

# THE ROOTS OF HEBREW PROPHECY AND JEWISH APOCALYPTIC.

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**I**T is not always easy for us to trace to their sources movements and tendencies which are momentous in our own day. The quest of origins is proverbially difficult. The tracks as we follow them backward grow fainter till they become imperceptible. And naturally when we are dealing with a movement in antiquity which, even in its brightest period, is all too dimly seen, we must not be surprised if the problem of origins baffles us. Our records are scanty at the best, and much information that would be priceless to us is not preserved because it was too commonplace or familiar to be put on record.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the significance and the influence of Israel. That tiny people ranks for us with Greece and Rome when we are estimating our incalculable debt to antiquity. Primarily it is of its religion that we think, alike for its own intrinsic value and because Christianity grew out of it. But this religion found expression in a literature of lofty quality ; and even if the religion should be set aside, the literature would remain a possession for ever. Of this religion Hebrew prophecy is the most splendid flower ; and if other Hebrew writings may rank as literature with the finest prophecies, or perhaps even surpass them, yet prophecy, rather than the Psalms or the Wisdom Books, is the mightiest creation of the Hebrew spirit. He who would understand the richness and depth of the religion of Israel and rightly measure the range and quality of its influence must beyond everything else steep himself in the study of the great prophets. For even if at certain points the Psalmists may rise to loftier heights of thought or expression ; or touch profounder levels of experience, it is the prophets who have made this possible ; for in these instances they

are original and creative, the Psalmists secondary and dependent. No pains then can be too great which are spent in learning to appreciate them ; and though my present concern is not with prophecy in the noble splendour of its maturity, yet the task of uncovering the roots that we may the better understand the forces which created the flower will not be without its reward.

Although Abraham and Moses are described as "prophets," that is the application to them of a later term which was not appropriate except in a very loose sense. The narrative of the seventy elders who received a portion of Yahweh's Spirit and prophesied at the Tent of Meeting in the wilderness, is closely related to the stories of the prophets in the time of Saul. The prophetic frenzy is evanescent and it does not return ; and when Eldad and Medad shared the experience and prophesied in the camp, and Moses rebuked the scandalised Joshua, desiring that Yahweh would put His Spirit upon all so that all the Lord's people might be prophets, it was not of anything beyond this passing ecstasy that he was thinking. But whether we regard this narrative as historical or as reflecting a condition of things which was really much later, it is of no special importance for our particular purpose. The story is isolated, no results seem to flow from it. It does not initiate any new and eventful movement.

To find the historical roots of Hebrew prophecy we must move forward to the age of Samuel. Samuel himself is described as a seer, and though a note in the narrative (1 Sam. ix. 9) seems to identify the prophet with the seer, the names being later and earlier terms for the same class, we should probably regard them as distinct. If we assumed that the seers and the prophets, after maintaining their separate identity for a period, finally coalesced, then the name "prophet," surviving as the designation of the whole, might not unnaturally be employed for one of the elements in the combination to which it was not strictly applicable.

A seer, as the name indicates, is one who sees, that is who sees what the ordinary man cannot see. Of Balaam it is said that his eye was closed, that he heard the words of God, saw the vision of God, falling down and having his eyes open. This seems to mean that he falls in a trance with his eyes closed, but with the inner eye open for the vision of God. The seers as a class were wise men, who were consulted by those who were in difficulties and received a fee for their

professional services. A typical case is that of Samuel, to whom Saul goes to enquire about his father's asses. Samuel was, it is true, no common seer, but we learn from this narrative what the profession involved. The seers would contribute to the combination their cooler judgment, their insight, their shrewdness in dealing with practical problems, while the prophets would bring to it their fiery enthusiasm.

It is in the time of Samuel that the prophets begin to be prominent. We do not know whether they had an earlier history, but they appeared at the time when the Hebrews were groaning under the oppression of the Philistines. Saul, who is selected by Samuel as the liberator of his people, comes in contact with a band of prophets, he is seized with their infectious ecstasy and, to the surprise of everyone, himself becomes a prophet. It is of course clear that prophecy is at this stage very rudimentary, with scarcely, it would seem, anything in common with the later activities of the great prophets. We are struck at once by its connexion with certain physical conditions. Music seems to have played a large part in the exercises. Saul is told by Samuel that he will meet a band of prophets, with a psaltery and a timbrel and a pipe and a harp before them, and when he meets them they will be prophesying. So too at a later period Elisha, when he was consulted by the King of Israel and his allies, called for a minstrel; and when the minstrel played before him the hand of Yahweh came upon him. The effect of the music was not, as we might have supposed, to soothe the prophet that he might the better hear the voice of God. It was rather designed to excite him and induce a condition of ecstasy. We have several indications of this in the history. Thus one form of the verb "to prophesy" in Hebrew means also "to rave;" and in the narrative of Saul's attempt on David's life, the text of the Revised Version says that Saul prophesied in the midst of the house, but the margin gives the alternative rendering "raved." Similarly the prophet who anointed Jehu gave the impression to Jehu's comrades that he was mad. The same abnormal element appeared in Elijah, when the hand of the Lord was upon him and he ran before the chariot of Ahab from Carmel to Jezreel.

