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Old Testament Ideals

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THIRTY years ago the coming Sunday eight gentlemen met to consider the organization of a society of Biblical literature and exegesis. They defined their purpose to be the promotion of a thorough study of the Scriptures by the reading and discussion of original papers. The thirty years which have passed show the timeliness of the step that was taken. At the date of their meeting Biblical scholarship was about to enter on a new era in this country. The decipherment of the Assyrian inscriptions had just been put on a firm basis; the higher criticism of the Old Testament, having thoroughly established itself in Germany, was beginning to be considered seriously by American students; Biblical theology as a distinct department of investigation was knocking at the door; the textual criticism of the Old Testament had hardly made a beginning. It is only when we call these facts to mind that we properly estimate the progress which has been achieved, and the solid nature of the contribution which we have made to that progress.

The correctness of insight which led to the foundation of our society is therefore a subject for congratulation. Equally a subject for congratulation is the broad manner

in which our founders defined their purpose. The original statement, which I have already quoted, simply said that the purpose was to promote a thorough study of the Scriptures by the reading and discussion of original papers. The constitution first adopted provided that the meetings should be devoted chiefly to the reading and discussion of original papers on Biblical subjects. The present constitution enacts that the object of the society shall be to promote the critical study of the Scriptures by presenting, discussing, and publishing original papers on Biblical topics. This, though a little more definite than the original provision, does not really narrow its scope. The specification of *critical* study of the Scriptures is intended only to intimate that our work is scholarly rather than popular, exegetical rather than homiletical. From the first the purpose has been to unite men of all parties in the freest interchange of views on a subject of common interest.

This subject of common interest is the Bible. It is another evidence of breadth of view on the part of the founders that they did not attempt to define the sense in which they used the word Bible. They were content to take the Bible as a given fact, an entity sufficiently well known to need no definition, and sufficiently important to justify our devotion to it as an object of study. For the simplicity and directness with which they set this forth they deserve our gratitude. Congratulating ourselves upon their insight, their breadth, and their unity of aim, we follow their example and feel ourselves one with them.

And yet it could hardly be that thirty years' study should not make some difference in our point of view. It would be poor evidence of progress if we found ourselves affirming the same things in the same way in which they were affirmed by the fathers. And when those of us whose memory goes back thirty years examine our interest in the book, we find that it is not exactly the same now as then. It is not a question of better understanding of what the Biblical writers said. It would seem arrogant to claim that we understand our text better than the great scholars of the sixteenth cen-

tury whose monumental works still adorn our libraries. But whether we understand our Bible better, we certainly understand it differently. It is not a question of understanding so much as it is a question of emphasis. We have changed our emphasis from doctrine to life. The fathers inquired: What do the men of the Bible teach us in philosophy and ethics? We ask: What did the men of the Bible experience in aim and motive? It is evident that in thus formulating our problem we greatly increase the complexity of our task. The theologian who makes out a system of doctrine may leave out of view much of the Bible which is not directly didactic; the scholar who seeks to understand the life of the Bible cannot safely ignore a single sentence.

To illustrate what I mean I have chosen the subject of Old Testament ideals. Life is activity; activity implies an aim. Every one of the Hebrew writers set before himself something to be accomplished. In our every-day life we recognize that a man's motive is the key to his action and that his ideal is only the form which his motive takes in his own mind. If we can discover the ideals after which the Old Testament writers were striving we shall understand the writers, and we shall also understand the Old Testament as a whole. For, be it noted, the variety of ideals which we may discover does not invalidate the unity of the whole process of which they are a part. The individual man has a great variety of aims in the course of his life, but he is the same man from his earliest to his latest years. In fact, the variety of aims is one evidence of the genuineness of the life. For life is activity, and activity is often conflict. Especially when we take an organism which exists through a long time, that is to say, when we consider a historic entity, we find that the life consists in the interaction of forces, and if the process be a spiritual one we shall find the forces to be ideals, whose interaction often takes the form of conflict.

