

INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE OLD TESTAMENT PROBLEM: THE RESULTS

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DURING the past few years the writer has by public lectures in the John Rylands Library, published subsequently in its BULLETIN, suggested and advocated a new approach to the problem of the Old Testament.¹ It is now fitting that there should be a summation of the arguments and the results showing their significance and how too, they can be woven into the pattern of Hebrew history. To accomplish this in orderly fashion it will be necessary at times to take up again, and re-stress, points which have already been discussed. For this we would ask the indulgence of the reader.

The scientific interpretation of the Old Testament has been dominated in the past century and more by German theories and their elaborations. Under the compelling force of argument and counter-argument, theory yielded to theory until in that bearing the names of Graf and Wellhausen a culminating point was reached. It did not achieve finality in interpretation but only reached a state of relative equilibrium in matters controversial. Shaped and reshaped to furnish a solution for the major problems of Old Testament interpretation which pressed in upon scholars from every side, it seemed to provide a reasoned answer, and in some cases a reasonable, or at least plausible, solution. Its great defect is that the solution it offers is not final, nor can ever be

¹ 'The Disruption of Israel's Monarchy: Before and After', BULLETIN, xx. (1936).

'Temple and Torah: Suggesting an Alternative to the Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis', xxvi (1) (1941).

'The Priestly Code: The Legislation of the Old Testament and Graf-Wellhausen', xxvi (2) (1942).

'The Riddle of the Torah: Suggesting a Solution', xxvii (1943).

'Samuel and Saul' (The Tyndale Lecture), xxviii (1944).

'The Pentateuch Problem: Some New Aspects', xxix (1945).

'The Period of the Judges: A Mystery Period in the History of Israel', xxx (1946).

accepted generally as such. In the view which it presents of the origin and development of Old Testament literature it runs counter not only to all Hebrew tradition but to all natural expectation, and in many directions strains credibility, and even credulity, to breaking point. Amongst other features which distinguish it, its viewpoint makes the prophets antecedent to the law. It regards the book of Deuteronomy as a product of the times of Hezekiah or Josiah, and, if not actually written by the prophets, at least composed in the prophetic atmosphere embodying prophetic ideas and the legislation arising therefrom. It regards most of what remains of the legislation of Pentateuch, and much also of the rest of the Old Testament literature, as emanations of the Exilic, or even post-Exilic, periods.

That there was considerable literary activity in the Exilic period cannot be denied, and there is no need to deny it. That the law was first codified in that period is, however, a contention not so easily accepted. Here surely is a reversal of all that we would expect. Law is one of the earliest human institutions and is the foundation of all organised society. Its origins lie in so distant a past that most early peoples appear to have regarded it as a special divine gift to man. Law, as the regulator of society, is a growth from a few broad principles, growing upward and branching outward, to cover the varied and varying requirements of the social organism.

To an ancient and intensely religious people like the Hebrews their law, divinely given as they believed, was their all in all. From the time of their acceptance of the law in nucleus form, which in their minds was an historic event associated with a definite place, they had cherished it, studied it, pondered over it, drawn inspiration from it, and administered it. Given, as they firmly believed by God, on this notable occasion in their history to serve for all time, the law must of necessity contain within itself the seeds of all possible development. It was their belief that all legislation and direction which might later evolve, were already extant in the 'Ten Words' written by the finger of God on the tables of stone. It is possible for critics to argue that this constitutes mass deception, that the law was not given in this way, and that they can see signs and evidences that it was a product of

the times of Ezra, and was fashioned from oral repetitions held in the retentive memories of priests or their associates.¹ This belief in the retention of the law by oral repetition only is largely a legacy of last century when scholars believed that the art of writing was unknown to the early Hebrews. We have long passed from that stage. Neither wishful thinking nor trenchant criticism can alter the hard fact that their law has held the Hebrew people together from the most distant days of their history. If there is one tradition more firmly established amongst the Hebrews than any other it is that of the continuous existence and power of their Torah. The long association of the Hebrews with their Torah is not a mere delusion induced in their minds by the ingenuity of priests planning the domination of their ilk in Babylonian seclusion in the dark days of the Exile. Their Torah was ever to the Hebrew people both warp and woof in the texture of their existence.

It is for that very reason that the traditions of such a people must be treated with respect. All religion abhors change and progress. It desires nothing better than that to-morrow should ever be the same as yesterday. The consequence is that, controlled by this most powerful conservatism, religious traditions are the strongest of all. And the Hebrew traditions are certainly no exception. The genealogical list is the backbone of early Hebrew historical records and traditions. The Hebrews compiled and preserved genealogical lists of their principal men and their families, their priests, their rulers, their prophets, their tribal ancestors.² Great value was attached to these and at the time of Ezra only those priests who could produce their family tree were reckoned within the pale.³ Some there were who 'sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they deemed polluted and put from the priesthood'.⁴ That their genealogical lists should be lightly regarded by critics and even more lightly discredited, is neither justified nor justifiable. In the transmission of proper

¹ Education of children in the East has always made large use of repetition and memory work. But that does not rule out in this case the use of written records.

² 'So all Israel were reckoned by genealogies', 1 Chr. ix. 1.

³ Ezra ii. 1 f. ⁴ Ezra ii. 62; Neh. vii. 64. Cf. also Neh. xii. 23, etc.

names over a long period of time there is unfortunately danger of variation in orthography and even distortion of form, but the names themselves are certainly not the spurious concoctions of priests with ulterior motive. And around certain names in the genealogical table tales and legends clustered. The structure of the books of Genesis and Exodus follows the genealogical table downwards from Adam.

There is a tendency, not unnatural perhaps, to imagine that all early peoples were possessed of childlike faculties and limited capabilities. That may be true of some early peoples but it is certainly not true of the Hebrews of history. Such a belief may not be inappropriate in respect of primitive peoples with a jungle background. It is not true of the peoples who lived and moved, wandered and settled, in the lands forming and adjoining the Fertile Crescent; lands which were the cradle of civilisation; lands where rich cultures flourished long centuries before the Hebrew tribes experienced both the desert and the sown, and travelled their confines.

