

JERUSALEM AND DEUTERONOMY.

CIRCA 638-608 B.C.

DURING the reign of Manasseh (*circa* 685-639) the land of Judah recovered from the devastation of 701. What became of the 200,000 captives, whom Sennacherib claims to have taken<sup>1</sup>—how many he carried to Assyria and how many his sudden departure obliged him to leave behind—we do not know. But it is certain that of those and of others who had fled before him into Jerusalem not all returned, and that the rural economy was radically disturbed. An invasion such as Sennacherib inflicted on Judah—and its drastic character is emphasized by Isaiah<sup>2</sup>—is followed not merely by the transference of estates from some families to others. It happens almost always that lands formerly preserved by many individuals pass into the hands of a few, and only seldom that the domains of a slain or a banished landlord are divided among his serfs or adherents. But all such disturbances consequent upon 701 must have been gradually repaired. The long peace of Manasseh's reign, with its prosperity,<sup>3</sup> and the revival under royal patronage of the local cults, must have restored to the country much of its appearance before Sennacherib's invasion. The rural population was again large. About 625 Jeremiah at Anathoth saw shrines all over the land—*as many as thy cities so be thy gods, O Judah; where hast thou not been defiled?*<sup>4</sup>—and heard across it the noise of much people.<sup>5</sup> Nor was this part of the nation without considerable moral force. Of the second group of Judean prophets half—Jeremiah himself and Nahum—came from villages, and, as we shall see, the Deuteronomic legislation is strongly

<sup>1</sup> See above, p 220.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. i.

<sup>3</sup> See above, 319.

<sup>4</sup> Jer. ii. 28, iii. 2; cf. iii. 9, xi. 13, etc.

<sup>5</sup> Jer. iii. 21, (?) 23 ff., etc.

influenced by provincial interests. The capital, of course, retained its lead, but when a party of officials slew Amon, son of Manasseh, it was *the people of the land*<sup>1</sup> who executed the murderers, and, as in the case of Uzziah, raised the murdered man's son to the throne.

The motives of the intrigue against Amon are not clear. Manasseh's persecutions, apparently confined to Jerusalem, must have created a bitterness against his house, which would naturally become effective under his weaker successor. But the conspiracy is said to have been formed among *the servants of Amon*, and was therefore more probably due to political opinions, restrained so long as Manasseh lived and there was no practical alternative to the Assyrian supremacy. By the time Manasseh died Psametik of Egypt had thrown off the Assyrian yoke,<sup>2</sup> and according to a credible tradition was already interfering in south-eastern Palestine.<sup>3</sup> The Egyptian party at the court of Jerusalem, which had controlled affairs at the close of the previous century, and, as we know from Jeremiah,<sup>4</sup> was again active about 625, but lay powerless during the reign of Manasseh, may have sought by the death of Amon to remove the chief obstacle to their policy. Or his courtiers may have had some more private grudge against him. In any case the motives of the conspirators were not economic; their punishment by *the people of the land* proves how contented the latter had been under the government of Manasseh.

There is no evidence that the elevation of Josiah was due to the party of the purer religion, formed by Isaiah.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xxi. 24—not of course exclusive of the unofficial classes in Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> "Before 660," Rodgers' *Hist. of Bab. and Assyria*, ii. 254; "It may have been about 660 but this is uncertain," W. Max Müller, *Enc. Bibl.*, art. "Egypt." "Certainly by 645," McCurdy, *Hist. Proph. and the Monuments*, ii. 355.

<sup>3</sup> Herodotus, ii. 151.

<sup>4</sup> Jer. ii. 18, 36.