I have already touched on the contagious character of prophecy in my reference to the experience of Saul when he met the band of prophets. The Spirit of Yahweh came mightily upon him, he

prophesied with them and was turned into another man. The strength of the influence and the measure of its transforming energy may be inferred from the amazement which Saul's experience occasioned. It found expression in an exclamation which passed into a proverb: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" But in a late narrative, which gives another account of the origin of this proverb, we are told of a similar phenomenon. When he sent messengers to capture David, who had taken refuge with Samuel at Naioth, they saw the company of prophets prophesying and Samuel standing as head over them. They were seized with the infectious ecstasy, and the same experience happened to two other companies of messengers and finally to Saul himself. The case of the seventy elders illustrates how the prophetic impulse might run like wildfire through a group, and even communicate the contagion to members of the group who had remained behind in the camp when the others had gone out to the Tent of Meeting. Another form of psychical phenomena, illustrated in the history of prophecy, is clairvoyance, as in Elisha's words to Gehazi, as he returned from the interview with Naaman: "Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee?" Ezekiel in particular is notable in this respect. Future events are vividly seen in the prophetic trance. Voices are heard, of God or of heavenly beings. If abnormal physical strength sometimes comes with the prophetic ecstasy, it may leave the prophet in a state of physical collapse. The Book of Daniel belongs to apocalyptic rather than to prophetic literature but it illustrates this point. After one of his visions and its interpretation we read that he fainted and was sick certain days. And on other occasions he says that his strength completely left him. The experience itself might sometimes be one of rapture, at other times it might fill the soul with horror or rack it with excruciating agony.

When we remember the wild contagious excitement, the infectious frenzy, of the early prophets there is no reason for surprise if, as is often supposed, they had no very high reputation at this time. It was just their eccentricities which would catch the popular eye and determine the popular estimate that they were more or less mad. It is usually thought that the question "Is Saul also among the prophets?" expresses the amazement of his friends that so respectable and steady a man as Saul should have joined a band of strolling enthusiasts.

This may not be the correct interpretation of the passage, though there is much to make it plausible.

The fact that the prophets come into prominence at the time of the Philistine oppression, has suggested to many scholars that the movement was patriotic and directed to the attainment of national freedom. It must be remembered that religion and patriotism were vitally associated from the very foundation of Israel's existence as a nation. Thus the impulse to achieve national independence would carry with it an intenser devotion to the national Deity. The prophets would combine a zeal for freedom with zeal for Yahweh of Hosts. Samuel himself seems to have been a seer rather than a prophet ; but he sympathised with the aims of the prophets, and predicted that the champion whom he had chosen to vindicate the liberties of his nation would experience the Divine enthusiasm and catch the contagion of the prophetic ecstasy. It is possible of course that prophecy appeared among the Hebrews before the Philistine invasion, and that it did not have its root in reaction against a foreign tyranny. It has often been supposed that it was not native to the religion of Israel, but derived from an external source. Generally it has been to Canaanite influence that its importation into Israel has been attributed. The Hebrews incorporated a large number of Canaanites and, with the adoption of the settled agricultural life, they took over the cult of the Baalim, that is the local divinities on whose favour and co-operation the fertility of the soil was thought to depend. It is asserted that the Canaanites had prophets of a character similar to that already depicted. It is true that the narrative of Elijah's contest on Carmel with the prophets of the Tyrian Baal shows that they went to wilder excesses in religious dancing and self-laceration than the prophets of Israel. But at any rate the antagonists of Elijah and the early Hebrew prophets had the ecstatic element in common. On the other hand the prophets confronted by Elijah were not Canaanite prophets but Phoenician. They were prophets of a foreign deity. We know nothing of Canaanite prophets. And it is questioned whether a movement so zealous for the worship of Yahweh would have taken over for its propaganda a form of religious exercise characteristic of Canaanite religion.

We cannot, however, build with any confidence on such arguments. That the prophets would have refrained from conscious adaptation of

elements derived from the paganism of Canaan may be true. But we need not think of deliberate borrowing. The Hebrews were very susceptible to their environment and it was not so much in modes of worship, or forms in which religious emotion found expression, as in the object to which worship was directed and the higher ideas by which they were re-interpreted that the genius of Israel stamped its religion with a unique quality. And the salient characteristics of early prophecy are such as we find in other lands and among other races. They seem to spring spontaneously out of the very nature of religion. It should be added, however, that recent investigation has tended to bring home the very complex character of the religion which the Hebrews found in Palestine at the time of their settlement. And it has been suggested that ultimately this corybantic prophecy really had its origin in the Dionysiac orgies of Thrace and Asia Minor, the movement spreading on the one side to Syria and Canaan and on the other to Greece. At present it is advisable to hold our judgment in suspense on the question whether prophecy was a foreign importation in Israel and if so from what people it was derived.

The question of foreign origin has recently come into special prominence in connexion with the eschatology of the prophets. It is rather unfortunate that the reaction from the old-fashioned view that prophecy was in the main prediction has led to the prevalent belief that the prophets were scarcely concerned with the future at all, but only with declaring the will of God for His people, denouncing the sin of their contemporaries and threatening them with speedy judgment if they failed to reform. Reaction was needed, but it has swung to an extreme. For really the predictive element in prophecy was very prominent. In the main, no doubt, prophecy before the destruction of Jerusalem was concerned with judgment. This is clear from a famous passage in Jeremiah. When Hananiah predicted that Jehoiachin and the captives, together with the Temple vessels, would be brought back to Jerusalem within two years, Jeremiah replied that he hoped the prophecy might come true. But he went on to say : "The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known that the Lord hath truly sent him." In other words, Jeremiah regarded the characteristic note of

true prophecy to be a prediction of calamity. And we find that Amos, the earliest of our literary prophets, utters a warning against the optimism of the people who expected the Day of Yahweh to be a day of triumph : "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord ! wherefore would ye have the day of the Lord ? it is darkness and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him ; or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness and not light ? even very dark, and no brightness in it ?" But in the portions of the prophetic writings, which we can with some confidence date before the destruction of Jerusalem, we have a number of passages which depict a glorious future for Israel. And after the downfall of Judah prophecy became largely a message of consolation. This continued even after the return from captivity. For the fortunes of the people were still miserable, and multitudes remained in the land of captivity or were scattered in the Dispersion.

