

## THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES.

AS THEY APPEAR IN THE LIGHT OF SCIENTIFIC ENQUIRY.

BY THE EDITOR.

THE BIBLE has ever been, is still, and will remain forever, the most important book for the study of religion. It has been the religious primer of the Mediterranean nations, offering them the basic ideas of their education; and now it has become to the scholar and historian a veritable gold mine for the proper comprehension of the origin and growth of religious thought. That the Bible has been and is still misunderstood, as well as misapplied, that it is misinterpreted and taken for what it never pretended to be; and further that it served ends and purposes which at the time when the Scriptures were written had no existence at all, is certainly not the fault of the Bible, and cannot detract from its intrinsic value. We must study the Bible in order to understand it; we must read it both appreciatively and thoughtfully. An unthinking perusal of these ancient and venerable documents is as wrong and injurious as an irreverential scoffing at them. The former is stupid, the latter is unfair. In reading the Bible, we must not make our reason captive to blind faith by at once assuming a prayerful attitude; the unctious tone in which many pious people recite the text is not contained in the Bible; it is an addition of their own, and it adulterates the meaning. It provokes ridicule and must to a great extent be held responsible for the spread of iconoclasm and Pyrrhonism. On the other hand, the satires of Colonel Ingersoll overshoot the mark. They are just only as applied to the blind faith with which the Bible is received by a certain superstitious class of believers, by a class which may aptly be called Christian pagans. The attacks of the infidel upon the Bible lose their meaning if applied to the Bible itself as a collection of religious documents. Such mockery was perhaps valuable for certain circles, as a strong

stimulant, or a call to awake; it came as a rude shock to rouse people from their dogmatic slumber and to set them thinking; but in itself mere ridicule offers nothing that can be of any lasting benefit.

The Bible is to the uninitiated a book with seven seals; but these seals are being opened now, and the men who are opening them are not the scoffers, not the revilers of Christianity, but the theologians, the students of the Bible, professors of Hebrew and Greek, of Old and New Testament theology,—a band of scholars of high degree, who devote their lives to the investigation of the Scriptures, not for the purpose of disparaging religion, but for sheer love of studying it and comprehending its growth. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that Biblical criticism is not the product of scepticism, but the result of patient and painstaking inquiry. It is a work done by professional men, by the theologians themselves, not by outsiders; and in reading the Bible we shall do well to inform ourselves what has been done in this important field, and what our theologians in the present state of scientific knowledge think about its significance and origin.

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Though of all the religious books of the world the Old Testament is the only one that stands for a rigid monotheism, it would be a mistake to think that the children of Israel were the only nation that took hold of this important thought. Historians and philologists are familiar with the fact that monotheism was evolved in Greece at an early date, and that philosophers like Plato and Aristotle have the same right to be called monotheists as any of the prophets of Israel.<sup>1</sup> Since we have become better acquainted with Egyptian and Babylonian civilisation, we know that the idea of monotheism was not absent in either country. Sir Henry Rawlinson speaks of a party of monotheists in ancient Assyria, and King Amenhotep of Egypt attempted to introduce monotheism into the cult of Egypt. He built his capital at Tel-el-Amarna, where we still find an extensive library, containing also translations of religious books from Babylon. Judging from his portrait, he was not a strong man. He died young, and only two of his successors were able to continue his reform. The fanaticism with which he carried out his plans showed more zeal than wisdom,

<sup>1</sup>Xenophanes of Colophon may be regarded as the prophet of monotheism in Greece. He attacked polytheism with much vigor and satire. There is one God only, and he is not anthropomorphic like the gods of Homer and Hesiod. For he is "all eye, all ear, all thought:"

ὄλος ὄρα, ὄλος δὲ νοεῖ, ὄλος δὲ τ' ἀκούει.

and the result was that a new dynasty succeeded which made it a point to wipe out all vestiges of Amenhotep's innovations. The reactions was so severe that henceforth no other king dared to set his face against the established polytheistic ritual.

But while the ritual of both Mesopotamia and Egypt was polytheistic, while every city had its local shrines and tutelary gods and goddesses, we know to a certainty that the more advanced thinkers of both nations were in their hearts monotheists. Either they looked upon the many gods worshipped in the various temples as so many different names for one and the same deity, or they believed that above them all there was an unnamable supreme power, the Abraxas, or Adorable One, the true God, the source of all life and the author of all goodness. In this way, the gods of the people were conceived as messengers or angels of the sole and supreme God, in somewhat the same way as Christian Catholics look upon the saints.