The Hebrew tribes come within historical ken as a civilised and intelligent race, originating in an area of high culture and contacting others at a similarly high level. In their traditions they always appear as such, and have continued to do so down the ages. There is no reason then to believe that the early Hebrews were less intelligent or less capable than are their descendants. They could, and did, create great institutions. They could, and did, conduct their worldly as well as their religious affairs—these being in general indistinguishable—through assemblies and councils in true democratic fashion.¹ The seventy elders to whom the Lord gave of his spirit, have served as a model for later institutions.² They could, and did, adapt their religious practice to their circumstances and their environment. When their occupation of the Holy Land made restriction of worship to one centre impossible of achievement, they established zonal shrines from which, and through which, their God might be worshipped.

Of these provincial shrines we know all too little beyond the

¹ 'In the multitude of counsellors', says their proverb, 'there is salvation' (Prov. xi. 14). Or again: 'In the multitude of counsellors purposes are established' (Prov. xv. 22).

² Num. xi. 25.

names and some indication of location.¹ Each would have its own priesthood and its own defined area from which its worshippers would be drawn. Each would have facilities for the instruction of the priestly novitiate, and perhaps also of lay youth, and be the centre of learning and culture for its area. At each the law would be studied and administered. There would be the priestly assembly, the *bēth-dīn* of later years, presided over by the chief priest. To each shrine the Hebrews of the area would resort to perform all the requirements of the law. Each shrine, in short, had all the institutions and facilities through which it fulfilled its function and radiated its influence. As time passed each shrine would develop more and more its own traditions, or rather its own rendering of the common tradition, regarding the infancy of the race, and its own interpretation of the meaning and application of the common law. This would give rise to variant forms of the narratives of the tribal ancestors. When the time came for their collection and editing—as we believe at the time of the formation of Deuteronomy or shortly afterwards—they were gathered and fused together, and the result is seen with great clearness in the patriarchal narratives of Genesis for instance.

Thus the J, E, P documents of the documentary theory may owe some at least of their distinctive characteristics to the shrines. It is possible, however, as we have pointed out elsewhere,² that the divine names El, Elohim, Yahweh, 'Adhonai, Hash-shem, etc., may be distinctive of periods in their usage, rather than of individual writers.

It may be helpful at this point to give an outline sketch of the course of Hebrew history from the Entry to the Exile as we now see it in the light of our investigations.

The Entry was made—so scholars agree—both from the south and the east. The strong Joseph tribes entered from the east and the Judahites from the south. Shechem appears to have been the first religious centre chosen.³ That was to be expected because of the existence there of a sanctuary and because of its early associations with both Abraham and Jacob. It was the

¹ On the question of the shrines see the interesting and important inquiry by R. Brinker, *The Influence of the Sanctuaries in Early Israel*, Manchester, 1946.

² See *The Pentateuch Problem*.

³ Cf. Joshua xxiv. 1 ff.

first place to which Abram repaired when he arrived in Canaan.¹ As the first religious centre of the tribes it seemed destined to be the permanent religious capital for the whole land. And so it would have been, and would have continued to be, had not the manner of the conquest destroyed the possibility of maintaining a unified worship directed from one centre. Effective direction from Shechem must have been gravely handicapped by the disjointed state of Hebrew territory. The conquest had been achieved by the tribes unequally and sporadically, the land being thus divided up into zones of conquered territory interlaced with Canaanite *enclaves*. The only possibility of carrying on the worship of their God effectively lay in its decentralisation and in the establishment of zonal sanctuaries. It has been the practice of the conquerors in past times to convert the shrines of the conquered to the service of the gods of the conquerors, just as the church of St. Sophia in Constantinople and the Temple area at Jerusalem were converted to the worship of Allah by the victorious Muslims. It may be that the Hebrews followed this practice in the selection and erection of the provincial sanctuaries, but whilst there is likelihood of this there is no clear written evidence linking them with it. The provincial shrines had this in common that they operated the same ritual and administered the same law. This law would be, basically at any rate, the Ten Commandments. It might include its earliest midrashic expansion, the Book of the Covenant.² Shechem, where the Aaronite high-priesthood, as but fitting, was established, would remain, nominally at least, the religious centre and the political capital of the land, since in a theocratic state, such as that of the Hebrews, the two spheres were merged.

There were two persons who by right wielded power in the Hebrew federal state—the high priest and the military commander. The former was born into his office which he held by primogeniture. The latter was appointed because of his possession of the requisite qualities for office. It was Eleazar and Joshua whom Moses appointed to divide the land.³ Moses had also

¹ Gen. xii. 6. Abram went to the *meqōm shekhem*—the ‘place’ or rather ‘sanctuary’ of Shechem.

² As generally reckoned: Exod. xx. 22—xxiii. 33.

³ Num. xxxiv. 18.

defined the position of the military leader anent the high priest, making it clear that the former was subordinate to the latter, and could only function at his behest and in consultation with him.¹ The high priesthood at Shechem would appear to have carried on the tradition and maintained the right to appoint the military leader to whom they gave the title of king. Joshua, being the first king, and appointed by Moses, was always referred to as 'the holy king Joshua'.

What were the names of these military leaders whom the Ephraimites (Samaritans) continued to appoint? The list of judges given in the book of Judges corresponds closely to the Samaritan list of kings. The Jews in the earnest endeavours of later times to avoid all mention of the Shechemite high priesthood, in order to belittle the position of Shechem anent Jerusalem, did not admit that these were 'kings'. For the Jews to recognise them as rightful kings would have been to admit the validity of their appointment by the Samaritan high priest, and consequently would involve a recognition of the authenticity of the Samaritan high-priestly order. Hosea in his diatribe against the Northern Kingdom repudiates these creations of Ephraim. He gives as the message of Yahweh, 'They have set up kings but not by me'.² But the whole presentation of Hebrew history with the exception of the Pentateuch comes solely from Jewish sources and is to some extent vitiated by the implacable enmity between Judah and Ephraim, between Jew and Samaritan.³ In order to get a clear picture of conditions in Palestine in the period of the Judges, for instance, or rather the period between the end of the Pentateuch history and the appearance of Samuel, it seems necessary to look beyond Jewish sources to the Samaritan, scanty as they are, for additional supplementary information. That the Aaronite priesthood of Shechem was in existence and took an active part in the nation's affairs, seems certain.

