest between the hosts of God and the hosts of evil.² In Israel's history it had been the ground not only of triumph but of tears. The greatest tragedy of that history, the defeat and death of the righteous Josiah, took place there;³ and since the earliest Jewish interpreters the *mourning of Hadad-Rimmon in the*

¹ See especially xii. 12 ff., which is very suggestive of the Priestly Code.

Hist. Geog., Chap. XIX. On the name *plain of Megiddo* see especially notes, p. 386.

³ 2 Chron. xxxv. 22 ff.

valley of Megiddo has been referred to the mourning for Josiah.¹ Jerome identifies Hadad-Rimmon with Rummāni,² a village on the plain still extant, close to Megiddo. But the lamentation for Josiah was at Jerusalem; and it cannot be proved that Hadad-Rimmon is a place-name. It may rather be the name of the object of the mourning, and as Hadad was a divine name among Phœnicians and Arameans, and Rimmōn the pomegranate was a sacred tree, a number of critics have supposed this to be a title of Adonis, and the mourning like that excessive grief which Ezekiel tells us was yearly celebrated for Tammuz.³ This, however, is not fully proved.⁴ Observe, further, that while the reading Hadad-Rimmon is by no means past doubt, the sanguine blossoms and fruit of the pomegranate, "red-ripe at the heart," would naturally lead to its association with the slaughtered Adonis.

And it shall come to pass in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations who have come in upon Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplication, and they shall look to him⁵ whom they have pierced; and they shall lament for him, as with lamentation for an only son, and bitterly grieve for him, as with grief for a first-born. In that day lamentation shall be as great in Jerusalem as the lamenta-

¹ Another explanation offered by the Targum is the mourning for "Ahab son of Omri, slain by Hadad-Rimmon son of Tab-Rimmon."

² LXX. gives for Hadad-Rimmon only the second part, ῥοῶν.

³ Ezek. viii. 14.

⁴ Baudissin, *Studien z. Sem. Rel. Gesch.*, I. 295 ff.

⁵ Heb. *Me*; several codd. *him*: some read יְהוָה, to (him) whom they have pierced; but this would require the elision of the sign of the acc. before *who*. Wellhausen and others think something has fallen from the text.

tion for Hadad-Rimmon¹ in the valley of Megiddo. And the land shall mourn, every family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of Shime'i² by itself, and their wives by themselves; all the families who are left, every family by itself, and their wives by themselves.

3. The third result of Jerusalem's deliverance from the heathen shall be the opening of a fountain of cleansing. This purging of her sin follows fitly upon her penitence just described. *In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David, and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.*³

4. The fourth consequence is the removal of idolatry, of the unclean spirit and of the degraded prophets from her midst. The last is especially remarkable: for it is not merely false prophets, as distinguished from true, who shall be removed; but prophecy in general. It is singular that in almost its latest passage the prophecy of Israel should return to the line of its earliest representative, Amos, who refused to call himself prophet. As in his day, the prophets had become mere professional and mercenary oracle-mongers, abjured to the point of death by their own ashamed and wearied relatives.

And it shall be in that day—oracle of Jehovah of Hosts—I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall not be remembered any more. And also the prophets and the unclean spirit will I expel

¹ See above, p. 482.

³ Cf. Ezek. xxxvi. 25, xlviii. 1.

² LXX. Συμεών

from the land. And it shall come to pass, if any man prophesy again, then shall his father and mother who begat him say to him, Thou shalt not live, for thou speakest falsehood in the name of Jehovah; and his father and mother who begat him shall stab him for his prophesying. And it shall be in that day that the prophets shall be ashamed of their visions when they prophesy, and shall not wear the leather cloak in order to lie. And he will say, No prophet am I! A tiller of the ground I am, for the ground is my possession¹ from my youth up. And they shall say to him, What are these wounds in² thy hands? and he shall say, What I was wounded with in the house of my lovers!

IO. JUDGMENT OF THE HEATHEN AND SANCTIFICATION OF JERUSALEM (xiv.).

In another apocalyptic vision the prophet beholds Jerusalem again beset by the heathen. But Jehovah Himself intervenes, appearing in person, and an earthquake breaks out at His feet. The heathen are smitten, as they stand, into mouldering corpses. The remnant of them shall be converted to Jehovah and take part in the annual Feast of Booths. If any refuse they shall be punished with drought. But Jerusalem shall abide in security and holiness: every detail of her equipment shall be consecrate. The passage has many resemblances to the preceding oracles.³ The language is undoubtedly late, and the figures are borrowed from other prophets, chiefly Ezekiel. It is a characteristic specimen of the Jewish Apocalypse. The destruction of the heathen is described in verses of terrible grim-

¹ Read אָרֶם הַקֶּנֶי for the Mass. אָרֶם הַקֶּנֶי: so Wellhausen.

² Heb. *between*.

³ But see below, p. 490.

ness: there is no tenderness nor hope exhibited for them. And even in the picture of Jerusalem's holiness we have no really ethical elements, but the details are purely ceremonial.

Lo! a day is coming for Jehovah,¹ when thy spoil will be divided in thy midst. And I will gather all the nations to besiege Jerusalem, and the city will be taken and the houses plundered and the women ravished, and the half of the city shall go into captivity, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. And Jehovah shall go forth and do battle with those nations, as in the day when He fought in the day of contest. And His feet shall stand in that day on the Mount of Olives which is over against Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split into halves from east to west by a very great ravine, and half of the Mount will slide northwards and half southwards. . . . ,² for the ravine of mountains³ shall extend to 'Aṣal,⁴ and ye shall flee as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uziah king of Judah,⁵ and Jehovah my God will come and⁶ all the holy ones with Him.⁷ And in that day there shall not be light, . . .

¹ ליהוה: or *belonging to Jehovah*; or like the *Lamed auctoris* or *Lamed* when construed with passive verbs (see *Oxford Heb.-Eng. Dictionary*, pp. 513 and 514, col. 1), *from, by means of, Jehovah*.

² Heb.: *and ye shall flee, the ravine of My mountains*. The text is obviously corrupt, but it is difficult to see how it should be repaired. LXX., Targ. Symmachus and the Babylonian codd. (Baer, p. 84) read וְנִסְתָּם, *shall be closed*, for וְנִסְתָּם, *ye shall flee*, and this is adopted by a number of critics (Bredenkamp, Wellhausen, Nowack). But it is hardly possible before the next clause, which says the valley extends to 'Aṣal.

³ Wellhausen suggests the ravine (גֵּיא) of Hinnom.

⁴ אֶצֶל, place-name: cf. אֶצֶל, name of a family of Benjamin, viii. 37 f., ix. 43 f.; and בֵּית הָאֶצֶל, Micah i. 11. Some would read אֶצֶל, the adverb *near by*.

⁵ Amos i. 1.

⁶ LXX.

⁷ LXX.; Heb. *thee*.

congeal.¹ And it shall be one² day—it is known to Jehovah³—neither day nor night; and it shall come to pass that at evening time there shall be light.

And it shall be in that day that living waters shall flow forth from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea: both in summer and in winter shall it be. And Jehovah shall be King over all the earth: in that day Jehovah will be One and His Name One. All the land shall be changed to plain,⁴ from Geba to Rimmon,⁵ south of Jerusalem; but she shall be high and abide in her place⁶ from the Gate of Benjamin up to the place of the First Gate, up to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hanan'el as far as the King's Winepresses. And they shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more Ban,⁷ and Jerusalem shall abide in security. And this shall be the stroke with which Jehovah will smite all the peoples who have warred against Jerusalem: He will make their flesh moulder while they still stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall moulder

¹ Heb. Ketb bh, יקרות יקפאון, *jewels* (? hardly stars as some have sought to prove from Job xxxi. 26) *grow dead* or *congealed*. Heb. Kerê, *jewels and frost*, יקפאון יקרית. LXX. καὶ ψύχη καὶ πάγος, יקרית יקפאון, *and cold and frost*. Founding on this Wellhausen proposes to read חום for אור, and renders, *there shall be neither heat nor cold nor frost*. So Nowack. But it is not easy to see how חום ever got changed to אור.

² *Unique or the same?*

³ Taken as a gloss by Wellhausen and Nowack.

⁴ ערבה, the name for the Jordan Valley, the Ghôr (*Hist. Geog.*, pp. 482-484). It is employed, not because of its fertility, but because of its level character. Cf. Josephus' name for it, "the Great Plain" (IV. *Wars* viii. 2; IV. *Antt.* vi. 1): also I Macc. v. 52, xvi. 11.

⁵ Geba "long the limit of Judah to the north, 2 Kings xxiii. 8" (*Hist. Geog.*, pp. 252, 291). Rimmon was on the southern border of Palestine (Josh. xv. 32, xix. 7), the present Umm er Rummamin N. of Beersheba (Rob., *B. R.*).

⁶ Or *be inhabited as it stands*.

⁷ Cf. "Mal." iii. 24 (Heb.).

in their sockets, and their tongue shall moulder in their mouth.

[*And it shall come to pass in that day, there shall be a great confusion from Jehovah among them, and they shall grasp every man the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall be lifted against the hand of his neighbour.¹ And even Judah shall fight against Jerusalem, and the wealth of all the nations round about shall be swept up, gold and silver and garments, in a very great mass. These two verses, 13 and 14, obviously disturb the connection, which ver. 15 as obviously resumes with ver. 12. They are, therefore, generally regarded as an intrusion.² But why they have been inserted is not clear. Ver. 14 is a curious echo of the strife between Judah and Jerusalem described in chap. xii. They may be not a mere intrusion, but simply out of their proper place: yet, if so, where this proper place lies in these oracles is impossible to determine.*]

And even so shall be the plague upon the horses, mules, camels and asses, and all the beasts which are in those camps—just like this plague. And it shall come to pass that all that survive of all the nations who have come up against Jerusalem, shall come up from year to year to do obeisance to King Jehovah of Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths. And it shall come to pass that whosoever of all the races of the earth will not come up to Jerusalem to do obeisance to King Jehovah of Hosts, upon them there shall be no rain. And if the race of Egypt go not up nor come in, upon them also shall³ come the plague, with which Jehovah shall strike the nations that go not

¹ Ezek. xxxviii. 21.

² So Wellhausen and Nowack.

³ So LXX. and Syr. The Heb. text inserts a *not*.

up to keep the Feast of Booths. Such shall be the punishment¹ of Egypt, and the punishment¹ of all nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Booths.

The Feast of Booths was specially one of thanksgiving for the harvest; that is why the neglect of it is punished by the withholding of the rain which brings the harvest. But such a punishment for such a neglect shows how completely prophecy has become subject to the Law. One is tempted to think what Amos or Jeremiah or even "Malachi" would have thought of this. Verily all the writers of the prophetic books do not stand upon the same level of religion. The writer remembers that the curse of no rain cannot affect the Egyptians, the fertility of whose rainless land is secured by the annual floods of her river. So he has to insert a special verse for Egypt. She also will be plagued by Jehovah, yet he does not tell us in what fashion her plague will come.