But from the first that party had included many of the leading men in Jerusalem,<sup>1</sup> and in spite of its decimation by Manasseh, probably still retained some adherents of high rank. After the murder of Amon, the slaughter of the king's *servants*, nominees of Manasseh, may have opened to those influential followers of the prophets some of the offices at court. And it certainly was to the advantage of their principles that the new king was too young to be committed to the policy of Manasseh, and sensitive to other influences. At the age of eight he was chiefly under the care of the women of the household; and through them, or some of his ministers or some of the priests, his character, on which so much depended, was moulded by the principles of his great-grandfather, Hezekiah. There must also have been sober and conservative men, whose minds, though not appreciating the spiritual teaching of the prophets, revolted against the foreign cults and the cruelties of Manasseh, and who would be ready to welcome the restored supremacy of the national God. And there was always the party favourable to Egypt. But so long as the Assyrian domination remained effective—Ashurbanipal had apparently accepted Josiah as his vassal—no one of these parties nor all of them together could carry their desires into action. The Assyrian sovereignty at once awed and divided them. While it remained there would be many who feared it, and some, among the prophetic party, who, following Isaiah, would judge a revolt against it or the appeal to Egypt, which others proposed, as an impious course for the Lord's people to pursue. The various parties could, therefore, only wait and privately prepare,—each in its own way and all by some compromises with each other—for a change in the political situation. Of this there were many omens. The Assyrian Empire, apparently as strong as ever at its centre, was

<sup>1</sup> Smend, *A. T. Religionsgeschichte*.

suffering in its extremities. Egypt was independent, and her forces, increased by Greek and Carian mercenaries, threatened the southern provinces; while swift and terrible hordes, races new to history, hung over the northern. During the youth of Josiah all the Jews must have gathered hope and courage, but the eyes of their various factions rested upon different rifts in the horizon. At last in 625, with the death of Ashurbanipal, a gate was suddenly flung open wide enough for all of them to move forward together, and a religious influence descended under which they became for the first time a united nation.

The Editor of the Book of Kings dates the beginning of Josiah's reforms in the eighteenth year of his reign, 621 or 620 B.C. The repair of the Temple which he records before that was a periodical affair instituted by Joash.<sup>1</sup> The Chronicler asserts that the reforms began earlier. He dates the king's adhesion to the purer religion in the eighth year of his reign, and the *commencement*<sup>2</sup> of the destruction of the high places and the idols in the twelfth year, and says that the work was complete by the eighteenth when the Temple was repaired and the Book of the Law discovered. But if the king had already achieved such drastic reforms, there was no cause for the consternation ascribed to him when the Book was read. We must therefore prefer the statement in Kings, that the high places and idols began to be removed *after* the discovery of the Book. Still the definite dates given by the Chronicler, when read in the light of the history of the time, suggest that he worked upon reliable material. The eighth

<sup>1</sup> Erbt, *Die Sicherstellung des Monotheismus durch die Gesetzgebung im vorexil. Juda* (1903), assumes that Josiah ordered a reconstruction (Umbau) of the Temple, and illustrates, what he believes must have followed from this on the discovery of its foundation stone and the documents of its constitution (Urkunde), from Babylonian parallels. But there is no evidence of so thorough a rebuilding.

<sup>2</sup> Josiah began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, the *Asherim*, the graven images, etc., 2 Chron. xxxiv. 2 ff.

year of Josiah's reign was the sixteenth of his life, when it is reasonable to suppose that his character was formed and that he began to assert himself. And the twelfth year of his reign is 626 or 625, the year of Ashurbanipal's death, which, as we have seen, left Judah free to govern herself. We may therefore infer that with the gradual growth of opportunity, as depicted above, the stages of the movement under Josiah were three. *First*, there was the king's adolescence and his adhesion to the purer religion. Whatever influences brought it about, the personal fact is too well credited to remain doubtful. Between the kings who preceded and those who followed him Josiah stands by himself, and we need not hesitate to ascribe to him, as both his historians do, that power of personality which it is so easy but so fallacious to ignore in religious movements. *Second*, there were some tentative efforts at reform after 625, when Ashurbanipal's death gave Josiah and his counsellors political freedom; but the king and all the parties may have been too dazzled by the sudden opportunity and too much at variance among themselves to effect a decisive change. *Third*, in 621 or 620, a sacred Law-Book was discovered in the Temple which not only did justice in its details to the various national interests, but by its general spirit impressed all their representatives with the awe of a supreme religious obligation.<sup>1</sup> It is this religious influence, gathered from the