Monotheism develops naturally, and it is peculiar that when firmly established by priests as a dogma to be believed by the people and popularised for the purpose, it evinces a certain intolerance. Philosophical monotheism does not endanger the shrines of pagan deities. The Platos of Egypt and Babylon left to the people their gods as well as their shrines; but in Judæa the monotheistic conception entered the heads of the priesthood, and they succeeded in making it popular among large masses of the people. This condition created a fierce intolerance which took offence at any other form of worship. Probably in this same way the monotheistic king of Egypt aroused the wrath of the Egyptian clergy, who saw themselves attacked by him in their most vital interests. Amenhotep did not proclaim that all the gods represented one and the same deity, the sole and true god of the world, but he pursued the opposite course: he widened his own God-conception, which was the sun-god, into the one and all. The same was done in Judæa. The ancient Israelites were as pagan as their neighbors. They worshipped the same kind of gods; they adored the stars, or the Zebaoth; they bowed their knees to the Baalim; they celebrated the death and resurrection of Naaman, who was none other than the Assyrian Tammuz and the Phœnician Adonis; they erected Ashuras in their temples; and Yahveh, the god of the covenant, the tutelary god of the Jews, was one god only among many other gods. In the progress of their religious development, however, the Israelites began to conceive of their gods as one god, and thus the plural forms Elohim and Zebaoth began to acquire the mean-

ing of singulars, which is to say, the word "gods" was used in the sense of "godhead"; and it became an established rule in Hebrew grammar that Elohim and Zebaoth, in spite of their plural form, should take the verb in the singular. The next step was the identification of Yahveh with all Jewish gods, the Elohim as well as the Zebaoth, and finally they worshipped this national deity as the sole God, Creator of Heaven and Earth.

The development of monotheism in Israel is by no means an anomaly or exception. It developed about simultaneously with, if not later than, the monotheism of other countries. But the peculiarity of Israelitic monotheism consists in this, that it took hold of the priestly class, which crushed out with the most zealous intolerance all other forms of worship, widening the conception of the national god of Judæa into the omnipotent lord of the whole world.

The vigor of Jewish monotheism finds a parallel only in the religious reform of Zarathustra, who, while more philosophical and less nationalistic, is as bold and as zealous as the Hebrew prophets. In Israel monotheism became a tribal instinct which dominated the minds of a number of zealots from whose ranks the prophets recruited themselves, and these prophets upbraided the people for their polytheism, insisting on the oneness of God, on his love of justice and hatred of paganism. The prophets, though rising from a minority fraction of the nation, stamped the religious character of the nation.

The prophets rose as the enemies of the priests and did not tire of denouncing the established rituals and festivals as immoral and ungodly. They were a party of opposition, the infidels and iconoclasts of their age; but the truth of their words appealed to the people, and when they gained access to the hearts of a number of influential priests, the result was a new faith,—a monotheistic religion.

It is well known that the people of Israel were split up at an early date into two little states: the Northern kingdom, or the Ten Tribes, which remained Israel proper; and the Southern kingdom, or Judæa, which had the good fortune to survive by several centuries her older and more powerful sister. Both kingdoms had common national traditions. They separated at a time when writing had been introduced, and the folklore of the country was no longer dependent upon oral transmission alone. Thus it happened that the original sources of Hebrew literature existed in two parallel versions which differed in many respects, but still bore a close resemblance to each other. These two parallel literary movements

show a like spirit of religious conception. Both reveal a monotheistic tendency; but they differ in their national coloring and in certain details which even now can be detected after they have been merged into that great unity called the Bible, and harmonised under priestly influence by the hand of a final redactor.

In the southern part of Palestine God was called Yahveh, in the midland and in the north on the right bank of the Jordan El, Eloah, or Elohim, and on the left bank where the tribe Ephraim dwelt, Zebaoth. Thus the name Elohim renders it probable that we have to deal with a tradition of the ten tribes while the name Yahveh indicates a Judaic origin.

It is probable that the final redactor had no longer the original documents of the Judaic, the Ephraimitic and other Israelitic authors at his command. The documents which he used must have been revised copies which already bore the stamp of pan-Israelitic harmonisation.

Besides these two streams of Hebrew traditions, coming from the two kingdoms, there is a third source of later origin which, in contrast to the popular style of the older writings, betrays a learned authorship. It presupposes an established priesthood with a definite ritual, and a rigorous monotheistic dogma, all institutions and laws being supposed to be given directly by God to Moses.

