

CHAPTER XVII.

LAW AND PROPHECY.

The order of law and prophets reversed by modern theory, and this not merely as an order of written documents but of history—(1) Position examined that all the prophets denied the divine authority of sacrifice and ritual laws—Passages from Isaiah, Micah, Hosea, Jeremiah considered—(2) The position that the Deuteronomic Code was introduced through prophetic influence, and with it the impulse given to legalism—Inconsistent character in which the prophets are made to appear in modern theory—The whole position of the prophets as religious guides is to be taken into account—The Covenant, and what it implied—The historical situation in Josiah's time does not agree with modern theory—Nor does the situation at and after the exile—Fundamental harmony of law and prophecy—The history did not turn on a struggle of parties—Law and Gospel.

ACCORDING to the modern theory the Biblical order of law and prophets is reversed into the order of prophets and law. Did this merely amount to the assertion that some of the prophetic writings existed before the Pentateuch had assumed its present form, it might be a defensible position on grounds of literary criticism.¹ It is, however, maintained in the sense that prophetic activity comes historically before the acceptance of authoritative law, and that, in fact, by a course of development, the prophets

¹ Cf. Wellhausen, p. 409.

brought about the introduction of the law. The position which, on this theory, the prophets are made to assume from first to last, and the relation in which they are made to stand towards the whole movement of legislation, are so peculiar that the subject requires some special treatment.

(1.) We have already considered the contention that in all those passages in the earlier writing prophets in which law or laws are mentioned, the reference is only to oral and not to written law. The priests, we are told, like the prophets, gave forth their *toroth* or instructions orally to the people; and the substance of the priestly Torah was chiefly moral, but partly also ceremonial, relating to things clean and unclean. Whatever became of the concrete *toroth* on those subjects, we are assured that the practice of the priests at the altar was never matter of instruction to the laity, and was not written down in a codified shape.¹ It is not made very clear in all this wherein the Torah of the priests differed from that of the prophets; nor is it made clear to what extent, if any, the priests wrote down their moral and ceremonial Torah. What we have particularly to do with here, however, is the attitude of the prophets to the law. It cannot be denied that, in the expressions of a general kind which they employ, they show a high respect for the Torah of the priests. This, however, say the critical historians, was the moral part of the priestly instruction, and it is strenuously maintained that the prophets, down to the time of Jeremiah, denied the divine authority of sacrifice and ritual laws. The situation, as I understand the contention, was this: In pre-exilic antiquity, when the worship of the Bamoth was the rule,

¹ Wellhausen, p. 59.

the main thing in the service was not the rite, but the deity to whom the service was rendered. The historical books that date from pre-exilic time—the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings—exhibit great varieties in the modes of sacrifice, some of which may correspond to the law of the Pentateuch, while others certainly deviate widely from it, proving that there was no fixed rule.¹ The prophetic books also, “in their polemic against confounding worship with religion,” while they “reveal the fact that in their day the cultus was carried on with the utmost zeal and splendour,” show that this high estimation rested, not on the opinion that the cultus came from Moses, but simply on the belief that Jahaveh must be honoured by His dependants, just like other gods, by means of offerings and gifts.² “According to the universal opinion of the pre-exilic period, the cultus is indeed of very old and (to the people) very sacred usage, but not a Mosaic institution; the ritual is not the main thing in it, and is in no sense the subject with which the Torah deals.”³ So that, in a word, as far as regards the ceremonies of worship, “the distinction between legitimate and heretical is altogether wanting;”⁴ the theory of an illegal praxis is impossible, and the legitimacy of the actually existing is indisputable.⁵ The prophets, therefore, when they rebuke the people for their sacrifices and offerings, are not to be understood as reproving them for the corruption of a pure law of worship that existed, but as expressing disapproval of the whole sacrificial system, as a thing of mere human device, and destitute of divine sanction. Not only do they show, by thus speaking, that there was no law such as the Levitical Code in their day; but even the prophets,

¹ Wellhausen, p. 55.² *Ibid.*, p. 56.³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55.⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

before the time of Josiah, have nothing to say against the local sanctuaries (so long as they are devoted to the worship of the national God), a proof that the Deuteronomic Code did not come into existence till that period, and much more a proof that it had no divine sanction. The prophets, in a word, appear as the exponents of a tendency the very opposite of the legalising tendency which brought legal Codes into existence.