Suddenly there came an event which changed the course of

¹ Num. xxvii. 18-23.

² viii. 4.

³ As we have tried to show in the article on 'The Period of the Judges', the history of that period is obscured and coloured by this enmity. From the book of Judges one could not learn that Shechem occupied any special place in the religious life of the period or that there was, indeed, a priesthood in the land at all.

Hebrew history and has had, we are convinced, a great effect on the world rôle of the Hebrew people. A schism developed within the Aaronite priesthood at Shechem. It arose, so Samaritan chronicles tell us, from the rivalry between the Eleazar and Ithamar branches of the priesthood. Eleazar was the oldest surviving son of Aaron and the one through whom the high priesthood was transmitted. The Samaritan records tell us that when the high priesthood descended upon Uzziah he was a mere child. The propriety of his being recognised as high priest under the circumstances was hotly disputed by Eli, the influential head of the Ithamar branch, who thought that the office should have fallen to him. Dissension was followed by strife, resulting in the withdrawal of Eli and his supporters from Shechem to set up a rival sanctuary at Shiloh, or rather perhaps to make use of the sanctuary there as a rival temple to Shechem. As, however, the high priesthood was determined by primogeniture, Eli, who belonged to a cadet branch of the Aaron family, was clearly at a disadvantage for which neither material power nor personal influence could compensate, and for which there was no redress. It had, however, the effect of splitting the Ephraimite people into two since a considerable section of them followed Eli.

In addition to this religious upheaval which had far-reaching consequences, the political fortunes of the Hebrew tribes were clouded by inter-tribal jealousies and animosities. In particular there was a long-standing feud between Ephraim and Judah which seemed to be incapable of appeasement. Ephraim is always represented in the Old Testament records—and that means the records of Judah—as the spoiled child of the Hebrew family who disdained co-operation with the others. But just how much this representation of Ephraim is coloured by the ill-concealed prejudices of the Jewish writers of a later age, it would be hard to say.

Then when things appeared at their blackest, by a happy chance the Shiloh temple found and developed the Ephraimite Samuel. 'Before the sun of Eli set, the sun of Samuel of Ramathaim rose', says the Talmud.¹ Samuel proved to be one of those great national leaders who emerge to lead a people at a

time of crisis. He early caught the imagination of the whole people for 'all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord'.¹ And the fruits of that recognition were that 'the word of Samuel came to all Israel'.² It would appear from this that the Shechemite priesthood joined in this recognition. As a prophet of the Lord he appears to have been recognised as the supreme interpreter of God's law, for Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.³ He went, too, on circuit to Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, returning to his home in Ramah where he also judged Israel.⁴ Gilgal is the name by which the Jewish historians often referred to Shechem.⁵ In the very use of such a term as Gilgal for Shechem one may perhaps detect a flavour of derision!

But Samuel's circuit-going in the land and judging Israel, had more than a merely unifying effect. It is of significance for it reveals that divergencies in the law and its application were arising in the provincial sanctuaries and that there was need of a master interpretation as well as a unifying influence. Samuel in his person supplied both. But the time had now clearly come for a new codification of the divine law as interpreted in the sanctuaries. That was something which could not be undertaken offhand by anyone however well versed in the law. It could only be left in the hands of one such as Samuel who could combine in his own person the requisite authority and the unique God-given favour and leadership recognised by all. To bring into effect a re-codification God must speak through its sponsor as he spoke through Moses. A re-codification could not be the work of one person only. There would require to be meetings, bands of

¹ 1 Sam. iii. 20.

² 1 Sam. iv. 1.

³ 1 Sam. vii. 15.

⁴ 1 Sam. vii. 16 f.

⁵ The identification of Gilgal with Shechem is accepted by a number of scholars. Cf. R. Brinker, *The Influence of Sanctuaries in Early Israel*, 1946, pp. 143 ff. It was to Gilgal that Samuel took Saul to renew (*hiddash*) the kingdom there (1 Sam. xi. 14). The expression 'renew' has long puzzled scholars. It has only significance if the kingship had previously been bestowed there. It was at Shechem that the Aaronite high priests appointed their kings. Moreover, it was to Shechem that Rehoboam repaired to be made king. Gilgal was clearly the Ephraimite centre of importance and that could only be Shechem. Hosea says of Ephraim, 'All their wickedness is in Gilgal for there I hated them; because of the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of my house' (ix. 15).

prophets gathered from the sanctuaries, to discuss, weigh, amend, adopt or reject. Such assembly would also require to be one in which God's presence was manifest. Is there any evidence of such?

There is sufficient evidence to show that Samuel during part of his career was not only in association with assemblies of that nature but presided over them. When Saul sent messengers to take David who had taken refuge with Samuel at Naioth in Ramah, Samuel's home, and when they 'saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as head over them, "the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul and they also prophesied"'.¹ That these mysterious assemblies of prophets presided over by Samuel were engaged in this necessary codification of the law is a reasonable supposition. No assembly devoid of God's presence could have any chance of success in such a task, nor could the results of its labours have been accepted by the Hebrew people. Not only was a re-codification required but fresh legislation of a civil nature was called for.² It was a time of crisis for the federal state and there was evidently a move away from the priestly control towards the civil power represented by the king. High priestly authority had already been effectively challenged by Eli and his followers, and this new movement was designed to place king above high priest. Samuel, like the great statesman that he was, yielded to the clamour and the pressure of the mass of the people. This altered position of king and high priest was allowed for in the new codification. In Deuteronomy the king appears for the first time and the high priest disappears. A return to centralisation of worship as well as unity of worship was envisaged, since a close political union of the tribes under one king made this not merely possible but also desirable. A return to the centralisation of worship from the decentralisation thrust upon them by the nature of the Conquest, was natural and ultimately inevitable. The site of the new capital, which must house also the central sanctuary, was a

¹ 1 Sam. xix. 20. For a fuller discussion of this point see *Samuel and Saul*. The 'beth-din of Samuel' became a familiar phrase on Jewish lips of later times.