Most of the institutions portrayed in the priestly writings are a product of the period beginning 621 B. C. In 586 B. C. Israel ceased to play a political part in the world. While the Jewish aristocracy lived in Babylonian captivity, their national tradition became endeared to them, they learned to appreciate their religion and religious institutions, and when they returned to their country, foreigners conducted the affairs of the government, and allowed the people to attend to their religion as they saw fit. At this latter period of the history of Israel, that is to say after the Babylonian exile, when under the benevolent rule of Persia the Jews enjoyed a relative period of rest, the monotheistic belief became firmly established among the people themselves. The age was favorable for collecting and collating the religious literature of the past. The leading men of the nation were not implicated in politics, and thus they had leisure to concentrate themselves upon the problems of their religious life.

The date of the establishment of priestly influence can be fixed with precision, because we happen to have definite information as to the method by which it attained the ascendancy. We read in

the second Book of Kings, xxii. and xxiii., of a religious reform which endowed the nation with a new spirit, introducing the spirit of the prophets into the priesthood of Jerusalem. The old popular religion which was still adhered to by the majority of the people had prevailed against the iconoclasm of the prophets. It reasserted its power under King Manasseh, and the monotheistic movement might have been stifled in Judæa as it was in Egypt, had it not found its way to the hearts of the priesthood of Jerusalem. Manasseh's son and successor, Ammon, was assassinated in a palace revolution, whereupon the conspirators were slain and the younger son, a boy of eight years, was placed on the throne. Under the weak government of a child the religious institutions of the country were left to adjust themselves, and the people worshipped Yahveh as well as Baal, Moloch, and the sun and the planets. In 621 B. C., when King Josiah was eighteen years of age, Hilkiab, the high-priest of Jerusalem, delivered a book of laws to the king, which, as he said, he found in the temple. The king was deeply impressed and wanted a confirmation of the book through a direct revelation of God. So he sent for a woman of advanced age who had acquired fame as a prophetess, and when she confirmed the genuineness of the book the king summoned all the people to the temple, and made a covenant with God to keep the law.

Josiah's reform is too important an event to judge it by a brief recapitulation of the Biblical account, and we advise the reader to peruse the story again in the words of the priestly historian, which are translated in our authorised version of the Bible as follows :

"Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.

"And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, that the king sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the Lord, saying : Go up to Hilkiab the high priest, that he may sum the silver which is brought into the house of the Lord, which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people : And let them deliver it into the hand of the doers of the work, that have the oversight of the house of the Lord : and let them give it to the doers of the work which is in the house of the Lord, to repair the breaches of the house, unto carpenters, and builders, and masons, and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. Howbeit there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand, because they dealt faithfully.

"And Hilkiab the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiab gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the

house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the Lord. And Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.

“And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying, Go ye, enquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.

“So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her. And she said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched. But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard; Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I have also heard thee, saith the Lord. Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

“And the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem.

“And the king went up into the house of the Lord, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears<sup>1</sup> all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord.

“And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.

“And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove,<sup>1</sup> and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Beth-el. And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the

<sup>1</sup>It is a common practise in sacrificial meals for the bread or other kind of food that may happen to be used on that occasion, to be in the form in which it was made in ancient times.

host of heaven. And he brought out the grove<sup>1</sup> from the house of the Lord, with-out Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people. And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that were by the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the grove. And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beer-sheba, and brake down the high places of the gates that were in the entering in of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on a man's left hand at the gate of the city.

"Nevertheless the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren. And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech. And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the Lord, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the chamberlain, which was in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire. And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the Lord, did the king beat down, and brake them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron. And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites,<sup>2</sup> and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile. And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men.

"Moreover the altar that was at Beth-el, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove. . . .

"All the houses also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the Lord to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Beth-el. And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.

"And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto the Lord your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant.

"Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah; but in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, wherein this passover was holden to the Lord in Jerusalem.

"Moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord. And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all

<sup>1</sup> Grove" is a wrong translation of the word "Asherah," which was a high wooden pole, representing the creative power of the deity. It was deemed in those ages so essential a symbol that it was not missing in the temple of Yahveh.

<sup>2</sup> Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, is mentioned on the Moabite stone.

his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.

"Notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal. And the Lord said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.

"Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

"In his days Pharaoh-nechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo when he had seen him. And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulchre. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead.

"Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done. And Pharaoh-nechoh put him in bands at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of an hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.

"And Pharaoh-nechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt and died there.

"And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it unto Pharaoh-nechoh.

"Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done."

