

THE
APOCRYPHA
ITS STORY & MESSAGES

BY
SYDNEY
HERBERT MELLONE
M.A., D.D.

The
Apocrypha
Mellone

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MODERN LIFE," "ETERNAL LIFE HERE AND HEREAFTER," ETC.
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WITH A PREFACE BY

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PREFACE

BRITISH religion has suffered from the exclusion of the Apocrypha from our Bibles. It was included in the Authorised Version of 1611, and the books were marked off from the strictly canonical by the insertion of "Apocrypha" at the top of each page. But in course of time it became customary to omit it, so that for several generations the readers of the Bible in English translations have for the most part never read a line of it and are indeed scarcely aware of its existence.

There may have been some gain in the exclusion. For, with the rigid theory of inspiration, it might well have led to graver apologetic difficulties than those which the defence of the historical, ethical, and theological validity of Scripture had to face. Yet even here the presentation, between the same covers, of the Apocrypha with the Old and the New Testaments might have done something to relax the stiffness with which the Bible "from cover to cover" has been declared to be the infallible word of God. And in other respects the loss incurred through the omission has been grave. It is true that we no longer speak of the period "from Malachi to Matthew" as "four

centuries of silence." The Old Testament itself contains not a little to bridge the gulf—notably Daniel, Esther, Ecclesiastes, some sections in the Canon of the Prophets, and various elements in the Psalter and the Book of Proverbs.

But when we pass from even the latest parts of the Old Testament to the Judaism of Palestine and the Dispersion in the first century of the Christian era, we find that a very marked development has taken place in the meantime. However true it is that Jesus Himself went back to the Prophets and Psalmists for His real forerunners, and found Himself at home in the Old Testament, though even here with qualifications, rather than in the "tradition of the elders," yet the Judaism in which He and those to whom He spoke had been trained was a religion which had been developed far beyond the point at which the Old Testament had left it. And Paul, a rigid Hebrew of pure Hebrew stock, trained in the scholasticism of the Rabbis, interpreted the Gospel, for all his anti-nomianism, in categories and with a dialectic he brought with him from the school of Gamaliel. The reconstruction of the various types of Judaism in the first century of our era is a difficult enterprise; but it is even more important for Christian origins than the investigations which take us further afield into Babylonian, Egyptian, Iranian, Anatolian, Greek or Indian religions.

Moreover, the historical narrative of the Old

Testament breaks off abruptly with Ezra and Nehemiah. The conquests of Alexander, the rule of Egypt and Syria, the attempt made by Antiochus Epiphanes to stamp out the Jewish religion, the Maccabæan struggle and triumph—all momentous for Jewish history—lay beyond the horizon of the Old Testament historians, though Prophet or Psalmist may reflect these later movements, and the author of Daniel record them in apocalyptic imagery.

Now it would not be true to say that the Apocrypha completely fills the gap. But alike in its historical and its didactic sections, it takes us a long way beyond the Old Testament towards the political conditions and the ethical and theological principles current in the Judaism with which Jesus and Paul were familiar. The student of the New Testament, while in no way abating his recognition of the Old Testament as its indispensable predecessor, ought also to regard the Apocrypha as providing invaluable help in his study. And if clay and iron are to be found in it, the silver and the gold are also present in rich abundance.

It is, accordingly, with real pleasure that I accept the invitation of my friend and former colleague, Dr. Mellone, to write a Preface to this volume. I have read it with much appreciation, and rejoice that he has given such an impulse to the pursuit of a study long neglected to our loss. I trust his exposition and the specimens of the

literature so felicitously chosen will send many to the study of the books themselves. The Revised Version, which is here much superior to the Authorised, should be used; and with this I may mention Dr. C. J. Ball's valuable edition in "The Variorum Apocrypha." The student will gain much more if he advances to the study of the Apocalyptic literature. Several of the Apocalypses are available in the excellent series of translations published by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. But towering above everything else is the noble translation edited in two massive volumes by Dr. R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*. If to his volume on the Apocrypha Dr. Mellone could add a companion volume on the Apocalyptic literature he would increase the obligation under which he has laid us by the present publication.

ARTHUR S. PEAKE.

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THE APOCRYPHA, ITS STORY AND MESSAGES

I

INTRODUCTION

THE collection of writings which are commonly described as "The Apocrypha" is of real interest and importance, both in itself and for the light it throws on the religious history of Palestine and the surrounding countries at a time when the world—all unknown to itself—was in the last period of its preparation for the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In this introductory chapter we shall simply indicate first, the relation of "The Apocrypha" to the Old Testament; then, the reason why it came to be known by its present name; and lastly, the causes of its having been so little known in Christendom at any rate during the last hundred years.

It has often been said that the Bible is not a book but a library: indeed the name "Bible" comes directly from a Greek word meaning "books." The Old Testament consists of the surviving literature of a gifted people during the great creative periods of their history. The literature must once have been more extensive than it is now, for much seems to have perished in the disasters which from time to time befell the nation. We know that these books belong to very different times, some of them many centuries apart. They contain examples of many kinds of literature. There are the early traditions of the Hebrew people from the time of their escape from Egypt; there are hymns, proverbial wisdom, history, legend; there is the latest philosophy of despair in the Preacher's cry "Vanity of vanities"; there is the love poem of the Song of Songs; there is the great drama of Job; and above all, there are the wonderful discourses of the Prophets, and there is the Sacred Law.

We do not know, in any detail, how

these writings were gathered together, but we can trace three stages in the process of collection.

Among all their sacred books those which the Jews most prized were the books of the Law. These were five in all. We call them by names—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy—derived from a famous Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures which we shall refer to again. The Jews spoke of them together as *Torah* or “Law,” and by this name they meant not only the commandments, beginning “Thou shalt,” “Thou shalt not,” but the whole religious and practical contents of the books. The tradition which was generally received at the time of Christ was that they had all been written by Moses after he led the Israelites out of Egypt. We now know, however, that these books could not all have been written by one person or at one time. They are like a great cathedral, built on a foundation of immemorial antiquity, and combining in its structure material from

different periods. These, however, were the first to be grouped together by the Jews to form a collection of sacred writings of supreme importance and supreme authority both for religious belief and practical life. Such a collection of sacred writings is called a "Canon," from a Greek word which originally meant a reed used as a ruler, and so came to mean a rule or order.

Afterwards—perhaps as late as the end of the third century before Christ—some other great writings, with which the people had long been familiar, were formed into a separate group constituting a second stage in the completion of the Jewish Canon. These consisted of what were called the "earlier Prophets," the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, and the "later Prophets," Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve "minor Prophets" (not including Daniel).

Still later, in fact about the time when Jesus lived, we find a third group in process of formation, consisting partly of writings

of comparatively recent origin, like Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs, and partly of older books which, like Job, Daniel, or the great collection of Psalms, had not acquired the kind of authority belonging to "The Law" or "The Prophets." This collection when completed was called "The Writings": Psalms, Proverbs, Job; Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther; Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah, Chronicles.

These three groups together formed the sacred Canon of the Bible of the Jews, as recognised by the Jews of Palestine, the fatherland of their Religion. There were other books in circulation, some of them as old as any in the collection of "The Writings," others probably older, and some of them actually written in Palestine, which for various reasons were not included in the Palestinian Canon. But a number of these were actually included with the Greek version of the Old Testament, published in Alexandria for the use of Jews in that city and other parts of the Empire,

for whom Greek was the mother-tongue. This translation was called the "Septuagint" from the legend that it was made by just seventy learned men; and it acquired additional importance through becoming the first Bible of the Christians. And since an equally famous later Latin translation of the Bible, called the Vulgate, made by and under the direction of the great scholar Saint Jerome, included several of these additional writings, they became widely known, although Jerome did not regard them as possessing the same authority as the books of the Palestinian Canon.

When our English version was made, most of these additional writings were translated and placed in a section called "The Apocrypha," which is found, in older Bibles, printed between the Old and New Testaments: and this is the collection now before us, and which we shall describe in the following pages.

There had been much difference of opinion about the value and importance of the books afterwards called the Apocrypha.

On the whole, popular usage received all the books of the enlarged Alexandrian Canon as of equal authority; but the tradition of theologians kept up the distinction between the Palestinian and the Alexandrian Canon which had been made by Jerome.

During the Reformation period, the Church of Rome formally decreed her adherence to the popular view of the Apocrypha held in the Christian Church from the beginning. She definitely accepted all its contents as canonical—except the two Books of Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh. The Church of England, on the other hand, formally adopted the view of S. Jerome, and while retaining the Apocrypha in her Bible gave it a secondary position. In her sixth Article of Religion, the books of the Apocrypha are described as “the other Books” which “the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine.”

In Scotland the question was involved in

the general theological controversy with the Church of Rome, and the books of the Apocrypha suffered from some of the bitterness imported into that controversy. An important result of this was that the British and Foreign Bible Society, early in the last century, deliberately decided to omit the Apocrypha from all their Bibles. The extent of the work done by this Society in circulating inexpensive copies of the Scriptures at home and abroad is well known; but the omission of the Apocrypha from all their editions has done more than anything else to keep this collection of writings in an entirely undeserved obscurity.

A few words must be added as to the name itself. Originally it had no meaning akin to that of the modern English adjective "apocryphal." The word "apocrypha" originally signified "hidden things" and was sometimes used as a title not of reproach but of honour. It was applied, for example, to writings regarded as too important or too difficult to be placed in

the hands of the multitude. Then, by a not unnatural transition, it came to be used of writings whose origin or authority was obscure or at any rate not generally known. Modern usage has imported the notion of the false or unreliable into the meaning of the word; but we must guard against the misleading character of such associations.

II

THE RETURN

The First Book of Esdras

SIX hundred years before the birth of Christ, the Empire of Babylonia was supreme in Western Asia. Long after all its power had passed away, and its royal line become only the memory of a name, a faithful and heroic Jew thus wrote of it as it was in the height of its glory :—

O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father the kingdom, and greatness, and glory, and majesty; and because of the greatness that he gave him, all the peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he raised up, and whom he would he put down.

Against this power, a little kingdom, by the Mediterranean Sea, chose to rebel.

The kingdom had fallen on evil days. The last two kings who nominally reigned in Jerusalem—one of them a mere boy—had no independence of action. Their policy was moulded for them by self-seeking and arrogant men destitute of any trace of political wisdom. The result was the complete ruin of everything which had hitherto been the refuge and defence of the people of Israel. In the year five hundred and ninety-seven many thousands of the population, including "the flower of the people" from every class in the community, were forcibly deported to Babylonia. Eleven years later, Jerusalem was laid waste; most of the remaining population of the city were carried off, and the earthly kingdom of Israel, down to its last visible remains, was utterly destroyed.

The deported captives were forcibly settled in the capital city and other parts of the Empire. Their condition varied at different times and in different districts. They were allowed to cultivate the land and pursue other avocations within the

limits assigned to them; and many were content. But still there burned among them the passion of a self-willed and high-spirited people, trained for generations in devotion to the religious tradition of their fathers, and now subject to the despotism of a heathen power.

During this period another power began to move forth victoriously in Western Asia. Cyrus of Persia was a royal leader endowed with genius and wisdom, and capable of arousing enthusiastic loyalty and even veneration among all sorts and conditions of men. This was the ruler who, after moulding "the Medes and Persians" into a new empire, now began to advance against Babylonia. The rumour of his movements spread rapidly and far; and the subject peoples began to dream of him as their deliverer. The Babylonian government, indifferent, inefficient, corrupt, was incapable of offering any permanent resistance: and even when the armies of Cyrus were surrounding the city, the Babylonians were celebrating in careless ease a luxurious

feast. We know little of the details of what happened, but the capture of Babylon by Cyrus in a single night is the fixed core of the tradition in all its forms; and the famous legend of the Handwriting on the Wall, so finely told in the fifth chapter of the Book of Daniel, stands out against the dark background and casts a fiery glow upon the whole narrative.

Unlike his successors on the throne of Persia, Cyrus was a man of justice and mercy, and acted generously towards the subject peoples of the powers which he had destroyed. And among all the events produced by his victories, the one which appeared least important at the time was the one fraught with momentous consequences for the whole future history of the world—the restoration of Israel. One of his earliest acts was to issue a decree giving permission to all of the Jewish exiles, who desired to do so, to return to their country with authority to re-build the Temple and as much of the city as they could, and to take back with them their personal property

and the sacred vessels which, fifty years before, had been carried away to the treasure-chambers of Babylon. Part of the story of the Return is told in what is called "The First Book of Esdras" in our English versions of the Apocrypha. It appears that an educated Jew, living probably some time in the first century before Christ, became possessed of a pamphlet describing the Restoration under Cyrus. It was written either in the ancient language of the people, Hebrew, or in the later local dialect called Aramaic. He translated it into Greek for the use of Jews abroad who used that language, and the Greek version has come down to us. It corresponds to portions of the Books of (second) Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, in the Old Testament, but differs from them in a number of details which raise historic problems lying outside our present purpose. What interests us here is the fact that he inserted in his translation a striking story, taken probably from some Greek source, describing a contest of a kind which was

popular at that time—a competition in argumentative skill.