The book closes with a little oracle of the most ceremonial description, connected not only in temper but even by subject with what has gone before. The very horses, which hitherto have been regarded as too foreign,² or—as even in this group of oracles³—as too warlike, to exist in Jerusalem, shall be consecrated to Jehovah. And so vast shall be the multitudes who throng from all the earth to the annual feasts and sacrifices at the Temple, that the pots of the latter shall be as large as the great altar-bowls,⁴ and every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be consecrated for use in the ritual. This hallowing of the horses

¹ תנּוּן, in classic Heb. *sin*; but as in Num. xxxii. 23 and Isa. v. 18, *the punishment that sin brings down*.

² Hosea xiv. 3.

⁴ So Wellhausen.

³ ix. 10.

raises the question, whether the passage can be from the same hand as wrote the prediction of the disappearance of all horses from Jerusalem.¹

In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto Jehovah. And the very pots in the House of Jehovah shall be as the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holy to Jehovah of Hosts, and all who sacrifice shall come and take of them and cook in them. And there shall be no more any pedlar² in the House of Jehovah of Hosts in that day.

¹ ix. 10.

² Heb. *Canaanite*. Cf. Christ's action in cleansing the Temple of all dealers (Matt. xxi. 12-14).

JONAH

“And this is the tragedy of the Book of Jonah, that a Book which is made the means of one of the most sublime revelations of truth in the Old Testament should be known to most only for its connection with a whale.”

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE BOOK OF JONAH

THE Book of Jonah is cast throughout in the form of narrative—the only one of our Twelve which is so. This fact, combined with the extraordinary events which the narrative relates, starts questions not raised by any of the rest. Besides treating, therefore, of the book's origin, unity, division and other commonplaces of introduction, we must further seek in this chapter reasons for the appearance of such a narrative among a collection of prophetic discourses. We have to ask whether the narrative be intended as one of fact; and if not, why the author was directed to the choice of such a form to enforce the truth committed to him.

The appearance of a narrative among the Twelve Prophets is not, in itself, so exceptional as it seems to be. Parts of the Books of Amos and Hosea treat of the personal experience of their authors. The same is true of the Books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, in which the prophet's call and his attitude to it are regarded as elements of his message to men. No: the peculiarity of the Book of Jonah is not the presence of narrative, but the apparent absence of all prophetic discourse.¹

Yet even this might be explained by reference to the first part of the prophetic canon—Joshua to Second

¹ Unless the Psalm were counted as such. See below, p. 511.

Kings.¹ These Former Prophets, as they are called, are wholly narrative—narrative in the prophetic spirit and written to enforce a moral. Many of them begin as the Book of Jonah does :² they contain stories, for instance, of Elijah and Elisha, who flourished immediately before Jonah and like him were sent with commissions to foreign lands. It might therefore be argued that the Book of Jonah, though narrative, is as much a prophetic book as they are, and that the only reason why it has found a place, not with these histories, but among the Later Prophets, is the exceedingly late date of its composition.³

This is a plausible, but not the real, answer to our question. Suppose we were to find the latter by discovering that the Book of Jonah, though in narrative form, is not real history at all, nor pretends to be; but, from beginning to end, is as much a prophetic sermon as any of the other Twelve Books, yet cast in the form of parable or allegory? This would certainly explain the adoption of the book among the Twelve; nor would its allegorical character appear without precedent to those (and they are among the most conservative of critics) who maintain (as the present writer does not) the allegorical character of the story of Hosea's wife.⁴

It is, however, when we pass from the form to the substance of the book that we perceive the full justification of its reception among the prophets. The truth

¹ *Minus* Ruth of course.

² Cf. with Jonah i. 1, יְהוָה, Josh. i. 1, 1 Sam. i. 1, 2 Sam. i. 1. The corrupt state of the text of Ezek. i. 1 does not permit us to adduce it also as a parallel.

³ See below, p. 496.

⁴ See above, Vol. I., p. 236.

which we find in the Book of Jonah is as full and fresh a revelation of God's will as prophecy anywhere achieves. That God has *granted to the Gentiles also repentance unto life*¹ is nowhere else in the Old Testament so vividly illustrated. It lifts the teaching of the Book of Jonah to equal rank with the second part of Isaiah, and nearest of all our Twelve to the New Testament. The very form in which this truth is insinuated into the prophet's reluctant mind, by contrasting God's pity for the dim population of Niniveh with Jonah's own pity for his perished gourd, suggests the methods of our Lord's teaching, and invests the book with the morning air of that high day which shines upon the most evangelic of His parables.

One other remark is necessary. In our effort to appreciate this lofty gospel we labour under a disadvantage. That is our sense of humour—our modern sense of humour. Some of the figures in which our author conveys his truth cannot but appear to us grotesque. How many have missed the sublime spirit of the book in amusement or offence at its curious details! Even in circles in which the acceptance of its literal interpretation has been demanded as a condition of belief in its inspiration, the story has too often served as a subject for humorous remarks. This is almost inevitable if we take it as history. But we shall find that one advantage of the theory, which treats the book as parable, is that the features, which appear so grotesque to many, are traced to the popular poetry of the writer's own time and shown to be natural. When we prove this, we shall be able to treat the scenery of the book as we do that of

¹ Acts xi. 8.

some early Christian fresco, in which, however rude it be or untrue to nature, we discover an earnestness and a success in expressing the moral essence of a situation that are not always present in works of art more skilful or more correct.

I. THE DATE OF THE BOOK.

Jonah ben-Amittai, from Gath-hepher¹ in Galilee, came forward in the beginning of the reign of Jeroboam II. to announce that the king would regain the lost territories of Israel from the Pass of Hamath to the Dead Sea.² He flourished, therefore, about 780, and had this book been by himself we should have had to place it first of all the Twelve, and nearly a generation before that of Amos. But the book neither claims to be by Jonah, nor gives any proof of coming from an eye-witness of the adventures which it describes,³ nor even from a contemporary of the prophet. On the contrary, one verse implies that when it was written Niniveh had ceased to be a great city.⁴ Now Niniveh fell, and was practically destroyed, in 606 B.C.⁵ In all ancient history there was no collapse of an imperial city more sudden or so complete.⁶ We must therefore date the Book of Jonah some time after 606, when Niniveh's greatness had become what it was to the Greek writers, a matter of tradition.

¹ Cf. Gittah-hepher, Josh. xix. 13, by some held to be El Meshhed, three miles north-east of Nazareth. The tomb of Jonah is pointed out there.

² 2 Kings xiv. 25.

³ Cf. Kuenen, *Eint.*, II. 417, 418.

⁴ iii. 3: הָיְתָה, *was*.

⁵ See above, pp. 21 ff., 96 ff.

⁶ Cf. George Smith, *Assyrian Discoveries*, p. 94; Sayce, *Ancient Empires of the East*, p. 141. Cf. previous note.

A late date is also proved by the language of the book. This not only contains Aramaic elements which have been cited to support the argument for a northern origin in the time of Jonah himself,¹ but a number of words and grammatical constructions which we find in the Old Testament, some of them in the later and some only in the very latest writings.² Scarcely less decisive are a number of apparent quotations and echoes of passages in the Old Testament, mostly later than the date of the historical Jonah, and

¹ As, *e.g.*, by Volck, article "Jona" in Herzog's *Real. Encycl.*:² the use of שָׁלַח for אָשַׁר, as, *e.g.*, in the very early Song of Deborah. But the same occurs in many late passages: Eccles. i. 7, 11, ii. 21, 22, etc., Psalms cxxii., cxxiv., cxxxv. 2, 8, cxxxvii. 8, cxlvi. 3.

² A. Grammatical constructions:—i. 7, בְּשָׁלְחִי; 12, בְּשָׁלִי; that בשל has not altogether displaced באשר König (*Einkl.*, 378) thinks a proof of the date of Jonah in the early Aramaic period. iv. 6, the use of לוֹ for the accusative, cf. Jer. xl. 2, Ezra viii. 24: seldom in earlier Hebrew, 1 Sam. xxiii. 10, 2 Sam. iii. 30, especially when the object stands before the verb, Isa. xi. 9 (this may be late), 1 Sam. xxii. 7, Job v. 2; but continually in Aramaic, Dan. ii. 10, 12, 14, 24, etc. The first personal pronoun אֲנִי (five times) occurs oftener than אַנְכִי (twice), just as in all exilic and post-exilic writings. The numerals ii. 1, iii. 3, precede the noun, as in earlier Hebrew.

B. Words:—מְנָה in Pi. is a favourite term of our author, ii. 1, iv. 6, 8; is elsewhere in O.T. Hebrew found only in Dan. i. 5, 10, 18, 1 Chron. ix. 29, Psalm lxi. 8; but in O.T. Aramaic מְנָה Pi. מְנִי occurs in Ezra vii. 25, Dan. ii. 24, 49, iii. 12, etc. סַפִּינָה, i. 5, is not elsewhere found in O.T., but is common in later Hebrew and in Aramaic. הִתְעַשֵּׂת, i. 6, *to think*, for the Heb. הִשָּׁב, cf. Psalm cxlvi. 4, but Aram. cf. Dan. vi. 4 and Targums. טַעַם in the sense *to order or command*, iii. 7, is found elsewhere in the O.T. only in the Aramaic passages Dan. iii. 10, Ezra vi. 1, etc. רָבּוּ, iv. 11, for the earlier רַבְבָּה occurs only in later Hebrew, Ezra ii. 64, Neh. vii. 66, 72, 1 Chron. xxix. 7 (Hosea viii. 12, Kethibh is suspected). שָׁתַק, i. 11, 12, occurs only in Psalm cvii. 30, Prov. xxvi. 20. עָמַל, iv. 10, instead of the usual יָגַע. The expression *God of Heaven*, i. 9, occurs only 2 Chron. xxxvi. 23, Psalm cxxxvi. 26, Dan. ii. 18, 19, 44, and frequently in Ezra and Nehemiah.

some of them even later than the Exile.¹ If it could be proved that the Book of Jonah quotes from Joel, that would indeed set it down to a very late date—probably about 300 B.C., the period of the composition of Ezra-Nehemiah, with the language of which its own shows most affinity.² This would leave time for its reception into the Canon of the Prophets, which was closed by 200 B.C.³ Had the book been later it would undoubtedly have fallen, like Daniel, within the Hagiographa.

2. THE CHARACTER OF THE BOOK.

Nor does this book, written so many centuries after Jonah had passed away, claim to be real history: On the contrary, it offers to us all the marks of the parable or allegory. We have, first of all, the residence of

¹ In chap. iv. there are undoubted echoes of the story of Elijah's depression in 1 Kings xix., though the alleged parallel between Jonah's tree (iv. 8) and Elijah's broom-bush seems to me forced. iv. 9 has been thought, though not conclusively, to depend on Gen. iv. 6, and the appearance of יהוה אלהים has been referred to its frequent use in Gen. ii. f. More important are the parallels with Joel: iii. 9 with Joel ii. 14a, and the attributes of God in iv. 2 with Joel ii. 13. But which of the two is the original?