<sup>1</sup> Erbt (*op. cit.*) and Dr. John Cullen (*The Book of the Covenant in Moab a critical enquiry into the original form of Deuteronomy*, Glasgow, Maclehose, 1903) both do justice, upon the Chronicler's data, to the gradual character of the movement. Cullen (p. 17): "The author of Kings has telescoped into one account a series of reforms." Erbt (p. 8) places the first stage at the accession of Josiah, but, as we have seen, there is no evidence that this was due to the spiritual party in Judah; and does not accept as reliable the Chronicler's first datum in Josiah's conversion, but takes it as a mere easy assumption that the king's adolescence was marked by his adhesion to the prophetic principles: yet here, as elsewhere, Erbt seems to me to ignore too much the personality of Josiah.

prophets of the eighth century, fostered by loyal hearts under Manasseh, and giving itself forth as divine, to which as it acted on the priests of the Temple, on a king whose character was predisposed to receive it, and through them on the whole people of Judah, at a time when the political situation was favourable to its national enforcement, the great Reform, the establishment of monotheism in Israel, was essentially due. Without the Divine call and the faith of the men who received it, the political situation, the compromises of parties, and the wonderful adaptation of the Law itself to the rival ecclesiastical and social interests would have availed little. The effect upon the nation was immediate and complete. The king was overcome by the denunciations against the negligence of its laws which the Book contained, and further moved by a message from the prophetess Huldah,<sup>1</sup> gathered *the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem* to the Temple and had the Book read in their hearing. Then with due sacrificial forms, and as the representative of the people, he *made a covenant* before God to keep the words of the Book, *and all the people stood to the covenant.*

Very few now doubt that the Book which formed the basis of this national covenant is part, at least, of our present Book of Deuteronomy. Recent attempts to disprove this,<sup>2</sup> cannot be pronounced successful. The reforms introduced by Josiah in obedience to the discovered Book correspond to the requirements of Deuteronomy as they do not to any of the other codes of Israel, while the distinctive Deuteronomic style and phraseology begin from

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xxii. 15-20. Huldah's oracle as here given is probably not in its original form, but the fact that it predicts a peaceful death for Josiah, who fell in battle at Megiddo, is proof that some at least of the original contents have been preserved.

<sup>2</sup> As, for instance, in *Are the Critics Right?* by Müller. Transl. by Irwin. Rel. Tract Soc., 1903.

this period onward to affect the literature of Israel.<sup>1</sup> But how much of the Book of Deuteronomy existed at the time we cannot say. Some portions of the canonical text are without doubt exilic; and recent criticism has tended to show how composite the rest is by first analysing it, not very successfully,<sup>2</sup> into a legal code (chaps. xi.-xxvi. with xxviii.), which was the discovered law book, and some hortatory introductions to this; and more recently, upon other linguistic phenomena, into constituents which run through both the legal and the hortatory divisions.<sup>3</sup> Accepting one or other of these conflicting principles of analysis, recent writers see in our present Deuteronomy the fusion of two or more editions of the original. It is generally agreed that the discovered Book must have contained some of the minatory passages, for example, chap. xxviii., or at least some of the strong exhortations, because their presence would explain the distress of the king on hearing the Book read. But there is, and probably always will be, a difference of opinion as to whether the hortatory sections by themselves inspired the reforms, and the legislation was its precipitate and codification; or whether the legislation was the actual programme on which the king and the other reformers went to work.<sup>4</sup> The question is

<sup>1</sup> It is beyond the scope of this article to detail the proofs. See Driver's *Introd. to Deuter.*, and Ryle's and Moore's articles in Hastings' *Bible Dict.* and the *Enc. Bibl.*

<sup>2</sup> See Driver's strong arguments for the linguistic unity of the hortatory and legal portions.

<sup>3</sup> Steuernagel's and Stärck's various analyses, based on a distinction between the singular and plural forms of address, to the principle of which the present writer adhered in a paper read before the Society of Historical Theology at Oxford in 1902. Erbt accepts Steuernagel's analysis.