Darius, king of the Persians, had given a royal banquet. When the guests had departed, he retired, but after a while was unable to sleep. Then three young men, guards of the king's chamber, agreed each to compose a statement in answer to the question, What is strongest in the world? The three answers were written, sealed, and placed under the king's pillow, to be read when he rose in the morning. The next morning the king summoned an assembly of his courtiers, and the three young men were ordered each to recite the arguments for his statement.

The first had said that "Wine is the strongest," and thus defended the statement:—

O sirs, how exceeding strong is wine! it causeth all men to err that drink it: it maketh the mind of the king and of the fatherless child to be all one, of the bondman and of the freeman, of the poor man and of the rich: it turneth also every thought into jollity and mirth, so that a man remembereth neither sorrow nor debt: and when they are in their cups,

they forget their love both to *friends* and brethren, and a little after draw their swords: but when they awake from their wine, they remember not what they have done.

The second had said that "The king is the strongest," and recited the ordinary powers of the typical Oriental despot:—

O sirs, do not men excel in strength, that bear rule over the sea and land, and all things in them? But yet is the king stronger: and he is their lord, and hath dominion over them; and in whatsoever he commandeth them they obey him. If he bid them make war the one against the other, they do it: and if he send them out against the enemies, they go, and overcome mountains, walls, and towers. They slay and are slain, and transgress not the king's commandment: if they get the victory, they bring all to the king, as well the spoil, as all things else. Likewise for those that are no soldiers, and have not to do wars, but use husbandry, when they have reaped again that which they had sown, they bring it to the king, and compel one another to pay tribute unto the king:

with more to the same effect.

The third had two statements to maintain. Humanly speaking, "Women are the strongest"; but absolutely, "Truth is stronger than all." Women are strongest, first, because they can be mothers:—

Women have borne the king and all the people that bear rule by sea and land. Even of them came they : and they nourished them up that planted the vineyards, from whence the wine cometh. These also make garments for men ; these bring glory unto men ; and without women cannot men be.

Again, they are strongest because they can win the devotion of men, and call forth their labour and courage :—

A man leaveth his own father that brought him up, and his own country, and cleaveth unto his wife. And with his wife he endeth his days, and remembereth neither father, nor mother, nor country. But this also ye must know that women have dominion over you : do ye not labour and toil, and give and bring all to women ?

They have powers to move men even though it is for evil :—

Yea, many there be that have run out of their wits for women, and become bondmen for their sakes. Many also have perished, have stumbled and sinned for women.

Then the speaker, greatly daring, took an illustration from the conduct of the king himself, whereupon “the king and the nobles looked one upon another ;” and he went on to speak concerning Truth :—

O sirs, great is the earth, high is the heaven, swift is the sun in his course, for he compasseth the heavens round about, and fetcheth his course again to his own place in one day. Is he not great that maketh these things? therefore great is truth, and stronger than all things. All the earth calleth upon truth, and the heaven blesseth her: all works shake and tremble, but with her is no unrighteous thing.

Truth abideth, and is strong for ever; she liveth and conquereth for evermore. With her there is no accepting of persons or rewards; but she doeth the things that are just, and refraineth from all unrighteous and wicked things; and all men do well like of her works. Neither in her judgement is any unrighteousness; and she is the strength, and the kingdom, and the power, and the majesty, of all ages. Blessed be the God of truth.

By general acclamation, the third speaker was declared victor in the argument. He proved to be a young Jew named Zerubabel, and the reward given to him is roughly woven into the story of the Return.

III

HOME LIFE IN EXILE.

The Book of Tobit and the History of Susanna

PALESTINE was subject to Persia for about two hundred years. In the year three hundred and thirty-three before Christ the Persian Empire was shattered by Alexander the Great, who, having succeeded his father as master of Greece when he was twenty years old, in the course of twelve years had made himself master of Asia from its western coasts to India.

The two centuries of Persian domination were not centuries of mere tyranny. At the outset, Cyrus was hailed by more than one of Israel's great prophets as a heaven-sent deliverer and even one of the first among the Servants of God. The later

rulers of the Empire degenerated in character and political wisdom; but for long periods at a time the Jews were comparatively content. The religion of Persia partly accounted for this. They had never before come into close contact with a religion, other than their own, which (until a late period in its history) had no share in the general adoration of idols or image-worship. It rested on an intense belief that the opposition of good and evil ran right through the whole of creation, through the souls of men and all visible and invisible created beings up to the realm of Deity itself, where the God of Wisdom and Righteousness stood over against an evil Being, a Power in every respect the opposite of himself. Along with this, it held the belief in an army or two opposed armies, of many ranks and grades of invisible beings, moving as it were between earth and heaven. In both these ways the ancient religion of Israel was influenced by that of Persia; the antagonism between good and evil was believed more deeply and intensely; the

unseen powers of good and of evil took personal form and became "angels" and "demons," with a leader or commander, Satan, the "adversary," at their head. But, amid all this, the religion of Israel was true to its own spirit and never yielded its belief in the supremacy of goodness and truth.

The mightiest work of Israel's genius belongs to this Persian period—the central portion of the Book of Job, the great debate (in chapters iii. to xli.) between Job and his friends, about the suffering of the innocent. Other later parts of the Old Testament originated during the age of Persian supremacy; but, of the literature now before us, nothing can with much probability be assigned to this period, unless it is the story of Tobit (the name means "goodness"), his troubles, and his deliverance.

This simple and almost child-like story shows how nobly the religion of the Old Testament, when it could no longer exercise any large public influence on the people and the state, lived on in the quiet inde-

pendence of the home, and there became the cherished religion of the heart, whose "ritual" was in homely acts of beneficence and kindness. And yet it is no mere "cosmopolitanism"; it attests national resignation and national hopes under calamity, but with no trace of vengeance, hatred, or hostility.

Tobit was a worthy Israelite who was carried to Nineveh in the captivity of the ten tribes, and, after rising into favour and wealth as a trader at the royal court, was reduced to poverty because he habitually buried those of his people whom the tyrant slew and ordered to be cast forth unburied. Through the influence of a relative at court, his lot was made easier for a time:—

Now when I was come home again, and my wife Anna was restored unto me, and my son Tobias, in the feast of Pentecost, which is the holy feast of the seven weeks, there was a good dinner prepared me, and I sat down to eat. And I saw abundance of meat, and I said to my son, Go and bring what poor man soever thou shalt find of our brethren, who is mindful of the Lord; and, lo, I tarry for thee. And he came, and said, Father, one of our race is strangled, and is cast out in the marketplace. And before I had tasted

ought, I sprang up, and took him up into a chamber until the sun was set. And I returned, and washed myself, and ate my bread in heaviness. And when the sun was set, I went and made a grave, and buried him.

But immediately afterwards he lost his eyesight by an accident. Helpless and in despair, supported by his wife's labour, and taunted by his neighbours, he yet puts his faith in God and prepares to die :—

O Lord, thou art righteous, and all thy works and all thy ways are mercy and truth, and thou judgest true and righteous judgement for ever. Remember me, and look on me; take not vengeance on me for my sins and mine ignorances, and the sins of my fathers, which sinned before thee.

And now deal with me according to that which is pleasing in thy sight, command my spirit to be taken from me, that I may be released, and become earth : for it is profitable for me to die rather than to live, because I have heard false reproaches, and there is much sorrow in me : command that I be now released from my distress, and go to the everlasting place : turn not thy face away from me.

First, however, he resolved to send his son Tobias to Rages in Media to reclaim an old loan. Now on the same day his cousin Sara had been mocked by her maids

because she had been married to seven husbands, all of whom, one after the other, had been slain by her demon-lover, Asmodeus, on the night of marriage. And Sara prayed thus to God:—

Thou knowest, Lord, that I am pure from all sin with man, and that I never polluted my name, nor the name of my father, in the land of my captivity: I am the only daughter of my father, and he hath no child that shall be his heir, nor brother near him, nor son belonging to him. Seven husbands of mine are dead already: why should I live? And if it pleaseth thee not to slay me, command some regard to be had of me, and pity taken of me, that I hear no more reproach.

Meanwhile Tobias was preparing for his long journey. And Tobit charged his son, and, among other things, said to him:—

My child, when I die, bury me: and despise not thy mother; honour her all the days of thy life, and do that which is pleasing unto her, and grieve her not. Remember, my child, that she hath seen many dangers for thee. When she is dead, bury her by me in one grave.

My child, be mindful of the Lord our God all thy days, and let not thy will be set to sin and to transgress his commandments: do righteousness all the days of thy life, and follow not the ways of unrighteousness.

For if thou doest the truth, thy doings shall prosperously succeed to thee, and to all them that do righteousness.

Let not the wages of any man, which shall work for thee, tarry with thee, but render it unto him out of hand: and if thou serve God, recompense shall be made unto thee. Take heed to thyself, my child, in all thy works, and be discreet in all thy behaviour, And what thou thyself hatest, do to no man.

Ask counsel of every man that is wise, and despise not any counsel that is profitable.

Bless the Lord thy God at all times, and ask of him that thy ways may be made straight, and that all thy paths and counsels may prosper: for every nation hath not counsel; but the Lord himself giveth all good things, and he humbleth whom he will, as he will. And fear not, my child, because we are made poor: thou hast much wealth, if thou fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is pleasing in his sight.

Tobias needed a travelling companion; and a friendly stranger named Azarias presented himself, and after mutual converse, was engaged: "so they both went forth to depart, and the young man's dog with them." With the unseen aid of his companion, Tobias not only recovered his father's money, but by killing "a fish"—by which is probably meant a small crocodile—which attacked him as he was

bathing his feet in the Tigris, he becomes possessed of two invaluable drugs, its liver with the heart, and its gall. By fumigation with the former, he drove away the demon Asmodeus, and with the gall he healed his father's eyes. By thus delivering the maiden, he won her for his wife :—

Blessed art thou, O God of our fathers, and blessed is thy holy and glorious name for ever; let the heavens bless thee, and all thy creatures.

Thou didst say, It is not good that the man should be alone; let us make him a helper like unto him. And now, O Lord, I take not this my sister for lust, but in truth: command that I may find mercy and grow old with her.

And amid all the rejoicing, the maiden's father said :—

Blessed art thou, O God, with all pure and holy blessing; and let thy saints bless thee, and all thy creatures; and let all thine angels and thine elect bless thee for ever. Blessed art thou, because thou hast made me glad; and it hath not befallen me as I suspected; but thou hast dealt with us according to thy great mercy. Blessed art thou, because thou hast had mercy on two that were the only begotten children of their parents: shew them mercy, O Lord; accomplish their life in health with gladness and mercy.

They called for the travelling companion, Azarias, and sought to reward him for all that he had done; and then he revealed himself to them:—

Surely I will keep close nothing from you. I have said, "It is good to keep close the secret of a king, but to reveal gloriously the works of God." And now, when thou didst pray, and Sara thy daughter in law, I did bring the memorial of your prayer before the Holy One: and when thou didst bury the dead, I was with thee likewise. And when thou didst not delay to rise up, and leave thy dinner, that thou mightest go and cover the dead, thy good deed was not hid from me: but I was with thee. And now God did send me to heal thee and Sara thy daughter in law. I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and go in before the glory of the Holy One.

Be not afraid, ye shall have peace; but bless God for ever. For not of any favour of mine, but by the will of your God I came; wherefore bless him for ever. All these days did I appear unto you; and now give God thanks: because I ascend to him that sent me.

So he vanished from their sight. And in the end we hear the old man's words of passionate thanksgiving:—

Blessed is God that liveth for ever, and blessed is his Kingdom. He leadeth down to the grave, and

bringeth up again; and there is none that shall escape his hand.

Give thanks unto him before the Gentiles, ye children of Israel: for he hath scattered us among them. There declare his greatness, and extol him before all the living: because he is our Lord, and God is our Father for ever. And he will scourge us for our iniquities, and will again shew mercy, and will gather us out of all the nations among whom ye are scattered. If ye turn to him with your whole heart and with your whole soul, to do truth before him, then will he turn unto you, and will not hide his face from you.

And his thoughts turn again to the Holy City of his fathers:—

O Jerusalem, the holy city, he will scourge thee for the works of thy sons, and will again have mercy on the sons of the righteous. Give thanks to the Lord with goodness, and bless the everlasting King, that his tabernacle may be builded in thee again with joy, and that he may make glad in thee those that are captives, and love in thee for ever those that are miserable.