² Kleinert assigns the book to the Exile; Ewald to the fifth or sixth century; Driver to the fifth century (*Introd.*⁶, 301); Orelli to the last Chaldean or first Persian age; Vatke to the third century. These assign generally to after the Exile: Cheyne (*Theol. Rev.*, XIV., p. 218: cf. art. "Jonah" in the *Encycl. Brit.*), König (*Einl.*), Rob. Smith, Kuenen, Wildeboer, Budde, Cornill, Farrar, etc. Hitzig brings it down as far as the Maccabean age, which is impossible if the prophetic canon closed in 200 B.C., and seeks for its origin in Egypt, "that land of wonders," on account of its fabulous character, and because of the description of the east wind as חרישית (iv. 8), and the name of the gourd, קיקיון, Egyptian *kiki*. But such a wind and such a plant were found outside Egypt as well. Nowack dates the book after Joel.

³ See above, Vol. I., p. 5

Jonah for the conventional period of three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, a story not only very extraordinary in itself and sufficient to provoke the suspicion of allegory (we need not stop to argue this), but apparently woven, as we shall see,¹ from the materials of a myth well known to the Hebrews. We have also the very general account of Niniveh's conversion, in which there is not even the attempt to describe any precise event. The absence of precise data is indeed conspicuous throughout the book. "The author neglects a multitude of things, which he would have been obliged to mention had history been his principal aim. He says nothing of the sins of which Niniveh was guilty,² nor of the journey of the prophet to Niniveh, nor does he mention the place where he was cast out upon the land, nor the name of the Assyrian king. In any case, if the narrative were intended to be historical, it would be incomplete by the frequent fact, that circumstances which are necessary for the connection of events are mentioned later than they happened, and only where attention has to be directed to them as having already happened."³ We find, too, a number of trifling discrepancies, from which some critics⁴ have attempted to prove the presence of more than one story in the composition of the book, but which are simply due to the license a writer allows himself when he is telling a tale and not writing a history. Above all, there is the abrupt close to the

¹ Below, pp. 523 ff.

² Contrast the treatment of foreign states by Elisha, Amos and Isaiah, etc.

³ Abridged from pp. 3 and 4 of Kleinert's Introduction to the Book of Jonah in Lange's Series of Commentaries. Eng. ed., Vol. XVI.

⁴ Köhler, *Theol. Rev.*, Vol. XVI.; Böhme, *Z.A.T.W.*, 1887, pp. 224 ff.

story at the very moment at which its moral is obvious.¹ All these things are symptoms of the parable—so obvious and so natural, that we really sin against the intention of the author, and the purpose of the Spirit which inspired him, when we wilfully interpret the book as real history.²

3. THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK.

The general purpose of this parable is very clear. It is not, as some have maintained,³ to explain why

¹ Indeed throughout the book the truths it enforces are always more pushed to the front than the facts.

² Nearly all the critics who accept the late date of the book interpret it as parabolic. See also a powerful article by the late Dr. Dale in the *Expositor*, Fourth Series, Vol. VI., July 1892, pp. 1 ff. Cf., too, C. H. H. Wright, *Biblical Essays* (1886), pp. 34-98.

³ Marck (quoted by Kleinert) said: "Scriptum est magna parte historicum sed ita ut in historia ipsa lateat maximi vaticinii mysterium, atque ipse fati suis, non minus quam effatis vatem se verum demonstrat." Hitzig curiously thinks that this is the reason why it has been placed in the Canon of the Prophets next to the unfulfilled prophecy of God against Edom. But by the date which Hitzig assigns to the book the prophecy against Edom was at least in a fair way to fulfilment. Riehm (*Theol. Stud. u. Krit.*, 1862, pp. 413 f.): "The practical intention of the book is to afford instruction concerning the proper attitude to prophetic warnings"; these, though genuine words of God, may be averted by repentance. Volck (art. "Jona" in Herzog's *Real. Encycl.*²) gives the following. Jonah's experience is characteristic of the whole prophetic profession. "We learn from it (1) that the prophet must perform what God commands him, however unusual it appears; (2) that even death cannot nullify his calling; (3) that the prophet has no right to the fulfilment of his prediction, but must place it in God's hand." Vatke (*Einkl.*, 688) maintains that the book was written in an apologetic interest, when Jews expounded the prophets and found this difficulty, that all their predictions had not been fulfilled. "The author obviously teaches: (1) since the prophet cannot withdraw from the Divine commission, he is also not responsible for the contents of his predictions; (2) the prophet often announces Divine purposes, which are not fulfilled,

the judgments of God and the predictions of His prophets were not always fulfilled—though this also becomes clear by the way. The purpose of the parable, and it is patent from first to last, is to illustrate the mission of prophecy to the Gentiles, God's care for them, and their susceptibility to His word. More correctly, it is to enforce all this truth upon a prejudiced and thrice-reluctant mind.¹

Whose was this reluctant mind? In Israel after the Exile there were many different feelings with regard to the future and the great obstacle which heathendom interposed between Israel and the future. There was the feeling of outraged justice, with the intense conviction that Jehovah's kingdom could not be established save by the overthrow of the cruel kingdoms of this world. We have seen that conviction expressed in the Book of Obadiah. But the nation, which read and cherished the visions of the Great Seer of the Exile,² could not help producing among her sons men with hopes about the heathen of a very different kind—men who felt that Israel's mission to the world was not one

because God in His mercy takes back the threat, when repentance follows; (3) the honour of a prophet is not hurt when a threat is not fulfilled, and the inspiration remains unquestioned, although many predictions are not carried out."

To all of which there is a conclusive answer, in the fact that, had the book been meant to explain or justify unfulfilled prophecy, the author would certainly not have chosen as an instance a judgment against Niniveh, because, by the time he wrote, all the early predictions of Niniveh's fall had been fulfilled, we might say, to the very letter.

¹ So even Kimchi; and in modern times De Wette, Delitzsch, Bleek, Reuss, Cheyne, Wright, König, Farrar, Orelli, etc. So virtually also Nowack. Ewald's view is a little different. He thinks that the fundamental truth of the book is that "true fear and repentance bring salvation from Jehovah." ² Isa. xl. ff.

of war, but of service in those high truths of God and of His Grace which had been committed to herself. Between the two parties it is certain there was much polemic, and we find this still bitter in the time of our Lord. And some critics think that while Esther, Obadiah and other writings of the centuries after the Return represent the one side of this polemic, which demanded the overthrow of the heathen, the Book of Jonah represents the other side, and in the vexed and reluctant prophet pictures such Jews as were willing to proclaim the destruction of the enemies of Israel, and yet like Jonah were not without the lurking fear that God would disappoint their predictions and in His patience leave the heathen room for repentance.¹ Their dogmatism could not resist the impression of how long God had actually spared the oppressors of His people, and the author of the Book of Jonah cunningly sought these joints in their armour to insinuate the points of his doctrine of God's real will for nations beyond the covenant. This is ingenious and plausible. But in spite of the cleverness with which it has been argued that the details of the story of Jonah are adapted to the temper of the Jewish party who desired only vengeance on the heathen, it is not at all necessary to suppose that the book was the produce of mere polemic. The book is too simple and too grand for that. And therefore those appear more right who conceive that the writer had in view, not a Jewish party, but Israel as a whole in their national reluctance to fulfil their Divine mission to the world.² Of them God

¹ So virtually Kuenen, *Eint.*, II., p. 423; Smend, *Lehrbuch der A. T. Religionsgeschichte*, pp. 408 f., and Nowack.

² That the book is a historical allegory is a very old theory. Hermann v. d. Hardt (*Ænigmata Prisci Orbis*, 1723: cf. *Jonas in*

had already said: *Who is blind but My servant, or deaf as My messenger whom I have sent? . . . Who gave Jacob for a spoil and Israel to the robbers? Did not Jehovah, He against whom we have sinned?—for they would not walk in His ways, neither were they obedient to His law.*¹ Of such a people Jonah is the type. Like them he flees from the duty God has laid upon him. Like them he is, beyond his own land, cast for a set period into a living death, and like them rescued again only to exhibit once more upon his return an ill-will to believe that God had any fate for the heathen except destruction. According to this theory, then, Jonah's disappearance in the sea and the great fish, and his subsequent ejection upon dry land, symbolise the Exile of Israel and their restoration to Palestine.

In proof of this view it has been pointed out that, while the prophets frequently represent the heathen tyrants of Israel as the sea or the sea-monster, one of them has actually described the nation's exile as its swallowing by a monster, whom God forces at last to disgorge his living prey.² The full illustration of this will be given

Carcharia, Israel in Carpathio, 1718, quoted by Vatke, *Einl.*, p. 686) found in the book a political allegory of the history of Manasseh led into exile, and converted, while the last two chapters represent the history of Josiah. That the book was symbolic in some way of the conduct and fortunes of Israel was a view familiar in Great Britain during the first half of this century: see the Preface to the English translation of Calvin on Jonah (1847). Kleinert (in his commentary on Jonah in Lange's Series, Vol. XVI. English translation, 1874) was one of the first to expound with details the symbolising of Israel in the prophet Jonah. Then came the article in the *Theol. Review* (XIV. 1877, pp. 214 ff.) by Cheyne, following Bloch's *Studien u. Gesch. der Sammlung der althebräischen Litteratur* (Breslau, 1876); but adding the explanation of the *great fish* from Hebrew mythology (see below). Von Orelli quotes Kleinert with approval in the main.

¹ Isa. xlii. 19-24.

² Jer. li. 34, 44 f.

in Chapter XXXVI. on "The Great Fish and What it Means." Here it is only necessary to mention that the metaphor was borrowed, not, as has been alleged by many, from some Greek, or other foreign, myth, which, like that of Perseus and Andromeda, had its scene in the neighbourhood of Joppa, but from a Semitic mythology which was well known to the Hebrews, and the materials of which were employed very frequently by other prophets and poets of the Old Testament.¹

Why, of all prophets, Jonah should have been selected as the type of Israel, is a question hard but perhaps not impossible to answer. In history Jonah appears only as concerned with Israel's reconquest of her lands from the heathen. Did the author of the book say: I will take such a man, one to whom tradition attributes no outlook beyond Israel's own territories, for none could be so typical of Israel, narrow, selfish and with no love for the world beyond herself? Or did the author know some story about a journey of Jonah to Niniveh, or at least some discourse by Jonah against the great city? Elijah went to Sarepta, Elisha took

¹ That the Book of Jonah employs mythical elements is an opinion that has prevailed since the beginning of this century. But before Semitic mythology was so well known as it is now, these mythical elements were thought to have been derived from the Greek mythology. So Gesenius, De Wette, and even Knobel, but see especially F. C. Baur in Ilgen's *Zeitschrift* for 1837, p. 201. Kuenen (*Einl.*, 424) and Cheyne (*Theol. Rev.*, XIV.) rightly deny traces of any Greek influence on Jonah, and their denial is generally agreed in.