We shall not be surprised, then, to find a large variety of aims and motives in the Hebrew Scriptures. To simplify our problem let us confine our attention to the two which

we shall all probably agree are the most prominent: the prophetic and the priestly. Our thesis is: A large part of the life we are studying consists in the interaction of the prophetic and the priestly ideals. In both prophetic and priestly circles the ideal naturally objectified itself as a requirement made by God. To put the ideals in the form in which they would appeal to the Hebrew mind we might say the prophetic school had as motto: The righteous God requires righteousness. The priestly school wrote on their banner: The holy God requires holiness. The two mottoes are not the same by any means, as we shall have occasion to note.

Take first the prophetic scheme, according to which the fundamental requirement is righteousness. It is of course most clearly set forth in the preaching of the great prophets from Amos down, and here it is so plain to every reader that it is needless to insist upon it. But it will be fair briefly to notice that the ideal clothed itself also with flesh and blood in the character of Israel's heroes. The life of Abraham as recorded for us by the earliest of our Pentateuchal writers is a prophetic document, designed to set forth an ideal. Abraham is an illustration, for example, of that hospitality to strangers which from time immemorial has been one of the cardinal virtues of the Oriental. Equally he is an example of generosity to kinsmen in his dealing with Lot. He is thoroughly trustful of the divine word and obedient to it, even to the extent of willingness to sacrifice his own son. It is not too much to say that in these respects we have the prophetic ideal incarnated in the great ancestor of the nation. It is true that the other patriarchs, even when their character is drawn by a prophetic hand, do not give us so delightful an example of virtue. But this is due to popular tradition, which had already shaped the material before it was made the subject of literary treatment.

It is sometimes asserted that the early writers in Israel were dominated by the nomadic ideal. This seems to be an exaggerated statement. Joy in the life of the free lance which is the most prominent emotion of the true Bedawy, hardly finds expression in any of our documents. The song

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of Lamech is only the exception which proves the rule. The patriarchs are not nomads in the true sense of the term; they are shepherds, to be sure; but this is only because they are examples of the simple life. The narrators knew not how else to keep them free from the vices of civilization. Even with the desire to picture their heroes as shepherds, the writers were not able to keep their narratives free from agricultural allusions. Again, when we come to the story of the wilderness wandering we are surprised to find concrete features of nomad life conspicuous by their absence.

It is no contradiction of what has been said to remark that warlike virtue was prominent in the thought of early Israel. In the struggle for the possession of Canaan, Zebulon and Naphtali immortalized themselves by jeopardizing their lives for the common cause; Judah was pronounced blessed because he placed his hand on the neck of his enemies; Joseph's bow abode in strength, and he gored the nations like an angry bull; Benjamin ravined like a wolf, Dan was a lion's whelp, and Gad rent the body of the foe. The warlike ideal was reflected in Yahweh himself, for it was he who led the heroes to battle, animated them by his spirit. He strengthened the arms of Joseph when the archers shot at him; his were the everlasting arms that upheld Israel; he was the sword of Jacob's excellency. These passages show well enough what the Psalmist meant when he called Yahweh a man of war, and they set forth the ideal with all desirable distinctness. But it would hardly be correct to call this the prophetic ideal. It is rather pre-prophetic, for the great prophets turned their attention to something quite different.

In declaring that the righteous God requires righteousness, the prophets meant that he requires justice between man and man. Two things called their attention to this subject. One was the increasing complexity of social conditions; the other was the consolidation of the nation in a monarchy. As to social conditions, we know that the increasing wealth of the people brought with it oppression of the poor by the rich, involving suffering on the part of one

class, and leading to vicious luxury and self-indulgence on the part of the other. The old agricultural ideal was that each man should sit under his own vine and fig tree with none to molest or make him afraid; what had actually come about was that the great landowners added field to field till there was no room for the peasant proprietor. This was done under color of the law, for Isaiah is very bitter against those who enact unrighteous decrees, and the lawyers who write perverseness, to turn aside the needy from justice, and to rob the poor of his right; and the denunciations of the other prophets are equally strong.