Great stress, in this argument, is laid upon the declaration of Isaiah. His antipathy to the whole ritual system finds expression, it is said, in the well-known passage in the first chapter of his book: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith Jahaveh: I am weary with the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, and of lambs, and of he-goats. When ye come to look upon my face, who hath required this at your hands, to trample my courts?" This expression, Wellhausen asserts with confidence, "the prophet could not possibly have uttered if the sacrificial worship had, according to any tradition whatever, passed for being specifically Mosaic."¹ But what then becomes of the book of the Covenant, which was surely at this time accepted as an authoritative Code, and is expressly ascribed to Moses? It says, in the law of worship which the critics appeal to as existing up to Josiah's time, and therefore prevailing in Isaiah's days: "An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt-offerings, and thy peace-offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen."² Or if it is maintained that Isaiah condemned even that early piece of legislation, surely the argument here employed proves too much. For it would make the prophet condemn also the Sabbath

¹ Wellhausen, p. 58.

² Exod. xx. 24.

as a piece of will-worship, and even reject prayer as a thing displeasing to God, since, in the same connection, he says: "The new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; . . . and when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear."¹

If we allow to Isaiah the perception of a difference between sacrifice as an *opus operatum*, and sacrifice as the expression of a true and obedient heart—and surely the prince of the prophets was capable of drawing such a distinction—his words have a definite and precise meaning, eminently suited to the times and circumstances in which he lived. If we take them as a statement in this bald form, of the history of religious observances in Israel, they are emptied of their ethical as well as their rhetorical force, and land us in a position which is incomprehensible in the circumstances. For what, is it conceived or conceivable, was the worship of a true Israelite in Isaiah's days? Is there any outward worship left that a man like Isaiah himself could take part in? Is this prophet to be refined away into a kind of free-thinker who stood aloof from all outward observances of religion, who "never went to church," as the modern phrase goes, because the whole of the ordinary service of worship was a mere human device? Or if a prophet might thus attain to a position independent of the out-

¹ Isa. i. 13, 15. König (Hauptprobleme, p. 90) endeavours to make a distinction between "I cannot away with" (v. 13) as applied to the Sabbath, and "who hath required?" (v. 12) as applied to offerings; and says that a "cautious exegesis" shows that the things enumerated in vv. 11-16 were looked upon as matters of worship, coming in different senses and degrees from God. "Cautious" is scarcely the term that I should apply to such exegesis; for I doubt very much whether such fine distinctions ever occurred to the minds of the prophets.

ward aids of devotion, what of the common people? What worship is to be allowed to them at all, if all that went on at the Temple is condemned, and if the condemnation means what the critics say? For, be it observed, Isaiah is not indifferent to these things, as things that might be good enough for the vulgar, but were too gross for him. Whatever the things are to which he is referring, he refers to them with displeasure; and if there is a possibility of legitimate worship at all, we must regard his words not as a condemnation of that, but of the spirit in which it was performed, or of the abuses with which it was surrounded. A more historical, unimpassioned statement as to the origin of sacrificial worship is out of the question.

Again, it has been said that the words of Micah, the contemporary of Isaiah, prove the same thing: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah vi. 8). Says Wellhausen, "Although the blunt statement of the contrast between cultus and religion is peculiarly prophetic, Micah can still take his stand upon this: 'It hath been told thee, O man, what Jehovah requires.' It is no new matter, but a thing well known, that sacrifices are not what the Torah of the Lord contains,"¹ which is not a fair interpretation of the prophet's words, for the command to do justly and love mercy does not exclude a command to offer sacrifice. But this is the very prophet who, in almost identical terms with Isaiah, anticipates the time when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be exalted, and all nations shall flow into it. So that the argument, if pushed to its conclusion, would prove that

¹ Hist. of Israel, p. 58.

these two prophets denied the divine authority of all outward observances of religion; and yet would ascribe to them the absurdity of maintaining great sanctity for a Temple and an altar, whose service was otiose or altogether improper.