² That separate legislation under the two categories, religious and civil, could be in the minds of the Hebrews is indicated by 2 Chr. xix. 11: 'Behold Amariah, the chief priest, is over you in all matters of the Lord, and Zebadiah, the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah in all the king's matters'.

controversial point. Because of inter-tribal enmity and jealousy, places such as Shechem and Hebron, both of which, although on different grounds, had claims, were unlikely to be chosen.¹ As a means of placating all parties and shelving a thorny problem for the time being, the selection of the capital city was left to the future. God himself would determine it in his own good time. It would be the place which 'the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there'.² All-round satisfaction was probably achieved by an ingenious use of terminology. The word used was most likely *bāhar* (perfect Qal) which can either mean 'has chosen' (as the Ephraimites of Shechem would interpret it, having in mind their own locality and temple) or 'has (in mind) chosen', the equivalent of 'will choose', i.e. the result will appear in the future. This is the so-called 'prophetic perfect', leaving it open to the Jews to so interpret it. This is the reading of the Samaritan Pentateuch, but the Masoretic text has *yibhar*, 'shall choose'. The *yodh* would seem to have been introduced at a later time—the Samaritans say by Ezra—to indicate by its clear and unmistakable futurity that Jerusalem was the place God had in mind to choose.

But the great glory of the new codification was that it restored unity and harmony in Israel. Its general acceptance implied a re-united Ephraim and Judah, and the burying of the hatchet by the Eleazar and Ithamar families. This Samuel, himself an Ephraimite, was in a position to bring about. That this happy state of things was all too brief was no fault of his. The fact remains, however, that the Eleazar and Ithamar branches are found cast in service together at the Jerusalem Temple when its projected courses were planned by David.³

¹ Shechem as the earliest religious centre and the headquarters of the Aaronite priesthood, and because of its associations with the patriarchs. Hebron, where so many of the ancestors of the Hebrews were buried. Indeed David later chose it as his capital in his struggle against Saul.

² Deut. xii. 5.

³ The courses instead of being allocated entirely to the Eleazar branch of the family, as might have been expected, were shared with the Ithamar priesthood, but in the proportion of 2 to 1 (16 courses to the Eleazar priesthood and 8 to Ithamar). The Jewish historian, unwilling to admit the precedence of the Eleazar priesthood, tried to conceal the fact by giving as the reason for the disparity that 'there were more chief men found of the sons of Eleazar than of the sons of Ithamar' !!

When Deuteronomy, as a whole, was completed, it formed the nucleus of the Pentateuch. There was attached to it as an elaborate preface the legalistic data from which it was constructed. They were not abrogated and discarded. They were attached that all might see and adjudge of the work done. The formulations of the laws at the different sanctuaries were given so that we often find a repetition of laws in slightly variant forms. So also was it with the narratives of the patriarchs. The variant forms which found acceptance were not eliminated in favour of one version. They were fused rather than reconciled, thus incorporating not only the main features of the narratives but dragging in with them a crop of duplications, divergencies and other inconsistencies. Thus came into being the Pentateuch, divided into five books.¹ The Hebrew fathers saw nothing inconsistent and certainly nothing false or wrong, in ascribing them to Moses. To them they formed part of the teaching and interpretation of the law which came through him. The first giver of the law was its giver for all time. The Pentateuch was merely the fruit of the seeds planted by him. It was fruit tended and finally garnered for his people by God. Without that divine care and supervision manifested in Samuel's assemblies it could not have been produced at all.

The Torah, having been accepted by all parties, would not thereafter be open to substantial alteration or modification. But minor alterations would be possible up to the time of its rejection by 'Rehoboam and all Israel'. Thereafter such changes would not be made with the consent of all parties but were of the kind fashioned by either Ephraimites or Jews to support the claims to supremacy of Shechem or Jerusalem.

Although the great schism was healed, on the surface at least, by Samuel's unifying influence, it was not destined to endure for long. All sudden upsetting of the balance of power brings an aftermath of disturbed and confused conditions. The upheaval in the Hebrew state brought in its train much dissension and intrigue, with plot and counter-plot. The court intrigues, so conspicuous in the reigns of David and Solomon, were largely of

¹ For the problem of the number of the books see above, '*The Pentateuch Problem*'.

priestly origins. The priesthood did not yield its age-long power to the kingship either willingly or gracefully. Samuel made that clear in his attitude to the popular demand for a king. At the Jerusalem court Shilonite and Shechemite renewed their feud in a struggle for supremacy. Shiloh itself had ceased to exist but its fortunes had now become more closely linked with Jerusalem. Abiathar, its surviving priest of the Eli family, was a chief priest along with Zadok in the time of David.¹ In the struggle for the throne which followed David's death, Abiathar backed Adonijah, whose legitimate claims were stronger than those of Solomon. He was, in consequence, deprived of office by Solomon when he came to the throne, whilst Zadok of the Eleazar family was confirmed in office. Again it was Ahijah the Shilonite who stirred Jeroboam to active revolt with the promise of divine aid in shaping a new kingdom. Yet both Shechemite and Shilonite appear to have participated in the Jeroboam revolt, since we are told that Jeroboam 'built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and dwelt there'.² This was but natural for the Shechemite priesthood must have been bitterly disappointed at the turn of affairs which had so exalted Jerusalem at the expense of Shechem. They naturally wanted the capital city of the state to be Shechem and in this Jeroboam acquiesced.