It is evident that this ideal could not have taken shape except where social conditions were sharply contrasted. It is not too much to say that it could not have taken the shape it did except in a monarchical society. The monarchy was significant, because it attempted to regulate the social order. Tribal custom, once sufficient to sanction the ethical standard, had broken down in the new conditions of life in Canaan. The monarchy provided, or was supposed to provide, a court of appeal to which the poor man could bring his case. The king was the supreme judge. Doubtless he was guided by precedent — he did not wish to revolutionize society. But he differed from other umpires who were called in to decide disputes in that he had power to enforce his decisions. Gradually this fact changed men's thinking; they no longer thought of the right as 'what used to be done in Israel'; they thought of it as what the king commanded. To be sure, the action of the king often disappointed really enlightened men. They could not shut their eyes to the fact that the actual king was far from their ideal administrator. In theory the king was the protector of the weak against the powerful. Too often he not only became the boon companion of the oppressor, but himself set the example of extortion. But as in the case of righteousness between man and man, the defects of the existing state of things brought the ideal more distinctly into view. The great prophets were sure that there ought somewhere to be a judge of all the earth who would do right. Therefore as

to the effect of the monarchy on men's conception of Yahweh there can scarcely be a doubt.

In saying this we do not lose sight of the fact that the foundations of Yahweh's judgeship were laid before the rise of the monarchy. As tribal god he had been interested in securing justice between man and man, for as member of the clan he was protector of the clan custom. The earliest account of the Mosaic age shows us the people coming to the oracle at Kadesh to secure the decision of the divinity in matters of dispute. But there is a great difference between a tribal arbitrator and a court of justice presided over by a monarch with troops and executioners at his command. The institution of the kingship enlarged and heightened men's idea of the divine king, for the intimate connection of the earthly and the divine monarch must be evident. In fact, the right of the king was derived from his unction by a messenger of Yahweh. As the anointed of Yahweh he partook of the sacredness of the divinity. When the human king became unfaithful, or showed himself unworthy, that very fact brought into strong relief the ideal which men now located in the divine ruler. Where innocent blood crying from the ground found the ear of the king deaf to its appeal, recourse was had to the avenger in heaven, whose eyes behold, whose eyelids try, the children of men.

The ethical conception then is, as it existed in the mind of the prophets, extraordinarily simple — righteousness is obedience to the commands of the divine monarch; sin is disobedience. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The same word is used to denote sin against a human monarch and sin against God — Pharaoh's butler and his baker sinned against him. Sin is specifically called rebellion; as Moab rebels against Israel, so Israel sins against Yahweh. The Deuteronomists' insistence on obedience to the statutes, ordinances, and judgments of Yahweh would be incomprehensible in any except the subject of a monarch.[1]

[1] Note the use of the words פשע, 2 Kings 1 1; מרד, 1 Kings 12 19, Jer. 5 23; מרד, 2 Kings 18 7, Num. 14 9.

The ethical ideal is, however, not exhausted by the definition we have given. Sin is not merely the overt act, it is a state of mind; not disobedience but disloyalty. This also implies the monarchy, for the duty of the subject to trust the ruler is self-evident. When the bramble is elected king of the trees he invites them to put their trust in his shadow, and threatens them with destruction if they do not. The bitter irony of the passage does not conceal the primary conception, namely, that trust is the duty of the subject. Loyalty, however, implies something more than that the ruler has power to enforce his commands; it implies that in some way he is worthy of devotion, and that he has impressed himself on the affections of his subjects. He must make himself such as to call out their loyalty. And we must remember that the kingship was established in the first place by an act of choice on the part of the nation; David made a covenant with the sheikhs of the tribes before he was recognized as their sovereign. On this side also the monarchy must have influenced the ethical ideal of the prophets.