In the same way appeal is made to the well-known declaration of Hosea, "I desired mercy and not sacrifice" (Hosea vi. 6). One would have thought that the prophet's meaning was made quite clear by the words that follow, "and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." I confess I am astonished that a passage like this should be insisted upon by professional students of Hebrew; but it would almost seem that, in their anxiety to establish a hypothesis, some can not only ignore poetry and sentiment in the Hebrew writings, but even shut their eyes to plain matters of grammar and rhetoric. The slightest reference to the usage of the language will suffice to show how little worth is the argument based on the text before us. When we read in Prov. viii. 10, "Receive my instruction and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold," we perceive that the two forms of expression explain one another. Who would conclude from the phrase "and not silver" that it was absolutely forbidden in all circumstances to take silver? Or again, when we read, "Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man in the way, and not a fool in his folly" (Prov. xvii. 12), does any one conclude that it was of no consequence what became of a man exposed to the attack of a wild beast, so long as he kept out of the way of a fool? The prophet, in brief, says only what Samuel said long before him, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams," though the seer of Ramah himself offered sacrifices as a regular religious observance.

What he did, no doubt his successors in the prophetic office countenanced; and there is absolutely no proof that, up to the time of Josiah, the Temple at Jerusalem was a place at which no purer service was known than that practised at the high places. The writer of the books of the Kings, though his testimony cannot be pressed here, had *some* good reason for singling out certain kings who introduced heathen corruptions into the Temple service, and instancing the attempts, successful or otherwise, to abolish them by others. To suppose that he acted arbitrarily in this matter is to criticise away his accounts altogether, and would leave us no assurance of the truth of even the account of Josiah's reformation. There is no reason to doubt that at certain times, and under the more faithful of the kings, the worship of the central sanctuary at Jerusalem was observed with something of the purity and regularity which were maintained after the time at which the critics allow the reform took place. To take the case of Isaiah, can any of the modern school tell us what led that prophet to clothe the vision of his inauguration to the prophetic work (Isa. vi) in the dress which he gives to it, and why, if the Temple service was full of abominations, its furniture and arrangements should have been chosen for the imagery of one of his highest flights of prophetic inspiration? What was the altar from which a live coal was taken, the touching of his lips by which was to purge his iniquity? One would have thought there was more need—if the modern position is correct—for the purifying influence to proceed in the opposite direction, from the prophet to the altar, and that the message delivered to the prophet should have been like that of the prophet against the altar of Bethel (1 Kings xiii. 2).

But we are told confidently that Jeremiah gives con-

clusive proof of the modern theory when he says (vii. 22): "For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices: but this thing I commanded them, saying, Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people." Well, if we are bound at all hazards to take words literally, the words are literally true; for, according to the account of Exodus itself, the command in the day of the deliverance from Egypt was not a command in regard to burnt-offerings and sacrifices. The people at that crisis had to make the grand venture of faith and obedience; and not till they were delivered and safe in the desert was there any "command concerning" a system of sacrifices. It is this idea that is working in the prophet's mind, though I do not believe he imagined for a moment that his words would be taken as a *historical statement* of the late origin of sacrifices, or of the time of its introduction at all. The polemic was not as to the *date* of introduction of sacrifice, but as to its rightful place and meaning. Jeremiah was not opposed to all ritual service, as Graf himself admitted. His words are just an expansion of the fundamental prophetic dictum of Samuel that to obey is better than sacrifice. The thing he is insisting on, as all the prophets do, is the utter worthlessness of sacrifices and offerings without the obedience of the life and the fidelity of the heart. And to make the words mean more is to make Jeremiah declare that up to his time there was no law for worship whatever, and yet worship at that period without authorised ceremonial and sacrifice is inconceivable.

(2.) On the other hand, we are told by the advocates of the modern theory that it was through prophetic influence that the Code of Deuteronomy was brought into existence

and recognition, and that the movement, once set agoing, resulted also in the codification of the Levitical law; that, in fact, the prophets seeking to give permanent form and authoritative sanction to their teaching, embodied it in the form of a code; that thus prophecy had its final development, but in reaching this development destroyed itself. Speaking of the manner in which the Deuteronomic Code was brought in, Wellhausen says: "With the tone of repudiation in which the earlier prophets, in the zeal of their opposition, had occasionally spoken of practices of worship at large, there was nothing to be achieved; the thing to be aimed at was not abolition but reformation, and the end, it was believed, would be helped by concentration of all ritual in the capital" (p. 26). He admits, indeed, that merely to abolish the holy places, and only to limit to one locality the cultus, which was still to be the main concern, was by no means the wish of the prophets—though it came about as an incidental result of their teaching (p. 23). This, however, seems to be hardly consistent with the preceding position; nor do I think it is reconcilable with a fair interpretation of the declarations of the prophets on the subject. The influence of the prophets cannot be said to have been at any time in the direction of the enforcement of external observances, except in so far as they urged the people to that change of heart which would result in such observances; and there is no proof from their own writings that they knew of any way of curing the people's godlessness but the exercise of repentance and the return to heart religion.