Jeroboam did not for long see eye to eye with the Aaronite priesthood of Shechem. We are told that he departed from there and built Penuel. We do not know if this was the result of his desire to introduce a new form of worship, or, perhaps rather an entirely new religion, which he may have brought with him from Egypt. No support, however, was forthcoming for his calf worship. This is made clear from the words of Abijah, son of Rehoboam, when he fulminated from Mount Zemaraim in the hill country of Ephraim against Jeroboam. 'Have ye not driven out the priests of the Lord, the sons of Aaron, the Levite . . .?'³ Abandoned by the priesthood, he was forced to 'make priests from among all the people who were not of the sons of Levi'.⁴ The indications are that he was driven to introduce the new worship as a means of maintaining hold on his people. He rightly feared

¹ Cf. 2 Sam. xix. 11.

³ 2 Chr. xiii. 9.

² 1 Ki. xii. 25.

⁴ 1 Ki. xii. 31.

the Jerusalem Temple with its religious influence and attraction. All this rather suggests that, far from taking hold of and swaying the people, his fancy religion was a 'flop', even if, as seems to have been the case, it persisted as the state religion of the Northern Kingdom even after his day. The stigma of the adherence of the Northern Kingdom, for a period even, to idolatrous worship remained long after the worship ceased to be practised, and served as a useful stick in the hands of the Jews with which to beat the Ephraimites (Samaritans). That the worship of the Golden Calf had any real substance, or that it left any deep or lasting impression on the people, is more than doubtful. For its existence even, there is little, if any, archaeological support. It would almost appear to have been merely a fleeting episode in the life of a section of the Hebrew people, and the Jews in their antagonism to the Ephraimites have been disposed to make the most of it.

The re-centralisation of worship with Jerusalem, the political capital, as centre, brought in its train the dislodgment of the priesthoods of the provincial sanctuaries. They had served their day and generation and were now superseded. It does not appear that all the buildings were destroyed, because after the disruption of the monarchy the people of Judah, at least, and their kings, are said to have permitted worship to continue at these high places. They may have been reduced in status by the withdrawal of recognition as places of worship, and the annulment of all rights and privileges as independent sanctuaries. The new law code, Deuteronomy, was intended to operate, and could only have operated from one centre. This would bring to Jerusalem a large number of priests from the provincial sanctuaries. The Temple was a vast building and the greater part of the provincial priests would be assigned duties as officiants in the Temple. One problem was, what to do with the chief priests of the provincial shrines. These priests were, of course, all descendants of Aaron but not in the direct line of high priesthood which was the prerogative of Shechem. It would seem that their services were suitably utilised by appointing them to act as members of the court of appeal,¹ where they served along with a civil judge.

¹ Deut. xvii. 8 ff. ; xviii. 1 f. ; xxiv. 8.

This court is termed 'The Priests, The Levites',¹ and they had before them the standard copy of the law to which they made reference in arriving at their decisions.² But this concentration of the chief men of the provincial priesthoods, men who had tasted of the sweets of power in their own sanctuaries, made Jerusalem a hot-bed of intrigue. As we have seen, the high priesthood for which Deuteronomy makes no provision, was restored by Solomon who gave the position to Zadok. The disruption of the monarchy was due as much to priestly intrigue as to political discontent. A regime which had brought the Hebrew federal state to a full and glorious bloom in a relatively short time was quickly brought to nought. It brought to nought with it also the new law code of the federal state. That fact we could have safely deduced had there been no direct statement to that effect. But there is a direct statement. It is said expressly of Rehoboam that 'he forsook the Torah of the Lord and *all Israel* with him'.³ The status, too, of the Temple was clearly affected. No longer could it be regarded as God's habitation on earth, his abode in a united Israel. Its spoliation by Shishak (Sheshonk), king of Egypt, merely emphasised its abandonment by Yahweh. The Temple had ceased to be the religious centre of a federal state and had become merely a territorial sanctuary of Judah, albeit a magnificent one. With the rejection of the Torah it must have reverted to the worship prevailing at the provincial shrines, and most probably that of Shiloh with which it was linked through Samuel and David. Jeremiah indicates this association when he says that in addressing the worshippers at the Temple the Lord reminds them of the fate of Shiloh, 'where my name was at the first'.⁴ The law code comprised in Leviticus xvii-xxvi, first called the 'Law of Holiness' (H) by Klostermann in 1877, is the one most likely to have formed the basis. Shiloh, being a schismatic temple to which Eli attached himself, would have every inducement to adopt, or evolve, a law code with features of its own.

¹ For an explanation of this title see *The Priestly Code*.

² Deut. xvii. 18.

³ 2 Chr. xii. 1. Note the use of the Deuteronomic term 'all Israel' to indicate the federal state.

⁴ Jer. vii. 12.

Only for a re-united people could there be a re-introduction of that Torah which Rehoboam and all Israel had perforce abandoned. The recognition that Ephraim must rejoin Judah if all Israel was to be restored to divine favour, runs through the utterances of the prophets.¹ Ezekiel, concerned with the return of Yahweh to his Temple, sees a return to a re-united people, with Ephraim and Judah returning in harmony once more to Jerusalem. Isaiah, his soul filled with despair at the consequences of the Disruption, can see in a vision the return of the Lord to the Temple which he had abandoned—the Lord surrounded by his seraphic host, 'high and lifted up and his train filling the Temple'.²

Yet, whatever law code took the place of the Torah in the Temple at the Disruption, whether H or some other, it was clearly one which differed from the Torah sufficiently to arouse excitement and some perturbation when the copy—perhaps the standard copy which was 'before the Priests, the Levites'³—was discovered in the Temple and given to the high priest Hilkiah, in the time of King Josiah. This showed that in the interval between the abandonment of the Torah by Rehoboam and its rediscovery a law-code, other than the Torah, had been in operation. The political sundering of North and South in the time of Rehoboam was accompanied by a religious disintegration. As the two were so closely interwoven, that was inevitable. That the populace of Judah would revert to worshipping in the provincial shrines was as natural as it was inevitable. The fulminations of the Jewish historians against those kings of Judah who either themselves worshipped at the high places or permitted, or otherwise encouraged, others to do so, are due to the fact that they are writing from a time subsequent to Ezra, who for the third time introduced again the Torah to his people. To the Jewish historians to whom we owe the books of Kings and Chronicles the criterion for divine favour is acceptance of the Torah and rejection of aught else. A king is to be judged from the standpoint of his attitude towards it. Kings, such as Asa, Hezekiah, Josiah, are in favour

¹ Cf. Hos. i. 11 ; iii. 6. Is. xi. 8. Mic. ii. 12 ; v. 3. Jer. iii. 18 ; xxxi. 5 ff. Cf. also Am. ix. 8 f. ; 14 f. Hos. xi. 10 f. ; xiv. 4-8. Ezek. iv. 4 f. ; xvi. 53 ff. ; xxxix. 25 ; xlvii. 13 ff. and v. 27 f. is a prelude to xl. ff. (S.R. Driver⁹, p. 291).