“Give thanks with goodness”—that is (to adapt the words of the Anglican collect) “Show forth His praise not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to His service, and walking before Him in humbleness and righteousness all our days.”

All these human elements are placed in this story in a supernaturalism as bald as any to be found in the *Arabian Nights*. So it seems to a modern reader; but, historically, it is easily explained. Belief in the power of the magic art, and in the unseen presence of "angels" and "demons," is evidence of Babylonian and Persian influences of which there are many traces in later Judaism; and an educated and travelled Jew, like the author of *Tobit*, would know that belief in the medical virtues of the crocodile was part of the folklore of the ancient world.

Very different is the other story which we associate with that of *Tobit*: different in date, origin, and character, yet setting forth a fidelity on which the foundations of the home depend.

Susanna was the young and beautiful wife of a wealthy Jew settled in Babylon. In his house were frequently held trials of suits in law, under "two ancients of the people" who had been appointed to be judges, and who nevertheless were men of

evil character and vile passions. Seeing Susanna one day alone in the garden, they made infamous proposals to her, with the threat, that if she refused they would together bring a charge against her for which the punishment was death. Firm in the faith of an Almighty Judge, she stood unmoved in the dreadful choice between death and dishonour:—

I am straitened on every side; for if I do this thing, it is death unto me: and if I do it not, I cannot escape your hands. It is better for me to fall into your hands, and not do it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord. O Everlasting God, that knowest the secrets, that knowest all things before they be: behold, I must die.

The evidence of the two elders was contrary to all that was known and believed of Susanna's character; but it was not questioned, and with the sorrowful assent of all the people she was declared guilty and led forth to execution. Then occurred a sudden and startling interruption:—

God raised up the holy spirit of a youth, whose name was Daniel: and he cried with a loud voice, "I am clear from the blood of this woman."

Then all the people turned them toward him, and said,

"What mean these words that thou hast spoken?"

So he standing in the midst of them said,

"Are ye such fools, ye sons of Israel, that without examination or knowledge of the truth ye have condemned a daughter of Israel? Return again to the place of judgement: for these have borne false witness against her."

Wherefore all the people turned again in haste, and the other elders said unto him,

"Come sit down among us, and shew it us, seeing God hath given thee the honour of an elder."

Then said Daniel unto them,

"Put them asunder one far from another, and I will examine them."

He examined the two witnesses separately, and the evidence of the one contradicted that of the other in a plain matter of fact. Then the people rose against the two elders:—

According to the law of Moses they did unto them in such sort as they maliciously intended to do to their neighbour: and they put them to death, and the innocent blood was saved.

The story of Susanna is believed to have been written during the first century before Christ, at a time when the abuses, springing

from the acceptance of the evidence of witnesses without cross-examination, were becoming a scandal. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, referred to in our introductory chapter, this story is placed at the beginning of the Book of Daniel; but the Hebrew of Daniel does not contain it.

A few words are needed on the class of literature to which *Tobit* and *Susanna* belong. It is a kind of literature which Jewish writers were very fond of, and which among the writings called "the Apocrypha" is represented also in the remaining additions to Daniel, in the additions to Esther, in Judith, and to some extent in Second Maccabees. Writings of this kind are like sermons in the form of narratives or stories: sometimes simply a briefly suggested "lesson" or "moral" added to a biblical narrative, sometimes extending to a whole chapter or requiring the composition of a new book. Whether it was historically veracious, or the reverse, mattered but little; it was not history but

instruction that was aimed at, and allegory, parable, and legend served the purpose just as much as a record of facts. To call such writings "false" is as absurd as to call Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* or *Old Mortality* "false." Probably the individuals portrayed as "Ivanhoe" or "Old Mortality" never existed; but the stories give a true picture of the kind of human life and experience occupying a particular place and time. Scott's stories, of course, are told for their own sake as literature; they are "historical novels." The devout Jew, on the other hand, wanted not the historical novel but the *historical parable*. He wanted to enforce religious and moral lessons under the guise of history.

IV

THE WAY OF WISDOM

The Book of Ecclesiasticus and The Wisdom of Solomon

IN the year one hundred and thirty-two before Christ, a thoughtful and well-educated Jew removed from Palestine to Alexandria bringing with him the manuscript of an extensive work written in the Hebrew language by his grandfather, Jesus the son of Sira ("Jesus," the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name which appears in our Old Testament as "Joshua"). The grandson, convinced of the value and importance of the book, undertook the labour of translating it into Greek, in order that it might be studied by his fellow-believers in Alexandria and elsewhere who spoke and read only in that language.

The book had been written about sixty

years previously in Palestine—before the great struggle to be described in our next chapter, but after Greek civilisation and culture, in a somewhat degenerate form, had begun to affect the Jewish people in Palestine as well as elsewhere. The writer deeply distrusted this influence, and part of the purpose of this book is to guard against it. He would secure this end by offering to his people a kind of book to which men and women might have recourse for guidance in almost every conceivable circumstance of life. The work grew under his hand,—“ I said, I will water my garden, . . . and lo, my stream became a river, and my river became a sea.” But what he offers is by no means merely his own personal opinions or even his own personal convictions. He knew the Old Testament thoroughly; and his mind was full of the spirit, the thought, and the diction of the books of Proverbs, Psalms, and Job. And what he gives in his own book he believes to be a true expression of the *Torah*, the teaching of the ancient Scriptures of his people.

He would have us see all life and duty in the light of Wisdom. What he means by this will be seen from the quotations which follow.

The highest Wisdom is divine and is of the nature of God, who gives it forth to the created world :—

All wisdom cometh from the Lord, and is with him for ever. The sand of the seas, and the drops of rain, and the days of eternity, who shall number? The height of the heaven, and the breadth of the earth, and the deep, and wisdom, who shall search them out? Wisdom hath been created before all things, and the understanding of prudence from everlasting.

To whom hath the root of wisdom been revealed? And who hath known her shrewd counsels? There is one wise, greatly to be feared, the Lord sitting upon his throne : he created her, and saw, and numbered her, and poured her out upon all his works. She is with all flesh according to his gift; and he gave her freely to them that love him.

Man's highest duty is to "fear God." What does this mean? It is a *fearless fear*—reverence, rising to love and trust : "Whoso feareth the Lord shall not be afraid, and shall not play the coward, for He is his hope" :—

Look at the generations of old, and see : who did ever put his trust in the Lord, and was ashamed ? Or who did abide in his fear, and was forsaken ? Or who did call upon him, and he despised him ? For the Lord is full of compassion and mercy ; and he forgiveth sins, and saveth in time of affliction.

Woe unto fearful hearts, and to faint hands, and to the sinner that goeth two ways ! Woe unto the faint heart ! for it believeth not : therefore shall it not be defended. Woe unto you that have lost your patience ! And what will ye do when the Lord shall visit you ? They that fear the Lord will not disobey his words ; and they that love him will keep his ways. They that fear the Lord will seek his good pleasure ; and they that love him shall be filled with the law. They that fear the Lord will prepare their hearts, and will humble their souls in his sight, saying, We will fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men : for as his majesty is, so also is his mercy.

He thus describes the fearless fear which leads to perfect trust :—

My son, if thou comest to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation. Set thy heart aright, and constantly endure, and make not haste in time of calamity. Cleave unto him, and depart not, that thou mayest be increased at thy latter end. Accept whatsoever is brought upon thee, and be longsuffering when thou passest into humiliation. For gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation. Put thy trust in him, and he will

help thee : order thy ways aright, and set thy hope on him.

He maintains the simple faith of his forefathers, that it shall be well with the righteous at the last. "And we too cling to the same belief, though we are fain to interpret 'at the last' as beyond the grave. Yet let us not despair too hastily of earthly justice either. 'Honesty is the best policy' is not always true, if by 'best' we mean externally most prosperous, and this is well; for if it were, the noblest kinds of goodness and sacrifice would never have been revealed. And yet, happily, it is true mainly and in the long run, for otherwise human society would be unworkable and impossible" (Dr. C. G. Montefiore).

Wisdom is won by discipline and training; the way is hard and burdensome at the first, but not at the last :—

Come unto her as one that ploweth and soweth, and wait for her good fruits; for thy toil shall be little in the tillage of her, and thou shalt eat of her fruits right soon. How exceeding harsh is she to the unlearned! And he that is without understanding will not abide in her. As a mighty stone of trial shall she

rest upon him; and he will not delay to cast her from him.

Give ear, my son, and accept my judgement, and refuse not my counsel, and bring thy feet into her fetters, and thy neck into her chain. Put thy shoulder under her, and bear her, and be not grieved with her bonds. Come unto her with all thy soul, and keep her ways with thy whole power. Search, and seek, and she shall be made known unto thee; and when thou hast got hold of her, let her not go. For at the last thou shalt find her rest; and she shall be turned for thee into gladness.

The wisdom of which he speaks is not craft or cunning; neither is it mere acquaintance with the ways of evil:—

All wisdom is the fear of the Lord; and in all wisdom is the doing of the law. And the knowledge of wickedness is not wisdom; and the prudence of sinners is not counsel. There is a wickedness, and the same is abomination; and there is a fool wanting in wisdom. Better is one that hath small understanding, and feareth, than one that hath much prudence, and transgresseth the law.

Because he believed that wisdom needs leisure, he is led into an entirely mistaken argument against democracy, although he sees the immense importance of the work of those who labour with their hands for the maintenance of civilisation:—

How shall he become wise that holdeth the plough, that glorieth in the shaft of the goad, that driveth oxen, and is occupied in their labours, and whose discourse is of the stock of bulls? So is every artificer and work-master, that passeth his time by night as by day; they that cut gravings of signets, and his diligence is to make great variety; he will set his heart to preserve likeness in his portraiture, and will be wakeful to finish his work. So is the smith sitting by the anvil, and considering the unwrought iron: the vapour of the fire will waste his flesh; and in the heat of the furnace will he wrestle with his work: the noise of the hammer will be ever in his ear, and his eyes are upon the pattern of the vessel; he will set his heart upon perfecting his works, and he will be wakeful to adorn them perfectly. So is the potter sitting at his work, and turning the wheel about with his feet, who is always anxiously set at his work, and all his handywork is by number; he will fashion the clay with his arm, and will bend its strength in front of his feet; he will apply his heart to finish the glazing; and he will be wakeful to make clean the furnace.

All these put their trust in their hands; and each becometh wise in his own work. Without these shall not a city be inhabited, and men shall not sojourn nor walk up and down therein. They shall not be sought for in the council of the people, and in the assembly they shall not mount on high; they shall not sit on the seat of the judge, and they shall not understand the covenant of judgement: neither shall they declare instruction and judgement; and where parables are they shall not be found. But they will

maintain the fabric of the world; and in the handy-work of their craft is their prayer.

No one honoured the ritual of the Temple worship, with its prescribed sacrifices, more than the son of Sira: but he knows that material sacrifices can make no atonement for wrong-doing:—

He that sacrificeth of a thing wrongfully gotten, his offering is made in mockery; and the mockeries of wicked men are not well-pleasing. The Most High hath no pleasure in the offerings of the ungodly; neither is he pacified for sins by the multitude of sacrifices. As one that killeth the son before his father's eyes is he that bringeth a sacrifice from the goods of the poor. The bread of the needy is the life of the poor: he that depriveth him thereof is a man of blood. As one that slayeth his neighbour is he that taketh away his living; and as a shedder of blood is he that depriveth a hireling of his hire.

One building, and another pulling down, what profit have they had but toil? One praying, and another cursing, whose voice will the Lord listen to? He that washeth himself after touching a dead body, and toucheth it again, what profit hath he in his washing? Even so a man fasting for his sins, and going again, and doing the same; who will listen to his prayer? And what profit hath he in his humiliation?

He that keepeth the law multiplieth offerings; he that taketh heed to the commandments sacrificeth

a peace offering. He that requiteth a good turn offereth fine flour; and he that giveth alms sacrificeth a thank offering.

It is important to realise what is meant by "the law" in such passages. The Hebrew word is *Torah*; and the word "law"—which inevitably suggests rules, regulations, commandments—is not a true rendering of it. It means teaching or instruction of any kind. The Book of Jonah is *Torah* whose meaning appears in its concluding chapter—the lesson of toleration, repentance, mercy; the story of Abraham's preparation to sacrifice his son is *Torah* of how religion outgrew the primitive horrors of human sacrifice; the Ten Commandments are *Torah*. The word was specially applied to the teaching of the five books bearing the name of Moses.