If there is any one class in the Old Testament history to whom we must accord the title of earnestness and sincerity of purpose, it is the prophets. The most superficial reader must perceive their deep religious devotion,

their freedom from self-seeking and time-serving. It is difficult, however, to reconcile the admission of these qualities with the characters they exhibit and the parts they are made to play on the modern theory. Wellhausen, for example, attempts to prove that Isaiah never laboured for the removal of the Bamoth, but only for their purification;¹ although he himself tells us that all writers of the Chaldean period associate monotheism in the closest way with unity of worship (p. 27), and admits that Isaiah himself gave a special pre-eminence in his estimation to Jerusalem, and that "even as early as the time of Micah the temple must have been reckoned a house of God of an altogether peculiar order, so as to make it a paradox to put it on a level with the Bamoth of Judah."² And yet these two prophets are relied upon as leading witnesses to prove that the whole ritual system was not only without authority, but positively displeasing to God. The ques-

¹ The reason given for this statement should not be passed over; it is characteristic of Wellhausen's method of proof: "In one of his latest discourses his anticipation for that time of righteousness, and the fear of God which is to dawn after the Assyrian crisis, is: 'Then shall ye defile the silver covering of your graven images, and the golden plating of your molten images; ye shall cast them away as a thing polluted: Begone! shall ye say unto them' (xxx. 22). If he thus hopes for a purification from superstitious accretions of the places where Jehovah is worshipped, it is clear that he is not thinking of their total abolition" (p. 25 f.) We will leave the circles in which "appreciation of scientific results can be looked for at all" (p. 9), to determine here whether the "accretions" are merely the plating of the images—as those who believe image-worship was the authorised religion would no doubt say—or the images themselves, as Wellhausen himself seems to imply (p. 46), in which case one would suppose there would be little use of these places of worship at all. Pyramids of "scientific results" are poised upon such precarious points, but I take it that Isaiah was not one to concern himself, like the scribes and Pharisees, with such distinctions (Matt. xxiv. 16-18). See before, chap. ix. p. 228; comp. p. 235 f.

² Wellhausen, p. 25.

tion is whether the inconsistency is to be attributed to the prophets or to be charged against a vicious theory; for other prophets fare no better at the hands of the critics. For, let us come down to Jeremiah, who was contemporary with the Deuteronomic reformation, and who has even been supposed to have had a hand in the composition of the book or the Code. We find that prophet, so far from trusting to the mere acceptance of a written code for reformation, going beyond any of his predecessors in the inwardness of his teaching.¹ He has reached, finally, the conception of personal heart religion as a thing far before a mere national adoption of a national God, and speaks of the law written in the heart. How a person with such views—not to speak of his conviction that law had no divine sanction—should labour to elaborate a book like Deuteronomy, and trust to its reception to bring about the state of things he desired, it is very hard to understand. Or if Jeremiah did indeed help the introduction of Deuteronomy, he at the same time went far beyond it in the unfolding of its teaching; and what then becomes of the assertion, that the codifying of the law put an end to the free activity of the prophets? No wonder that prophecy, in reaching this position, destroyed itself, for the prophets had stultified themselves. There is here an exhibition of inconsistency which requires explanation, and the explanation that is given is peculiar. “In his early years,” we are told,² “Jeremiah had a share in the introduction of the law; but in later times he shows himself little edified by the effects it produced; the lying pen of the scribes, he says, has written for a lie (Jer. viii. 7-9).” To say nothing of the very doubtful determination of early and late in Jeremiah’s utterances on this subject, we are

¹ Jer. iii. 16; xxxi. 31 ff.