Kleinert (*op. cit.*, p. 10) points to the proper source in the native mythology of the Hebrews: "The sea-monster is by no means an unusual phenomenon in prophetic typology. It is the secular power appointed by God for the scourge of Israel and of the earth (Isa. xxvii. 1)"; and Cheyne (*Theol. Rev.*, XIV., "Jonah: a Study in Jewish Folk-lore and Religion") points out how Jer. li. 34, 44 f., forms the connecting link between the story of Jonah and the popular mythology.

God's word to Damascus: may there not have been, though we are ignorant of it, some connection between Niniveh and the labours of Elisha's successor? Thirty years after Jonah appeared, Amos proclaimed the judgment of Jehovah upon foreign nations, with the destruction of their capitals; about the year 755 he clearly enforced, as equal with Israel's own, the moral responsibility of the heathen to the God of righteousness. May not Jonah, almost the contemporary of Amos, have denounced Niniveh in the same way? Would not some tradition of this serve as the nucleus of history, round which our author built his allegory? It is possible that Jonah proclaimed doom upon Niniveh; yet those who are familiar with the prophesying of Amos, Hosea, and, in his younger days, Isaiah, will deem it hardly probable. For why do all these prophets exhibit such reserve in even naming Assyria, if Israel had already through Jonah entered into such articulate relations with Niniveh? We must, therefore, admit our ignorance of the reasons which led our author to choose Jonah as a type of Israel. We can only conjecture that it may have been because Jonah was a prophet, whom history identified only with Israel's narrower interests. If, during subsequent centuries, a tradition had risen of Jonah's journey to Niniveh or of his discourse against her, such a tradition has probability against it.

A more definite origin for the book than any yet given has been suggested by Professor Budde.¹ The Second Book of Chronicles refers to a *Midrash of the Book of the Kings*² for further particulars concerning

¹ *Z.A.T.W.*, 1892, pp. 40 ff.

² 2 Chron. xxiv. 27.

King Joash. A *Midrash*¹ was the expansion, for doctrinal or homiletic purposes, of a passage of Scripture, and very frequently took the form, so dear to Orientals, of parable or invented story about the subject of the text. We have examples of *Midrashim* among the Apocrypha, in the Books of Tobit and Susannah and in the Prayer of Manasseh, the same as is probably referred to by the Chronicler.² That the Chronicler himself used the *Midrash of the Book of the Kings* as material for his own book is obvious from the form of the latter and its adaptation of the historical narratives of the Book of Kings.³ The Book of Daniel may also be reckoned among the *Midrashim*, and Budde now proposes to add to their number the Book of Jonah. It may be doubted whether this distinguished critic is right in supposing that the book formed the *Midrash* to 2 Kings xiv. 25 ff. (the author being desirous to add to the expression there of Jehovah's pity upon Israel some expression of His pity upon the heathen), or that it was extracted just as it stands, in proof of which Budde points to its abrupt beginning and end. We have seen another reason for the latter;⁴ and it is very improbable that the *Midrashim*, so largely the basis of the Books of Chronicles, shared that spirit of universalism which inspires the Book of Jonah.⁵ But we may well believe that it was in some *Midrash* of the Book of Kings that the author of the Book of Jonah found the basis of the latter part of his immortal work, which too clearly reflects the

¹ Cf. Driver, *Introduction*, I., p. 497.

² 2 Chron. xxxiii. 18.

³ See Robertson Smith, *Old Test. in the Jewish Church*, pp. 140, 154.

⁴ See above, pp. 499 f.

⁵ Cf. Smend, *A. T. Religionsgeschichte*, p. 409, n. 1.

fortunes and conduct of all Israel to have been wholly drawn from a Midrash upon the story of the individual prophet Jonah.

4. OUR LORD'S USE OF THE BOOK.

We have seen, then, that the Book of Jonah is not actual history, but the enforcement of a profound religious truth nearer to the level of the New Testament than anything else in the Old, and cast in the form of Christ's own parables. The full proof of this can be made clear only by the detailed exposition of the book. There is, however, one other question, which is relevant to the argument. Christ Himself has employed the story of Jonah. Does His use of it involve His authority for the opinion that it is a story of real facts?

Two passages of the Gospels contain the words of our Lord upon Jonah: Matt. xii. 39, 41, and Luke xi. 29, 30.¹ *A generation, wicked and adulterous, seeketh a sign, and sign shall not be given it, save the sign of the*

¹ Matt. xii. 40—*For as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so shall the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights*—is not repeated in Luke xi. 29, 30, which confines the sign to the preaching of repentance, and is suspected as an intrusion both for this and other reasons, *e.g.* that ver. 40 is superfluous and does not fit in with ver. 41, which gives the proper explanation of the sign; that Jonah, who came by his burial in the fish through neglect of his duty and not by martyrdom, could not therefore in this respect be a type of our Lord. On the other hand, ver. 40 is not unlike another reference of our Lord to His resurrection, John ii. 19 ff. Yet, even if ver. 40 be genuine, the vagueness of the parallel drawn in it between Jonah and our Lord surely makes for the opinion that in quoting Jonah our Lord was not concerned about quoting facts, but simply gave an illustration from a well-known tale. Matt. xvi. 4, where the sign of Jonah is again mentioned, does not explain the sign.

prophet Jonah. . . . The men of Niniveh shall stand up in the Judgment with this generation, and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, a greater than Jonah is here. This generation is an evil generation : it seeketh a sign ; and sign shall not be given it, except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninivites, so also shall the Son of Man be to this generation.

These words, of course, are compatible with the opinion that the Book of Jonah is a record of real fact. The only question is, are they also compatible with the opinion that the Book of Jonah is a parable? Many say No ; and they allege that those of us who hold this opinion are denying, or at least ignoring, the testimony of our Lord ; or that we are taking away the whole force of the parallel which He drew. This is a question of interpretation, not of faith. We do not believe that our Lord had any thought of confirming or not confirming the historic character of the story. His purpose was purely one of exhortation, and we feel the grounds of that exhortation to be just as strong, when we have proven the Book of Jonah to be a parable. Christ is using an illustration : it surely matters not whether that illustration be drawn from the realms of fact or of poetry. Again and again in their discourses to the people do men use illustrations and enforcements drawn from traditions of the past. Do we, even when the historical value of these traditions is *very* ambiguous, give a single thought to the question of their historical character? We never think of it. It is enough for us that the tradition is popularly accepted and familiar. And we cannot deny to our Lord that which we claim for ourselves.¹ Even

¹ Take a case. Suppose we tell slothful people that theirs will be

conservative writers admit this. In his recent Introduction to Jonah Orelli says expressly: "It is not, indeed, proved with conclusive necessity that, if the resurrection of Jesus was a physical fact, Jonah's abode in the fish's belly must also be just as historical."¹

Upon the general question of our Lord's authority in matters of criticism, His own words with regard to personal questions may be appositely quoted: *Man, who made Me a judge or divider over you? I am come not to judge . . . but to save.* Such matters our Lord surely leaves to ourselves, and we have to decide them by our reason, our common-sense and our loyalty to truth—of all of which He Himself is the creator, and of which we shall have to render to Him an account at the last. Let us remember this, and we shall use them with equal liberty and reverence. *Bringing every thought into subjection to Christ* is surely just using our knowledge, our reason, and every other intellectual gift which He has given us, with the accuracy and the courage of His own Spirit.

5. THE UNITY OF THE BOOK.

The next question is that of the Unity of the Book. Several attempts have been made to prove from discrepancies, some real and some alleged, that the book is a compilation of stories from several different hands.

the fate of the man who buried his talent, is this to commit us to the belief that the personages of Christ's parables actually existed? Or take the homiletic use of Shakespeare's dramas—"as Macbeth did," or "as Hamlet said." Does it commit us to the historical reality of Macbeth or Hamlet? Any preacher among us would resent being bound by such an inference. And if we resent this for ourselves, how chary we should be about seeking to bind our Lord by it.

¹ Eng. trans. of *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, p. 172. Consult also Farrar's judicious paragraphs on the subject: *Minor Prophets*, 234 f.

But these essays are too artificial to have obtained any adherence from critics; and the few real discrepancies of narrative from which they start are due, as we have seen, rather to the license of a writer of parable than to any difference of authorship.¹

In the question of the Unity of the Book, the Prayer or Psalm in chap. ii. offers a problem of its own, consisting as it does almost entirely of passages parallel to others in the Psalter. Besides a number of religious

¹ The two attempts which have been made to divide the Book of Jonah are those by Köhler in the *Theol. Rev.*, XVI. 139 ff., and by Böhme in the *Z.A.T.W.*, VII. 224 ff. Köhler first insists on traits of an earlier age (rude conception of God, no sharp boundary drawn between heathens and the Hebrews, etc.), and then finds traces of a late revision: lacuna in i. 2; hesitation in iii. 1, in the giving of the prophet's commission, which is not pure Hebrew; change of three days to forty (cf. LXX.); mention of unnamed king and his edict, which is superfluous after the popular movement; beasts sharing in mourning; also in i. 5, 8, 9, 14, ii. 2, יָנָה, iii. 9, iv. 1-4, as disturbing context; also the building of a booth is superfluous, and only invented to account for Jonah remaining forty days instead of the original three; iv. 6, לְהַצִּיל לוֹ = to offer him shade; 7, *the worm*, תּוֹלַעַת, due to a copyist's change of the following בְּעֵלֹת. Withdrawing these, Köhler gets an account of the sparing of Niniveh on repentance following a sentence of doom, which, he says, reflects the position of the city of God in Jeremiah's time, and was due to Jeremiah's opponents, who said in answer to his sentence of doom: If Niniveh could avert her fate, why not Jerusalem? Böhme's conclusion, starting from the alleged contradictions in the story, is that no fewer than four hands have had to deal with it. A sufficient answer is given by Kuenen (*Einkl.*, 426 ff.), who, after analysing the dissection, says that its "improbability is immediately evident." With regard to the inconsistencies which Böhme alleges to exist in chap. iii. between ver. 5 and vv. 6-9, Kuenen remarks that "all that is needed for their explanation is a little good-will"—a phrase applicable to many other difficulties raised with regard to other Old Testament books by critical attempts even more rational than those of Böhme. Cornill characterises Böhme's hypothesis as absurd.

phrases, which are too general for us to say that one prayer has borrowed them from another,¹ there are several unmistakeable repetitions of the Psalms.²

And yet the Psalm of Jonah has strong features, which, so far as we know, are original to it. The horror of the great deep has nowhere in the Old Testament been described with such power or with such conciseness. So far, then, the Psalm is not a mere string of quotations, but a living unity. Did the author of the book himself insert it where it stands? Against this it has been urged that the Psalm is not the prayer of a man inside a fish, but of one who on dry land celebrates a deliverance from drowning, and that if the author of the narrative himself had inserted it, he would rather have done so after ver. 11, which records the prophet's escape from the fish.³ And a usual theory of the origin of the Psalm is that a later editor, having found the Psalm ready-made and in a collection where it was perhaps attributed to Jonah,⁴ inserted it after ver. 2, which records that Jonah did pray from the belly of the fish, and inserted it there the more readily, because it seemed right for a book which had found its place among the Twelve Prophets to contribute, as all the others did, some actual discourse of the prophet whose name it bore.⁵ This, however, is not probable. Whether the original author found the

¹ *To Thy holy temple*, vv. 5 and 8: cf. Psalm v. 8, etc. *The waters have come round me to my very soul*, ver. 6: cf. Psalm lxix. 2. *And Thou broughtest up my life*, ver. 7: cf. Psalm xxx. 4. *When my soul fainted upon me*, ver. 8: cf. Psalm cxlii. 4, etc. *With the voice of thanksgiving*, ver. 10: cf. Psalm xlii. 5. The refl. are to the Heb. text.