We defined the ethical ideal of the prophets in the sentence: The righteous Yahweh requires righteousness. We now see more clearly what that sentence meant to the men who made it the basis of their preaching. Its full force came only when the monarchy was firmly established. The prophetic theory of right living is obedience to the commands of the divine king; its theory of right thinking is reliance upon that king's power and good will; it regards sin either as disobedience of his command, or distrust of his power, or transgression of the covenant which binds him and his subjects to each other. As the earthly monarch is the vicegerent of the real ruler, he was looked to to apply this standard in his realm. The prophets as ethical teachers had occasion to note how far the actual rulers fell short of the expectation. In every society there is need of reform, and in a monarchy the king should lead in bringing reforms about. But in Israel and in Judah reforms rarely proceeded from the throne. Tradition affirms that Hezekiah and Josiah realized the hopes of the reforming party. But the

other kings fell below the standard set for them. The result was to turn the attention of men from the earthly ruler to the ideal king. If Yahweh be indeed king in Jeshurun (they argued), he must intervene to secure the obedience which is his right. Hence the confidence of Isaiah that Yahweh will restore the judges of Judah as in the old days, will purge out the nation's dross and refine it as silver is refined. The result as time went on was to turn men's thoughts away from all human help, make them careless of all human social institutions, and fix their hope on a day of Yahweh which will introduce a new state of affairs.

If we attempt to reproduce the state of mind of men in Jerusalem after this prophetic ideal had long been held before them, we shall be struck by the variety of opinions, and by their discordance. Just before Jerusalem fell into the hands of Nebuchadrezzar there were at least four parties in the state. First, we may put those whom Zephaniah describes as settled on their lees — the men who said Yahweh will not do good nor will he do harm. These were the skeptics — philosophers who, like so many thinkers since their time, thought God to be indifferent to what goes on in his world.

Then there was a considerable party who believed in Yahweh as one god out of many. He might be king in Judah, but then there was Babylon to reckon with, and Egypt, too. Yahweh could not be king in those nations, for they had their own divinities. The salvation of Judah (they felt) must be secured by political measures in which the foreign gods were to have part as well as foreign armies. Manasseh therefore could not be blamed when he introduced Assyrian deities into the temple. This was an evidence not of his total depravity but of his political sense. When the Assyrian power was seen to be tottering to its fall, these statesmen would counsel conciliation of the Babylonian king and the Babylonian gods as well. Or if Egypt, which was near at hand, should show its old-time vigor, its deities — Isis, Osiris, and the dog Anubis — had an equal claim to recognition.

These parties did not take the kingship of Yahweh very seriously, but there were intense patriots who did take it seriously. They relied upon the traditions of the past which showed how gloriously their God had vindicated his rights. He had long been not only king but warrior. He was waiting only for some signal opportunity to reveal his real power. Whatever might be true of Babylonia, Canaan was Yahweh's land, and he must soon expel the intruders. A typical member of this party was the prophet who ostentatiously took the yoke from Jeremiah's neck and broke it, saying, "Thus saith Yahweh, even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon from off the neck of all nations, and this within two years." When things had gone so far that the chief men had been carried into exile and the vessels of the temple had been taken with them, these same cheerful Jingoes assured the people that both exiles and vessels would be brought back in the same short space of two years. No doubt these men were sincere in their belief. They had learned of the kingship of Yahweh and trusted it. They gave proof of their sincerity, for they sealed their faith with their blood. They were the ones who resisted the irresistible Babylonian power to the end, hoping against hope for that miraculous demonstration of Yahweh's kingship which never came.

Finally, there was the small party of which Jeremiah was leader and spokesman. They also believed in the kingship of Yahweh, but they had learned to put the emphasis on his righteous will rather than upon his sovereign power. They knew him to be lord of the land, but they knew also that in the old days he had purged the land clean of its inhabitants because of their iniquity. If sin is disobedience to the commands of Yahweh — and this was what the great prophets had taught — then the worst was yet to come, for the land was full of violations of his commands. A king does not treat with the disobedient; he punishes them. He does not make terms with rebels; he exterminates them. The thought of a covenant gives no comfort to the party which has broken the covenant. If a man put away his wife and

she become another's, can she return to him? And thou who hast had many paramours wouldst return to me? Pathetic is the hopelessness which expresses itself in such a comparison.