² Wellhausen, *Hist. of Israel*, p. 403.

asked to believe not only that the prophet had a share in the introduction of a code which pronounces a curse on those who shall not observe it, and afterwards turned his back upon all ritual law, but also that he allowed the book of his prophecies to go forth (Jer. xxxvi. 4, 5, 32) with the record of his inconsistency on its face. Had not the prophet of Anathoth trouble enough in his lifetime that he must be thus tortured in modern days? Or are we to say that a character so vacillating deserved all that he suffered? Yet Vatke would build him a sepulchre, by claiming him as the earliest witness for the late origin and unhistorical character of the Mosaic law.¹ It will hardly be denied that the prototype of modern critics is made to appear in rather a sorry character; for, if all this is true, he utters his own condemnation (Jer. xiv. 14). Again, it is not easy to comprehend how Ezekiel, pining over the low condition of his countrymen in exile, and reaching those spiritual intuitions expressed in his vision of the dry bones, and the waters issuing from the sanctuary, should at the same time believe that the remedy for his people's misfortunes was to be found in a minute observance of ceremonial ordinances, and occupy himself with a codification—on a limited scale—of Temple ritual, as if the putting down of Levites and the putting up of priests was to bring about a national revival. Nor does he, in point of fact, represent things in that order. All these things are good enough when the people are of one mind in serving their Lord, and desire to give expression to their active religious life: they are absolutely powerless to produce such a life, as all the prophets well knew.

In order to perceive how the prophets stood to the law, we must take into account their whole position as religious

¹ *Bibl. Theol.*, p. 220 f.; *Bredenkamp, Gesetz und Propheten*, p. 106.

teachers, and their relation to the religious movement of the nation. Kuenen, as we have seen in another connection,¹ insists upon the common ground on which people and prophets stood—viz., that Jahaveh was Israel's God, and Israel Jahaveh's people. This, he says, can be traced back to Moses himself, whose "great work and enduring merit" it was "not that he introduced into Israel any particular religious forms and practices, but that he established the service of Jahveh among his people upon a moral footing. 'I will be to you a God, and ye shall be to me a people.' So speaks Jahveh, through Moses, to the Israelitish tribes."² This reciprocal covenant between Jahveh and His people, sealed by the deliverance from Egyptian bondage, is guaranteed by the fact that the ark, Jahveh's dwelling-place, accompanies the Israelites on the journey in the desert, and afterwards remains established in their midst."³ Kuenen thus admits that there was a "reciprocal covenant between Jahveh and His people," sealed by a historical occurrence, and vouched for by the existence of a religious symbol. We have already argued (p. 338 f.) that such a covenant is inconceivable without some attendant ceremonial institutions; and at this initial point, it seems, we may find the explanation of the real attitude of the prophets to the law. Kuenen himself hints at it when he says, "On their part the people must remain faithful to the conditions of the pact concluded with Jahveh. These conditions are principally moral ones. This is the great thing. Jahveh is distinguished from the rest of the gods in this, that he will be served, not merely by sacrifices and feasts, but also,

¹ See chap. xii. p. 307.

² Exod. vi. 7; Levit. xxvi. 45; Deut. xxix. 13.

³ *Relig. of Israel*, vol. i. pp. 292, 293.

nay, in the first place, by the observance of the moral commandments which form the chief contents of the ten words." ¹ Quite so; and this is just what all the Biblical writers say. But why slip in this, "not merely by sacrifices and feasts," if these are not only not commanded, but actually wrong? There can be no doubt whatever that the people regarded sacrifices and ceremonies as observances well-pleasing to God, and signs of their adherence to the Covenant. It is doubtful how a people, situated as they were, could have kept up their recollection of the Covenant relation without outward service and ceremony. Have we, in this nineteenth century, got so far that we can dispense with outward observances which we regard as divinely appointed or divinely approved? Or if the prophets disagreed with this deeply rooted feeling in the popular mind, inseparably linked with that conviction which Kuenen says prophets and people held in common, they not only fail to give us clear indications of the fact, but they are in opposition to the writers of prophetic spirit and to the prophetic men who guided the nation in early times. For from the very beginning sacrifice appears as a regular and acceptable expression of devotion. The earliest of all the codes, the book of the Covenant, occurring in a prophetic writing, and containing prescriptions of a ceremonial as well as of a moral kind, proves the close union of morality and observance from the first, and shows that, in the constitution of Israel, and in the conception of the nation, the two are inseparable. And if, according to Kuenen, the people were right in the matter of fact as to a covenant dating from the time of Moses, and had, from that time onwards, practised sacrifices and other observances as marks of their allegiance to their

¹ *Relig. of Israel*, vol. i. p. 293. Cf. Allan Menzies, p. 24.

covenant God, it will require more than the citation of a few rhetorical passages to prove that the prophets regarded sacrifice and observance in themselves as wrong, or of mere human device. Kuenen himself, in the passage quoted from him, gives the key to the true exegesis of such passages: "Not merely by sacrifices and feasts, but also, nay, in the first place, by the observance of the moral commandments." The prophets are, in fact, in all such polemic, combating the germ of what became the monstrous doctrine of Rabbinism, that Israel was created in order to observe the law.