² Cf. ver. 3 with Psalm xviii. 7; ver. 4 with Psalm xlii. 8; ver. 5 with Psalm xxxi. 23; ver. 9 with Psalm xxxi. 7, and ver. 10 with Psalm l. 14.

⁴ De Wette, Knobel, Kuenen.

⁵ Budde, as above, p. 42.

³ Budde.

Psalm ready to his hand or made it, there is a great deal to be said for the opinion of the earlier critics,¹ that he himself inserted it, and just where it now stands. For, from the standpoint of the writer, Jonah was already saved, when he was taken up by the fish—saved from the deep into which he had been cast by the sailors, and the dangers of which the Psalm so vividly describes. However impossible it be for us to conceive of the compilation of a Psalm (even though full of quotations) by a man in Jonah's position,² it was consistent with the standpoint of a writer who had just affirmed that the fish was expressly *appointed by Jehovah*, in order to save his penitent servant from the sea. To argue that the Psalm is an intrusion is therefore not only unnecessary, but it betrays failure to appreciate the standpoint of the writer. Given the fish and the Divine purpose of the fish, the Psalm is intelligible and appears at its proper place. It were more reasonable indeed to argue that the fish itself is an insertion. Besides, as we shall see, the spirit of the Psalm is national; in conformity with the truth underlying the book, it is a Psalm of Israel as a whole.

If this be correct, we have the Book of Jonah as it came from the hands of its author. The text is in wonderfully good condition, due to the ease of the narrative and its late date. The Greek version

¹ *E.g.* Hitzig.

² Luther says of Jonah's prayer, that "he did not speak with these exact words in the belly of the fish, nor placed them so orderly, but he shows how he took courage, and what sort of thoughts his heart had, when he stood in such a battle with death." We recognise in this Psalm "the recollection of the confidence with which Jonah hoped towards God, that since he had been rescued in so wonderful a way from death in the waves, He would also bring him out of the night of his grave into the light of day."

exhibits the usual proportion of clerical errors and mis-translations,¹ omissions² and amplifications,³ with some variant readings⁴ and other changes that will be noted in the verses themselves.

¹ ii. 5, B has λαόν for ναόν; i. 9, for עברי it reads עבדי, and takes the י to be abbreviation for יהוה; ii. 7, for בעדי it reads בעלי, and translates κάτοχοι; iv. 11, for ישׁבה it reads ישבו, and translates κατοικοῦσι.

² i. 4, גדולה, perhaps rightly omitted before following גדול; i. 8, B omits the clause לננו באשר, probably rightly, for it is needless, though supplied by Codd. A, Q; iii. 9, one verb, μετανοήσει, for ישוב ונחם, probably correctly, see below.

³ i. 2, ἡ κραυγή τῆς κακίας for רעתם; ii. 3, τὸν θεόν μου after יהוה; ii. 10, in obedience to another reading; iii. 2, τὸ ἔμπροσθεν after קראיה; iii 8, לאמר.

⁴ iii. 4, 8.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE GREAT REFUSAL

JONAH i

WE have now laid clear the lines upon which the Book of Jonah was composed. Its purpose is to illustrate God's grace to the heathen in face of His people's refusal to fulfil their mission to them. The author was led to achieve this purpose by a parable, through which the prophet Jonah moves as the symbol of his recusant, exiled, redeemed and still hardened people. It is the Drama of Israel's career, as the Servant of God, in the most pathetic moments of that career. A nation is stumbling on the highest road nation was ever called to tread.

*Who is blind but My servant,
Or deaf as My messenger whom I have sent?*

He that would read this Drama aright must remember what lies behind the Great Refusal which forms its tragedy. The cause of Israel's recusancy was not only wilfulness or cowardly sloth, but the horror of a whole world given over to idolatry, the paralysing sense of its irresistible force, of its cruel persecutions endured for centuries, and of the long famine of Heaven's justice. These it was which had filled Israel's eyes too full of fever to see her duty. Only when we

feel, as the writer himself felt, all this tragic background to his story are we able to appreciate the exquisite gleams which he flashes across it: the generous magnanimity of the heathen sailors, the repentance of the heathen city, and, lighting from above, God's pity upon the dumb heathen multitudes.

The parable or drama divides itself into three parts: The Prophet's Flight and Turning (chap. i.); The Great Fish and What it Means (chap. ii.); and The Repentance of the City (chaps. iii. and iv.).

The chief figure of the story is Jonah, son of Amittai, from Gath-hepher in Galilee, a prophet identified with that turn in Israel's fortunes, by which she began to defeat her Syrian oppressors, and win back from them her own territories—a prophet, therefore, of revenge, and from the most bitter of the heathen wars. *And the word of Jehovah came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying, Up, go to Niniveh, the Great City, and cry out against her, for her evil is come up before Me. But he arose to flee.* It was not the length of the road, nor the danger of declaring Niniveh's sin to her face, which turned him, but the instinct that God intended by him something else than Niniveh's destruction; and this instinct sprang from his knowledge of God Himself. *Ah now, Jehovah, was not my word, while I was yet upon mine own soil, at the time I made ready to flee to Tarshish, this—that I knew that Thou art a God gracious and tender and long-suffering plenteous in love and relenting of evil?*¹ Jonah interpreted the Word which came to him by the Character which he knew to be behind the Word. This is a significant hint upon the method of revelation.

¹ iv. 2.

It would be rash to say that, in imputing even to the historical Jonah the fear of God's grace upon the heathen, our author were guilty of an anachronism.¹ We have to do, however, with a greater than Jonah—the nation herself. Though perhaps Israel little reflected upon it, the instinct can never have been far away that some day the grace of Jehovah might reach the heathen too. Such an instinct, of course, must have been almost stifled by hatred born of heathen oppression, as well as by the intellectual scorn which Israel came to feel for heathen idolatries. But we may believe that it haunted even those dark periods in which revenge upon the Gentiles seemed most just, and their destruction the only means of establishing God's kingdom in the world. We know that it moved uneasily even beneath the rigour of Jewish legalism. For its secret was that faith in the essential grace of God, which Israel gained very early and never lost, and which was the spring of every new conviction and every reform in her wonderful development. With a subtle appreciation of all this, our author imputes the instinct to Jonah from the outset. Jonah's fear, that after all the heathen may be spared, reflects the restless apprehension even of the most exclusive of his people—an apprehension which by the time our book

¹ For the grace of God had been the most formative influence in the early religion of Israel (see Vol. I., p. 19), and Amos, only thirty years after Jonah, emphasised the moral equality of Israel and the Gentiles before the one God of righteousness. Given these two premisses of God's essential grace and the moral responsibility of the heathen to Him, and the conclusion could never have been far away that in the end His essential grace must reach the heathen too. Indeed in sayings not later than the eighth century it is foretold that Israel shall become a blessing to the whole world. Our author, then, may have been guilty of no anachronism in imputing such a foreboding to Jonah.

was written seemed to be still more justified by God's long delay of doom upon the tyrants whom He had promised to overthrow.

But to the natural man in Israel the possibility of the heathen's repentance was still so abhorrent, that he turned his back upon it. *Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the face of Jehovah.* In spite of recent arguments to the contrary, the most probable location of Tarshish is the generally accepted one, that it was a Phœnician colony at the other end of the Mediterranean. In any case it was far from the Holy Land; and by going there the prophet would put the sea between himself and his God. To the Hebrew imagination there could not be a flight more remote. Israel was essentially an inland people. They had come up out of the desert, and they had practically never yet touched the Mediterranean. They lived within sight of it, but from ten to twenty miles of foreign soil intervened between their mountains and its stormy coast. The Jews had no traffic upon the sea, nor (but for one sublime instance¹ to the contrary) had their poets ever employed it except as a symbol of arrogance and restless rebellion against the will of God.² It was all this popular feeling of the distance and strangeness of the sea which made our author choose it as the scene of the prophet's flight from the face of Israel's God. Jonah had to pass, too, through a foreign land to get to the coast: upon the sea he would only be among heathen. This was to be part of his conversion. *He went down to Yapho, and found a ship going to Tarshish, and paid the fare thereof, and embarked on her*

¹ Second Isaiah. See chap. lx.

² See the author's *Hist. Geog. of the Holy Land*, pp. 131-134

to get away with her crew¹ to Tarshish—away from the face of Jehovah.

The scenes which follow are very vivid : the sudden wind sweeping down from the very hills on which Jonah believed he had left his God ; the tempest ; the behaviour of the ship, so alive with effort that the story attributes to her the feelings of a living thing—*she thought she must be broken* ; the despair of the mariners, driven from the unity of their common task to the hopeless diversity of their idolatry—*they cried every man unto his own god* ; the jettisoning of the tackle of the ship to lighten her (as we should say, they let the masts go by the board) ; the worn-out prophet in the hull of the ship, sleeping like a stow-away ; the group gathered on the heaving deck to cast the lot ; the passenger's confession, and the new fear which fell upon the sailors from it ; the reverence with which these rude men ask the advice of him, in whose guilt they feel not the offence to themselves, but the sacredness to God ; the awakening of the prophet's better self by their generous deference to him ; how he counsels to them his own sacrifice ; their reluctance to yield to this, and their return to the oars with increased perseverance for his sake. But neither their generosity nor their efforts avail. The prophet again offers himself, and as their sacrifice he is thrown into the sea.

And Jehovah cast a wind² on the sea, and there was a great tempest,³ and the ship threatened⁴ to break up. And the sailors were afraid, and cried every man unto his own god ; and they cast the tackle of the ship into the sea, to lighten it from upon them. But Jonah had gone

¹ Heb. *them*.

² So LXX. : Heb. *a great wind*.

³ Heb. *on the sea*.