The tendency among scholars has been to reduce the extent of optimistic prophecy before the Exile, and this has led to the denial on an increasing scale of the authenticity of such passages at present found in pre-exilic prophecies. But even those critics, who have not gone to such drastic extremes as Duhm or Marti, yet have held for the most part that the eschatology was a comparatively late development. Predictions of future felicity might be pre-exilic ; but in the main the older prophets were prophets of disaster, and eschatology was a comparatively late development. Opinions differed as to the route by which the conviction of impending catastrophe was reached. Generally it was thought to have a moral root. The prophets felt deeply the sin of Israel and realised intensely its intolerable incompatibility with the righteousness of Yahweh. They preached repentance and reform but did not believe that their message would be received. Hence the speedy coming of judgment was in their belief inevitable. Against this it was urged by others that we cannot understand why such an inference should have arisen only in Israel and why it should have extended only over a period of four hundred years. Why should there have been such long periods without prophecy ? Hence Wellhausen laid stress on the foreboding of the future. He compared the prophets with storm-birds, sensitive to approaching change, who were moved to utterance by the conviction that Yahweh was about to do something.

Or again prediction was derived from an acute observation of the political conditions, and might in some cases be regarded as prophecy after the event. There was, however, another possibility. It might have been due not to instinctive anticipation or political or moral inference, but to tradition. In that case the prophets did not draw their certainty of judgment from the contradiction between a Holy God and an unclean people, or from keener insight into the political forces at work, or from their instinctive anticipation of calamity ; but they applied to the situation a traditional scheme familiar to themselves and their hearers. This scheme embraced not only the prophecy of disaster but that of restoration and blessedness.

Several advocates of this view argue that the scheme was borrowed from abroad. This conclusion was independently reached along two lines. Eduard Meyer brought forward proofs that such a scheme existed in Egypt. Gressmann argued for it on the Old Testament evidence. Gunkel had previously expressed the view that there was in Israel a pre-prophetic eschatology. In his commentary on Genesis he said in reply to the view that the Messianic element in Jacob's blessing on Judah was a late interpolation : " Modern scholars are of the opinion that the eschatology of Israel was a creation of the literary prophets, hence they strike out the verse since it contradicts this fundamental conviction. The author of this commentary does not share this conviction ; he believes on the contrary that the prophets can be understood only on the assumption that they found an eschatology already in existence, took it over, contested it, transformed it. This pre-prophetic eschatology is here attested." Gressmann worked out the evidence most thoroughly. Both he and Gunkel lay stress on the mythical survivals in the descriptions of the future, especially in the imagery, which could not have originated in Israel. Sellin tries to trace back the evidence in the pre-prophetic period ; but he believes that the eschatology, while it may employ mythical imagery, yet grew directly out of the fundamental ideas of Israel's religion.

It will be seen at once that this implies a totally different attitude to the origin of eschatology. Wellhausen argued that eschatology was an artificial creation, it had a literary origin. The older prophets started with the actual situation and their predictions grew out of the historical facts. Ezekiel created eschatology by starting, not from the actual conditions, but from literary sources, that is from earlier prophecies.



Thus the prophecies occasioned by the Scythian peril in the reign of Josiah were the origin of Ezekiel's prophecy on Gog. From the Exile onwards fantastic forecasts were made of a general combination of God knows what nations against the New Jerusalem, for which in reality there was no occasion at all. Sellin who is opposed to this theory has thus formulated it. "For pre-exilic eschatology a psychological explanation is to be given, for eschatology after Ezekiel, a literary."

This theory as to the origin of the eschatology naturally affected the literary criticism of the books. The prophets interpreted history and foretold the future in the light of great fundamental ideas. Then the eschatological writers constructed their scheme of the future from the data of the prophets. There was accordingly a strong and increasing tendency to reject the authenticity of eschatological passages in pre-exilic prophecy. Critics of this school argued that earlier prophecies, relating to contemporary conditions, had been adjusted to later eschatological theories. The eschatologists on the other hand contend that an old eschatological scheme was adapted by the prophets to contemporary conditions. They are therefore ready to recognise the authenticity of many passages in pre-exilic prophecy, which scholars like Duhm and Marti relegated to the post-exilic period. It ought of course to be recognised that in the criticism of the prophets, passages are frequently assigned to a late date on grounds which are not connected with any theory on the origin of eschatology. The presence of ideas which we have independent reasons for regarding as late in their origin, allusions to events or conditions of a later time, expressions characteristic of the post-exilic period, literary dependence on late originals, may all serve as criteria pointing to post-exilic date. At the same time it is undeniable that if the origin of the prophetic eschatology is traced to Ezekiel there will be a strong temptation to approach the study of particular passages with a certain bias in favour of a late date. Wellhausen himself applied the principle with much more moderation than Duhm, while Duhm has not been so thorough-going as Marti. My personal judgment on the matter is that it is not safe to settle the date of a particular passage by this criterion alone. Yet there are not a few passages that fall into this category which are probably late rather than early. And as the number of these passages grows, the tendency is not unjustified to recognise a certain presumption that passages which betray a close kinship with them are likely to belong to the same period.