How much is written between the lines, and how many facts appear in a new light when we begin to consider the situation and weigh the evidence of the genuineness of the book of the law discovered in the temple by Hilkiyah! It is possible that "the doers of the work in the house of the Lord" were honest, that "they dealt faithfully," as our historian says, but it is characteristic of the king that "no reckoning was made with them of the money that was delivered into their hands." He was too young and too much under the influence of the priests.

The young king Josiah was obviously sincere, but we must qualify the unbounded praise with which the priestly historians reward his obedience, by saying that he was weak and short-sighted, qualities which made him a dupe of priestly fraud and an easy tool in the hands of Hilkiyah. We can imagine that the power of the

nation was frittered away in useless quarrels between the priesthood of the capital and the priesthood of the provinces, for it is not probable that the priests of the country should without any struggle have given up their traditional rights with all perquisites and emoluments, thus allowing themselves to be reduced to beggary.

The priests of the capital had everything their own way. The punishment with which they visited their brethren in the country who dared to offer resistance was bloody and relentless. The king slew the priests of the high places and had the old historical fanes at Bethel and in other towns desecrated. Undoubtedly he destroyed many immoral and superstitious practices; he did away with wizards and those that had familiar spirits, but he himself consulted an old woman for an oracle from Yahveh. Nor did he succeed in convincing the people of the truth of the religion of the priesthood of the temple, for we read (in xxiii. 9) that, "Nevertheless the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren."

The question is now: Do we still possess the book which Hilkiyah sent to the king, and what is the nature of the book? The question has been answered by De Wet, one of the most famous theologians and the father of Old Testament criticism. The result of his investigations have become the key to our comprehension of the religious history of Israel. He showed that the mooted book is Deuteronomy, and that this book cannot have originated before the prophetic movement but is a product of the prophetic monotheism, modified by the priesthood of Jerusalem.

We can no longer cross-examine the priest Hilkiyah as to how he found the book; but we may assume to a certainty that if he himself was not its author, the book originated in his time and was written by a man of his immediate surroundings. The aim of the book is to establish as ancient Mosaic institutions the monotheism of the prophetic conception of God and to abolish the traditional method of worshipping on the high places, which implies the abrogation of the privileges of the priests in the country and a centralisation of the national worship in the temple of Jerusalem. The priesthood of Jerusalem placed itself thus in a hostile attitude toward the priesthood of the country, and we have good reason to believe that the reform of Josiah was never fully executed. All open resistance was broken in the year 621, and a Yahvist monotheism was established at Jerusalem. All further details are want-

ing. Certain it is that the military forces of the country must have been seriously weakened by the civil war of the religious parties. The king's council was influenced by a narrow fanaticism which led to the speedy ruin of Judæa. It is probably not an accident that we have no knowledge about the government of King Josiah, except the judgment of the Yahvist devotees that he was a good king, second to no one except David.

The Kingdom of Judæa had only a short respite. The Assyrian empire broke to pieces under the onslaught of the Medes and Chaldæans, and the latter founded a new Babylonian empire in Mesopotamia. The king of Egypt seized the opportunity to invade Asia. Josiah met him in battle and, notwithstanding the prophecy of Huldah the prophetess, he was defeated and slain. The priestly chronicler ascribes the King's death to the wrath of Yahveh, provoked by the paganism of his predecessors. He says :

"Notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal."

Such is the judgment of the Yahvist historian, but we can very well imagine what the opinion must have been of the adherents of other religious parties.

For a while Judæa remained a vassal state of Egypt, but when Nebuchadnezzar, the Chaldæan crown-prince, defeated the Egyptian army at Carchemish on the Euphrates, King Jehoiakim of Judæa was obliged to swear allegiance to Babylon. In those days Jeremiah counselled submission, but Jehoiakim put his trust in fanatic advisers and rebelled. He was vanquished and deported to Babylon together with "all the men of might." In his place Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah king of Judæa, but when the latter rebelled also, the anger of Nebuchadnezzar knew no bounds. Defeated, Zedekiah was tried by a court martial. His sons were executed in his presence; his eyes were put out and he himself was led away a captive to Babylon.

Such was the fate of the Jews. It is heartrending to read the story of their implicit trust in Yahveh which made them scorn all compromise and worldly prudence. The Persian restoration of Judæa gave them only a shadow of national independence, and the Maccabee movement was a mere temporary revival. Judæa was doomed, not because the Gentiles would have it so, but because the priestly pretensions of the Jews and their unswerving faith in a final rehabilitation, rendered the continuance of their national independence an impossibility; and their trust in their God was

such that the Romans could settle the Jewish question not other wise than by a complete destruction of the temple and an annihilation of the commonwealth of Judæa together with the last shadow of its independence.