⁴ Lit. *reckoned or thought*.

down to the bottom of the ship and lay fast asleep. And the captain of the ship¹ came to him, and said to him, What art thou doing asleep? Up, call on thy God; peradventure the God will be gracious to us, that we perish not. And they said every man to his neighbour, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose sake is this evil come upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. And they said to him, Tell us now,² what is thy business, and whence comest thou? what is thy land, and from what people art thou? And he said to them, A Hebrew am I, and a worshipper of the God of Heaven,³ who made the sea and the dry land. And the men feared greatly, and said to him, What is this thou hast done? (for they knew he was fleeing from the face of Jehovah, because he had told them). And they said to him, What are we to do to thee that the sea cease raging against us? For the sea was surging higher and higher. And he said, Take me and throw me into the sea; so shall the sea cease raging against you: for I am sure that it is on my account that this great tempest is risen upon you. And the men laboured⁴ with the oars to bring the ship to land, and they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them. So they called on Jehovah and said, Jehovah, let us not perish, we pray Thee, for the life of this man, neither bring innocent blood upon us: for Thou art Jehovah, Thou doest as Thou pleasest. Then they took up Jonah and cast him into the sea, and the sea stilled from its raging. But the men were

¹ Heb. *ropes*.

The words for *whose sake is this evil come upon us* do not occur in LXX. and are unnecessary.

² Wellhausen suspects this form of the Divine title.

⁴ Heb. *aug*.

in great awe of Jehovah, and sacrificed to Him and vowed vows.

How very real it is and how very noble! We see the storm, and then we forget the storm in the joy of that generous contest between heathen and Hebrew. But the glory of the passage is the change in Jonah himself. It has been called his punishment and the conversion of the heathen. Rather it is his own conversion. He meets again not only God, but the truth from which he fled. He not only meets that truth, but he offers his life for it.

The art is consummate. The writer will first reduce the prophet and the heathen whom he abhors to the elements of their common humanity. As men have sometimes seen upon a mass of wreckage or on an ice-floe a number of wild animals, by nature foes to each other, reduced to peace through their common danger, so we descry the prophet and his natural enemies upon the strained and breaking ship. In the midst of the storm they are equally helpless, and they cast for all the lot which has no respect of persons. But from this the story passes quickly, to show how Jonah feels not only the human kinship of these heathen with himself, but their susceptibility to the knowledge of his God. They pray to Jehovah as the God of the sea and the dry land; while we may be sure that the prophet's confession, and the story of his own relation to that God, forms as powerful an exhortation to repentance as any he could have preached in Niniveh. At least it produces the effects which he has dreaded. In these sailors he sees heathen turned to the fear of the Lord. All that he has fled to avoid happens there before his eyes and through his own mediation.

The climax is reached, however, neither when Jonah feels his common humanity with the heathen nor when he discovers their awe of his God, but when in order to secure for them God's sparing mercies he offers his own life instead. *Take me up and cast me into the sea; so shall the sea cease from raging against you.* After their pity for him has wrestled for a time with his honest entreaties, he becomes their sacrifice.

In all this story perhaps the most instructive passages are those which lay bare to us the method of God's revelation. When we were children this was shown to us in pictures of angels bending from heaven to guide Isaiah's pen, or to cry Jonah's commission to him through a trumpet. And when we grew older, although we learned to dispense with that machinery, yet its infection remained, and our conception of the whole process was mechanical still. We thought of the prophets as of another order of things; we released them from our own laws of life and thought, and we paid the penalty by losing all interest in them. But the prophets were human, and their inspiration came through experience. The source of it, as this story shows, was God. Partly from His guidance of their nation, partly through close communion with Himself, they received new convictions of His character. Yet they did not receive these mechanically. They spake neither at the bidding of angels, nor like heathen prophets in trance or ecstasy, but as *they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. And the Spirit worked upon them first as the influence of God's character,¹ and second

¹ *I knew how Thou art a God gracious.*

through the experience of life. God and life—these are all the postulates for revelation.

At first Jonah fled from the truth, at last he laid down his life for it. So God still forces us to the acceptance of new light and the performance of strange duties. Men turn from these, because of sloth or prejudice, but in the end they have to face them, and then at what a cost! In youth they shirk a self-denial to which in some storm of later life they have to bend with heavier, and often hopeless, hearts. For their narrow prejudices and refusals, God punishes them by bringing them into pain that stings, or into responsibility for others that shames, these out of them. The drama of life is thus intensified in interest and beauty; characters emerge heroic and sublime.

“But, oh the labour,
O prince, the pain!”

Sometimes the neglected duty is at last achieved only at the cost of a man's breath; and the truth, which might have been the bride of his youth and his comrade through a long life, is recognised by him only in the features of Death.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE GREAT FISH AND WHAT IT MEANS— THE PSALM

JONAH ii

AT this point in the tale appears the Great Fish. *And Jehovah prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.*

After the very natural story which we have followed, this verse obtrudes itself with a shock of unreality and grotesqueness. What an anticlimax! say some; what a clumsy intrusion! So it is if Jonah be taken as an individual. But if we keep in mind that he stands here, not for himself, but for his nation, the difficulty and the grotesqueness disappear. It is Israel's ill-will to the heathen, Israel's refusal of her mission, Israel's embarkation on the stormy sea of the world's politics, which we have had described as Jonah's. Upon her flight from God's will there followed her Exile, and from her Exile, which was for a set period, she came back to her own land, a people still, and still God's servant to the heathen. How was the author to express this national death and resurrection? In conformity with the popular language of his time, he had described Israel's turning from God's will by her embarkation on a stormy sea, always the symbol of the prophets for

the tossing heathen world that was ready to engulf her; and now to express her exile and return he sought metaphors in the same rich poetry of the popular imagination.

To the Israelite who watched from his hills that stormy coast on which the waves hardly ever cease to break in their impotent restlessness, the sea was a symbol of arrogance and futile defiance to the will of God. The popular mythology of the Semites had filled it with turbulent monsters, snakes and dragons who wallowed like its own waves, helpless against the bounds set to them, or rose to wage war against the gods in heaven and the great lights which they had created; but a god slays them and casts their carcasses for meat and drink to the thirsty people of the desert.¹ It is a symbol of the perpetual war between light and darkness; the dragons are the clouds, the slayer the sun. A variant form, which approaches closely to that of Jonah's great fish, is still found in Palestine. In May 1891 I witnessed at Hasbeya, on the western skirts of Hermon, an eclipse of the moon. When the shadow began to creep across her disc, there rose from the village a hideous din of drums, metal pots and planks of wood beaten together; guns were fired, and there was much shouting. I was told that this was done to terrify the great fish which was swallowing the moon, and to make him disgorge her.

Now these purely natural myths were applied by the prophets and poets of the Old Testament to the illustration, not only of Jehovah's sovereignty over the storm and the night, but of His conquest of the heathen

¹ For the Babylonian myths see Sayce's Hibbert Lectures; George Smith's *Assyrian Discoveries*; and Gunkel, *Schöpfung u. Chaos*.

powers who had enslaved His people.¹ Isaiah had heard in the sea the confusion and rage of the peoples against the bulwark which Jehovah set around Israel;² but it is chiefly from the time of the Exile onward that the myths themselves, with their cruel monsters and the prey of these, are applied to the great heathen powers and their captive, Israel. One prophet explicitly describes the Exile of Israel as the swallowing of the nation by the monster, the Babylonian tyrant, whom God forces at last to disgorge its prey. Israel says:³ *Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me⁴ and crushed me,⁴ . . . he hath swallowed me up like the Dragon, filling his belly, from my delights he hath cast me out.* But Jehovah replies:⁵ *I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed. . . . My people, go ye out of the midst of her.*

It has been justly remarked by Canon Cheyne that this passage may be considered as the intervening link between the original form of the myth and the application of it made in the story of Jonah.⁶ To this the objection might be offered that in the story of Jonah the *great fish* is not actually represented as the means of the prophet's temporary destruction, like the monster in Jeremiah li., but rather as the vessel of his deliver-

¹ Passages in which this class of myths are taken in a physical sense are Job iii. 8, vii. 12, xxvi. 12, 13, etc., etc.; and passages in which it is applied politically are Isa. xxvii. 1, li. 9; Jer. li. 34, 44; Psalm lxxiv., etc. See Gunkel, *Schöpfung u. Chaos*.

² Chap. xvii. 12-14.

³ Jer. li. 34.

⁴ Heb. margin, LXX. and Syr.; Heb. text *us*.

⁵ Jer. li. 44, 45.

⁶ Cheyne, *Theol. Rev.*, XIV. See above, p. 503.

ance.¹ This is true, yet it only means that our author has still further adapted the very plastic material offered him by this much transformed myth. But we do not depend for our proof upon the comparison of a single passage. Let the student of the Book of Jonah read carefully the many passages of the Old Testament, in which the sea or its monsters rage in vain against Jehovah, or are harnessed and led about by Him; or still more those passages in which His conquest of these monsters is made to figure His conquest of the heathen powers,²—and the conclusion will appear irresistible that the story of the *great fish* and of Jonah the type of Israel is drawn from the same source. Such a solution of the problem has one great advantage. It relieves us of the grotesqueness which attaches to the literal conception of the story, and of the necessity of those painful efforts for accounting for a miracle which have distorted the common-sense and even the orthodoxy of so many commentators of the book.³ We are dealing, let us remember, with poetry—a poetry inspired by one of the most sublime truths of the Old Testament, but whose figures are drawn from the legends and myths of the people to whom it is addressed. To treat this as prose is not only to sin against the common-sense which God has given us, but against the simple and obvious intention of the author. It is blindness both to reason and to Scripture.

¹ See above, p. 511, on the Psalm of Jonah.

² Above, p. 525, n. 1.

³ It is very interesting to notice how many commentators (*e.g.* Pusey, and the English edition of Lange) who take the story in its individual meaning, and therefore as miraculous, immediately try to minimise the miracle by quoting stories of great fishes who have swallowed men, and even men in armour, whole, and in one case at least have vomited them up alive!

These views are confirmed by an examination of the Psalm or Prayer which is put into Jonah's mouth while he is yet in the fish. We have already seen what grounds there are for believing that the Psalm belongs to the author's own plan, and from the beginning appeared just where it does now.¹ But we may also point out how, in consistence with its context, this is a Psalm, not of an individual Israelite, but of the nation as a whole. It is largely drawn from the national liturgy.² It is full of cries which we know, though they are expressed in the singular number, to have been used of the whole people, or at least of that pious portion of them, who were Israel indeed. True that in the original portion of the Psalm, and by far its most beautiful verses, we seem to have the description of a drowning man swept to the bottom of the sea. But even here, the colossal scenery and the magnificent hyperbole of the language suit not the experience of an individual, but the extremities of that vast gulf of exile into which a whole nation was plunged. It is a nation's carcass which rolls upon those infernal tides that swirl among the roots of mountains and behind the barred gates of earth. Finally, vv. 9 and 10 are obviously a contrast, not between the individual prophet and the heathen, but between the true Israel, who in exile preserve their loyalty to Jehovah, and those Jews who, forsaking their *covenant-love*, lapse to idolatry. We find many parallels to this in exilic and post-exilic literature.

And Jonah prayed to Jehovah his God from the belly of the fish, and said:—

I cried out of my anguish to Jehovah, and He answered me;

¹ See above, pp. 511 f.

² See above, p. 511, nn. 1, 2.