I may illustrate what I have been saying by reference to the closing verses of Amos. This is a typically eschatological passage. It was regarded by Wellhausen as a late appendix and his verdict has been very widely accepted. But the important point to emphasise is that his case did not rest on the assumption that a passage of this kind must, since it was eschatological, in the nature of the case be late. He based it on the glaring contradiction it presents to what has gone before. After Amos had expressed his conviction of judgment in its most drastic form, he could not have broken the point of all that he had been saying, assured his hearers that matters would not be so bad after all, substituted roses and lavender for blood and iron or allowed milk and honey to pour from the goblet of Yahweh's wrath. It is accordingly not surprising that Gunkel in his recent work on the prophets says : "The close of the Book of Amos (ix. 8 ff.) is according to the generally accepted opinion non-authentic." It is interesting, however, that both Eduard Meyer and Sellin argue for its authenticity. Meyer does not contend that the contradiction does not exist. He says : "The closing chapter of Amos, which is generally regarded as a late addition, I consider to be in all essentials genuine, and its ideas as indispensable for the book of the prophet. It is usually forgotten that contradictions in ideas often exist harmoniously side by side in an author and entirely so in a prophet, who ought never to be judged by rules of logic." For my own part I think the price Eduard Meyer pays for the authenticity of the passage is too high. Sellin, in his volume of studies entitled *Der Alttestamentliche Prophetismus* (1912), met the difficulty in another way. Amos did not utter the closing passage in Bethel. The total destruction announced by him concerned North Israel alone. The closing passage refers only to Judah, and was added by the prophet when on his way home he halted at Jerusalem and put his book together there. It was obvious to him as to any other Israelite that the downfall of the Northern Kingdom was not the end of God's ways. The final thing on earth was the salvation for which all the fathers had hoped. How could this be expressed otherwise than in ix. 11-15 ? The God of Amos, he says, was more than a logical category (pp. 32 f.). I see no reason for this very hypothetical reconstruction of history, and one would have expected the contrast which Sellin found to have been clearly indicated. It is interesting that in the third edition of his *Introduction to the Old Testament* (1920) he offers quite a different explanation. He says

it is obvious that Amos cannot have uttered the prophecy in question immediately after ix. 1-4. But all objections disappear as soon as it is recognised that it once stood after vii. 10-17, and was a continuation of the doom announced to Amaziah, for whom, as for Israel, the brilliant future of Judah signified a verdict of destruction. This reconstruction is also quite hypothetical and the actual language of the passage does not seem to suit the situation to which Sellin assigns it.

So far I have not explained in any detail the grounds on which the eschatological theory is based. In certain Egyptian documents Eduard Meyer discovered Egyptian prophecies with a fixed eschatological scheme. The general outline is as follows: A wise man unveils to the king Egypt's future, falls dead and is solemnly buried by the king, his prophecies are recorded and handed down to later generations. Their content is that, first a period of terrible misery is coming, in which everything in Egypt is turned upside down, foreign nations burst in, the temples are plundered and desecrated, their mysteries are unveiled, while the king himself is carried off as a prisoner or has to flee to a foreign land. Then, however, an epoch follows, in which the gods again bestow their favour on the land, and a righteous ruler, beloved of the gods, of the seed of Rê, drives out the enemy, restores the cultus and the ancient order, subdues the neighbouring countries, and enjoys a long and fortunate reign. Meyer thinks that the numerous points of contact between this scheme and Old Testament prophecy need no further exposition. The scheme is in its fundamental features entirely the same; first a time of severe affliction, the destruction of the civil power, the devastation of the country and its sanctuaries, then the glory of the Messianic kingdom under the righteous king, beloved of the gods, of the old legitimate stock to whom all nations will be made subject. This scheme is to be found in all the Hebrew prophets, from whom we possess extensive remains, composed in written form by the prophets themselves. This scheme, he continues, the material content of all prophecy, undoubtedly comes from Egypt. The prophets did not spring from Egypt, they were Canaanite; and just as little were the solitary men, brooding in melancholy, like Amos and Hosea, who were not nor wished to be prophets, under their influence. But this traditional history of the future came to Palestine like other fine histories; and the great Israelite prophets fastened on to it and made it the foundation of their preaching and thereby filled it with quite a new spiritual

content. It was here as with the old Babylonian dragon myth, which, when turned into a history of the future, formed the basis of eschatology. But the spirit which filled the Old Testament prophets was absent from this eschatology ; so the prophets' pictures of the future had quite another worth and an eternal significance than the Jewish and Christian and ancient Egyptian Apocalypses ever gained.

I have said that Gressmann reached his belief in a pre-prophetic eschatology derived by Israel from abroad along lines quite different from those which led Meyer to a similar result ; and the convergence of two independent lines of enquiry may seem a striking testimony in favour of the conclusion reached. On the question of foreign origin Gressmann has since expressed the opinion that the probability is more in favour of Egypt than Babylonia, although there may have been similar expectations throughout the nearer East. Moreover in Palestine the influence of Egypt and Babylonia may have crossed. He adds : "The characteristic difference in the oracles of the two peoples is that the Egyptians only repeat the usual phrases while the Israelites transform the type individually here and everywhere. Therefore the Messianic prophecies in Israel had a long and important history, while in Egypt they remained unaltered through the centuries." Gunkel considers the Egyptian parallels as of the highest significance, but will not allow that they gave rise to the Hebrew prophecies. He draws attention especially to the absence in the Egyptian sources of the cosmic, mythological imagery which is so frequent in the writings of the prophets ; quoting as instances of this, the burning of the world, the universal deluge, a new chaos and a new creation, the wars of the deity against the powers of the deep and of heaven, a kingdom of peace even among the beasts. Yet while he argues that we could infer from the Old Testament itself that another and more popular prophecy had preceded that of the great prophets, and that Israelite eschatology had grown up on the basis of a borrowed foreign eschatology, he says nevertheless that the eschatology of the prophets and psalmists is in its present form a thoroughly Israelite phenomenon and filled with ideas which are peculiarly Israelite. As a whole it is undoubtedly the creation of the great literary prophets.