As you do not need to be told, it was this party of pessimists which in the fall of Jerusalem saw the melancholy triumph of their belief. The kingly ideal had justified itself, though the human kingship had disappeared. Not only had the human kingship disappeared, the physical substratum of the divine kingship had been taken away. Those who cherished the ideal were a scattered and disheartened remnant among the Gentiles. Could they hold on to their ideal? Humanly speaking, we may say they could not have held on to it, unless it had been reënforced by another and in its origin very different ideal. This is what I have already called the priestly ideal. It was not an accident that the man who put heart into the exiles and gave them something to live for was a priest. None but such an one could have brought the Jews through the first trying period of their exile.

If we may judge by the general course of religious development, we may say that the priestly ideal is more ancient than the prophetic, for it appears in the most rudimentary religions. The religious instinct is fundamentally conscious of the gulf between God and man. Religious rites are the means taken to bridge this gulf, and are therefore the most distinct testimony to its existence. Because the approach to a divinity is dangerous, it is undertaken with ceremonious precaution. Approach to a king is guarded in the same way, and at first thought we might suppose religious ritual derived from the etiquette of a court. Uzzah smitten for rash handling of the Ark reminds us of the intruder stabbed by a sentinel for forcing his way into the palace. The men of Beth-shemesh did not rejoice at the approach of Yahweh, and the plague broke out among them. We think of a parallel case where a monarch in his progress through his realm comes to a surly village which gives him no welcome; in sudden anger he turns his soldiers loose upon it to wreak

their will. But these parallels are deceptive. To argue that the ritual of the sanctuary is derived from the ceremony of the court is to reverse the true order. The etiquette of the court is a reflex of that of the temple, and is the result of the sacredness of the king which requires that he be treated like the divinity whose representative he is.

The priestly ideal is expressed by the word *sanctity*, which denotes precisely that distance between God and man which so strongly impresses the religious mind. Unfortunately we have no adjective which corresponds to the Hebrew word קדש, and which we can apply to God, for it is not customary with us to speak of the divinity himself as sacred. If we adopt the conventional rendering 'holy,' we may state the priestly ideal, with which we have here to do, in the sentence: The holy God requires holiness. We must be careful, however, to keep in mind that this holiness is a physical rather than a spiritual quality, and that it reacts mechanically against all that is displeasing to the divinity and destroys it. Before one can approach a divinity, therefore, he must be purged from anything which is not consonant with the divine sanctity. The priestly writers are careful to set their ideal before us in their narratives as well as in their legislation. The care which, according to them, Moses took to purify the camp shows what they aimed at. Had the prophets written the account, they would have made the lawgiver expel all thieves, oppressors, and perjurers. The priest says nothing about these, but banishes all lepers, those who have an issue, and those who have been in contact with a dead body.

It is evident that we have here a very different ideal from that of the prophets, and we cannot wonder at the sharp opposition between the two classes. Yet it is needful to notice that the prophets had no objection to the idea of sanctity. They believed just as the priests did that the sphere of the sacred is distinct from that of the profane. Amos makes Yahweh swear by his sanctity; Isaiah hears the seraphim proclaim this attribute, and his name for Yahweh is 'the Holy One of Israel'; Hosea in declaring that

Yahweh is God and not man, adds 'the Holy One in the midst of thee.' Yet the prophets inveigh in no measured terms against the ritual, and refuse to see in sacrifice and offerings something commanded by God. Logically the advantage was on the side of the priests, for by tradition the sacrifices bridge the chasm between God and man.