*From the belly of Inferno I sought help—Thou
heardest my voice.*

*For Thou hadst¹ cast me into the depth, to the heart
of the seas, and the flood rolled around me ;*

All Thy breakers and billows went over me.

Then I said, I am hurled from Thy sight :

*How² shall I ever again look towards Thy holy
temple ?*

*Waters enwrapped me to the soul ; the Deep rolled
around me ;*

The tangle was bound about my head.

I was gone down to the roots of the hills ;

Earth and her bars were behind me for ever.

*But Thou broughtest my life up from destruction,
Jehovah my God !*

*When my soul fainted upon me, I remembered
Jehovah,*

*And my prayer came in unto Thee, to Thy holy
temple.*

They that observe the idols of vanity,

They forsake their covenant-love.

But to the sound of praise I will sacrifice to Thee ;

What I have vowed I will perform.

Salvation is Jehovah's.

*And Jehovah spake to the fish, and it threw up
Jonah on the dry land.*

¹ The grammar, which usually expresses result, more literally runs, *And Thou didst cast me* ; but after the preceding verse it must be taken not as expressing consequence but cause.

² Read *וַיִּשְׁאֵל* for *וַיִּשְׁאֵל*, and with the LXX. take the sentence interrogatively.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE REPENTANCE OF THE CITY

JONAH iii

HAVING learned, through suffering, his moral kinship with the heathen, and having offered his life for some of them, Jonah receives a second command to go to Niniveh. He obeys, but with his prejudice as strong as though it had never been humbled, nor met by Gentile nobleness. The first part of his story appears to have no consequences in the second.¹ But this is consistent with the writer's purpose to treat Jonah as if he were Israel. For, upon their return from Exile, and in spite of all their new knowledge of themselves and the world, Israel continued to cherish their old grudge against the Gentiles.

And the word of Jehovah came to Jonah the second time, saying, Up, go to Niniveh, the great city, and call unto her with the call which I shall tell thee. And Jonah arose and went to Niniveh, as Jehovah said. Now Niniveh was a city great before God, three days' journey through and through.² And Jonah began by

¹ Only in iii. 1, *second time*, and in iv. 2 are there any references from the second to the first part of the book.

² The diameter rather than the circumference seems intended by the writer, if we can judge by his sending the prophet *one day's journey through the city*. Some, however, take the circumference as meant, and this agrees with the computation of sixty English miles as the girth of the greater Niniveh described below.

going through the city one day's journey, and he cried and said, Forty¹ days more and Niniveh shall be overturned.

Opposite to Mosul, the well-known emporium of trade on the right bank of the Upper Tigris, two high artificial mounds now lift themselves from the otherwise level plain. The more northerly takes the name of Kujundschik, or "little lamb," after the Turkish village which couches pleasantly upon its north-eastern slope. The other is called in the popular dialect Nebi Yunus, "Prophet Jonah," after a mosque dedicated to him, which used to be a Christian church; but the official name is Niniveh. These two mounds are bound to each other on the west by a broad brick wall, which extends beyond them both, and is connected north and south by other walls, with a circumference in all of about nine English miles. The interval, including the mounds, was covered with buildings, whose ruins still enable us to form some idea of what was for centuries the wonder of the world. Upon terraces and substructions of enormous breadth rose storied palaces, arsenals, barracks, libraries and temples. A lavish water system spread in all directions from canals with massive embankments and sluices. Gardens were lifted into mid-air, filled with rich plants and rare and beautiful animals. Alabaster, silver, gold and precious stones relieved the dull masses of brick and flashed sunlight from every frieze and battlement. The surrounding walls were so broad that chariots could roll abreast on them. The gates, and especially the river gates, were very massive.²

¹ LXX. Codd. B, etc., read *three days*; other Codd. have the *forty* of the Heb. text.

² For a more detailed description of Niniveh see above on the Book of Nahum, pp. 98 ff.

All this was Niniveh proper, whose glory the Hebrews envied and over whose fall more than one of their prophets exult. But this was not the Niniveh to which our author saw Jonah come. Beyond the walls were great suburbs,¹ and beyond the suburbs other towns, league upon league of dwellings, so closely set upon the plain as to form one vast complex of population, which is known to Scripture as *The Great City*.² To judge from the ruins which still cover the ground,³ the circumference must have been about sixty miles, or three days' journey. It is these nameless leagues of common dwellings which roll before us in the story. None of those glories of Niniveh are mentioned, of which other prophets speak, but the only proofs offered to us of the city's greatness are its extent and its population.⁴ Jonah is sent to three days, not of mighty buildings, but of homes and families, to the Niniveh, not of kings and their glories, but of men, women and children, *besides much cattle*. The palaces and temples he may pass in an hour or two, but from sunrise to sunset he treads the dim drab mazes where the people dwell.

When we open our hearts for heroic witness to the truth there rush upon them glowing memories of Moses before Pharaoh, of Elijah before Ahab, of Stephen before the Sanhedrim, of Paul upon Areopagus, of Galileo before the Inquisition, of Luther at the Diet. But it takes a greater heroism to face the

¹ רחבות עיר, Gen. x. 11.

² Gen. x. 12, according to which the Great City included, besides Niniveh, at least Resen and Kelach.

³ And taking the present Kujundschiik, Nimrud, Khorsabad and Balawat as the four corners of the district.

⁴ iii. 2, iv. 11.

people than a king, to convert a nation than to persuade a senate. Princes and assemblies of the wise stimulate the imagination; they drive to bay all the nobler passions of a solitary man. But there is nothing to help the heart, and therefore its courage is all the greater, which bears witness before those endless masses, in monotone of life and colour, that now paralyse the imagination like long stretches of sand when the sea is out, and again terrify it like the resistless rush of the flood beneath a hopeless evening sky.

It is, then, with an art most fitted to his high purpose that our author—unlike all other prophets, whose aim was different—presents to us, not the description of a great military power: king, nobles and armed battalions: but the vision of those monotonous millions. He strips his country's foes of everything foreign, everything provocative of envy and hatred, and unfolds them to Israel only in their teeming humanity.¹

His next step is still more grand. For this teeming humanity he claims the universal human possibility of repentance—that and nothing more.

Under every form and character of human life, beneath all needs and all habits, deeper than despair and more native to man than sin itself, lies the power of the heart to turn. It was this and not hope that remained at the bottom of Pandora's Box when every other gift had fled. For this is the indispensable secret of hope. It lies in every heart, needing indeed some dream of Divine mercy, however far and vague,

¹ Compare the Book of Jonah, for instance, with the Book of Nahum.

to rouse it ; but when roused, neither ignorance of God, nor pride, nor long obduracy of evil may withstand it. It takes command of the whole nature of a man, and speeds from heart to heart with a violence, that like pain and death spares neither age nor rank nor degree of culture. This primal human right is all our author claims for the men of Niniveh. He has been blamed for telling us an impossible thing, that a whole city should be converted at the call of a single stranger ; and others have started up in his defence and quoted cases in which large Oriental populations have actually been stirred by the preaching of an alien in race and religion ; and then it has been replied, "Granted the possibility, granted the fact in other cases, yet where in history have we any trace of this alleged conversion of all Niniveh ?" and some scoff, "How could a Hebrew have made himself articulate in one day to those Assyrian multitudes ?"

How long, O Lord, must Thy poetry suffer from those who can only treat it as prose ? On whatever side they stand, sceptical or orthodox, they are equally pedants, quenchers of the spiritual, creators of unbelief.

Our author, let us once for all understand, makes no attempt to record an historical conversion of this vast heathen city. For its men he claims only the primary human possibility of repentance ; expressing himself not in this general abstract way, but as Orientals, to whom an illustration is ever a proof, love to have it done—by story or parable. With magnificent reserve he has not gone further ; but only told into the prejudiced faces of his people, that out there, beyond the Covenant, in the great world lying in darkness, there live, not beings created for ignorance and hostility to God, elect for destruction, but men with consciences

and hearts, able to turn at His Word and to hope in His Mercy—that to the farthest ends of the world, and even on the high places of unrighteousness, Word and Mercy work just as they do within the Covenant.

The fashion in which the repentance of Niniveh is described is natural to the time of the writer. It is a national repentance, of course, and though swelling upwards from the people, it is confirmed and organised by the authorities: for we are still in the Old Dispensation, when the picture of a complete and thorough repentance could hardly be otherwise conceived. And the beasts are made to share its observance, as in the Orient they always shared and still share in funeral pomp and trappings.¹ It may have been, in addition, a personal pleasure to our writer to record the part of the animals in the movement. See how, later on, he tells us that for their sake also God had pity upon Niniveh.

And the men of Niniveh believed upon God, and cried a fast, and from the greatest of them to the least of them they put on sackcloth. And word came to the king of Niniveh, and he rose off his throne, and cast his mantle from upon him, and dressed in sackcloth and sat in the dust. And he sent criers to say in Niniveh:—

By Order of the King and his Nobles, thus:—Man and Beast, Oxen and Sheep, shall not taste anything, neither eat nor drink water. But let them clothe themselves² in sackcloth, both man and beast, and call upon God with power, and turn every man from his evil way and from every wrong which they have in hand. Who

¹ Cf. Herod. IX. 24; Joel i. 18; Virgil, *Eclogue V.*, *Æneid XI.* 89 ff.; Plutarch, *Alex.* 72.

² LXX.: *and they did clothe themselves in sackcloth, and so on.*

knoweth but that God may¹ relent and turn from the fierceness of His wrath, that we perish not?²

And God saw their doings, how they turned from their evil way; and God relented of the evil which He said He would do to them, and did it not.

¹ So LXX. Heb. text: *may turn and relent, and turn.*

² The alleged discrepancies in this account have been already noticed. As the text stands the fast and mourning are proclaimed and actually begun before word reaches the king and his proclamation of fast and mourning goes forth. The discrepancies might be removed by transferring the words in ver. 6, *and they cried a fast, and from the greatest of them to the least they clothed themselves in sackcloth*, to the end of ver. 8, with a *לְאָמַר* or *וַיֹּאמְרוּ* to introduce ver. 9. But, as said above (pp. 499, 510, n. 1), it is more probable that the text as it stands was original, and that the inconsistencies in the order of the narrative are due to its being a tale or parable.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

ISRAEL'S JEALOUSY OF JEHOVAH

JONAH iv

HAVING illustrated the truth, that the Gentiles are capable of repentance unto life, the Book now describes the effect of their escape upon Jonah, and closes by revealing God's full heart upon the matter.