² Is. vi.

³ Deut. xvii. 18.

with God because they strove to re-introduce it. It is the Torah which can be the salvation of God's people. Rejection of it rendered them liable to all punishments and calamities listed in chapter xxviii of the book of Deuteronomy. In the Torah, God has spoken finally to his people through Moses and Samuel, or rather through Moses interpreted by Samuel. No other law-code should, or could, be a substitute for it.

Another consequence of the rejection of the Torah by Rehoboam and all Israel would be the return of many priests to the sanctuaries from which they had been drafted to Jerusalem. It was to be expected that those who had previously been heads of shrines and their families would drift back to their former homes. Yet, perhaps, no religious class would be more upset at the upheaval than the 'prophets'. It has now come to be recognised by a growing number of Old Testament scholars that the prophets were not isolated individuals but had an official position in the cultus, attached; it would appear, to the shrines. God's law from the first called for interpretation, and as it evolved and expanded it required a special class of men to study it and furnish the interpretation according to the divine will. Such men were the official prophets. They were the precursors of the Sopherim. To interpret God's word aright they must be held fast in the grasp of the divine. Obviously some would be affected in this way more than others. The greatest of them would evince manifest signs of God's hold on them. They would act strangely and be capable of strange experiences. The power of working miracles would be associated with them. They were able to see the future in visions, and in a state of trance have God speak through them. But these were the great prophets. Those who studied God's word under them constituted the class known as 'the sons of the prophets'. Amos is not speaking ironically when he proclaims that he was 'neither a prophet, nor the son of a prophet'. He is not deriding a class of men. Rather is he emphasising the wonder that God should have chosen to speak through one like himself who had not made a study of God's word. In the seventeenth chapter of the second book of Kings the chronicler has a disquisition on the reason for the deportation of the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom by the

Assyrians, which he finds in their neglect of God's worship and in their building high places in all their cities, and in their idolatry. And he adds: ' Yet the Lord testified unto Israel and unto Judah by the hand of every prophet and every seer saying, Turn ye from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by the hand of my servants the prophets '.¹ Here the expression ' commandments and statutes ' carries the law beyond the ' Ten Words ', and must mean an expanded form of it—to all seeming, the Torah.

Not only Rehoboam and Judah, but ' all Israel ', rejected the Torah. In the north Jeroboam strove to introduce his calf-worship and to bind the people to it. It is true that, unlike what was done in Judah, he got rid of the ' high places ' which were to prove such a stumbling block in the Southern Kingdom, for he turned them into dwelling houses and ' made priests from among all the people which were not of the sons of Levi '.² Thus in both North and South the Torah had been rejected. God's word, his ' commandments and statutes ', which had been accepted as such by ' all Israel ' and was their bond of union with one king, one capital, one Temple, had been spurned and set aside. But God's word cannot so lightly be disavowed and rejected. When given, it is given for all time. It does not become null and void. There were those, and particularly the group of prophets known to us as the eighth century prophets, interpreters of God's will and word, who realised the need for the restoration of the state both politically and religiously, the re-instatement of the Torah, and the return of the Lord to his Temple. It was to this end that those prophets in particular laboured. They strove to re-establish political unity by undermining the stability of the Northern Kingdom with a view to its eventual downfall and the removal of the greatest obstacle to the purpose they had in view. They sought out, aided and abetted revolutionaries in order to put in the place of its rulers men, who, as adherents of the Yahweh religion, would re-unite the two kingdoms. They had initial successes in a number of instances. Baasha exterminated the house of Jeroboam, but when he became ruler, he followed in the

¹ 2 Ki. xvii. 13.

² 1 Ki. xii. 31.

footsteps of Jeroboam. So Baasha's house was denounced by the prophet Jehu, the son of Hanani, whereupon Zimri, one of his chariot captains, assassinated him and exterminated his family. The Israelites, however, made Omri, the commander-in-chief of the army, king, and he triumphed to carry on the kingdom of Jeroboam. His son Ahab with queen Jezebel had to contend with Elijah. Hazael, at Elisha's instigation, slew Ben Hadad, king of Syria, and one of 'the sons of the prophets' on the command of Elisha anointed Jehu and started him on his rebellion against Joram leading to the extermination of Ahab's house. And so on. Yet it always happened that the men who rose to power in this way refused to take the other step, so essential for the restoration of unity, the renunciation of the throne of the Northern Kingdom in favour of a union with the South under a Davidic king. If it had been possible to thrash out anew the whole question of the monarchy, it might have been conceivably possible to get North and South together again. But that question was no longer in the melting pot and the attitude of the North continued to be 'What portion have we in David? Neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel'.¹ Men like Hosea, Amos, Micah strove to prove how depraved morally the Northern Kingdom in particular had become through abandonment of the Torah. 'Though I write for him (Ephraim) my Torah in a myriad copies they are accounted a strange thing'.² Israel was destined, however, to be without the Torah for a long period. As the prophet Azariah, son of Oded, said to Asa: 'For a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without Torah'.³ It was at this prophet's instigation that Asa made an effort to restore the worship of Yahweh as it was at the time of the Disruption. For this purpose he gathered all Judah and Benjamin and those who 'sojourned' with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh and out of Simeon. Here was an attempt at re-union, but only with some elements of the North. With such limitations on the northern side it could

¹ 1 Ki. xii. 16.

² Hosea viii. 12. The usual interpretation of this is '10,000 precepts', which is surely not the meaning, since so many precepts would indeed make it a strange thing to those for whom they were intended.