Thus the time of Judæa's political independence from Josiah's reform in 621 B. C. was only 35 years, and this period was too troublesome for rendering the assumption probable that the institutions of the law had ever been practically tried in the country. They seem to have existed only as an ideal of the Jerusalemite priests.

The Jews that were exiled by Nebuchadnezzar must have formed quite a colony. They consisted of the royal family "and all the men of might, even seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all that were strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon."

These eight thousand or more Jews represent the quintessence of the nation. They were all there was of the best classes, the aristocracy of both blood and intellect as well as strength; and their religious conviction was exclusively guided by the priests of Jerusalem who accompanied them into captivity. Now these priests shared the views of the book of laws which was discovered in the temple and they believed that the institutions and beliefs delineated therein, had been established by Moses himself. This error led to the reconstruction of the story of their national development by which the ideas of the deity which they cherished themselves were imputed to the patriarchs, as well as to their great law-giver.

The exiled Jews carried with them also some profane literature, among them the legends of ancient Israel as described by the northern school of the Elohist, and another collection of similar traditions told by the Yahvists, the former already prepared for further use by the influence of the prophetic spirit. In addition a new collection of national traditions was worked out by the priests from old and most valuable materials, and it is this book of priestly redactorship which became the framework of the Old Testament. All absolutely polytheistic recollections were omitted or changed, and the ancient traditions were modified to suit the religious ideal of the monotheistic priests. These priests aspired for scientific exactness, but it was the precision of the scholar, the philologist, not that of the scientist. It was *Stubengelehrsamkeit*, not natural philosophy. Dates are definitely determined and numbers are stated with a painstaking conscientiousness. They are sometimes contradictory and woefully improbable, but the assurance

with which they are given makes up for the defect. When we consider the slow growth of a true historiography among other nations, for instance, the Greeks, we need not wonder that our priestly authors, in spite of the dryness of their narrative, were devoid of all historical sense.

One instance may suffice.

The flight of the Israelites from Egypt, and their passage through the desert, appeared to the priests like the migration of a large nation, and thus they introduced numbers to suit their own imagination. Even to-day so many people could not exist in the desert; and a modern tourist agency would find it impossible to take care of such an army of wayfarers with their women and children, without making special preparations and utilising modern means of transportation for the purpose.

The priestly institutions were worked out into further details, resulting in the establishment of the Levitical law which was adopted in the times of Ezra, 440 B. B.

Finally, some later redactor, or school of redactors, united all Jewish literature into that collection of books which in their bulk constitutes our present Bible, and we owe it to the peculiar circumstances of the history of the Jewish nation, which had become a martyr to its religious convictions, that this collection of books bears a decidedly religious character.

It is probable that the priestly writings were composed during the thirty-five years which lie between Josiah's reform and the destruction of Jerusalem. Some of them may have been composed during the Babylonian exile or even later. The compilation of the canon from its three main sources (i. e., the Yahvist traditions, the Elohist traditions, and the priestly writings) can scarcely have taken place before Ezra's time. The date is indifferent and whatever it may be, it would not change the nature of the facts themselves.

But how do we know that such was the history of the literature of the Old Testament?

Happily, the last redaction of the Bible was done in a very conservative spirit, and the hand of the last editor who endeavored to harmonise the different sources left their main characteristic features untouched. It is more a combination than a fusion; and as a rule we have of almost all ancient traditions two versions of the same story. These versions can be differentiated partly by the name of God which is used, partly by the tendency of the narrator; for, in one set of stories as we have seen, God is called Yahveh,

and this version is now called by Hebrew scholars the source of the Yahvist (abbreviated by German scholars *J*), while in the other, God is called Elohim, which accordingly is called the source of the Elohist (abbreviated *E*). Judaic editors of Elohist traditions added the name Yahveh to Elohim, calling God "Yahveh Elohim," which is translated in the authorised English Bible by "The Lord God."