This attitude of the prophets to the law is exhibited in the circumstances of the time of Josiah which culminated in his reformation. When it is said that the worship of the high places had become so corrupt that a reformation was felt to be necessary, let us be careful to understand what that means. It was not that at many high places there was rendered to Jahaveh a worship which should have been rendered to Him at one central sanctuary. The worship of the Bamoth was part of a great national defection. The needed reformation had much more to do, as Wellhausen admits, than to gather into one central place all the abuses of many high places; and it is altogether a weak understatement of the case to say that "even Jerusalem and the house of Jehovah there *might* need *some* cleansing, but it was clearly entitled to a preference over the obscure local altars."¹ There was required above all things a reformation of *religion*, not merely of worship; and the prophets were not the men—Jeremiah certainly was not the man—to rest satisfied with anything else. The message of Huldah the prophetess, on the occasion of the discovery of the law-book, foretold "evil upon this place,"

¹ Wellhausen, p. 27.

“because they have forsaken me and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the work of their hands” (2 Kings xxii. 17). And so we see that the work done by Josiah was of a thorough kind; the co-operation of priests, prophets, and people was indicative of a movement of the national conscience; and the evils put away are of a much more serious kind than merely the worshipping of Jahaveh at various high places. “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 Jahaveh all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the Asherah, and for all the host of heaven,” &c., &c. (2 Kings xxiii. 4 ff.), beginning with a cleansing of the central sanctuary itself. And let it not be supposed that these were recognised up till this time as elements of the national worship. The book of the Covenant itself—which is supposed to have been in existence for two hundred years—had said, immediately before the words relied on as allowing the multiplicity of sanctuaries: “Ye shall not make other gods with me; gods of silver or gods of gold, ye shall not make unto you” (Exod. xx. 23); and had reiterated the warning against making “mention of the name of other gods” (Exod. xxiii. 13), and bowing down to the gods of the nations, or serving them, or doing after their works, but “thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and break in pieces their pillars” (Exod. xxiii. 24). These things were indeed thoroughly inconsistent with the whole position which—by the confession of the nation as implied in the prophetic utterances—Israel sustained to Jahaveh; and if the sin of them did not come home to them through prophetic rebukes or through their knowledge of the book of the Covenant, the discovery of a hundred other codes

could not have convinced them. The truth is that the evils had pressed upon the hearts of good men for long before: Hezekiah had partially done what Josiah now did more thoroughly; and the powerful upheaval of public sentiment that was produced cannot have an adequate cause in a mere, or in a primary, desire to centralise the worship. In a word, the idea of worship in one place cannot be taken by itself and apart from the nature of the worship which Jahaveh claimed. The tendency towards reform was there before the alleged contrivance of producing a code was resorted to. The book did not produce what was the essential part of the reform; and the reform is quite conceivable on the supposition of the discovery of any code, and had already proceeded a great way before the book of the law was brought to light.

Nor were the circumstances materially different when the later reformation took place after the exile. The little community under Joshua and Zerubbabel had returned to Jerusalem, and held a struggling existence for more than half a century¹ before Ezra made his appearance with his book, which is said to have been the Pentateuch law now first come into existence. It was the sense of their national position and national calling that had brought them thither; they did not come for the purpose of observing a ritual law, but for the purpose of keeping alive a nationality and exhibiting their faith in the divine promises. This much the teaching of the prophets had effected, though the fruits of prophetic teaching were tardy, and brought to maturity by the

¹ Edict of Cyrus, 538. The return of exiles under Zerubbabel and Joshua was in B.C. 536, and twenty years later (Haggai and Zechariah) the Temple was consecrated. The arrival of Ezra was in 458. Law promulgated, 444. Cf. Wellhausen, p. 492 ff.

sufferings of the exile. I am willing to admit that the influence of Ezekiel was a powerful factor in leading to the restoration, but I see another direction of his influence than that of codification of law. As in a former chapter I maintained that the doubtful or figurative language of a writer should be interpreted by his clearer and more unequivocal utterances, so I should say here that we are to look not to the programme of legislation which Ezekiel saw in vision, but to the reviving Spirit, breathing upon the dry bones, as the motive power which was uppermost in the mind of the prophet of the exile.