While often in sharp opposition, therefore, the two ideals were not necessarily hostile. In actual life the common man probably did not distinguish them. He might avoid a certain act because it was sin in the prophetic sense, that is, because it was contrary to the command of God, or he might avoid it because it involved defilement, that is, violation of the priestly tradition. The ethical and the ritual motive might coincide, and a man might act from either or both. The fear of Yahweh, which is the Old Testament phrase for religion, might be fear of a divine administrator and judge, or it might be dread of a mysterious being whose ways are so different from our ways. Yet while the two motives might exist side by side in the same bosom, we can see how the historic process brought one to the front at one time and the other at another. The great prophets, as we have seen, laid stress upon the ethical. To them succeeded the Deuteronomist and his school who made some concessions to the ritual. Then in the crisis came Ezekiel, who brought the ritual again to the front.

It is the interaction of the two ideals seen in the documents I have just named which makes the later history of the Old Testament people so interesting. As for the Deuteronomist, we see at once that he was a practical man who sought to combine both classes of motives. In his emphasis of the commandments and statutes of Yahweh he is thoroughly prophetic in tone. In insisting that reverence be paid at the sanctuary by burnt offering and sacrifice, he is as distinctly priestly. His main interest is undoubtedly ethical, but he is willing to preserve priestly tradition so far as it is not inconsistent with his ethical system. The ritual has conquered the opposition of the prophets and secured a foothold in the prophetic school, but it has been

obliged to become moral in order to succeed. The same is more strikingly exemplified in Ezekiel. Himself a priest and faithful to the priestly ideal, he believed that Jerusalem was destroyed because of trespass upon the ritual separateness of Yahweh. What weighed upon him as he reviewed the past was the fact that the priests had not been careful to distinguish between sacred and profane, that the kings of Judah had buried their dead in immediate proximity to the temple, and that they had brought heathen slaves into the sacred place.

But though thus at heart a priest Ezekiel had adopted the prophetic standard in ethics. When he describes a wicked man he names his offenses against the moral law as well as those against priestly tradition. Both kinds of transgressions are indeed viewed from the priestly point of view, for they are both called תועבה. At first sight it looks as though the prophetic standard has wholly disappeared, but on looking closer we see that it has been merged in that of the priest. The ritual is enforced, but the ritual has been moralized. Even in the midst of his sketch of the restored temple the prophet stops to forbid violence and oppression, and to enjoin just weights and measures. Yet this same sketch of the future temple and commonwealth shows how fully the author's thought emphasized ritual requirements. So scrupulous is he in the matter of ceremonial purity that he finds his standard unattainable except by a direct act of God. Yahweh himself will sprinkle clean water on the exiles, cleanse them from all their filthiness, and give them a new heart and a new spirit. The new temple will be consecrated by elaborate sacrifices, and will be kept pure by regularly recurring applications of sacred blood. The chief duty of the prince will be to provide sacrifices for the purification (לכפר) of the nation. The most elaborate precautions will be taken to guard the sanctuary from pollution. We have seen that the moral earnestness of the prophet is unquestioned. He truly desired ethical as well as ritual purity for his people, but the ethical has been absorbed by the ritual.

The ideal of Ezekiel was taken up by the priestly writers, and through them it affected the whole thought of Judaism. Moral conduct is undoubtedly urged, — no one can say that the ethical standard of Judaism is not high, — but it is urged from the ritual point of view. "Be ye separate because I am separate" is the recurring injunction. But the separateness is not primarily from moral offenses alone; it is from everything which tradition made incompatible with the sanctity of Yahweh. Contact with a dead body is to be shunned as scrupulously as murder or adultery, and both are to be shunned for the same reason. Both alike violate that mysterious sanctity which must be preserved by the land, by the temple, by pots and pans. In the literal sense the people are to be a nation of priests. In the theory of these writers no foreigner ought to enter the land of Yahweh, for none but Jews are consecrated to his service. Or if this seems too rigorous, we may say without fear of contradiction that none but Jews, and they in a state of ritual purity, ought to be allowed in the city of Jerusalem. This is set forth by the Pentateuchal writer with all desirable plainness when he makes Moses by divine command shut out from the camp every one who is defiled by leprosy, or who has an issue, or is polluted by the dead. There are degrees of sanctity — the Talmud distinguishes no less than eleven — increasing in intensity as we approach the temple, and culminating in the Most Holy, the chamber of Yahweh's residence.