In spite of many similarities, the Judaic and the Israelitic versions are quite different. The Elohist tales preserve the traditions of Israel proper, that is to say of the midland, northern, and eastern tribes; and their authors derived their material from older documents, part of which were in written form, while the bulk may have been preserved orally in the way in which such narratives are always transmitted in a preliterate period. Professor Dillmann<sup>1</sup> characterises these documents as "the books of Israel's legendary history." The authors of these traditions show a special fondness for pointing out the origin of the ancient sanctuaries of the midland and eastern parts of Palestine, and also those of the far southwest, leaving out Judæa proper. They dwell with special emphasis on the glory of the tribe of Joseph, that is the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. A prior leadership of the tribe of Reuben is still recognised. Bethel is the sanctuary of the nation, where the tithes are to be paid. The city of Shechem is expressly pointed out as the possession of Joseph. Joseph receives a special blessing from Jacob. An account of the flood, however, was not contained in it. The mode of worship is the older form of the Israelites, who worshipped in the high places. It condemns, however, the teraphim or house-idols and other idolatrous things. It speaks of revelations of angels, has a regard for dreams and visions; and calls Abraham a prophet. It dwells on the idea of divine providence and God's method of unveiling his dispensations beforehand. It must have been a product of the time before the destruction of the northern kingdom, which took place in the seventh century; accordingly it seems to be older, and belongs most probably to the age when the prophetic order flourished in the northern kingdom, that is the ninth century. The original form of these documents has been tampered with and much has been omitted by later redactors, but enough of its characteristic features have been left to render them plainly recognisable.

The Judaic or Yahvist sources have been utilised by the final

<sup>1</sup>Dillmann's *Genesis, Critically and Exegetically Expounded*, has been excellently translated by Professor Stevenson of Edinburgh, and is published by T. & T. Clark of Edinburgh.

redactor only as supplementary documents, to fill out gaps which were not sufficiently covered by the Elohist and the Priestly Code. It contained old Jewish traditions; thus, for instance, it calls Hebron the residence of Abraham and Jacob; it makes Judah prominent in the history of Joseph; in many details it exhibits an obvious parallelism with the Elohist story of the lives of the patriarchs, and may have served as the main source for the Priestly Code. If this was so, it was certainly thoroughly remoulded and properly adjusted to the tendency of the writer. That it borrowed frequently from the legends of the Elohist is plainly perceivable in its accounts of Jacob and Joseph, legends which must have developed in Israel and not in Judah.

The third source, that of the Priestly Code, being the latest and hence the most sympathetic in doctrinary respects to the post-exilic generations of the Jewish people, has become the main and most important document for the redactorship of the Bible. It is systematic and rendered precise; it divides the history of God's revelation into three exact periods: The first period is from the creation to Abraham in which God is called simply *Elohim*, i. e., God. With Abraham a new epoch begins in which God chooses the Israelites as his elected people, and he characterises himself as *Ei Shaddai*, the Mighty One. The third period begins with Moses, to whom God reveals himself as *Yahveh*, which is, as it were, his proper name, and thus forms the most intimate connotation of his being.

The style of the Priestly Code is dry; the author lays down laws, ordinances, and institutions; he explains the origin of customs, which is mostly historical, and tries to justify prevailing institutions as remembrances of events of Israel's past. It loves genealogies, and fixes the chronology. It is austere in its manner and anxiously avoids all anthropomorphism. Jerusalem is regarded as the central sanctuary of the nation and the sole place where the temple of God can stand. While thus it evinces its late origin, the sources which have been utilised date back to the most ancient times of the kings of Israel. It forms, as it were, the frame into which the other sources, first the Elohist and then the Yahvist, have been inserted.

There is now being published<sup>1</sup> an edition of the Bible embodying the results of the literary investigation of the old Testament scriptures, in which colors are utilised to show at a glance the different sources from which the Bible has been compiled. These

<sup>1</sup>Dodd, Mead & Co., publishers, New York.

colors form the background on which the text is printed, and from this method the new Bible edition has been called "The Polychrome Bible." It is edited by a German-American scholar, Paul Haupt of the Johns Hopkins University, and the different Biblical books are assigned to the best Hebrew scholars selected from the theological faculties in both hemispheres. The publication of the original text is complete; but of the translation only six volumes have appeared, viz., the Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Judges, Joshua, and Leviticus. Although the work may have its shortcomings, it is as yet the best that theological scholarship has produced and may be regarded as a fair summary of the present state of our knowledge as to the origin and significance of the Scriptures.

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A few typical instances of the mode of composition that prevails in the Old Testament may be given. A sample of the nature of the Priestly Code is the creation story in the first chapter of Genesis. It utilises ancient materials which ultimately go back to Babylonian cosmology. That grand and vivid picture of the fight between Bel-Merodach and Tiamat and their helpers on both sides has been sobered down into a simple enumeration of God's work within the scope of a week. If we had not the positive evidence of the similarity of names, such as *Tohu*, *Bohu*, *Tehom*, and other unmistakable details, we should not recognise the Hebrew account as historically connected with the Babylonian epic.