We observed, above, that almost every conceivable situation in life is dealt with by the writer; but our space admits only a few illustrations out of many which might be given. Here is a striking passage on *true and false shame* :—

Observe the opportunity, and beware of evil; and be not ashamed concerning thy soul. For there is a shame that bringeth sin; and there is a shame that is glory and grace. Accept not the person of any against thy soul; and reverence no man unto thy falling. Refrain not speech, when it tendeth to safety; and hide not thy wisdom for the sake of fair-seeming. For by speech wisdom shall be known; and instruction by the word of the tongue. Speak not against the truth; and be abashed for thine ignorance. Be not ashamed to make confession of thy sins; and force not the current of the river. Lay not thyself down for a fool to tread upon; and accept not the person of one that is mighty. Strive for the truth unto death, and the Lord God shall fight for thee.

But when, near the end of his book, he comes to set forth things of which we may be rightly and things of which we may be wrongly ashamed—in his forty-first and forty-second chapters—he mingles together morality and behaviour, duty and worldly prudence: and in his remarks about “servants”—that is, slaves—and children, he is no worse, if no better, than the average man of his time. Other good examples of his interest in matters of worldly wisdom will be found in his eighth chapter—cautions against quarrelling with the mighty, the rich, and

the loud-mouthed; against consorting with sinners; against lending, and becoming surety; against having dealings with dangerous men; and so forth: and in his thirty-first chapter, concerning behaviour at meals, manners at table, moderation in eating.

The fact is that, in his time, *manners* and *morals* were not strictly marked off from each other. We may, however, with Dr. C. G. Montefiore, "venture to doubt whether a too absolute separation between manners and morals is of advantage to either." He reminds us of "that fine old English proverb which, through William of Wykeham their founder, has become the motto of his great school at Winchester and his great college at Oxford (New College)" — "manners maketh man."

He has a good deal to say about the *discipline of the tongue*.

For example:—

Hear ye, my children, the discipline of the mouth; and he that keepeth it shall not be taken. The sinner shall be overtaken in his lips; and the reviler and the proud man shall stumble therein. Accustom not thy mouth to an oath; and be not accustomed to the

naming of the Holy One. For as a servant that is continually scourged shall not lack a bruise, so he also that sweareth and nameth God continually shall not be cleansed from sin.

Curse the whisperer and double-tongued : for he hath destroyed many that were at peace. A third person's tongue hath shaken many, and dispersed them from nation to nation ; and it hath pulled down strong cities, and overthrown the houses of great men. A third person's tongue hath cast out brave women, and deprived them of their labours. He that hearkeneth unto it shall not find rest, nor shall he dwell quietly. The stroke of a whip maketh a mark in the flesh ; but the stroke of a tongue will break bones.

Yet he knows the value of speaking out when speaking is difficult, and that a slip of the tongue does not always come from the heart :—

Reprove a friend ; it may be he did it not : and if he did something, that he may do it no more. Reprove thy neighbour ; it may be he said it not : and if he hath said it, that he may not say it again. Reprove a friend ; for many times there is slander : and trust not every word. There is one that slippeth, and not from the heart : and who is he that hath not sinned with his tongue ?

It is specially interesting to hear what a man like the son of Sira has to say about *forgiveness and generosity*. He seems to

understand "forgiveness" chiefly in the negative way of not *cherishing or cultivating* anger or resentment:—

Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he hath done thee; and then thy sins shall be pardoned when thou prayest. Man cherisheth anger against man; and doth he seek healing from the Lord? Upon a man like himself he hath no mercy; and doth he make supplication for his own sins? He being himself flesh nourisheth wrath: who shall make atonement for his sins? Remember thy last end, and cease from enmity: remember corruption and death, and abide in the commandments. Remember the commandments, and be not wroth with thy neighbour; and remember the covenant of the Highest, and wink at (*i.e.* make allowance for) ignorance.

Abstain from strife, and thou shalt diminish thy sins: for a passionate man will kindle strife; and a man that is a sinner will trouble friends, and will make debate among them that be at peace.

Let us hear him again on the value of *friendship* and the things which may destroy it:—

A faithful friend is a strong defence; and he that hath found him hath found a treasure. There is nothing that can be taken in exchange for a faithful friend; and his excellency is beyond price. A faithful friend is a medicine of life; and they that fear the Lord shall find him. He that feareth the Lord

directeth his friendship aright; for as he is, so is his neighbour also.

If thou hast drawn a sword against a friend, despair not; for there may be a returning. If thou hast opened thy mouth against a friend, fear not; for there may be a reconciling; except it be for upbraiding, and arrogance, and disclosing of a secret, and a treacherous blow: for these things every friend will flee.

He that revealeth secrets destroyeth credit, and shall not find a friend to his mind. Love a friend, and keep faith with him: but if thou reveal his secrets, thou shalt not pursue after him: for as a man hath destroyed his enemy, so hast thou destroyed the friendship of thy neighbour. And as a bird which thou hast loosed out of thy hand, so hast thou let thy neighbour go, and thou wilt not catch him again: pursue him not, for he is gone far away, and hath escaped as a gazelle out of the snare. For a wound may be bound up, and after reviling there may be a reconcilment; but he that revealeth secrets hath lost hope.

In the last paragraph we should observe that "destroy credit" means "forfeit trust"; and to "reveal secrets" here means not merely to disregard a friend's injunction "don't tell anyone else"; it means *to be untrustworthy*. You cannot make a *friend* of a person whom you cannot trust.

Nothing is better than the wise advice of

a true friend; and yet there are times when a man's own heart—his inward conviction of right and wrong—may be his best counsellor :—

Be continually with a godly man, whom thou shalt have known to be a keeper of the commandments, who in his soul is as thine own soul, and who will grieve with thee, if thou shalt miscarry. And make the counsel of thy heart to stand; for there is none more faithful unto thee than it. For a man's soul is sometime wont to bring him tidings, more than seven watchmen that sit on high on a watch-tower. And above all this intreat the Most High, that he may direct thy way in truth. Let reason be the beginning of every work, and let counsel go before every action.

The son of Sira feels keenly the disabilities of the poor and needy. Here are some typical sayings about *charity and generosity* :—

My son, deprive not the poor of his living, and make not the needy eyes to wait long. Make not a hungry soul sorrowful; neither provoke a man in his distress. To a heart that is provoked add not more trouble; and defer not to give to him that is in need. Reject not a suppliant in his affliction; and turn not away thy face from a poor man.

A rich man toleth in gathering money together, and when he resteth, he is filled with his good things.

A poor man toileth in lack of substance; and when he resteth, he becometh needy.

And he understands what a modern poet expressed by saying that "the gift without the giver is bare":—

My son, to thy good deeds add no blemish; and no grief of words in any of thy giving. Shall not the dew assuage the scorching heat! So is a word better than a gift. Lo, is not a word better than a gift! And both are with a gracious man.

On the other hand, he urges *contentment* "with much or with little":—

The chief thing for life is water, and bread, and a garment, and a house to cover himself. Better is the life of a poor man under a shelter of logs, than sumptuous fare in another man's house.

Better is a poor man, being sound and strong of constitution, than a rich man who is plagued in his body. Health and a good constitution are better than all gold; and a strong body than wealth without measure. There is no riches better than health of body; and there is no gladness above the joy of the heart.

There is a prosperity that a man findeth in misfortunes; and there is a gain that turneth to loss. There is a gift that shall not profit thee; and there is a gift whose recompense is double. There is an abasement because of glory; and there is that hath lifted up his head from low estate. There is that buyeth much for little, and payeth for it again sevenfold.

healing. Some of the sayings appear to be directed against persons who saw in the physician a man counteracting the designs of God—just as, two thousand years afterwards, some of the Scottish clergy denounced the use of *anæsthetics* as an interference with the designs of God :—

My son, in thy sickness be not negligent ; but pray unto the Lord, and he shall heal thee. Put away wrong doing, and order thine hands aright, and cleanse thy heart from all manner of sin. Give a sweet savour, and a memorial of fine flour ; and make fat thine offering, as one that is not. Then give place to the physician, for verily the Lord hath created him ; and let him not go from thee, for thou hast need of him. There is a time when in their very hands is the issue for good. For they also shall beseech the Lord, that he may prosper them in giving relief and in healing for the maintenance of life.

It is clear from his book that the son of Sira was a townsman, born and bred in the city, and keenly interested in the variety of its life, with its divers professions, crafts, and occupations. But his forty-third chapter shows how the beauties and wonders of Nature make their appeal to him, and “ declare the glory of God.” And he knows

that even all these wonders are not to be compared to the great things which are yet to be revealed :—

We may say many things, yet shall we not attain; and the sum of our words is, He is all. How shall we have strength to glorify him? For he is himself the great one above all his works. The Lord is terrible and exceeding great; and marvellous is his power. When ye glorify the Lord, exalt him as much as ye can; for even yet will he exceed: and when ye exalt him, put forth your full strength: be not weary; for ye will never attain. Who hath seen him, that he may declare him? And who shall magnify him as he is? Many things are hidden greater than these; for we have seen but a few of his works.

And if the works of Nature thus reveal the immeasurable wisdom of the Creator, how much more the greatness of man? This brings us to the splendid passage in his forty-fourth chapter, with its triumphant close—familiar in many schools and colleges where a Founders' Day commemoration is observed, but bearing its message of courage and cheer to all :—

Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us. The Lord manifested in them great glory, even his mighty power from the beginning.

Such as did bear rule in their kingdoms, and were men renowned for their power, giving counsel by their understanding, such as have brought tidings in prophecies : leaders of the people by their counsels, and by their understanding men of learning for the people ; wise were their words in their instruction : such as sought out musical tunes, and set forth verses in writing : rich men furnished with ability, living peaceably in their habitations : all these were honoured in their generations, and were a glory in their days. there be of them, that have left a name behind them, to declare their praises. And some there be, which have no memorial ; who are perished as though they had not been, and are become as though they had not been born ; and their children after them. But these were men of mercy, whose righteous deeds have not been forgotten. With their seed shall remain continually a good inheritance ; their children are within the covenants. Their seed standeth fast, and their children for their sakes. Their seed shall remain for ever, and their glory shall not be blotted out. Their bodies were buried in peace, and their name liveth to all generations.

This book, in its Greek version, became extraordinarily popular both among Jews and Christians, and was read in church as a source of instruction. For this reason it came to be called " Ecclesiasticus " or " The Church Book."

Before we leave the son of Sira we must

try to make clear to our own minds what he means by Wisdom. He speaks of Wisdom as a person—"she" does this or that. We must understand that this language is poetic or metaphorical (as it is in the Book of Proverbs). He did not believe, and did not intend his readers to believe, that there existed a separate half-divine power or spirit or being called Wisdom. Wisdom is a divine quality, an attribute of God.

Wisdom is also a human quality, an attribute of human conduct. Among men, goodness is wisdom. What does this mean? Not merely that goodness is the prudent course; but that it is man's real well-being—in a deep sense, his life, his soul's salvation (if "salvation" means being in a condition of "health"). And wickedness is folly, not merely because, in the long run, it does not "pay"; it is folly because it leads to every sort of vital ruin. So that "life," as these teachers see it, is not merely length of days: it is good life; and "death" is the opposite and negation of all this; and they all insist that the good life brings

happiness—lasting happiness, as distinguished from passing pleasures.

In our language, wisdom implies knowledge, understanding; and so it does in the teachings of these ancient sages. For them, real goodness is wise, understanding goodness; real love is wise, understanding love. It has been well said that "many of the children of light would be all the better off for some of that wisdom."

The Wisdom of the son of Sira was followed at an interval of about a hundred years by the "Wisdom of Solomon." This is the work of an Alexandrian teacher whose beliefs have been deeply influenced by Greek thought, but by Greek thought in no degenerate form. The book is a signal instance of the custom prevalent in the two centuries before Christ, both in the Jewish and Gentile worlds, of placing modern untried writings under the shelter of some venerable authority. No name appeared so suitable for this purpose as that of the monarch who in the traditions of his people became, in after years, the ideal embodiment

of Wisdom. To call this "deception" or "forgery" is absurd. Modern literary standards have no application here. What the author—who conceals his own name—tried to do was to express the mind of Solomon (as far as he could grasp it) in relation to the experiences and events of his own time. Part of his purpose is to bring before us a Solomon very different from the one who speaks in the Book called "Ecclesiastes" in our Old Testament:—

Love righteousness, ye that be judges of the earth, think ye of the Lord with a good mind, and in singleness of heart seek ye him; because he is found of them that tempt him not, and is manifested to them that do not distrust him. For crooked thoughts separate from God; and the supreme Power, when it is brought to the proof, putteth to confusion the foolish.