It may be questioned however, whether the existence of this ancient Egyptian eschatology has not been too hastily affirmed. For example, H. O. Lange of Copenhagen, speaking of the hieratic papyrus known

as *Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage*, affirmed that the speeches of the sage were prophetic in character predicting an era of disaster for Egypt for which the king is responsible. The advent of a Saviour is prophesied, a wise and mild ruler who will restore order among his people and inaugurate an age of happiness and prosperity. This prophecy of restoration Lange regarded as quite Messianic in its colouring, both the form in which it is put and the choice of words recalling those higher flights of Hebrew prophecy that speak of a coming Messiah. Dr. Alan Gardner, however, is convinced that there is no prophecy at all in these passages. He says : " At all events it seems now to be clear that whichever hypothesis scholars may choose, there is too much uncertainty about the matter for it to be made the basis of any far-reaching conclusions as to the influence of Egyptian on Hebrew literature." And at the close of the discussion he says : " Before leaving the subject of its contents, I must once more affirm that there is no certain or even likely trace of prophecies in any part of the book."

Sellin reduces the Egyptian parallels to two ; but he does not accept Meyer's view as to the indebtedness of Hebrew prophecy to Egyptian influence. He endorses König's criticism that we ought to have found the Egyptian scheme in the professional prophets, the opponents of Micah or Jeremiah, who were much more susceptible than the great prophets to foreign influence. But they say, Peace, where there is no peace, no disaster can overtake us. Sellin also emphasises the difference in the sense attached to calamity and deliverance in the Egyptian and Hebrew prophecies. The former simply described national catastrophes, adding the hope of a new future. In Israel calamity is the judgment of the inexorably righteous God upon sin, and the coming of the Kingdom of God is proclaimed, of which in the Egyptian texts there is not the slightest trace.

Hölscher in his volume on the Prophets takes a still less favourable view. Acknowledging a certain connexion between the Egyptian form of literature and the literary scheme of the Jewish prophetic literature, he urges that the influence as to the age of this scheme on Hebrew soil remains unproved. Against it lie the objections to the authenticity of most of the predictions of blessedness in the old prophetic books, objections which have not been refuted. Nor is the mere antithesis of misfortune and blessedness necessarily to be derived from a mythical or a literary scheme. Moreover the

Egyptian influence on ancient Israel is minute even to vanishing point, and the religious ideas and usages of the Hebrews in the early period nowhere betray any traces of Egyptian influence. If such influence is to be assumed, it can belong only to a much later period and it must have been mediated through the later Jewish communities in Egypt.

It will be clear then that we cannot with any confidence assert the derivation of the prophetic eschatology from an Egyptian source. It is also uncertain whether we are entitled to attribute it to a foreign origin at all. Gunkel and Gressmann think the imagery we find in the eschatological descriptions points to derivations from foreign mythology. It is quite possible that imagery foreign in origin might be used to depict religious ideas which were a later development, and if there was a pre-prophetic eschatology in Israel it may have grown from a genuine Hebrew root, developed from the fundamental principles of the religion. This is Sellin's position. But, when all is said, it must still be regarded as very questionable whether there was in early Israel any developed eschatology at all.

## II.

I pass on to the origin of Jewish Apocalyptic. The general distinction between prophecy and apocalyptic may be best realised if we place a typical prophetic book alongside of an apocalypse, for example *Amos* by the side of *Daniel*. Biblical apocalypses are to be found in *Daniel*, *Revelation* and *II Esdras*. Other apocalypses are the *Book of Enoch*, the *Book of the Secrets of Enoch*, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, the *Assumption of Moses*, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. But it is not possible to draw a clear-cut distinction between the two, because the transition from one to the other was gradual, and the later prophecy is in many cases a good deal marked with apocalyptic features. Here I return to matters already mentioned. I have already pointed out that the great pre-exilic prophets were mainly concerned with the religious and moral condition of their own people. With but slight exceptions they are emphatic in their condemnation of sinful Israel and Judah; they anticipate that the people of God will be punished by a heathen power which is the rod of Yahweh's anger. When the Northern Kingdom had fallen, prophecy was concentrated on Judah and was

very largely prophecy of approaching judgment. Yet some qualification must be made. There are prophecies of a radiant future in the earlier prophetic books, whose pre-exilic origin we have no good reason for doubting. Yet glowing forecasts of the blessed future have been added somewhat freely in the later period to prophecies of judgment, especially in the form of happy endings. Another qualification must be made. While the great prophets proclaim that the primary object of Yahweh's anger is His own people, the prophecy of Nahum is directed entirely against Nineveh. He brings no complaint against the morality or righteousness of Judah. His hot and fierce indignation is poured out exclusively upon the heathen oppressor. A similar view has been taken in various forms with reference to Habakkuk, but I believe incorrectly.