³ 2. Chr. xv. 2.

never be more than a partial success, but it earned for him the divine commendation in the view of later Jewish historians. A great opportunity came with the fall of the Northern Kingdom. The time for re-union would seem at long last to have arrived. Hezekiah, king of Judah, sent messengers throughout all Israel and Judah calling on the people to 'yield themselves unto the Lord and to enter into his sanctuary which he hath sanctified for ever'.¹ But the messengers met with a poor reception in the North. They were laughed to scorn and mocked. Yet some from Asher, Manasseh and Zebulon (although none apparently from Ephraim) humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. Like the earlier attempt of Asa, that of Hezekiah had only a limited success.

It must not be supposed that these strivings after re-union were mere whims of the monarchs concerned. At the back of the efforts were the promptings of the religious officials, the priests and the prophets. If we read aright the fluctuating attitude of the monarchy to this question there would appear to have been a conflict of views, involving no doubt vested interests as well, within religious officialdom. There would be a Torah party and an anti-Torah party, or at least one that wished to maintain the cult as it had been re-organised and carried on since the abandonment of the Torah in the days of Rehoboam. With Hezekiah the Torah party was in the ascendant, but their opponents had evidently influenced his son Manasseh. After imprisonment in Babylonia, perhaps because of it, he seems to have attached himself to the Torah party. In other words, in the view of the later historians he repented and did much to compensate for his earlier conduct. His son Amon, however, remained under the anti-Torah influence, but a conspiracy brought about his death in his own house. His son Josiah then came to the throne at the early age of eight years. He would thus be made the target of conflicting interests, but the Torah party was evidently successful in securing him since at the age of sixteen he 'began to seek after the God of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand nor to the left'.² It was appropriate that in his reign a famous copy of the Torah, as we have already observed presumably

¹ Chr. xxx. 8.

² 2 Chr. xxxiv. 2.

the standard copy which had been 'before the Priests, the Levites',¹ was discovered in the Temple, and was ceremoniously re-adopted as the law-code of a re-united Israel. The stir occasioned by its discovery was probably not due to the recovery of the text of the book. That could have been recoverable from the priests of Shechem who still held fast to the Torah, operative and only operable, as they always believed, from Shechem and not from Jerusalem. But Jerusalem could never have accepted and adopted a text from Shechem. Its authenticity would be altogether suspect. Only the recovery of the standard copy of the law could have created so much excitement.

The restoration of the Torah so triumphantly accomplished in the reign of Josiah was not destined to be permanent. After Josiah's untimely death the anti-Torah party again prevailed and his successors 'did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord' during their brief and inglorious reigns. And all the chiefs of the priests and the people 'polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. . . . They mocked the messengers of God and despised his words and scoffed at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people till there was no remedy'.² With the fall of Jerusalem the priesthood, with others of the nation, went into exile. They would carry with them their dissensions and divisions. This cleavage was exemplified in separate organisations of a Return. The first was the attempt under the high priest Joshua with the intention of making Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, king. Zerubbabel was in the Davidic line. Joshua was the son of the last high priest in Jerusalem who was one of those men who 'did evil in the sight of the Lord'. What was evidently envisaged in this Return was an anti-Torah regime. It was different with the Ezra Return. We are told that 'Ezra had set his heart to seek the Torah of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments'.³ Ezra was an inheritor of the Torah party tradition. He was a great grandson of that Hilkiah who was instrumental in the re-introduction of the Torah in the time of Josiah. The Zerubbabel party was offered co-operation in the rebuilding of the Temple by the Ephraimites presumably. The anti-Ephraimite bias of the

¹ Deut. xvii. 18.² 2 Chr. xxxvi. 14 ff.³ Ezra vii. 10.

returning Jews is shown in their rejection of the offer, and that of the historians in the words they put into the mouths of these 'adversaries of Judah and Benjamin'. It is difficult to imagine Samaritans describing themselves to the Jews as 'sacrificing to your God since the days of Esarhaddon, who brought us up hither'.¹ One could hardly imagine a claim for recognition expressed in terms more damning and self-depreciatory. That these same terms express to the full the Jewish attitude to the Samaritans and indeed serve as justification for that attitude, is not without significance.

The Ezra party seems to have come back with no intention of restoring the monarchy. Rather was it harking back to the days of Samuel and the period of priestly leadership. It would almost appear as if Ezra and his associates had made up their minds that Judah, and if you will, Benjamin, were now all that counted and all that need be counted. The deportation of the Ten Tribes must in their eyes have been such as made their return impossible. Perhaps there was in this the birth of the idea, so widespread in later times, that the Ten Tribes were carried away to a region whence it was impossible for them to return.² The civil leadership in the state, which had ousted the religious at the time of Samuel, was now in turn to yield place to its predecessor. Samuel's edition of the Torah of Moses was to be brought again into operation, but no longer as the law-code of a united Israel. It was to be God's law for *all that was left* of Israel. Any association with Ephraimites (Samaritans) they rejected. In the Assyrian importations into the northern area they had a grand excuse for refusing to have any dealings with the northern territories, and they made the most of it. Judah with the addition of Benjamin was henceforth in their eyes to be esteemed the sole survivor of the Hebrew people and the sole inheritor of the divine promises. Salvation was to be sought in a holy, pure race of Jews. Marriages with foreigners, and particularly with the hated Samaritans, whom they now branded as foreigners, were not to be countenanced, and such as had taken place were to be

¹ Ezra iv. 2.

² See the writer's 'The Samaritans and the Sabbatic River', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, xx (1936).

dissolved. An Israel sifted in this fashion, embarked on a new era with the Torah again as its law-code and priestly power in the ascendant.