Solomon is called from the dead past thus to address the rulers of this world: and the author would have in mind his own actual experience of the corrupt governments of Syria and of Egypt. But of those who have large power much is expected:—

Hear therefore, ye kings, and understand; learn, ye judges of the ends of the earth: give ear, ye that

have dominion over much people, and make your boast in multitudes of nations. Because your dominion was given you from the Lord, and your sovereignty from the Most High; who shall search out your works, and shall make inquisition of your counsels; because being officers of his kingdom ye did not judge aright, neither kept ye law, nor walked after the counsel of God. Awfully and swiftly shall he come upon you; because a stern judgement befalleth them that be in high place; for the man of low estate may be pardoned in mercy, but mighty men shall be searched out mightily. For the Sovereign Lord of all will not refrain himself for any man's person, neither will he reverence greatness; because it is he that made both small and great, and alike he taketh thought for all; but strict is the scrutiny that cometh upon the powerful. Unto you therefore, O princes, are my words, that ye may learn wisdom and fall not from the right way. For they that have kept holily the things that are holy shall themselves be hallowed.

Wisdom, in this book, is not, as in Ecclesiasticus, only a quality of God. Wisdom is now an actual influence or even a power going forth from God, the sustainer of all the order and beauty of the world, and in man the source alike of goodness and of knowledge:—

For there is in her a spirit quick of understanding, holy, alone in kind, manifold, freely moving, clear in

utterance, unpolluted, unharmed, loving what is good, keen, unhindered, beneficent, loving toward man, stedfast, sure, free from care, all-powerful, all-surveying, and penetrating through all spirits that are quick of understanding, pure, most subtil: for wisdom is more mobile than any motion; yea, she pervadeth and penetrateth all things by reason of her pureness.

For she is a breath of the power of God, and a clear effluence of the glory of the Almighty; therefore can nothing defiled find entrance into her. For she is an effulgence from everlasting light, and an unspotted mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness. And she, being one, hath power to do all things; and remaining in herself, reneweth all things: and from generation to generation passing into holy souls she maketh men friends of God and prophets. For nothing doth God love save him that dwelleth with wisdom.

For she is fairer than the sun, and above all the constellation of the stars: being compared with light, she is found to be before it; for to the light of day succeedeth night, but against wisdom evil doth not prevail; but she reacheth from one end of the world to the other with full strength, and ordereth all things graciously.

The arguments of practical materialism are then set forth:—

For they said within themselves, reasoning not aright, short and sorrowful is our life; and there is no healing when a man cometh to his end, and none

was ever known that gave release from Hades. Because by mere chance were we born, and hereafter we shall be as though we had never been; because the breath in our nostrils is smoke, and while our heart beateth reason is a spark, which being extinguished, the body shall be turned into ashes, and the spirit shall be dispersed as thin air; and our name shall be forgotten in time, and no man shall remember our works; and our life shall pass away as the traces of a cloud, and shall be scattered as is a mist, when it is chased by the beams of the sun, and overcome by the heat thereof. For our allotted time is the passing of a shadow, and our end retreateth not; because it is fast sealed, and none turneth it back. Come therefore and let us enjoy the good things that now are; and let us use the creation with all our soul as youth's possession. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and perfumes; and let no flower of spring pass us by; let us crown ourselves with rosebuds, before they be withered; let none of us go without his share in our proud revelry: everywhere let us leave tokens of our mirth: because this is our portion, and our lot is this.

Sensuality transforms itself into savage hatred of good:—

Let us oppress the righteous poor; let us not spare the widow, nor reverence the hairs of the old man gray for length of years. But let our strength be to us a law of righteousness; for that which is weak is found to be of no service. But let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is of disservice to us, and

is contrary to our works, and upbraideth us with sins against the law, and layeth to our charge sins against our discipline. He professeth to have knowledge of God, and nameth himself servant of the Lord. He became to us a reproof of our thoughts. He is grievous unto us even to behold, because his life is unlike other men's, and his paths are of strange fashion. We were accounted of him as base metal, and he abstaineth from our ways as from uncleannesses. The latter end of the righteous he calleth happy; and he vaunteth that God is his father. Let us see if his words be true, and let us try what shall befall in the ending of his life. For if the righteous man is God's son, he will uphold him, and he will deliver him out of the hand of his adversaries. With outrage and torture let us put him to the test, that we may learn his gentleness, and may prove his patience under wrong. Let us condemn him to a shameful death; for he shall be visited according to his words.

And then in a striking passage he contrasts, with such utterances as these, the experience of the wicked after death:—

This was he whom aforetime we had in derision, and made a parable of reproach: we fools accounted his life madness, and his end without honour: how was he numbered among sons of God? And how is his lot among saints? Verily we went astray from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness shined not for us, and the sun rose not for us. We took our fill of the paths of lawlessness and destruction, and we

journeyed through trackless deserts, but the way of the Lord we knew not.

What did our arrogance profit us? And what good have riches and vaunting brought us? Those things all passed away as a shadow, and as a message that runneth by: as a ship passing through the billowy water, whereof, when it is gone by, there is no trace to be found, neither pathway of its keel in the billows: or as when a bird flieth through the air, no token of her passage is found, but the light wind, lashed with the stroke of her pinions, and rent asunder with the violent rush of the moving wings, is passed through, and afterwards no sign of her coming is found therein: or as when an arrow is shot at a mark, the air disparted closeth up again immediately, so that men know not where it passed through: so we also, as soon as we were born, ceased to be; and of virtue we had no sign to shew, but in our wickedness we were utterly consumed.

And what of the righteous, after death? Here is his answer:—

The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died; and their departure was accounted to be their hurt, and their journeying away from us to be their ruin: but they are in peace. For even if in the sight of men they be punished, their hope is full of immortality; and having borne a little chastening, they shall receive great good; because God made trial of them, and found them worthy of himself: as gold in the furnace he proved them.

And in the time of their visitation they shall shine forth, and as sparks among stubble they shall run to and fro. They shall judge nations, and have dominion over peoples; and the Lord shall reign over them for evermore. They that trust on him shall understand truth, and the faithful shall abide with him in love; because grace and mercy are to his chosen.

A righteous man, though he die before his time, shall be at rest. (For honourable old age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor is its measure given by number of years: but understanding is gray hairs unto men, and an unspotted life is ripe old age.) Being made perfect in a little while, he fulfilled long years; for his soul was pleasing unto the Lord.

In the memory of virtue is immortality: because it is recognised both before God and before men. When it is present, men imitate it; and they long after it when it is departed: and throughout all time it marcheth crowned in triumph, victorious in the strife for the prizes that are undefiled.

The book has two well-marked divisions, which appear to have been written at different times. The first part (chapters one to ten) is believed by some biblical scholars to have been written during the author's maturer years, and the second part (chapters eleven to end) during his youth. In this second part he sets forth what he believed to be the glories of Divine Wisdom

as shown in the deliverance of the Israelites from captivity and their settlement in the Promised Land. He reveals a passionate scorn and hatred not only of idolatry but of idolaters; and at this point the charity and broadmindedness of his doctrine of Wisdom breaks down.

On the one hand, the mercy of God is glorified in noble words:—

But thou hast mercy on all men, because thou hast power to do all things, and thou overlookest the sins of men to the end they may repent. For thou lovest all things that are, and abhorrest none of the things which thou didst make; for never wouldest thou have formed anything if thou didst hate it. And how would anything have endured, except thou hadst willed it? Or that which was not called by thee, how would it have been preserved? But thou sparest all things, because they are thine, O Sovereign Lord, thou lover of men's lives; for thine incorruptible spirit is in all things. Wherefore thou convictest by little and little them that fall from the right way, and, putting them in remembrance by the very things wherein they sin, dost thou admonish them, that escaping from their wickedness they may believe on thee, O Lord.

On the other hand, we are told that God left the heathen to their own devices, or destroyed them only by degrees:—

Not that thou wast unable to subdue the ungodly under the hand of the righteous in battle, or by terrible beasts or by one stern word to make away with them at once; but judging them by little and little thou gavest them a place of repentance, not being ignorant that their nature by birth was evil, and their wickedness inborn, and that their manner of thought would in no wise ever be changed, for they were a seed accursed from the beginning.

And his verdict on the heathen is thus summed up:—

While therefore thou dost chasten us, thou scourgest our enemies ten thousand times more, to the intent that we may ponder thy goodness when we judge, and when we are judged may look for mercy.

We must remember, however, that the Jews, especially those living outside Palestine, had personal knowledge of the follies of heathen worship as well as of the frequently cruel and immoral rites which were associated with it.

He was acquainted with two kinds of idolatry. Men worship the powers of Nature; and they worship objects made by their own hands—"idols" in the ordinary meaning of the word. He pictures the making of an idol out of *refuse*:—

Yea and if some woodcutter, having sawn down a tree that is easily moved, skilfully strippeth away all its bark, and fashioning it in comely form maketh a vessel useful for the service of life; and burning the refuse of his handywork to dress his food, eateth his fill; and taking the very refuse thereof which served to no use, a crooked piece of wood and full of knots, carveth it with the diligence of his idleness, and shapeth it by the skill of his indolence; then he giveth it the semblance of the image of a man, or maketh it like some paltry animal, smearing it with vermilion, and with paint colouring it red, and smearing over every stain that is therein; and having made for it a chamber worthy of it, he setteth it in a wall, making it fast with iron.

Nature-worship is far less reprehensible and injurious, and is only in part "inexcusable" because it springs from a confusion of the Creator with his works:—

For verily all men by nature were but vain who had no perception of God, and from the good things that are seen they gained not power to know him that is, neither by giving heed to the works did they recognise the artificer; but either fire, or wind, or swift air, or circling stars, or raging water, or luminaries of heaven, they thought to be gods that rule the world. And if it was through delight in their beauty that they took them to be gods, let them know how much better than these is their Sovereign Lord; for the first author of beauty created them; but if it was through astonishment at their power and influence, let them under-

stand from them how much more powerful is he that formed them; for from the greatness of the beauty even of created things in like proportion does man form the image of their first maker. But yet for these men there is but small blame, for they too peradventure do but go astray while they are seeking God and desiring to find him. For living among his works they make diligent search, and they yield themselves up to sight, because the things that they look upon are beautiful. But again even they are not to be excused. For if they had power to know so much, that they should be able to explore the course of things, how is it that they did not sooner find the Sovereign Lord of these his works?

V

FOR FAITH AND FREEDOM

First and Second Books of Maccabees

THE events which now come before us belong to the most stirring and heroic period in Israel's recorded history.

In the year three hundred and thirty-six before Christ, Alexander the Great, then a young man of twenty, succeeded his father, Philip of Macedonia, who a few years previously had made himself master of Greece and was making vast preparations for the invasion of Asia. Alexander at once entered on a career of conquest such as had never been known before. In three years he had subdued Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, and in the course of thirteen years had made himself master of Western Asia as far

as India. The events which followed his death, so far as they relate to the fortunes of the Jews, are told in the First and Second Books of "Maccabees" in our Apocrypha (the origin of the name "Maccabee" is mentioned later in this chapter). The First Book of Maccabees is of great value as a trustworthy history of the Jewish struggle for civil and religious liberty during forty years from the hundred and seventy-fifth to the hundred and thirty-fifth before Christ. It was written about the last-named date, or soon afterwards. The Second Book deals only with the first fifteen years of this period, and was written probably fifty years later. The writer is interested in religion rather than in history, and is fond of introducing miracles and marvels. The Jewish leader is surrounded by angelic champions; sometimes his little band is led by a mystic horseman in white; and in the thick of the fray five splendid horsemen appear suddenly, as if from heaven, as guardians of the five famous brothers. The Second Book was written

much more for religious instruction than for historical knowledge.

The author of the First Book thus summarises the conquests of Alexander :—

He fought many battles, and won many strongholds, and slew the kings of the earth, and went through to the ends of the earth, and took spoils of a multitude of nations. And the earth was quiet before him, and he was exalted, and his heart was lifted up, and he gathered together an exceeding strong host, and ruled over countries and nations and principalities, and they became tributary unto him. And after these things he fell sick, and perceived that he should die, and he called his servants which were honourable and had been brought up with him from his youth, and he divided unto them his kingdom while he was yet alive.

The Jews welcomed Alexander's government, for it was part of his policy to respect the various religions of the conquered lands.

After Alexander's death, in the year three hundred and twenty-three before Christ, his empire was broken up. The writer is mistaken in saying that he divided it among his generals himself. The cynical remark which he is said to have made on his death-bed represents what actually

happened: "There will be fine funeral games for me"; by which he meant the struggles among his generals and others for the fragments of his huge and unwieldy empire. Eventually it was carved into a number of kingdoms, among which Palestine was fought over and fought for by Syria and Egypt. Whichever side won, the Jews remained equally dependent; and there was party strife in Jerusalem among those favouring Syrian dominion, as against Egyptian, or the reverse. It was through Syria that the influence of Greek civilisation flowed into Palestine. It was disliked and feared by some, and welcomed by others who liked Greek culture and Greek ways: and to this party some of the priestly cast belonged.