No sooner is Jerusalem destroyed than the whole character of prophecy is transformed. This was due to the terrible fate which had overtaken the Jews. Now that they had been carried into captivity with their city destroyed, their temple in ruins, their national existence brought to an end, it was felt that the stroke of judgment had fallen and henceforward the prophet must provide for the future. We see the actual transition in the message of Ezekiel. His ministry began in 592, while Jerusalem and the first temple were still standing; he outlived the destruction of the city for a considerable period; and his prophecy comes to us from both these periods in his life. He is uncompromising in the severity of the judgment he passes on Israel's history from beginning to end. He speaks with loathing and with anger, not only of his contemporaries in Palestine, but of all the past generations whether in Egyptian bondage, in the wilderness or in Canaan. There is no redeeming feature in the indictment he draws up against his people through the whole of its history. And this unrelieved condemnation is matched by his prediction of unsparing retribution. But when the city was in ruins and the people were in exile, he turned his face towards the future. Not that he retracted his judgments on the people. His estimate of its moral character and ungrateful apostasy is just as stern as ever. But as he contemplates the destiny of the people, his tone entirely changes. He predicts the return from exile to Palestine. He contemplates a regenerate and happy community, a re-united Israel living under a Davidic prince in security in its own land, the old ceremonial established in a new

temple in which Yahweh Himself will dwell in the midst of His people. He also foretells how, when the hosts of heathendom assail the apparently defenceless Israelites, Yahweh without human aid will utterly overthrow them. The other great prophet of the Exile, the author of Isaiah 40-55, who is commonly called the Second Isaiah, foretold in glowing language the return of the Jews from exile, the rebuilding of the Temple, the bliss of the redeemed in their ancestral home.

The return from captivity took place ; but the Jews entered on a long period of disillusion. On the political side the old tradition was simply continued. The downfall of Assyria had not meant the liberation of Judah, for she fell first into the power of Egypt and in a few years passed under the sway of Babylon. The Second Isaiah predicted that Cyrus would destroy the Babylonian power. That came to pass. But while a certain number went back to their own land, they did not secure political independence ; they remained subject to Persia and in later times suffered much from the Persian Government. Alexander the Great broke the power of Persia, but the Jews did not go free, they were still under foreign rule. And when Alexander's empire broke up, first Egypt and then Syria kept them in subjection. Their material conditions were often distressing. Thus, while the prophecies of the downfall of tyrants had been fulfilled, the fulfilment only meant the change of one tyrant for another. They came to realise that in the overthrow of empires there was no relief from their miseries.

We are thus able to understand how the outlook of apocalyptic is differentiated from that of prophecy. The anticipations of the prophets are conditioned by contemporary political conditions. Isaiah expects judgment to be inflicted by Assyria, Jeremiah anticipates it from Babylonia. The Second Isaiah predicts deliverance from Babylonia, but it is to be effected by the triumph of Cyrus. In apocalyptic this is not the case. Apocalypses have been described in a happy phrase as "tracts for bad times." The writers have come to despair of any relief through normal political action in international affairs. They rely no longer on human agency, whether in the form of insurrection or the overthrow of the oppressor by a foreign power. Experience showed that insurrection was worse than futile and if one empire was overthrown by a successful conqueror, a new tyrant simply



took the place of the old. Hence they were driven to turn from earth to heaven, from man to God. God Himself will intervene to crush the oppressor and establish His kingdom on earth.

Since deliverance does not come from any development in the political situation but by Divine intervention, no visible movement of events will lead up to it. Whatever preparation there may or may not be in the unseen world, the action of God will come on men like lightning out of a clear sky. "When they are saying Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them." We find in the earlier prophets something parallel, but with a more limited application. For example Isaiah says: "At eventide behold terror; and before the morning they are not. This is the portion of them that spoil us and the lot of them that rob us." This refers simply to the overthrow of a great invading army, which strikes horror into God's people but is annihilated in the night. But Ezekiel is here, as in so much besides, the ultimate literary source. He anticipates that when Israel is living in peace and security after its restoration to Palestine, Yahweh will lure Gog to his destruction, by the prospect of easy victory and rich spoil. For Israel will be dwelling in unwallled villages with no fortifications and apparently defenceless. When Gog and his multitudinous hordes comes from the ends of the earth, greedy for their certain spoil, Israel will need to lift no hand in self-defence, for God will destroy them with pestilence and tempest, with fire and brimstone, and by inciting them to mutual slaughter.

How then did Ezekiel's anticipation originate? It was in the first instance the outcome of his theodicy. His fundamental doctrine was the sovereignty and glory of God. In all His action God has His own glory for His supreme end. The whole course of history is directed to that goal. By its misconduct Israel had compromised the reputation of its God in the sight of the heathen. The merited judgment had been again and again averted. But now the Divine patience has been exhausted and judgment has fallen on the guilty nation. But this has compromised Yahweh's reputation afresh, for the overthrow of His people can be interpreted by the heathen as due only to the weakness of its God. Hence Yahweh must demonstrate His supreme power by restoring His people from exile to their own land. Again and again it is affirmed that regard for His own glory, tender pity for His own outraged reputation, is the motive for His action. But the

restoration of Israel is not enough ; Yahweh has an account to settle with the heathen for their misjudgment of Him and for the insults they have heaped upon Him. And so, still with the all-controlling purpose of vindicating His holy name, He entices Gog and all his vast multitudes to fall on defenceless Israel, that He may thus, by this appalling slaughter, for ever secure His glory in the sight of the nations. "It shall come to pass in the latter days, that I will bring thee against my land, that the nations may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes." "And I will magnify myself, and sanctify myself, and I will make myself known in the eyes of many nations ; and they shall know that I am Yahweh." It is again and again affirmed that the restoration of Israel is not accomplished for Israel's own sake. Such passages as these are characteristic. "I do not this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name, which ye have profaned among the nations, whither ye went." "Not for your sake do I this, saith the Lord Yahweh, be it known unto you : be ashamed and confounded for your ways O house of Israel." It is this conception of a ruler of the universe, self-centred, jealous for His reputation, feeling it intolerable to be misjudged by the heathen, brooding over the insults they had heaped upon Him, and finally demonstrating His supremacy by the vast holocaust of the heathen whom He had inspired to undertake their ill-fated expedition, which is the main root of this prophecy.