Our own associations with the word *holy* are so different that in reading many passages of the Old Testament we do not realize what they meant to those who first read them. The book of Zechariah promises that a fountain shall be opened in Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness. The same book asserts that in time to come even the bells of the horses shall be sacred. The great prophet of consolation gives the joyful assurance that the uncircumcised and the unclean shall no more enter the restored Jerusalem. We spiritualize such expressions and forget that by the Jew they were taken in the most literal sense, as promises of ritual

inviolability to be secured to the sacred city. Some of the most painful tragedies of the post-exilic period arose from the fact that this priestly ideal, cherished by all faithful Jews, was wantonly violated. It was not in the power of the people to keep intruders out of their city; sometimes the hated foreigner forced his way into the temple itself. When such intrusion occurred the frantic rage of the people knew no bounds. Their dearest sensibilities were outraged, they felt that their God was affronted, and at the same time that their nation was insulted. They feared that the divine vengeance would fall upon them for the sacrilege which they had not the physical power to prevent. They were beside themselves with these mingled emotions.

Unless we take the ritual point of view we shall be unable to appreciate the theory of sin which underlies the priestly literature. Sin — to use this word in default of a better — is anything which offends the sanctity of Yahweh, whether it be committed wittingly or unwittingly. To be a little more precise, the *act* is sin, the resulting state is *guilt*. The guilt rests upon the one who has contracted it until he has taken the proper means to remove it. Guilt or defilement resting on the individual is dangerous, not to himself alone, but to the whole community. Hence the sternness of the law: "The soul which acts with uplifted hand . . . insults Yahweh; that soul shall be certainly cut off with its guilt in it." The offending member must be cut off lest the whole body perish. According to the Talmud there are twenty-six offenses which if knowingly committed must be followed by the death or excommunication of the offender.

Logically, unwitting offenses should be treated in the same way; for the pollution is as real in one case as in the other. In the earlier time they seem to have been so treated, for Jonathan's violation of Saul's taboo found no extenuation in ignorance. To make the rule so rigid, however, in a world full of things unclean is impossible. Hence the indulgence which allows the unwitting offender to cleanse himself. Impurity may be counteracted by means known to the priests. Ezekiel was fully possessed by this idea, and

under his influence the whole temple service became a continuous purification rite. The daily burnt offering is a cleansing of the people; the annual day of atonement carries away what pollution may remain; even the headband of the high priest by its sanctity takes away the pollution which may lurk in the sacred things; individuals who suspect that they have unwittingly offended are allowed to bring the so-called sin offerings, which restore them to the communion of the temple. The anxiety of the Psalmists to be cleansed from secret faults shows the sensitiveness bred in pious souls by this elaborate system.

The triumph of the ritual ideal, therefore, may be said to be complete. Under the influence of the apostle Paul we may easily do injustice to this ideal. Undoubtedly so complicated a system of rules and purifications might become a burden to a conscientious man. But it is a mistake to think of the faithful Jew as always groaning under the yoke of the Torah. Quite otherwise — the majority found joy and pride in their law. Is it not a relief to have one's conscience directed by an infallible guide? And is it not a matter for thankfulness to the devout Jew that his nation has been chosen out of all the world to be priests to Yahweh? To such questions the believer could make but one answer; patriotism and religious fervor combined to make Jerusalem, the city of the great king, the object of the most ardent affection, and of the most heroic devotion. In proportion to the warmth of this affection was the bitterness felt against scoffers and renegades, who by their unfaithfulness endangered the security of Israel, delayed the coming of the Messiah, and invited a new outbreak of divine wrath. The men who believed that if Israel should keep the law for a single day their redemption would dawn, could not be tolerant of sinners who were preventing that glorious consummation. The imprecatory Psalms become more intelligible, if not more excusable, when we realize the aspirations of the authors. In enthusiasm for a whole people pity for the individual may be lost out of sight.