Early in the second century before Christ, Antiochus of Syria captured Jerusalem and annexed Judæa; and his grandson Antiochus called "Epiphanes" ("Illustrious"), tried to weld his ill-compacted kingdom together by setting up what we may call a State Church—an imperial worship which

was to embrace all his dominions. This Antiochus was a romantic believer in the old gods of Greece; eccentric in character, so much that some called him *Epimanes* ("madman") instead of *Epiphanes*; not without energy and ability, but capable of plunging his kingdom into ruin through yielding policy to passion.

In one small corner of his dominions was the home of a race of stubborn adherents of an ancient faith which would not and could not fit into his scheme for an Imperial Church. After a scheme of conquest in Egypt, at first successful, had been ignominiously foiled by the intervention of Rome, Antiochus turned his attention to Palestine, and in his wrath and waywardness sent orders for the thorough extirpation of Judaism. Two years before, he had entered Jerusalem, killed many of the inhabitants, and robbed the Temple of most of its treasures; and now, Jerusalem was partly destroyed and rebuilt as a Greek city, and the policy of "thorough" was pursued:—

The king sent letters by the hand of messengers unto Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, that they should follow laws strange to the land, and should forbid whole burnt offerings and sacrifice and drink offerings in the sanctuary; and should profane the sabbaths and feasts, and pollute the sanctuary and them that were holy; that they should build altars, and temples, and shrines for idols, and should sacrifice swine's flesh and unclean beasts: and that they should leave their sons uncircumcised, that they should make their souls abominable with all manner of uncleanness and profanation; so that they might forget the law, and change all the ordinances. And whosoever shall not do according to the word of the king, he shall die. According to all these words wrote he to his whole kingdom; and he appointed overseers over all the people, and he commanded the cities of Judah to sacrifice, city by city. And from the people were gathered together unto them many, every one that had forsaken the law; and they did evil things in the land; and they made Israel to hide themselves in every place of refuge which they had.

And they rent in pieces the books of the law which they found, and set them on fire. And wheresoever was found with any a book of the covenant, and if any consented to the law, the king's sentence delivered him to death. Thus did they in their might unto Israel, to those that were found month by month in the cities. And on the five and twentieth day of the month they sacrificed upon the idol altar which was upon the altar of God.

And many in Israel were fully resolved and con-

firmed in themselves not to eat unclean things. And they chose to die, that they might not be defiled with the meats, and that they might not profane the holy covenant : and they died.

Thus a systematic persecution was organised. Dr. C. G. Montefiore has reminded us that under such circumstances the smallest act of ritual acquires a peculiar and symbolic power. The command to eat " swine's flesh " was not simply to take one kind of food instead of another ; it meant, and was intended to mean, a renunciation of the whole *Torah*, the life and law and covenant, of their Fathers.

The author of the Second Book tells two grim tales of the martyrdoms of this time of terror. These were traditions, told in after years with pride, of men and women who died thus for their ancestral faith.

Eleazar, one of the principal scribes, a man of ninety years, was compelled to open his mouth to eat forbidden food, and spat it forth :—

But they that had the charge of that forbidden sacrificial feast took the man aside, for the acquaint-

ance which of old times they had with him, and privately besought him to bring flesh of his own providing, such as was befitting for him to use, and to make as if he did eat of the flesh from the sacrifice, as had been commanded by the king; that by so doing he might be delivered from death, and for his ancient friendship with them might be treated kindly.

But he, having formed a high resolve, and one that became his years, and the dignity of old age, and the gray hairs which he had reached with honour, and his excellent education from a child, or rather that became the holy laws of God's ordaining, declared his mind accordingly, bidding them quickly send him unto Hades. For it becometh not our years to dissemble, said he, that through this many of the young should suppose that Eleazar, the man of fourscore years and ten, had gone over unto an alien religion; and so they, by reason of my dissimulation, and for the sake of this brief and momentary life, should be led astray because of me, and thus I get to myself a pollution and a stain of mine old age. For even if for the present time I shall remove from me the punishment of men, yet shall I not escape the hands of the Almighty, either living or dead. Wherefore, by manfully parting with my life now, I will shew myself worthy of mine old age, and leave behind a noble ensample to the young to die willingly and nobly a glorious death for the reverend and holy laws. And when he had said these words, he went straightway to the instrument of torture.

And when they changed the good will they bare him a little before into ill will, because these words of his were, as they thought, sheer madness, and when he

was at the point to die with the stripes, he groaned aloud and said, To the Lord, that hath the holy knowledge, it is manifest that, whereas I might have been delivered from death, I endure sore pains in my body by being scourged; but in soul I gladly suffer these things for my fear of him. So this man also died after this manner, leaving his death for an ensample of nobleness and a memorial of virtue, not only to the young but also to the great body of his nation.

The second tale is that of seven brothers who, one after the other, bore fearful torments of rack, knife, scourge, and flame, rather than renounce the Law, while their mother encouraged them to endure: "and last of all, after her sons, the mother died." The story became famous among Jews and Christians alike; but the most remarkable feature of it has not often been noticed. These young men believe that their sufferings are their share of the expiation due for the sins of their people. Not that they, being innocent, are simply suffering instead of others who are guilty; but they feel that the race and nation of Israel are as it were one living being; and the last of the brothers thus defies the tyrant:—

But thou, O unholy man and of all most vile, be not vainly lifted up in thy wild pride with uncertain hopes, raising thy hand against the heavenly children; for not yet hast thou escaped the judgement of the Almighty God that seeth all things. For these our brethren, having endured a short pain that bringeth everlasting life, have now died under God's covenant; but thou, through the judgement of God, shalt receive in just measure the penalties of thine arrogancy. But I, as my brethren, give up both body and soul for the laws of our fathers, calling upon God that he may speedily become gracious to the nation; and that thou amidst trials and plagues mayest confess that he alone is God; and that in me and my brethren thou mayest stay the wrath of the Almighty, which hath been justly brought upon our whole race.

But Antiochus had overreached himself; he had pushed matters to that extreme at which the most drastic coercion breaks down.

There lived at a village called Modin an aged and honourable priest named Mattathias, with his five sons, John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar, and Jonathan. And they saw the things that were being done in Jerusalem and Judæa, and the father lifted up his voice:—

Woe is me! wherefore was I born to see the destruction of my people, and the destruction of the holy

city, and to dwell there, when it was given unto the hand of the enemy, the sanctuary into the hands of aliens? Her temple is become as a man that was glorious¹: her vessels of glory are carried away into captivity, her infants are slain in her streets, her young men with the sword of the enemy. What nation hath not inherited her palaces, and gotten possession of her spoils? her adorning is all taken away; instead of a free woman she is become a bond woman: and, behold, our holy things and our beauty and our glory are laid waste, and the Gentiles have profaned them. Wherefore should we live any longer?

And when the king's officers came to Modin to enforce the heathen sacrifice, Mattathias slew a renegade Jew, struck down the royal commissioner, and with his five sons fled to the mountains, crying out, "Whosoever is zealous for the Law, and maintaineth the covenant, let him come forth after me." This was the signal of revolt. The Maccabæan fight for faith and freedom had begun. The handful of brave men drew others after them, and the bands went through the country destroying heathen altars, reviving Jewish rites, and reopening synagogues. A guerilla warfare

¹ "Was glorious" and is now disgraced.

began, and the king's soldiers could not exterminate the insurgents in their rocky strongholds.

On one occasion a company of about a thousand faithful Jews were traced and attacked on the Sabbath in the expectation that they would not resist:—

They set the battle in array against them on the sabbath day. And they said unto them, Thus far. Come forth, and do according to the word of the king, and ye shall live. And they said, We will not come forth, neither will we do the word of the king, to profane the sabbath day. And they hastened to give them battle. And they answered them not, neither cast they a stone at them, nor stopped up the secret places, saying, Let us die all in our innocency: heaven and earth witness over us, that ye put us to death without trial. And they rose up against them in battle on the sabbath, and they died, they and their wives and their children, to the number of a thousand souls.

As a matter of fact, there is no written command, and no trace of any oral tradition, forbidding the Jews to defend their lives even on their Seventh Day. Nevertheless the author of the Second Book of Maccabees was evidently prepared to defend

this extreme of scrupulosity (the Philip referred to in this extract is described as being appointed by Antiochus Governor of Jerusalem, and as being "in character more barbarous than him that set him there") :—

And others, that had run together into caves near by to keep the sabbath day secretly, being betrayed to Philip, were all burnt together, because they scrupled to defend themselves, from regard to the honour of that most solemn day.

Mattathias and his friends, however, took an entirely different view :—

If we all do as our brethren have done, and fight not against the Gentiles for our lives and our ordinances, they will now quickly destroy us from off the earth. And they took counsel on that day, saying, Whosoever shall come against us to battle on the sabbath day, let us fight against him, and we shall in no wise all die, as our brethren died in the secret places.

Mattathias, unable to bear the weight of age and anxiety, soon died; and his last words and charge to his sons are thus described :—

Now have pride and rebuke gotten strength, and a season of overthrow, and wrath of indignation. And now, my children, be ye zealous for the law; and give your lives for the covenant of your fathers. And call to remembrance the deeds of our fathers which they did in their generations; and receive great glory and an everlasting name.

And be not afraid of the words of a sinful man; for his glory shall be dung and worms. To-day he shall be lifted up, and to-morrow he shall in no wise be found, because he is returned unto his dust, and his thought is perished. And ye, my children, be strong, and shew yourselves men in behalf of the law; for therein shall ye obtain glory. And, behold, Simon your brother, I know that he is a man of counsel; give ear unto him alway: he shall be a father unto you. And Judas Maccabæus, he hath been strong and mighty from his youth: he shall be your captain, and shall fight the battle of the people. And take ye unto you all the doers of the law, and avenge the wrong of your people.

His son Judas therefore succeeded to the leadership. The origin of the name "Maccabæus" is not quite certain. It has been supposed to be derived from a Hebrew word meaning "hammer," and to signify that Judas was the *hammer* of his foes. However this may be, Judas soon showed himself worthy of his father's choice as a fearless warrior and leader of men; and the name

was applied to all his kinsmen, and sometimes is used to include all who resisted the Syrian tyranny.

Round Judas rallied several thousand men. He easily defeated the first attack made upon his forces; but preparations on a more formidable scale were made to crush him:—

And Seron, the commander of the host of Syria, heard say that Judas had gathered a gathering and a congregation of faithful men with him, and of such as went out to war; and he said, I will make myself a name and get me glory in the kingdom; and I will fight against Judas and them that are with him, that set at nought the word of the king. And there went up with him also a mighty army of the ungodly to help him, to take vengeance on the children of Israel.

And he came near unto the going up of Bethhoron, and Judas went forth to meet him with a small company. But when they saw the army coming to meet them, they said unto Judas, What? shall we be able, being a small company, to fight against so great and strong a multitude? and we for our part are faint, having tasted no food this day. And Judas said, It is an easy thing for many to be shut up in the hands of a few; and with heaven it is all one, to save by many or by few: for victory in battle standeth not in the multitude of a host; but strength is from heaven. They come unto us in fulness of insolence and lawlessness, to destroy us and our wives and our children,

for to spoil us : but we fight for our lives and our laws. And he himself will discomfit them before our face : but as for you, be ye not afraid of them.

And by a sudden and unexpected attack, he scattered the unwieldy and ill-organised army of the enemy, and won a great victory.

Exasperated at these failures, Antiochus commissioned Lysias, "an honourable man, and one of the seed royal" to raise an army sufficient to "root out and destroy the strength of Israel, and the remnant of Jerusalem, and take away their memorial from the place." Terror spread among the Jews, and many fell away. Judas called all the faithful together, and ordered all who were timid and faint-hearted to return to their homes. With the remainder, three thousand strong, he chose a position a few miles from Jerusalem, and on the approach of the Syrian army he veiled a surprise attack by an apparent retreat. Nothing could resist the ardour of the Jewish onslaught, and the Syrians fled in panic.

Lysias had appointed Gorgias, one of the "mighty men of the king's friends," to lead

the campaign against Judas; but after this ignominious defeat, he organised another expedition in the following year, on a vaster scale, taking charge of it himself: "three-score thousand chosen footmen, and five thousand horse." Judas, whose following had now grown to ten thousand, all ready "either to live or to die nobly," met the Syrians at Bethsura, some twenty miles to the south of Jerusalem.

And he saw that the army was strong, and he prayed and said, Blessed art thou, O Saviour of Israel, who didst quell the onset of the mighty man by the hand of thy servant David, and didst deliver the army of the Philistines into the hands of Jonathan the son of Saul, and of his armourbearer: shut up this army in the hand of thy people Israel, and let them be ashamed for their host and their horsemen: give them faintness of heart, and cause the boldness of their strength to melt away, and let them quake at their destruction: cast them down with the sword of them that love thee, and let all that know thy name praise thee with thanksgiving.