But it was not simply the doctrine of Yahweh's outraged dignity, to which reparation must be made, that accounts for it. The form which Yahweh's exemplary vengeance takes was suggested by earlier prophecy which Ezekiel considers to have been unfulfilled. He represents Yahweh as saying to God : "Art thou he of whom I spake in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days for many years that I would bring you against them." Ezekiel seems to have in mind those prophecies in Jeremiah and Zephaniah which referred originally to the Scythians. It is axiomatic for him that prophecy must be fulfilled, hence from his study of unfulfilled prophecies he creates new prophecies. This literary method is characteristic for apocalyptic. Thus Daniel is represented as brooding over the seventy years predicted by Jeremiah "for the accomplishing of the desolations of Jerusalem." Gabriel explains to him that the seventy years are seventy weeks, that is seventy weeks of years, each year in

Jeremiah's prophecy being multiplied by seven. This calculation starts from the fact that the prophecy has not been fulfilled in its literal sense. It is therefore obvious to the writer that the literal is not the real sense. Hence we have a re-interpretation, a feature very familiar to students of our modern apocalyptists who, when one reinterpretation after another breaks down, never draw the conclusion that the whole method is at fault, but devise some new reinterpretation.

With this study and reinterpretation of older prophecy there naturally goes a systematisation. Forecasts of the future which were originally independent and might even, because they sprang out of different circumstances, be superficially contradictory, would be brought together and combined into a coherent scheme of future history, which would become more extensive as the range of material from which the scheme was derived became fuller. It was believed that a scheme or programme of history had been laid down by God, that the fixed order of events inscribed on the heavenly tablets must be exactly carried out. Given sufficient data and correct methods of calculation, and the whole development of history would become plain. In particular by identifying events in past history with those indicated in the scheme, it would become possible to determine what point in the programme history had actually reached and fix the interval which had to be traversed before the consummation was attained. Hence the calculation of times and seasons becomes an important part of the apocalyptist's task, with any adjustment or reinterpretation that the failure of earlier calculations may involve. This may account for a feature which is at first sight very perplexing, namely the very long record of historical events given in predictive form in some apocalypses. The most familiar example is found in the Book of Daniel. According to the generally received judgment of scholars that book, at least in its present form, dates from 165 or 164 B.C. But it contains a good deal of earlier history, often of a rather minute kind, related in the form of prophecy. The prediction is ostensibly uttered from a much earlier period than that in which it was actually composed. But when the author's own time is actually reached and the assumed standpoint gives place to the real, history in the guise of prediction changes into prediction proper, and what had been minutely foretold, because it had already happened, is now replaced by real prediction which becomes vague and general. The reason for this may have been that the prediction of so long a

series of events, with an accuracy that the reader can test, inspires confidence in the forecasts of the actual future. The reader will naturally say "I have found the prophet right so far up to my own time, I can therefore trust him to disclose what still lies in the future." But if this method is to be adopted, it can only be by antedating the composition of the prophecy. Hence it is attributed to some seer of the older time such as Daniel or Enoch or Baruch or the patriarchs. This pseudonymous character of apocalyptic may be further explained by the extinction which had overtaken prophecy through the dominance of the Law, so that if a man wished to gain acceptance for prophecies of his own, he would put them forward not in his own name but under some ancient name. The question would naturally occur, Why if these famous men of old uttered these prophecies do we hear of them only now? The explanation given is that while the oracle had been uttered centuries before, it had been sealed by Divine command, in other words it had been withheld from publication. Thus Daniel is told to "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end."

In connexion with what has been said about reinterpretation, I may call attention to the elaborate symbolism in apocalyptic. Partly this is traditional in character, some of it is derived from oriental mythology, some from earlier prophecy. We have for example in Daniel the four beasts, the fourth of which had ten horns, among which there came up a little horn. These represent empires, the little horn is Antiochus Epiphanes. The kings of Media and Persia are later represented by a ram, while a he-goat stands for Greece. This kind of imagery is familiar to us also in the Book of Revelation. Sometimes the symbolism is interpreted, sometimes it is not interpreted. But even when it has been interpreted in one apocalypse it may be reinterpreted in another. For example in II Esdras we have a vision of an eagle, and the seer receives an interpretation which is thus introduced: "The eagle, whom thou sawest come up from the sea, is the fourth kingdom which appeared in vision to thy brother Daniel. But it was not expounded unto him as I now expound it unto thee or have expounded it." This symbolism might also serve to safeguard the meaning from discovery in cases where it might be unsafe to speak plainly. Two points may be added here. It is not necessary to suppose that a writer always used his symbols with a clear understanding of what was intended. He may have used them as part of the sacred material which had come

down to him in the apocalyptic tradition, but to which, though he faithfully transmitted it, he may have assigned no definite signification.