<sup>4</sup> As stated above, the latter was formerly the prevailing view. But Dr. Cullen (*op. cit.*) has argued that a large hortatory and historical section, including chapters v. 29-xi. 28, and other passages, to which he gives the name the Book of the Covenant, was the original discovered in the Temple, and that the Law-code was put together in consequence of the reforms. Erbt, following on Steuernagel, distinguishes two codes: one of Hezekiah, which was the basis of reforms in 625, and one of Josiah, which was the basis of the reforms of 621 or 620.

not one within our duty to discuss at the present time. Whatever be the correct analysis of Deuteronomy, and the dates of its various constituents, we may confidently hold that all of these represent the religious spirit which animated Josiah and his people between 625 and 620, and that they detail for us the reforms which were enforced in Judah from the latter year onward.

The Book of Deuteronomy applies the teaching of the eighth century prophets to the life and consuetudinary law of Israel : interpreting the people's history, modifying their institutions, regulating their daily habits, inspiring their individual hearts and minds, and dealing in addition with the latest phenomena of their religious and economic development. The governing principle of the Book is Monotheism, qualified, it is true, by current popular conceptions, and in its applications limited by the practical necessities of the time ; yet so earnestly moral and warmly spiritual in its exposition of the relation between God and the people, that our Lord has accepted one of its central expressions as the supreme law of religion : *Hear, O Israel, Jahweh thy God is one Jahweh, and thou shalt love Jahweh thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.* The worship of every other deity is absolutely forbidden, and, in the spirit of the times, on the penalty of death. Equally excluded is the representation of the Deity in any material form ; and His worship is purged of all immoral elements, *abominations* as they are called : images, *massèboth*, Asherim, all tainted and foolish rites, all mutilations of the body and unclean practices, all witchcraft and necromancy. The whole of the practice of religion is winnowed and ordered by a spirit as certain of its own reasonableness as it is passionately pure and humane.

The distinctive feature of Deuteronomy, however, is the centralization of the national worship. We have already

seen how inevitable a corollary this was to the ethical monotheism of the prophets. The ritual of Israel's religion had always been a menace to its intellectual and moral elements, partly because men are ever disposed to assign to the performance of rites a higher place in the Divine will than morality, and partly because the rites used by Israel were akin to those of the religions around them, and thus constantly tempted the worshippers to confuse the character of their God with those of others. That is why the prophets of the eighth century did not refrain from demanding the abolition of all sacrifice and ritual. Instead of this the practical reformers of the seventh century proposed their limitation to one place, not only in order to secure the purity of the ritual but to avert that dissolution of the Divine Unity which was almost inseparable in the popular mind from the identification of God with many sanctuaries. Therefore besides enforcing the extirpation of the cult of every other god from the land, Deuteronomy decrees the destruction of all the *bamoth* or high places at which Jahweh Himself was worshipped, and confines His sacrifices and the celebration of His feasts to a single sanctuary. Such a measure was not, as some recent writers labour to prove, the invention of any interested locality or corporation of priests, and it could never have been carried out by mere party motives, however powerful or skilfully organized. The removal of the high places was nothing less than a religious and ethical necessity, demanded in the name of the One God, and proved by the bitter experience of centuries. Unless we appreciate this we shall not understand how so great a revolution in the national worship was so unanimously effected in Judah, without opposition from the interests which it disturbed.

But the ideal of the Book is political as well as religious. The establishment of many idolatries in Jerusalem had been the sacramental token of the nation's servitude to a

foreign power. But the Deuteronomic Israel is a free people, owning no overlord save their God, and governing themselves in subjection to His revealed will. His will is applied to every department of the national life—monarchy, war, agriculture, commerce, education, and the relief of the poor, as well as worship—in as comprehensive a system of national religion as the world has ever seen. The duty laid upon the Book of rigorously limiting the national worship to one locality neither shortens its vision of the land nor restrains its heart from the whole compass of the people's life. There is no stage of Israel's legislation from which we enjoy so wide and sympathetic a prospect of land and people. One of the most frequently enforced obligations to love and serve God is His gift of *this land*, whose singular preciousness and beauty is as lavishly described<sup>1</sup> as its sacredness is solemnly proclaimed: *Thou shalt not cause the land to sin which Jahweh thy God giveth thee for an heritage. Thy cities and thy gates* are among the most often recurring formulas by which the laws (except those relating to the central sanctuary) are expressly affirmed as applicable throughout the country, and the laws are designed for a widely scattered people still mainly employed in agriculture.<sup>2</sup> To this stage of life the blessings and the curses are, with one exception,<sup>3</sup> confined, and the happiness of the people is described as in rural wealth and pleasures. It is remarkable how the very fringes of country life are considered—the dropped sheaf, strayed animals, and the like; and also how much care is taken for remote persons and places—for fugitives from blood at a distance from the central sanctuary,<sup>4</sup> for escaped slaves,<sup>5</sup> and for the victims of murder and outrage in lonely