And they joined battle; and there fell of the army of Lysias about five thousand men.

Lysias was compelled to retire into Syria with the remnants of his army.

The way now lay open for Judas to Jerusalem. He could not capture its strong citadel, which was still held by a garrison of Syrian soldiers; but on entering the Temple area, he found all in ruins and desolation. And then the warriors who had destroyed three armies, fell on their faces, and wept aloud. They restored all that could be restored, and dedicated the Temple afresh. Thus, in the hundred and sixty-fifth year before Christ, the Temple was purified of its pollution and re-consecrated to the Service of God. Perhaps the famous verses of Psalm cxviii were written in celebration of this event:—

The stone which the builders despised
Is become the head stone of the corner.
This is the Lord's doing;
It is marvellous in our eyes.
This is the day which the Lord hath made:
We will rejoice and be glad in it.
O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good;
For his mercy endureth for ever.

Soon afterwards, religious freedom was granted to the Jews, and no further attempts were made to impose an alien faith upon

them by force. The political confusion of the Syrian Empire almost compelled its rulers to take this course. But the Jews were not content with religious freedom. They struggled for what was impossible of achievement—complete political independence. The end was not long in coming. With a following of eight hundred men Judas was overwhelmed by numbers.

And Judas saw that his army slipped away, and that the battle pressed upon him, and he was sore troubled in heart, for that he had no time to gather them together, and he waxed faint. And he said to them that were left, Let us arise and go up against our adversaries, if peradventure we may be able to fight with them. And they would have dissuaded him, saying, We shall in no wise be able; but let us rather save our lives now: let us return again, we and our brethren, and fight against them: but we are few. And Judas said, Let it not be so that I should do this thing, to flee from them: and if our time is come, let us die manfully for our brethren's sake, and not leave a cause of reproach against our glory.

The eight hundred were not driven from the field. When the sun set they lay dead upon it.

Judas had lifted Judæa out of the dust;

displaying a patriotism, generalship, and heroism of which his race may well be proud, he rendered a yet greater service, for he inspired them with a new sense of the value of their religion.

After the death of Judas, his brother Jonathan was appointed High Priest and political ruler by the Syrian Government; and Jonathan was followed by his brother Simon in the double office :—

And the land had rest all the days of Simon : and he sought the good of his nation ; and his authority and his glory was well-pleasing to them all his days. And amid all his glory he took Joppa for a haven, and made it an entrance for the isles of the sea ; and he enlarged the borders of his nation, and gat possession of the country ; and he gathered together a great number of captives, and gat the dominion of Gazara, and Bethsura, and the citadel, and he took away from it its uncleanness ; and there was none that resisted him. And they tilled their land in peace, and the land gave her increase, and the trees of the plains their fruit. The ancient men sat in the streets, they communed all of them together of good things, and the young men put on glorious and warlike apparel. He provided victuals for the cities, and furnished them with all manner of munition, until the name of his glory was named unto the end of the earth. He made peace in the land, and Israel rejoiced with great

joy : and they sat each man under his vine and his fig tree, and there was none to make them afraid : and there ceased in the land any that fought against them : and the kings were discomfited in those days.¹ And he strengthened all those of his people that were brought low : the law he searched out, and every lawless and wicked person he took away. He glorified the sanctuary, and the vessels of the temple he multiplied.

But Simon was treacherously murdered by his own son-in-law ; and the land was left in a forlorn condition. The rule of the Maccabees became a despotism of the common oriental sort. When they became political rulers instead of religious leaders, their influence for good was on the wane.

One very interesting episode is recorded of Judas before his death. He sent delegates to Rome and made a compact with that great Power, of whose beneficent rule the author of First Maccabees gives a greatly exaggerated account :—

The residue of the kingdoms and of the isles, as many as rose up against them at any time, they destroyed and made them to be their servants ; but

¹ That is to say, in these days the kings of other lands were suffering trouble and defeat.

with their friends and such as relied upon them they kept amity; and they conquered the kingdoms that were nigh and those that were far off, and all that heard of their fame were afraid of them; moreover, whomsoever they will to succour and to make kings, these do they make kings; and whomsoever they will, do they depose; and they are exalted exceedingly: and for all this none of them did ever put on a diadem, neither did they clothe themselves with purple, to be magnified thereby: and how they had made for themselves a senate house, and day by day three hundred and twenty men sat in council, consulting alway for the people, to the end they might be well ordered: and how they commit their government to one man year by year, that he should rule over them, and be lord over all their country, and all are obedient to that one, and there is neither envy nor emulation among them.

The writer of these words did not know that only some fifty years later, a great Roman General would capture Jerusalem and enter the Holiest Place of the Temple; and that a century afterwards another Roman General would destroy Jerusalem and leave the Temple in ruins.

VI

MILITANT NATIONALISM AND PASSIVE RESISTANCE

The Books of Judith and Baruch, The Additions to Esther, and The Song of the Three Holy Children

READERS of the earlier narrative books of our Old Testament—especially those of Joshua, Judges, Samuel—are aware of the fierce spirit of the old Jewish religion, and its attitude to those outside its pale.

Religion and nationalism were united. National hatreds were augmented by religious differences. Some of the great Prophets of the Old Testament saw the rising vision of a world where the religion of Israel would be the religion of all. But there were many periods in Jewish history—long after its earliest days—where the

main desire is that the enemies of Israel should be destroyed. For Israel, there was God's mercy and pity; for the world beyond, there was only His anger and vengeance. The enemies of the nation were the enemies of the nation's religion; and the enemies of the religion were the enemies of God. Read the Song of Deborah in the fifth chapter of the Book of Judges, and consider its reference to Jael:—

Blessed among women shall Jael be.
He asked water, and she gave him milk;
She brought him butter in a lordly dish.
She put her hand to the nail,
And her right hand to the workmen's hammer;
And with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote
through his head

So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord;
But let them that love Him be as the sun when he
goeth forth in his might.

But these national and religious hatreds did not grow spontaneously; they were aroused from without. It is very probable, for example, that the hatred and cruelty which are conspicuous in the Book

of Esther—one of the latest books in our Old Testament—were inspired by the intolerable persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (referred to in our introductory chapter) a few passages are added to Esther, and these are given in the Apocrypha. Their purpose seems to be to supply what later writers felt to be missing in the original work—and especially to teach, frankly and not only by implication, Israel's dependence upon God for deliverance from his enemies. The added passages make no difference to the spirit and aim of the book, which is to glorify the Jews by showing how a plot to massacre them throughout the king's dominions, was defeated by a counter-plot of the king's Jewish wife and her uncle, and how the Jews, instead of being themselves slain, slew many thousands of their foes.

The same spirit flames up many time in the Apocrypha. Even the author of the Book of Wisdom can say, "While

thou dost *chasten* us [Israel], thou *scourgest* our enemies ten thousand times more."

In the Book of Judith we see the passion of religious nationalism, with all its limitations, lifted above mere hatred and mere cruelty. It is a selfless passion—an utter devotion to the one end: "Woe to the nations that rise up against my race!" The story is finely told. It abounds in historical and geographical inconsistencies, but the writer did not mind that. He throws his message into the form of a sacred drama or romance.

The Assyrian king, being engaged in war, called for the assistance of all the nations subject to his rule. Some refused—the Jews among them; and after victory he sent his general Holofernes to punish them. The arrogance of the oriental despot is well portrayed:—

Thus saith the great king, the lord of all the earth, Behold, thou shalt go forth from my presence, and take with thee men that trust in their strength, unto a hundred and twenty thousand footmen; and the number of horses with their riders twelve thousand: and thou shalt go forth against all the west country,

because they disobeyed the commandment of my mouth. And thou shalt declare unto them, that they prepare earth and water; because I will go forth in my wrath against them, and will cover the whole face of the earth with the feet of my host, and I will give them for a spoil unto them: and their slain shall fill their valleys and brooks, and the river shall be filled with their dead, till it overflow: and I will lead them captives to the utmost parts of all the earth. But thou shalt go forth, and take beforehand for me all their coasts; and if they shall yield themselves unto thee, then shalt thou reserve them for me till the day of their reproof. But as for them that are disobedient, thine eye shall not spare; but thou shalt give them up to be slain and to be spoiled in all thy land. For as I live, and by the power of my kingdom, I have spoken, and I will do this with my hand. And thou, moreover, shalt not transgress aught of the commandments of thy lord, but thou shalt surely accomplish them, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt not defer to do them.

Holofernes laid waste the lands of all the nations of Western Asia (the author gives them fictitious names) until at last he came to Judæa. Here Achior, chief of the warriors of Ammon, warned him that the God of the Jews was not like the gods of other nations. But Holofernes and his chief men were enraged:—

And who art thou, Achior, and the hirelings of Ammon, that thou hast prophesied among us as to-day, and hast said, that we should not make war with the race of Israel, because their God will defend them! And who is God but Nebuchadnezzar? He shall send forth his might, and shall destroy them from the face of the earth, and their God shall not deliver them: but we his servants shall smite them as one man; and they shall not sustain the might of our horses.

So he invaded Judæa, and found the fortified city of Bethulia guarding the passes from the hills. He cut off its water supply, and surrounded it. The cisterns failed; and the people called the leaders together:—

God be judge between you and us: because ye have done us great wrong, in that ye have not spoken words of peace with the children of Asshur. And now we have no helper: but God hath sold us into their hands, that we should be laid low before them with thirst and great destruction. And now call them unto you, and deliver up the whole city for a prey to the people of Holofernes, and to all his host. For it is better for us to be made a spoil unto them: for we shall be servants, and our souls shall live, and we shall not see the death of our babes before our eyes, and our wives and our children fainting in death.

The leaders promised that if in five days no relief came, they would surrender. Then Judith heard of this. She was a widow; her husband had died of sunstroke more than three years before:—

And she was of a goodly countenance, and exceeding beautiful to behold; and her husband Manasses had left her gold, and silver, and menservants, and maidservants, and cattle, and lands; and she remained upon them. And there was none that gave her an evil word; for she feared God exceedingly.

And Judith sent for the leaders and charged them:—

O ye rulers of the inhabitants of Bethulia: for your word that ye have spoken before the people this day is not right, and ye have set the oath which ye have pronounced between God and you, and have promised to deliver the city to our enemies, unless within these days the Lord turn to help you. And now who are ye that have tempted God this day, and stand instead of God among the children of men! And now try the Lord Almighty, and ye shall never know anything. For ye shall not find the depth of the heart of man, and ye shall not perceive the things that he thinketh: and how shall ye search out God, which hath made all these things, and know his mind, and comprehend his purpose! Nay, my brethren, provoke not the Lord our God

to anger. For if he be not minded to help us within these five days, he hath power to defend us in such time as he will, or to destroy us before the face of our enemies. But do not ye pledge the counsels of the Lord our God : for God is not as man, that he should be threatened ; neither as the son of man, that he should be turned by intreaty.

Then, calling to mind sin and retribution as it had been known in the story of her own forefathers, she turned to God :—

O God, O my God, hear me also that am a widow. For thou wroughtest the things that were before those things, and those things,¹ and such as ensued after ; and thou didst devise the things which are now, and the things which are to come : and the things which thou didst devise came to pass ; yea, the things which thou didst determine stood before thee, and said, " Lo, we are here " : for all thy ways are prepared, and thy judgement is with foreknowledge. For, behold, the Assyrians are multiplied in their power ; they are exalted with horse and rider ; they have gloried in the strength of their footmen ; they have trusted in shield and spear and bow and sling ; and they know not that thou art the Lord that breaketh the battles : the Lord is thy name. Dash thou down their strength in thy power, and bring down their force in thy wrath : for they have purposed to profane thy sanctuary, and to defile

¹ " Those things," that is to say, the events which she had called to mind.

the tabernacle where thy glorious name resteth, and to cast down with the sword the horn of thine altar. Look upon their pride, and send thy wrath upon their heads: give into my hand, which am a widow, the might that I have conceived. Smite by the deceit of my lips the servant with the prince, and the prince with his servant: break down their stateliness by the hand of a woman. For thy power standeth not in multitude, nor thy might in strong men: but thou art a God of the afflicted, thou art a helper of the oppressed, an upholder of the weak, a protector of the forlorn, a saviour of them that are without hope.

Taking into her confidence only her faithful attendant, who accompanied her, she made her way into the Assyrian camp. There she reported that the people within Bethulia were so hard pressed by hunger and thirst that it would not be necessary for the besiegers to strike a blow. She asked permission to remain in the camp, and to go forth at dawn to perform her offerings to God. Holofernes believed her, and was fascinated by her charms. On the fourth day he gave a great feast in her honour. During the feast he allowed himself to be overcome with drunkenness; and when the other guests had departed, and

she was alone "with Holofernes lying along upon his bed," then :—

Judith, standing by his bed, said in her heart, O Lord God of all power, look in this hour upon the works of my hands for the exaltation of Jerusalem. For now is the time to help thine inheritance, and to do the thing that I have purposed to the destruction of the enemies which are risen up against us. Strengthen me, O Lord God of Israel, this day.