Jonah is very angry that Niniveh has been spared. Is this (as some say) because his own word has not been fulfilled? In Israel there was an accepted rule that a prophet should be judged by the issue of his predictions: *If thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which Jehovah hath not spoken?—when a prophet speaketh in the name of Jehovah, if the thing follow not nor come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken presumptuously, thou shalt have no reverence for him.*¹ Was it this that stung Jonah? Did he ask for death because men would say of him that when he predicted Niniveh's overthrow he was false and had not God's word? Of such fears there is no trace in the story. Jonah never doubts that his word came from Jehovah, nor dreads that other men will doubt. There is absolutely no hint of anxiety as to his professional reputation. But, on the contrary, Jonah says that

¹ Deut. xviii. 21, 22.

from the first he had the foreboding, grounded upon his knowledge of God's character, that Niniveh would be spared, and that it was from this issue he shrank and fled to go to Tarshish. In short he could not, either then or now, master his conviction that the heathen should be destroyed. His grief, though foolish, is not selfish. He is angry, not at the baffling of his word, but at God's forbearance with the foes and tyrants of Israel.

Now, as in all else, so in this, Jonah is the type of his people. If we can judge from their literature after the Exile, they were not troubled by the non-fulfilment of prophecy, except as one item of what was the problem of their faith—the continued prosperity of the Gentiles. And this was not, what it appears to be in some Psalms, only an intellectual problem or an offence to their sense of justice. Nor could they meet it always, as some of their prophets did, with a supreme intellectual scorn of the heathen, and in the proud confidence that they themselves were the favourites of God. For the knowledge that God was infinitely gracious haunted their pride; and from the very heart of their faith arose a jealous fear that He would show His grace to others than themselves. To us it may be difficult to understand this temper. We have not been trained to believe ourselves an elect people; nor have we suffered at the hands of the heathen. Yet, at least, we have contemporaries and fellow-Christians among whom we may find still alive many of the feelings against which the Book of Jonah was written. Take the Oriental Churches of to-day. Centuries of oppression have created in them an awful hatred of the infidel, beneath whose power they are hardly suffered to live. The barest justice calls for the overthrow of their oppressors. That these share

a common humanity with themselves is a sense they have nearly lost. For centuries they have had no spiritual intercourse with them; to try to convert a Mohammedan has been for twelve hundred years a capital crime. It is not wonderful that Eastern Christians should have long lost power to believe in the conversion of infidels, and to feel that anything is due but their destruction. The present writer once asked a cultured and devout layman of the Greek Church, Why then did God create so many Mohammedans? The answer came hot and fast: To fill up Hell! Analogous to this were the feelings of the Jews towards the peoples who had conquered and oppressed them. But the jealousy already alluded to aggravated these feelings to a rigour no Christian can ever share. What right had God to extend to their oppressors His love for a people who alone had witnessed and suffered for Him, to whom He had bound Himself by so many exclusive promises, whom He had called His Bride, His Darling, His Only One? And yet the more Israel dwelt upon that Love the more they were afraid of it. God had been so gracious and so long-suffering to themselves that they could not trust Him not to show these mercies to others. In which case, what was the use of their uniqueness and privilege? What worth was their living any more? Israel might as well perish.

It is this subtle story of Israel's jealousy of Jehovah, and Jehovah's gentle treatment of it, which we follow in the last chapter of the book. The chapter starts from Jonah's confession of a fear of the results of God's lovingkindness and from his persuasion that, as this spread to the heathen, the life of His servant spent in opposition to the heathen was a worthless life; and

the chapter closes with God's own vindication of His Love to His jealous prophet.

It was a great grief to Jonah, and he was angered; and he prayed to Jehovah and said: Ah now, Jehovah, while I was still upon mine own ground, at the time that I prepared to flee to Tarshish, was not this my word, that I knew Thee to be a God gracious and tender, long-suffering and plenteous in love, relenting of evil? And now, Jehovah, take, I pray Thee, my life from me, for for me death is better than life.

In this impatience of life as well as in some subsequent traits, the story of Jonah reflects that of Elijah. But the difference between the two prophets was this, that while Elijah was very jealous *for* Jehovah, Jonah was very jealous *of* Him. Jonah could not bear to see the love promised to Israel alone, and cherished by her, bestowed equally upon her heathen oppressors. And he behaved after the manner of jealousy and of the heart that thinks itself insulted. He withdrew, and sulked in solitude, and would take no responsibility nor further interest in his work. Such men are best treated by a caustic gentleness, a little humour, a little rallying, a leaving to nature, and a taking unawares in their own confessed prejudices. All these—I dare to think even the humour—are present in God's treatment of Jonah. This is very natural and very beautiful. Twice the Divine Voice speaks with a soft sarcasm: *Art thou very angry?*¹ Then Jonah's affections, turned

¹ The Hebrew may be translated either, first, *Doest thou well to be angry?* or second, *Art thou very angry?* Our versions both prefer the *first*, though they put the *second* in the margin. The LXX. take the *second*. That the second is the right one is not only proved by its greater suitability, but by Jonah's answer to the question, *I am very angry, yea, even unto death.*

from man and God, are allowed their course with a bit of nature, the fresh and green companion of his solitude; and then when all his pity for this has been roused by its destruction, that very pity is employed to awaken his sympathy with God's compassion for the great city, and he is shown how he has denied to God the same natural affection which he confesses to be so strong in himself. But why try further to expound so clear and obvious an argument?

But Jehovah said, Art thou so very angry? Jonah would not answer—how lifelike is his silence at this point!—but went out from the city and sat down before it,¹ and made him there a booth and dwelt beneath it in the shade, till he should see what happened in the city. And Jehovah God prepared a gourd,² and it grew up above Jonah to be a shadow over his head. . . .³ And Jonah rejoiced in the gourd with a great joy. But as dawn came up the next day God prepared a worm, and this⁴ wounded the gourd, that it perished. And it came to pass, when the sun rose, that God prepared a dry east-wind,⁵ and the sun smote on Jonah's head, so that he was faint, and begged for himself that he might die,⁶ saying, Better my dying than my living! And

¹ Heb. *the city*.

² קִיקִיּוֹן, the Egyptian kiki, the Ricinus or Palma Christi. See above, p. 498, n. 2.

³ Heb. adds *to save him from his evil*, perhaps a gloss.

⁴ Heb. *it*.

⁵ הַרְיֵשִׁית. The Targum implies a *quiet*, i.e. *sweltering, east wind*. Hitzig thinks that the name is derived from the season of ploughing and some modern proverbs appear to bear this out: *an autumn east wind*. LXX. *στυγαλω*. Siegfried-Stade: *a cutting east wind*, as if from הַרְשֵׁ. Steiner emends to הַרְיֵסִית, as if from הַרְיֵס = *the piercing*, a poetic name of the sun; and Böhme, *Z.A.T.W.*, VII. 256, to הַרְרִית, from הַרְר, *to glow*. Köhler (*Theol. Rev.*, XVI., p. 143) compares הַרְרֵשׁ, *dried clay*.

⁶ Heb.: *begged his life, that he might die*.

God said unto Jonah, *Art thou so very angry about the gourd? And he said, I am very angry—even unto death! And Jehovah said: Thou carest for a gourd for which thou hast not travailed, nor hast thou brought it up, a thing that came in a night and in a night has perished.¹ And shall I not care for Niniveh, the Great City,² in which there are more than twelve times ten thousand human beings who know not their right hand from their left, besides much cattle?*

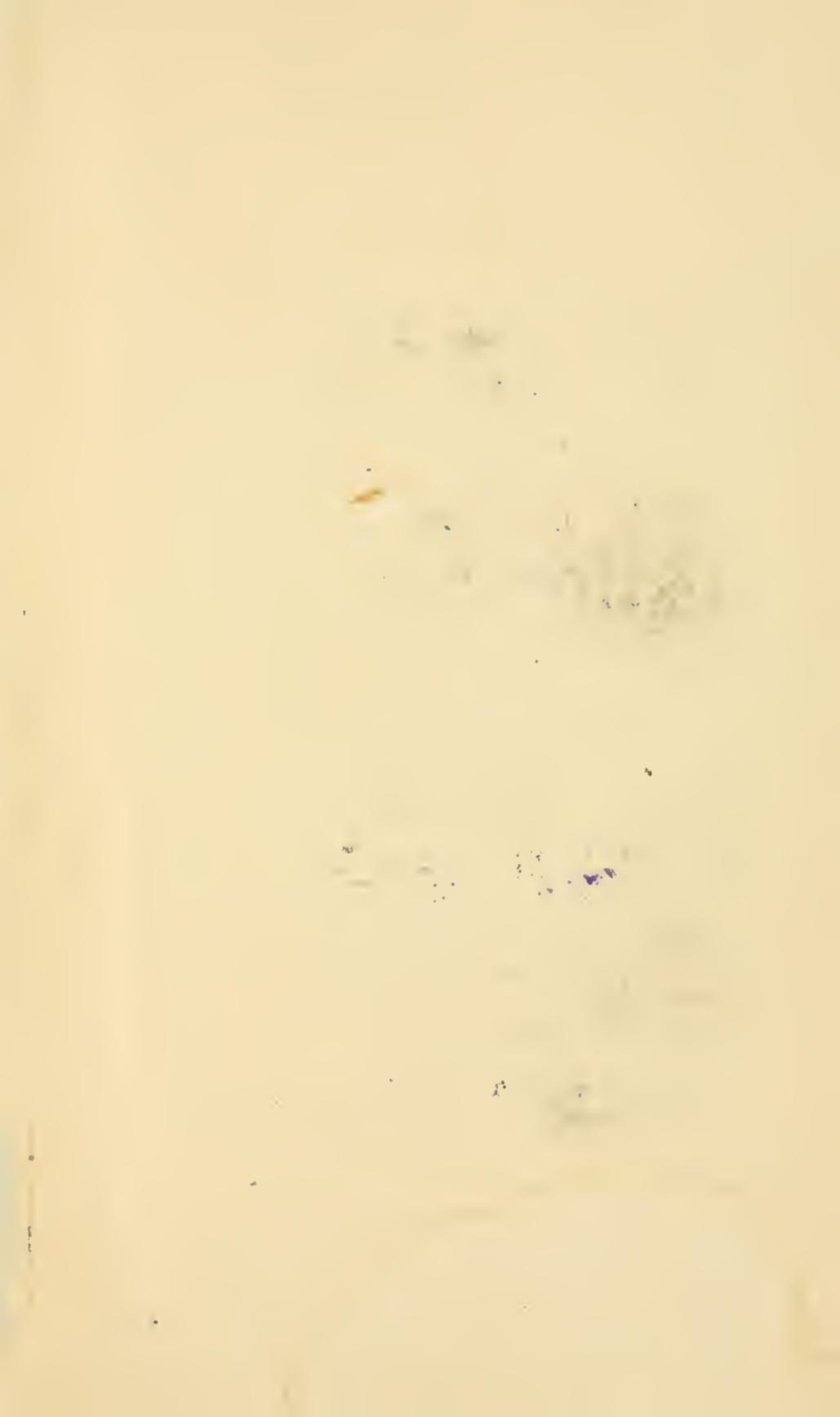
God has vindicated His love to the jealousy of those who thought that it was theirs alone. And we are left with this grand vague vision of the immeasurable city, with its multitude of innocent children and cattle, and God's compassion brooding over all.

¹ Het : *which was the son of a night, and son of a night has perished*

² Gen. x. 12.

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