The conviction that the course of history was pre-determined and had to be worked out according to a programme with fixed dates, meant that nothing could be done by men or angels to hasten or retard the process. Punctually at the time appointed each event would happen. God Himself would not depart from the scheme which in His wisdom He had, even in its details, foreordained. Yet the seer, though he cannot put forward or back the clock of destiny, may still give an answer to the question "Watchman, what of the night?" He can devote himself to the study of history and match it with the revealed plan of its movement, calculate the position of his own time in the programme, and determine how much remains to be endured, and how long it will be before with catastrophic suddenness the old order is replaced by the new. Moreover he is possessed in his measure by a conviction similar to that which we find in the ancient prophets. Amos had said "Surely the Lord Yahweh will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." The very fact that a true prophet had appeared was an omen, which men ought to heed, that God was going to intervene in history in some signal way. And so the apocalypticist publishes his message because he is certain that the end is very near. Now this certainty, it may be said, grew out of his study. Through elaborate calculations he reached the conclusion that he was living in the very last times. But all who are familiar with the history of modern interpretation of prophecy on apocalyptic lines are well aware that nothing is more common than to find the interpreter quite in good faith fixing the critical events in his own immediate future. It is a human frailty to believe that the times in which we live are specially important in the world's history. And if we are preoccupied with millenarian speculations we easily find reasons for believing that the end is very near. It is this conviction which, whether consciously or unconsciously, largely guides the quest for identification of events in history with predictions in prophecy and apocalypse. But what specially convinces the apocalypticist that history is rushing to its crisis is the acuteness of the present distress. Times of persecution in particular, when the people of God are outlawed and hunted down, tortured and massacred, are fruitful in apocalyptic. What makes the seer so sure that history has

only a very little course to run is the fact that the pressure has become so acute. For the powers of evil who instigate the fiery trial, from which the people of God are suffering, know well that the hour of doom is approaching and work with all the more ferocious energy that the period of their activity draws so near to its close. This is brought out in the comment on the result of the war between Michael and the dragon in the Book of Revelation. To heaven's joy, the defeated dragon is cast out ; but the passage continues : " Woe for the earth and for the sea : because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time." Therefore the immediate prospect for the saints is appalling, since the dragon, smarting under defeat and maddened by the knowledge that his night is coming when he will be able to work no longer, pours all his concentrated fury on the people of God. Hence a season of unprecedented persecution is to burst upon the Church ; but the very intensity of the devil's malevolent energy is in itself a ground of consolation. For it means that the appointed time of redemption is very near, therefore let the saints lift up their heads. It is to be observed that no matter how awful the persecution may be, God does not intervene before the predestined time has come. The author does not suggest that for the elect's sake God may shorten the days.

The same conviction of a fixed scheme, from which no departure will be made, may be illustrated by what seems the strange forecast that when the thousand years of the devil's imprisonment are ended, " he must be loosed for a little time." The reason why this should be inscribed on the tablets of destiny is not certain. There are parallels to it in ethnic religions and from these it may be derived. But ultimately it may rest on the principle that the last things are to be like the first, and if at creation God triumphed over the dragon of darkness and chaos, so with the creation of new heavens and a new earth there is to be a final victory over the powers of evil.

I have already spoken of the supernatural forces which the apocalypticist believed to be at work behind the veil. In earlier Jewish theology responsibility for the evils from which Israel suffered was laid at the door of the angels. According to Deut. xxxii. 8 (LXX) Yahweh assigned the nations to angelic rulers reserving Israel for Himself. We read in the Psalms (lviii., lxxxii.) and in the apocalyptic section of Isaiah, belonging probably to the time of Alexander the

Great (xxiv. 21 f.), of the unrighteous rule of the angels and the punishment to be inflicted on them. This belief finds a fuller development in Daniel. We read of the angel princes of Persia or Greece; but now Israel has its own angel. Behind the heathen empires and their kings there are their angelic rulers who have incited their earthly instruments to hostility against Israel. In the later period this angelology is much more developed; and it is not improbable that in this Persian influence is to be recognised. In the development of the angelology, especially the doctrine of evil angels, the story of the marriages of the angels with women in Gen. vi. 1-4 plays a prominent part. Another interesting development is the angel who frequently in apocalyptic communicates or interprets the revelation. But this goes back to Ezekiel and in particular to Zechariah.

To us apocalyptic is likely to seem a decadent form of prophecy. Its preoccupation with the future, its dualism, its pessimistic interpretation of the present, its bizarre symbolism, its rigid predestinarianism and theory of a fixed programme to which history must conform, its bitterness towards the heathen, its lapses into mythology, its forced and fluctuating exegesis, its publication under pseudonyms, are all hindrances to our appreciation. But, if strange to our own time, the apocalypses appealed to the men of their own age. They represent a very important development in the history of Judaism. An understanding of them is necessary if we are to reconstruct the religious conditions in which Christianity was born. Important Christian doctrines owe much in their form and even content to this literature. Nor can we withhold our tribute to the amazing courage of their authors' faith. With a hostile world all about them, a world polytheistic and idolatrous, with the civil forces, military, political, social and intellectual, massed against them, with sinister supernatural powers, as they believed, marshalling these forces against them, their faith rose to unprecedented heights. Appearances were all against them, the hard realities seemed fatal to a belief in the righteousness of the world's government or the final triumph of their cause. But even when strength and endurance seemed to be strained to the uttermost, they nerved themselves still to bear their tortures, confident that the end was very near and that soon in one radiant moment the kingdoms of this world would become the kingdom of their God and His Messiah.