<sup>1</sup> xi. 10 ff.

<sup>2</sup> This even in xiv. 22–29.

<sup>3</sup> xxviii. 12, 43 f.

<sup>4</sup> iv. 41 ff.

<sup>5</sup> xxiii. 15.

fields far from houses.<sup>1</sup> If the writers belonged to Jerusalem, they did not write from behind her walls. The whole country is upon their conscience and their heart; its cities and village life, farms and homesteads, vineyards, fields and mines, long roads and desert places. One would think that not the law of the central sanctuary, but the interests of the rest of the land were the main anxiety of the Book; so careful, for instance, are its provisions for the priests of the disestablished shrines, and for the domestic convenience of the people in whose gates sacrifice, hitherto the invariable form of the slaughter of animals for food, is no longer to be allowed. Down to small details and to the remotest distances, interests, whether vested or not, are safeguarded, and compensation is made for the disturbance caused to the rural economy by the centralisation of the cultus. But such provisions form only part of the wide and mindful humanity of the Book. Its ethics are the social justice and pure charity of the great prophets. Its care is vigilant for the poor, the widow, the fatherless, the slave and debtor, and the stranger *that is within thy gates*. Nor are the animals forgotten.

Yet the system is limited to Israel. Beyond directions for the admission to the covenant of individual Edomites and Egyptians,<sup>2</sup> there is no attempt to deal with the world outside. There is no missionary programme, no provision for mankind—that is one of the limitations of the monotheism of the Book, already alluded to. Next to devotion to the national Deity, comes pride in the nation itself: a pride, of course, subject to the austere moral conditions imposed on their life. As there is one Jahweh, so there is one Israel, the only righteous people, and wise above all others. For no other possesses a religion or laws so high

<sup>1</sup> xxi. 1, xxii. 25 ff.

<sup>2</sup> xxiii. 3-8: against which note the frequent command to extirpate other peoples (e.g. xxv. 17 ff.).

and pure. The intellectual tempers of monotheism—the sense of a loftier mental position, the scorn of idolatry—appear if not in the original Deuteronomy yet in its immediate additions.

It is only when we thus realize all the tempers which inspire Deuteronomy—some of them, it may be, not yet articulate by the date of the Reform, of which parts of the Book were the cause and parts the precipitate—that we can explain the rapid and unanimous adoption of the system by the nation : in spite of the fact that it involved the alteration of so many sacred customs and the disturbance of so many vested interests throughout the land. The religious instincts and natural conscience of the people, headed by their pious king, were stirred. Their patriotism was inflamed, their intelligence aroused, and their affections drawn forth by the humane ideals presented to them. Every home, every heart was appealed to. Every interest found itself respected. Upon the poor and the oppressed a great hope dawned. But to all this volume of movement, the edge and point was the conviction of the zealous leaders of reform, sharpened as it had been by the cruel experiences of Manasseh's reign—the conviction that only such radical and rigorous measures as Deuteronomy enjoins could save their religion from submergence by heathenism, and their nation from destruction. And now for the free operation of all these motives the political situation gave the opportunity which had been denied to the efforts of Hezekiah. Israel was free for the moment from foreign servitude—free to obey its God and to govern itself in His fear.