Where the priestly ideal prevails there is evident danger

of emphasizing the *opus operatum*. Had the priestly writings alone become the Bible of Israel, this danger would have become acute, for the Priest Code does not make the efficacy of the sacrifices depend on repentance and confession. The danger was minimized by the union of the priestly *tora* with documents of the prophetic school which exalt the ethical standard. The great ethical Decalogue stands out conspicuously as the word of God, most important of all his requirements. In fact, the combination of these documents symbolizes the combination of the two ideals we have been considering. With thinking men the ritual did not overshadow the ethical, though in form it seemed to triumph.

Evidence of this is found in what we call the Wisdom literature. It needs no argument to show that these writers are absorbed in ethical problems. They do not reject the ritual nor regard it as something outgrown; they take it as something established, which the wise man will observe, but concerning which he need not argue:—

> Fear God with all thy heart, and regard his priests as holy,
> Love thy Maker with all thy strength, and forsake not his servants,
> Fear God and honor the priest, and give him his portion as thou art commanded.

This exhortation of Sirach might stand as the motto of the school, yet it is clear that their thought is much more exercised by ethics than by ritual. They give little attention to questions of ceremonial purification. If in the priestly writers the ethical was overshadowed by the ritual, the ethical now reasserts itself. We have seen that the word תועבה is in its origin a ritual term, denoting whatever is contrary to the sanctity of Yahweh. But the sages use it to designate sins against one's neighbor. To them deceitful balances are an abomination; so are evil devices, haughty eyes, the man who pronounces the innocent guilty or the guilty innocent. Moreover, the righteous character of Yahweh himself is strongly insisted upon, the grace of repentance is fully recognized, and probity, kindness, and fair dealing are constantly commended.

The outline sketch which I have set before you seems to

me to show the value of the studies in which we are engaged, and to which this society is dedicated. The ethical attainments of Israel have passed into the possession of the race; they are a part of our spiritual heritage. To understand the process by which they were reached is to understand the moral evolution of mankind. By study of this process we find what these ethical attainments cost. We see that they came by struggle and conflict, with strong crying and tears. The history and literature of Israel will never lose its importance as an object of study, because it is the monument of this struggle. It follows that nothing which helps our understanding of these documents is insignificant. In looking over the volumes of our Journal some might think we had given too much space to criticism — higher and lower. Our answer must be that to understand our history we must first date our documents. The very fact that the documents have resulted from the interaction of various forces makes the problem more difficult, but also more important. We are learning that art is long; each year we have the necessity forced upon us to learn something new and to unlearn some of the things we had supposed settled.[2] But this only shows that our science is a living and growing thing.

The importance of the inquiry we have followed, and the justification of a Biblical science which is something more than a mere branch of Oriental philology, are seen in the clearness with which the spiritual evolution of Israel is revealed by its literature as a complete whole. We who have seen the growth of Assyriology and Egyptology would be the last to ignore the light which these sciences have thrown upon many Old Testament problems. The time has

[2] It may not be impertinent to call attention to some illustrations which show how far we are from agreement on some of our fundamental problems. Eerdmans is reopening the whole Pentateuchal problem, claiming that the current theory of the documents is all wrong. Wiener and Schlögl are emphasizing the textual discrepancies between the Hebrew text and the Greek version of Genesis, claiming that these discrepancies invalidate the division of the narrative between Elohist and Yahwist. The only answer that can be made to such assertions is the careful reëxamination of the whole field of textual and historical criticism.

passed when the Old Testament scholar could claim to understand the history of Israel apart from that of its neighbors. But the most generous recognition of the light which comes from Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt still leaves untouched the moral evolution of Israel as a complete whole, parallel no doubt to what has gone on in other nations, but not dependent upon outside forces, standing out as a distinct entity with a clearness which makes it typical of the whole ethical process. With this conviction let us address ourselves with renewed ardor to the problems before us.