The more closely the matter is looked at, the more clearly will it appear that it is impossible to dis sever the moral from the ceremonial part of the law of Israel. Moses himself is represented as a prophet;¹ and prophecy has its legal, just as the law has its prophetic, side. The idea of holiness is common to both. The law links even the meanest ceremonial observance with this moral attribute: "Ye shall be holy men unto me, neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field;"² and prophecy recognises a clean and an unclean land and offerings.³ Even the prophet who speaks most exclusively of the Holy One of Israel (Isa. lv. 5) expresses abhorrence of the eating of swine's flesh and so forth (Isa. lxv. 4; lxvi. 17). The rules for purifications and sacrifices indicate clearly, not only that these observances were of an educative character, but also that they did not come in the place of moral requirements, as if they were ends in themselves. The sacrifices and offerings do not effect atonement for moral offences, nor do they constitute the

¹ Deut. xviii. 15; Hosea xii. 13.

² Exod. xxii. 31. Comp. Levit. xi. 44-47; xix. 2, 15-19.

³ Amos vii. 17; Hosea ix. 3-5.

whole religious service of Israel. The sins atoned for are those that affect the theocratic relation of the people, the offerings are the outward signs of the inward homage due to Jahaveh. We need not, indeed, wonder that the prophets, in the situation in which they found themselves before the exile, laid so little stress on the ritual worship, for it was powerless to cure the evils which they deplored. To what purpose indeed would it have been for a preacher of righteousness like Amos, addressing a people who trampled on the most fundamental laws of humanity, to urge to the more sedulous performance of outward acts of worship; or for a prophet with insight into God's love such as Hosea enjoyed, to direct a people openly apostate and idolatrous in heart to begin with a mere reformation of cultus? Isaiah again and his fellow-prophets of the south had before them a people—such as all ages and all countries have produced—who thought to make up for wickedness of life and hollowness of heart by loud-sounding devotion and ostentatious worship; and it is no wonder that such men contemptuously scouted the whole system of outward observance, which was that and nothing more. It was needless to insist upon the sign when the thing signified was wanting—for the outward form was then a gross lie; and just because the mission of the prophets was to insist upon the underlying moral requirements of the law, for that reason they made light of its ceremonial elements, which had no basis nor reason for existence apart from these moral requirements. On the other hand, we find the prophet Haggai, when his contemporaries in the coldness of their devotion committed the opposite mistake from pre-exilic Israel, reproving them for the scantiness of their offerings; although both he and Zechariah, who laboured for the restoration

of the Temple and its service, are quite clear as to the supreme duty of heart religion and the inutility of a mere *opus operatum*.¹ The position of Malachi is to be particularly noted, because in him we find a distinctly ceremonial tone (chap. i.), and because he belongs to the time of the alleged introduction of the Priestly Code. It is very hard to believe that a priesthood such as he chides (in chap. ii.) was fit to be trusted with the task of elaborating an authoritative code.² It is much more likely that the prophet reproves them for deviation from a standard that was far older and much higher. In any case it is to be observed that this prophet, though technical as any priest could be, is at one with all the prophets as to the essentials of religion.

It is inaccurate, therefore, to represent the prophetic and priestly classes as opposed, and to make the history turn upon the preponderance of the one over the other. There was no greater antagonism than that which in a normal condition of things exists between the inner truth and its outward manifestation — which, however, becomes pronounced when the outward expression is made the whole, or is represented as having the vitality and the importance of the inner truth. Such times there were in the history of Israel, as in the religious history of all nations, when the priesthood, peculiarly liable to settle down to formality and routine, and peculiarly liable to the temptations besetting any privileged order, encouraged the people to boast, saying, "The temple of the Lord are we," or even exercised their office for their own gain. At such times the prophetic voice was raised in scathing rebukes, whose terms almost lead one to conclude that in the prophetic estimation the whole priestly order,

¹ Haggai ii. 12 f.; Zech. vii. 6, 9, 10.