From the foregoing it will be seen that next to the giving of the law through Moses, the giving of the 'Second Law' through Samuel was an event of the greatest importance to the Hebrews. This 'Second Law' was an evolution of the first law and was given through the divinely inspired Samuel whose assemblies, to all seeming gathered for that purpose, had manifestly God in their midst. Thus, God-controlled at every stage, it was still the same law to which the name of Moses was attached, the law of the Lord from Mt. Sinai. It gathered together the distilled legal wisdom of the years intervening since the time of Moses to clarify and re-constitute the relationship of God to his people. It marked not only progress in the interpretation of the divine will as expressed primarily in the 'Ten Words', but marked also a period in which there was unanimity and accord between Ephraim and Judah. It held together North and South until the days of Rehoboam. Hence any extraordinary alterations or additions to the text, as we have already remarked, must have been made after that period. The Samaritan and Jewish texts of the Pentateuch are substantially the same. The only variations which cannot be explained by the chances of text transmission in the manuscript period, are the tendentious changes made by either Jews or Samaritans, or, it may be both, to support the rival claims of Jerusalem and Shechem to be the religious centre chosen by God and his earthly habitation. That the enmity existing between the two could be strong enough to induce surreptitious modifications of the text accepted by both as God's word, is a measure of its intensity. The only common ground of Samaritan and Jew is the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses. The other writings, which have been attached to the Torah in later times to form the canon of the Old Testament as we now have it, have not been accepted by the Samaritans. In view of the mutual hostility, which has varied little down the years, it would be too much to expect that those all-Jewish writings are free from anti-Ephraim bias. And, indeed, they are not. The full effect of this bias on the Jewish presentation of Israel's past, has still to be

fully investigated. It may yet be found of no small importance in a final assessment of Old Testament history.

With only the Jewish presentation of Israelite history from which to form our estimate of the course of events, it becomes the more desirable to have the evidence from the Ephraimite side. Unfortunately its whole prospect is coloured adversely in the eyes of European scholars by the inadequacy of existing Samaritan literature, the present pitiable state of the surviving Samaritan community, combined with an unenviable reputation for narrow-mindedness and cupidity. The Jewish point of view, which certainly displays no fraternal love for the Samaritans, has always been accepted as true and unbiassed, and Samaritan contentions have been lightly dismissed as fabrications unworthy of either credence or attention. The Samaritans, however, would appear to have certain points in their favour which cannot be easily rejected or ignored. Their possession of Shechem and Mt. Gerizim from the earliest times is indisputable. They have an unchallengeable tradition of the possession of the Aaronite high priesthood by direct descent until relatively recent times when it died out.¹ Their Pentateuch is written in the ancient Hebrew script. This script was abandoned by Ezra in favour of the 'aššūrī, the form of Hebrew script with which we are familiar.² Their Pentateuch, also, is textually closer to the Septuagint (Greek) version, the earliest version of the Old Testament, than is the Masoretic text. There seems too, some evidence, if slight, that the Jews may have borrowed some of their genealogical lists from the Ephraimites. It is undoubted that the Samaritans suffered extensive losses of literature during the persecutions to which they were subjected more than once in the course of their troubled history. All the foregoing are considerations to which it is but reasonable that heed should be paid.

Western scholars place great weight on the dating of manuscripts. That is but right and proper, especially when manuscripts contain material which is the product of a particular age

¹ A.D. 1625. From this time on the Samaritans ceased to use the title *haḳ-kōhēn haggadōl* for their chief priest, who has since then been known as *haḳ-kōhēn hal-lēwī*.

² It may have been that the change was made of set purpose in order to differentiate from the Samaritan.

and finds its justification and explanation from the authors' circumstances and environment, and the date of the author of any particular manuscript has to be determined from the contents. The date of a manuscript is, however, seldom the date of the author. This applies particularly to the genealogical lists and skeleton chronicles which form the basis of Israel's recorded history. The writer of a work on history is not ordinarily suspect of inventing his data. Yet one argument made against accepting Samaritan evidences is that the earliest dated manuscript of the Samaritan chronicles was one copied by one of their priests in the thirteenth century. That fact of itself does not prove that it was a fabrication of the writer. He would at least compile it from earlier works or from genealogical lists handed down. The Samaritan genealogical lists where they duplicate with the Jewish are clearly closely akin. Since they have been transmitted independently over a long period we must expect variations. They do exist although of a minor character. That either should have borrowed from the other since they went their separate ways is almost unthinkable. If there was any borrowing it is more likely that the Jews borrowed from the Ephraimites, who, with their Aaronite high priesthood at Shechem, the earliest religious centre of the Hebrews in Palestine, were more likely to have prior records.

It has been said that the idea is the controlling force in all human progress. The progress of the Hebrews down the ages has been swayed and dominated above all by the belief that their God had chosen them to be his own people in a very special sense. He was their guardian against foreign attack, and they looked to him to lead them to victory over their enemies. He had bound them to himself by covenant and their lives were regulated and controlled by him. For their guidance and regulation he had given them the 'Ten Words' by the hand of Moses. The legislative development of the 'Ten Words' partook of two forms, oral and written. The former represented the fluid, evolving law as applied to the multifarious cases for decision arising in the complexities of a life which had passed from the nomadic to the settled. The latter comprised the distillations from the former and consisted of legal generalisations which, after a prolonged

testing time, had graduated to the position of firm, unalterable law. From this latter the legalistic portions of the Torah were compiled. Brought together under divine inspiration through the medium of the prophet Samuel, the Torah became God's final written word to Israel. Its acceptance by all brought union and unanimity to an Israel rent and torn with dissension. It made an 'all Israel' not merely a desirability, but an actual fact. Its rejection after a relatively brief period was the outcome of the political disruption which sundered the monarchy and created a difficult and grave religious situation. From being a bond of union it became a bone of contention in religious circles. It appears to have divided the priesthood, in Judah especially, into its adherents and those who were opposed to its re-introduction. A struggle for power appears to have developed which affected the kingship and was no doubt one of the causes which brought Judah to exile. It did, however, lead eventually to the triumph of the adherents of the Torah, with Ezra as leader, in the Return.

Both the Ephraim-Judah hostility and the Torah have proved factors of moment in controlling the fortunes and shaping the destinies of the Hebrew tribes. The nature and extent of their influence are, I believe, still unappreciated. A just estimate will only be obtained through careful study and investigation.