By the side of the creation story of the Priestly Code, there is a second story of the origin of the world which is the story of the Yahvist school, being told in the second chapter of Genesis, verses 4 to 25. Consider the difference between the two. The author of the account in the Priestly Code attempts to offer a scientifically exact development in which an aboriginal chaos is more and more reduced to order. Plants and animals appear in progressive perfection, last of all man, at the command of the creative word of God. The priestly author's view of the origin of things finds expression in the verb ברא, "to create," while the more primitive Yahvist account speaks of עָשָׂה (*conficere, fabricare*) and יָצַר (*ingere*), which means, the former, "to fabricate," the latter "to mould," or "to give shape to," as a potter makes pots. The priestly writer is a theologian who looks at his subject through the spectacles of metaphysics, who is scientific and iconoclastic for his day, but dry and colorless; the author of the second account is a poet, anthropomorphic, naïve, almost child-like, but truly poetical and realistic, and depicting scenes of psychological interest.

The Yahvist account in Genesis ii. is the product of another climate. In the first story the world evolves from a general inundation, in the same way as the dry land with its vegetation appears in the spring when the waters of the Euphrates and Tigris recede. The second report in Genesis ii. presupposes the existence of a desert country, such as the highlands of Canaan. The plants are described as "herbs of the field," and they are supposed not to have existed as yet, because "the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. There, trees do not grow naturally, but must be planted. Therefore, while in the first account God makes the earth bring forth all kinds of plants and trees, in the second account God must plant trees himself. In the Priestly account, God makes man after his likeness, after the likeness of the Elohim; and he makes man and woman at the same time. The Yahvist account describes how God formed man of the dust of the ground, and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. He made man alone, and afterwards woman as a helpmate for him, and obviously the creation of the woman is told to account for the missing ribs over the pit of the stomach, offering an explanation which undisguisedly belongs to a very primitive age. In the first account, the animals are created before man; in the second account, the animals are created after man, as an abortive attempt to give him a companion.

The most characteristic instance in which the two accounts, that of the Priestly Code and that of the Yahvist, have been woven into one is the story of the Deluge. The compilation still shows the seams of the patches, and we are here allowed to watch the compiler in his work. The final redactor, who is distinguished by a pedantic conservatism, preserves as much as he can of the material on hand. Undoubtedly he had before him the written manuscripts of both accounts. He utilised the report of the Priestly Code, which was nearest to his own conception, and inserted pieces from the Yahvist account wherever it was possible. The Yahvist account is not preserved as completely as that of the Priestly Code. Where the Yahvist and the Priestly versions run parallel, he either preserved both versions side by side, or if they were too similar, he omitted the version of the Yahvist. His conservative spirit is evinced in that he does not shrink from frequent repetitions. The introduction to the story of the Deluge, relating the perversion of the world, is told by the Yahvist in Genesis vi. 5-8, and by the Priestly writer in the succeeding verses, 9 to 12. God's command to build the ark is only preserved in the

words of the Priestly version, verses 13 to 16. The command concerning the living beings to be taken into the ark and the beginning of the flood, is related in chapter vi. 17-22 in the Priestly version, and chapter vii. 1-5 in the Yahvist version. Thus, the redactor has preserved the Priestly report in its completeness, and given it the central position.

The redactor did not take the trouble to remove contradictions which originated through the preservation of both accounts. According to the Priestly version, God orders Noah to take one pair of each species of animals into the ark; but according to the Yahvist he is requested to take seven pairs of the clean and two of the unclean animals. According to the Yahvist, the Deluge originates through a conflux of the waters above the firmament with the waters underneath the earth,—an unmistakable recollection of Babylonian mythology; while the Priestly account makes the cause of the Deluge more prosaic and more plausible by attributing it to a heavy shower of forty days' duration. According to the Yahvist, Noah has to find out for himself whether or not the floods have disappeared, as related in chapter viii. 6-12. The Priestly version is simpler, for here God merely gives the command, and Noah obeys, as related in chapter viii., verses 16 and following. The Priestly report gives a precise chronology not only of the year, but even of the month and the day, in which the Deluge begins and ceases (chapter vii. 5, 11, 13, 24; viii. 3, 4, 5, 13, 14). It gives definite figures in its description of the ark (chapter vi. 15), and of the height which the waters attain (chapter vii. 20). The Yahvist cites no definite figures, but allows his imagination freer play and gives in each instance the impression of greater immensity (chapter vii. 4, 10, 12; viii. 6, 10, 12). The Priestly report is written in the spirit of a sober scholar who traces the event as a dry account of history, in the style of a chronicler. The Yahvist, on the contrary, is imbued with a poetical spirit; he gives more details of a personal nature, rendering the description more vivid.