² Bredenkamp, *Gesetz und Propheten*, p. 120.

and all the ceremonies over which they presided, were in their essence wrong. Yet even in the midst of such rebukes there is a tone of respect for the law, and a recognition of the sacred function of the priest. So also when we come to any crisis in the history in which a positive advance is made, we perceive that it is not by a conquest of one party over the other, but by the hearty co-operation of both, that the movement of reform or advance succeeds. Moses, the forerunner of the prophets, has Aaron the priest beside him; and Joshua is still surrounded by priests in the carrying out of his work. Samuel is both priest and prophet; David and Solomon in the same way are served or admonished by both. In Josiah's time we see the priest Hilkiah as eager for the introduction of reform as the prophet or prophets who prepared—as is alleged—the Code which was to be recognised;¹ although the Code was not to be to the advantage of the Jerusalem priesthood, according to the modern view of it, for it was to bring to the capital all the priests of the high places who should so desire, and thus reduce the emoluments and lower the prestige of the ministers of the central sanctuary. Jeremiah was of the priests of Anathoth, and Ezekiel, too, was a priest-prophet. So that at every turning-point in the nation's life, when an advance was made, or a return to a better mind, the two classes are seen working in harmony. Which is just saying in other words that the better mind

¹ And so some would have it that the Code is a composite work. "The Deuteronomic *torah*," says Cheyne, "is in fact the joint work of at least two of the noblest members of the prophetic and the priestly orders." —Jeremiah, *His Life and Times*, p. 63 f. One may obtain, from this, some idea of the critical principles on which the separation of sources is effected, and may be inclined to ask, if two writers of different tendencies could work so harmoniously here, why similar tendencies should be put so far apart elsewhere.

resulted in a better life, and that faithfulness of heart was expressed in the better observance of the authoritative forms of religion.

On this subject, as on many others connected with the history of Israel, we must beware of concluding that distinctions which we can abstractly draw, and of which the history shows the possibility, were actually drawn at the time. "The passion of the human mind," says Dr A. B. Davidson, "is for distinctions and classification. Broad distinctions are rare in the Old Testament. The course of revelation is like a river, which cannot be cut up into sections. The springs at least of all prophecy can be seen in the two prophets of northern Israel; but the rain which fed those fountains fell in the often unrecorded past."¹ On reviewing the history we may perceive the two currents of influence, the priestly and the prophetic, and in analysing the combined stream of national life we may be able to separate them in thought and assign different effects to them respectively. But we are not for all that to jump to the conclusion that priests and prophets were arrayed in hostile camps, and existed like two parties in a modern state. The prophets are as free in their denunciations of prophets when these are unfaithful, as they are in their rebukes of the excesses of the priests. The truth is, that on this low view of a struggle of parties, the history of Israel is as devoid of interest, as it is incapable of explanation. When it did come to a struggle of parties in Israel, in the later stages of the history, when some leaned to Egypt and some to Assyria, the days of Israel's independence were numbered. The thing that made two parties in *ancient* Israel was not the question of ritual or no ritual, not the question of written Torah or oral Torah, but the question of fidelity to their national

¹ *Expositor*, third series, vol. vi. p. 163.

God, and purity from heathen contamination. The daily observances of the Temple might go on unrecorded for years—as I believe they went on far more regularly than is now supposed—and call for no remark. But as soon as these were rested in as the essentials of religion, or improved and adorned by a tampering with heathen ways and an aping of idolatrous rites, then the prophetic voice was raised, and in such terms that we perceive how all the time these men knew wherein the essentials of true religious worship consisted.

Though, therefore, the legalistic tendency set in after the great prophets had done their work, the two things were not cause and effect. It was not the “prophets that were the destroyers of old Israel,” but it was Israel that destroyed itself. A mistake may be very readily committed from taking too narrow a view of development, and assuming that what is immediately subsequent to something else results naturally from it. There are *re*-actions and recoils as well as direct influences in the same line. The true succession of Old Testament prophets is found in the Gospel, not in the scribes. Though Jesus Christ followed the scribes, He did not develop their teaching. He did not, however, deny its historical basis. He was the direct successor of the prophets, but He assumed and took for granted that law preceded prophecy, and that law was also of divine authority. From His polemic with the scribes and Pharisees of His day, one might hastily claim Him as maintaining the human origin of the Codes, and the natural basis of sacrifice. Yet, though He rejected the traditions and commandments of men, He attended even to the ceremonial of the law, and in His life and teaching treated the law as given through Moses by divine authority.