The Book of Deuteronomy is singularly reticent as to the name of the place which Jahweh would choose for His one altar and sanctuary. Jerusalem is not mentioned, neither in the laws nor in the introductions or supplements. We

<sup>1</sup> And that although the cities of refuge are given by name, and

can hardly doubt the reason of this. The authors of the policy were more concerned to state the religious principle involved in it than to advocate the claims of a particular locality. Nor did the latter need to be asserted. Jerusalem was the only possible candidate for the unique position designated by Deuteronomy. We have seen the gradual growth of Temple and City at a time when they had still many ancient and more powerful rivals in the land. We have seen how Isaiah interpreted the Divine purpose in their history and unveiled their glory as the habitation and the hearth of God, and how this sacredness had been vindicated in 701 when every other sanctuary in the land was despoiled. Nowhere else could the centralized ritual be kept so pure as on a site which, never having been used by another deity before Jahweh chose it for His own, had passed through such a history of divine deed and word. David's, Solomon's, Isaiah's, Hezekiah's work was completed by Josiah, and the Temple became the single sanctuary of the One God.

The record of how Josiah carried out the Deuteronomic reforms<sup>1</sup> is composite, and beset with later intrusions. But it is certain that the Temple, the City and their surroundings were largely purged of heathen altars, rites, and ministries; and that from Geba to Beersheba—the limits of Judah—the high places of Jahweh were abolished, His rural priests brought to Jerusalem, and His sacrifices and festivals established there alone. The former side of the Reform does not appear to have been so successful as the latter. The heathen cults may have ceased for the rest of Josiah's reign, but upon his death they immediately revived. But the centralization of the national worship of Jahweh, the establishment of the one sanctuary

sacred functions are appointed at Ebal and Gerizim the natural centre of the land.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings xxiii.

for the One God, was settled once for all. And this was the main thing. Whether cleansed or not from heathen cults, Jerusalem became, not merely the principal school and shrine of the one great system of ethical and intellectual monotheism in the ancient world; but its material sign and sacrament, its only altar, and for centuries almost an equal object with its God of confidence and longing.

While it was thus possible to execute the formal decrees of Deuteronomy with regard to the worship, it was by no means so easy to realize the ethical ideals, and one after another these faded even in Josiah's time. Removed from close contact with the agricultural and pastoral habits of the people, which moulded the cases of the rural shrines, the ritual was relieved from the debasing infections of nature-worship. But at the same time there was danger that the healthy influence of association with the simple life of the common people and their domestic interests would be lost. As a matter of fact the sensuous but naïve credulities of the country were replaced by another materialism. Jeremiah reports that a more sophisticated and tyrannous superstition grew up about the one altar and the letter of the Law on which its ritual was founded. The vivid sympathy which we have seen in Deuteronomy for the whole land and its life was replaced by a fanaticism for the Temple and the City. Even so definite an ordinance as that for the admission of the rural priests to equal office and privilege with those of Jerusalem was ignored. And in general the social legislation of Deuteronomy was neglected. As the prophets complain, the people of Jerusalem learned neither justice nor mercy toward the poor and the slave.

The great influx of rural priests undoubtedly introduced to the capital a measure of moral vigour and independence of thought: witness Jeremiah himself. But it also meant the increase of the number of religious idlers, especially

when those priests were refused admission to the full work and honour of the altar. Divorced more or less from local and domestic interests, deprived of the highest ambitions of their profession, and reduced in many cases to a degrading beggary and subsistence on chance, the Levites were left to develop a narrow and a hollow patriotism without responsibility or healthy discipline. There was thus constituted a body of zealots and fanatics, who are already apparent in the days of Jeremiah and who never ceased in the Temple courts till the days of Titus: men who turned the Temple into a fortress and forgot the rest of their land and its interests.

Thrice every year the manhood of the people gathered to Jerusalem, and what that meant for the national unity and discipline and instruction in great causes cannot be exaggerated. We see it already in Jeremiah's choice of such seasons for the delivery of his prophecies. He could address the whole of Judah in the courts of the Temple. But at the same time these mobs were prone to be as fuel to the false fire of the zealots. Instead of bringing to the capital the health and sanity of the country, they took back to the provinces the fever of the City.

In short, from the very morrow of the Deuteronomic centralization of the cultus in Jerusalem, we see at work all the forces, good and bad, which form the mingled glory and horror of her future history.

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