The story concludes, as does its Babylonian prototype, with a definite promise that the catastrophe will not be repeated; and thus it ends with a covenant between God and mankind. And here we have an ancient nature myth preserved, according to which the surest sign that the storm-god has relented consists in his doffing his armor and putting away his bow. The bow becomes visible as it leans against the sky, and it is nothing else than the rainbow, which after a thunder-storm appears in the clouds, proving the reappearance of sunshine and the appeasement of the angry god.

The differentiation of the Biblical text into its sources, the singling out of the comments and insertions of the redactors, first of the redactor of the Yahvist and Elohist sources, then of the Priestly writings, and lastly of the final redactor who compiled these three different sources into one book, is a masterpiece of modern scholarship. At first sight, it seems almost incredible that the task could be accomplished, but in going over the evidence there is no gainsaying the arguments, and in many chapters of the Bible we can analyse the text in such a way as to trace back each single word to its respective origin, with a certainty which every one who takes the trouble to verify the investigations must admit.

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The Bible, and especially the Old Testament, with which we have been dealing exclusively in this present article, has been and is still sometimes considered the word of God, in the sense that it was literally dictated by the Holy Ghost. We need not say that this view has never been the official belief of the church, and that it is untenable. It is the expression of a childlike mind, which takes such a phrase as "the word of God" literally. Since the Council of Nice, the Church has considered the collection of books called the Bible as "canonical," that is to say, as standard works, which may be taken as a "norm." That is the meaning of the term "canon." And we may say that, taking the word canon in the sense of "standard," we may still accept the Scriptures as canonical; they are books of sterling worth and documents of primary importance. They are as classical in their way as our great poets Shakespeare, Goethe, Schiller, Homer, are in poetry, as Plato and Kant are in philosophy, and Beethoven in music.

But what is the main importance of the Biblical books for mankind? If they are not the word of God, if they have not the authority of being a direct revelation of the Deity, and yet are classical, what is their significance?

The Scriptures are documents bequeathed to us from ancient ages, describing the religious development of that nation which by destiny, accident, or historical necessity, however we may express it, has become the classical religious nation of the world. The Bible is an indirect revelation of God. God is not the responsible editor of the Scriptures, but the Scriptures reflect man's gradual comprehension of God. A scientific scrutiny of the Biblical books reveals to us the struggles of the patriarchs, prophets, and priests after a higher and nobler conception of God.

It would be absurd to claim that the God-conception of the

Bible is throughout one and the same, that it is everywhere identical and on the same level. If it were, there would have been no need of a painful and slow development which led man upwards from crude fetishism and idolatry through the barbarism of human immolations and animal sacrifices to the conception of a moral world-order, of a God who is justice, mercy, and love incarnate.

A scientific conception of the Bible has nothing to conceal, nothing to fear, and will not disparage these old venerable documents. There is no need of denying the truth that in the beginning the ancient Israelites were as superstitious and heathenish as the surrounding nations. They shared with their pagan neighbors many superstitions and idolatrous practices; but while the latter remained under the influence of mythology and paganism, the Jews worked their way out to salvation by a higher and nobler conception of God. That their monotheism was not as yet a finality, but only a seed-corn for further religious development, does not minimise the result of their aspirations, but on the contrary proves its vitality. Judaism produced Christianity, and Christianity is a religion which, even at the present time, is changing, developing, and progressing. Its history is not as yet finished, and its highest ideals are still to be realised.

Christianity represents, as it has been styled by its own apostles, a new covenant made between God and mankind on the basis of a broader and more cosmopolitan world-conception. While Jewish monotheism is still nationalistic, Christianity, the daughter of Judaism, makes claims to universality and catholicity. God is no longer the God of one nation, but the God of all mankind.

Christianity in its turn is as little a finality as is Judaism. It is passing at present through the fire of the furnace of science. The scholars' research of the Scriptures and the related documents have, in combination with a better scientific insight into the nature of things, modified and will still further modify the significance of the new covenant. The main factor of the changes in Christianity at the present time is the slow-working leaven of science. But science does not come as an enemy to religion, it comes as a purifier. Science is not a hostile aggressor, but an educator; and we may be sure that whatever changes science may work in our religious conceptions it will be for the better. The result will be a nobler, a higher, and a truer interpretation of the religious instincts of the human heart.