She took his own scimitar and struck off his head. In the early morning she pulled down the "canopy" (the mosquito-net) to cover the corpse, and went forth as usual with her attendant, who carried the general's head concealed in her basket. Escaping to the beleaguered town, she told what had happened, and induced them to go forth and make an attack. The Assyrian army fell into panic, and the town was saved.

In her final thanksgiving Judith loses all thought and feeling for herself, and thinks and feels only for her people united and saved :—

Asshur came out of the mountains from the north,
 He came with ten thousands of his host,
 The multitude whereof stopped the torrents,
 And their horsemen covered the hills.
 He said that he would burn up my borders,
 And kill my young men with the sword,
 And throw my sucking children to the ground,
 And give mine infants for a prey,
 And make my virgins a spoil.
 The Almighty Lord brought them to nought by the
 hand of a woman.
 For their mighty one did not fall by young men,
 Neither did sons of the Titans smite him,
 Nor did high giants set upon him :
 But Judith the daughter of Merari made him weak
 with the beauty of her countenance.
 For she put off the apparel of her widowhood
 For the exaltation of those that were distressed in
 Israel,
 She anointed her face with ointment,
 And bound her hair in a tire,
 And took a linen garment to deceive him.
 Her sandal ravished his eye,
 And her beauty took his soul prisoner :
 The scimitar passed through his neck.

I will sing unto my God a new song :
 O Lord, thou art great and glorious,
 Marvellous in strength, invincible.
 Let all thy creation serve thee :
 For thou spakest, and they were made,
 Thou didst send forth thy spirit, and it builded
 them,

And there is none that shall resist thy voice.
For the mountains shall be moved from their founda-
tions with the waters,
And the rocks shall melt as wax at thy presence :
But thou art yet merciful to them that fear thee.
For all sacrifice is little for a sweet savour,
And very little for a whole burnt offering to thee :
But he that feareth the Lord is great continually.
Woe to the nations that rise up against my race :
The Lord Almighty will take vengeance of them in
the day of judgement.

It is strange to hear her appealing to the "fearless fear" of God which is the beginning of wisdom and better than all ritual and ceremony, and almost in the same breath exulting in the fierce nationalism which sees in the enemies of the race the enemies of God.

In complete contrast to the mood thus expressed, we have the attitude of "passive resistance," with the watchword "Violence is vain." This also finds recognition here and there in the Apocrypha—quite definitely in Second Maccabees, as where the writer dwells on the patience and faith of the martyrs, and holds up to honour the example of the Sabbatarians who would

be slaughtered rather than raise a hand to defend themselves on their sacred Seventh Day.

It shows itself in a determination to abide by conscience and conviction, with a willingness to accept the consequences, whatever they may be :—

If our God whom we serve be able to deliver us, he will deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and out of thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

It shows itself again in the conviction that the way to gain God's help against evil men is not to resist them or fight against them but to do God's will :—

He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God!

This extract is from a splendid fragment which appears in our Old Testament in the sixth chapter of the Book of Micah. We shall return to it soon. The other extract is from the narrative of the three young

Israelites of whom we read in the first and third chapters of the Book of Daniel. At first they were given Babylonian names and raised to honour for their ability and wisdom, but soon afterwards were sentenced to the "burning fiery furnace" for their defiance of the king's idolatrous decree. In the Greek Old Testament an addition is made to the third chapter: a Prayer of Azariah, one of the "Three Holy Children," in the midst of the fiery furnace, and the "Song of the Three Children," a stirring psalm of praise, well known from its inclusion among the morning canticles in the Anglican Prayer-book. The Prayer belongs to a time of great suffering and distress—probably the "fiery furnace" of the Syrian persecution:—

For we, O Lord, are become less than any nation, and be kept under this day in all the world because of our sins. Neither is there at this time prince, or prophet, or leader, or burnt offering, or sacrifice, or oblation, or incense, or place to offer before thee, and to find mercy. Nevertheless in a contrite heart and a humble spirit let us be accepted; so let our sacrifice be in thy sight this day, and grant that we

may wholly go after thee, for they shall not be ashamed that put their trust in thee.

The Song, on the other hand, belongs to a time of deliverance and joy; and we believe it was intended to be a great declaration against the popular heathenism of those days. Instead of the swarms of gods, great and small, haunting everything in heaven and earth, the Song tells of all the powers of the universe, above and below, uniting in one chorus of praise to the one Creator and Saviour of all. The angel choirs; the powers of the heavens above; sun, moon, and stars; showers and dew, winds, lightnings, and clouds; light and darkness, cold and heat, frost and snow; the earth herself, with her mountains and hills, fountains, rivers, and seas, and all their life and growth, with all that move in the waters and the air, with all beasts and cattle; and then:—

O ye children of men, bless ye the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O let Israel bless the Lord: praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye priests of the Lord : bless ye the Lord :
praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye servants of the Lord, bless ye the Lord :
praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye spirits and souls of the righteous, bless ye the
Lord : praise and exalt him above all for ever.

O ye that are holy and humble of heart, bless ye
the Lord : praise and exalt him above all for ever.

Turn back now to the thought suggested
in our extract from Micah. It pervades
the small group of writings joined together
in the Apocrypha under the name of Baruch.
They are of very uncertain date, and are
connected only by a certain resemblance of
spirit. This is typical :—

How happeneth it, O Israel, that thou art in thine
enemies' land, that thou art waxen old in a strange
country, that thou art defiled with the dead, that
thou art counted with them that go down into the
grave ! Thou hast forsaken the fountain of wisdom.
For if thou hadst walked in the way of God, thou
shouldest have dwelled in peace for ever. Learn
where is wisdom, where is strength, where is under-
standing ; that thou mayest know also where is
length of days, and life, where is the light of the
eyes, and peace.

Wisdom was given to Israel and was
" conversant with men." In the Law, the

Torah, in that wide meaning of the word which we have already explained, "the things that are pleasing to God are made known to us." And this conviction creates an absolute confidence in final salvation:—

Put off, O Jerusalem, the garment of thy mourning and affliction, and put on the comeliness of the glory that cometh from God for ever. Cast about thee the robe of the righteousness which cometh from God; set a diadem on thine head of the glory of the Everlasting. For God will shew thy brightness unto every region under heaven. For thy name shall be called of God for ever "The peace of righteousness," and "The glory of godliness."

Arise, O Jerusalem, and stand upon the height, and look about thee toward the east, and behold thy children gathered from the going down of the sun unto the rising thereof at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that God hath remembered them. For they went from thee on foot, being led away of their enemies: but God bringeth them in unto thee borne on high with glory, as on a royal throne. For God hath appointed that every high mountain, and the everlasting hills, should be made low, and the valleys filled up, to make plain the ground, that Israel may go safely in the glory of God. Moreover the woods and every sweet-smelling tree have overshadowed Israel by the commandment of God. For God shall lead Israel with joy in the light of his glory with the mercy and righteousness that cometh from him.

We have separated this account of militant Nationalism and of Passive Resistance from the story of Judas Maccabæus and his struggle in defence of Faith and Freedom. "He was no mere hero of battles, but a knight of religion; and in those days Judaism needed warlike knights as well as saintly martyrs." We believe that Judas did for his people what neither Militant Nationalism nor Passive Resistance could have done.

VII

IDOLATRY A FRAUD

*The Epistle of Jeremiah, The Stories of
Bel and the Dragon, The Prayer of
Manasses*

THE title of this chapter strikes, as it were, the keynote of the attack upon idolatry which, suggested by some famous passages in the Old Testament, is worked out with argument, scorn, invective, in the fragment known as the "Epistle of Jeremiah," in the stories of "Bel" and of the "Dragon" (added in the Greek Old Testament to the Book of Daniel), and, indirectly and by implication, in the "Prayer of Manasses": as well as in passages which we have already referred to in the Wisdom of Solomon. This writer,

we noticed, finds the worship of Nature or natural objects or forces, excusable; but the worship of things *made by the hands of men* he believes to be a delusion deadly and devastating alike for religion and for practical life.

Our first question is this: What did the Jews really know about the idolatry of heathenism? How far were their religious leaders in touch with the facts? We can give a threefold answer. They knew the past history of their own people—the long-drawn-out struggle of the great Prophets to lift the religion of the people out of the heathenism of the Canaanite tribes, with its degrading rites and hideous cruelties. They knew at least the outward appearance of the religious practices of Babylonia, represented in their eyes by multitudes of graven images, and especially by the enormous gilded statue of "Bel," which according to a Greek historian was one of the most conspicuous objects in the splendid city of Babylon. Later they came to know the popular heathenism and idolatry which

spread from Greece, and in degenerate forms found its way among the nations of Western Asia and elsewhere. And from their experience of the facts they declared that idolatry is sin and the mother of sin.

But it seems clear that they based their judgments not only on the facts but also on a theory about the facts—a theory about the inner meaning of idolatry, which was entirely wrong. They seem to have thought that idolatry really means directing the impulses of religious worship solely and only upon things which have been fashioned by men's own hands. If so, they were wrong. The "heathen in his blindness" does *not* "bow down to wood and stone," as wood and stone, but as symbolising or representing some unseen power or agency, whether imagined as a personal being or in some vaguer way; and the respect which he demands for the "idol" is demanded because of what it stands for or represents. Hence the Jewish attack upon idolatry, though it was justified by the popular heathenism of the time,

misses the real source of the evils which it points to.

Turn now to our sources in the Apocrypha and first to the Epistle of Jeremiah. The writer had personal knowledge of the practices of Babylonian heathenism, and he believed that his warnings were true to the thought and feeling of the great Prophet. The "epistle" is an argument to prove that idols are helpless and have no claim to be regarded as gods. His appeal is to Jewish families and communities settled in idolatrous countries such as Babylonia; and by inspiring contempt for the imposing ceremonial of heathen worship, he seeks to guard his fellow-believers from the danger of being deceived by it:—

For neither can they set up a king in a land, nor give rain unto men. Neither can they judge their own cause, nor redress a wrong, being unable: for they are as crows between heaven and earth. For even when fire falleth upon the house of gods of wood, or overlaid with gold or with silver, their priests will flee away, and escape, but they themselves shall be burnt asunder like beams. Moreover they cannot withstand any king or enemies: how should a man then allow or think that they be gods?

Neither are those gods of wood, and overlaid with silver or with gold, able to escape either from thieves or robbers. Whose gold, and silver, and garments wherewith they are clothed, they that are strong will take from them, and go away withal: neither shall they be able to help themselves.

Therefore it is better to be a king that sheweth his manhood, or else a vessel in a house profitable for that whereof the owner shall have need, than such false gods; or even a door in a house, to keep the things safe that be therein, than such false gods; or a pillar of wood in a palace, than such false gods.

And so his argument proceeds. Idols are nothing but the work of men's hands, without power of speech, hearing, or self-preservation. They are of less worth than common household utensils—they cannot benefit their worshippers in the smallest affairs of life, and are indifferent to the moral quality of the worship offered to them.

The stories of Bel and of the Dragon are intended to expose the imposture which sometimes entered into idolatrous worship. The priests of Bel claimed that the offerings of meat and drink were consumed by the idol itself. The offerings disappeared

after the outer doors were locked. But the priests had a secret entrance, and took the food for themselves and their families :—

Now Daniel had commanded his servants to bring ashes, and they strewed all the temple with them in the presence of the king alone : then went they out, and shut the door, and sealed it with the king's signet, and so departed. Now in the night came the priests with their wives and children, as they were wont to do, and did eat and drink up all. In the morning betimes the king arose, and Daniel with him. And the king said, Daniel, are the seals whole ? And he said, Yea, O king, they be whole. And as soon as he had opened the door, the king looked upon the table and cried with a loud voice, Great art thou, O Bel, and with thee is no deceit at all. Then laughed Daniel, and held the king that he should not go in, and said, Behold now the pavement, and mark well whose footsteps are these. And the king said, I see the footsteps of men, women, and children.

The destruction of the Dragon by Daniel adds little to the force of the lesson. The author thought that the Dragon of the Babylonian temples was a living creature. But in fact the monster was only depicted on the walls. Another writer added fragments of a legend about the prophet

Habbakuk being carried by the hair of his head, by angel hands, to feed Daniel in the lions' den—a grotesque addition, redeemed by the closing words, "Thou hast remembered me, O God; neither hast thou forsaken them that seek thee and love thee."

To understand the meaning and importance of the Prayer of Manasses, we must call to mind what is recorded of this king in the Old Testament. The forty-five years of his reign seem to have been outwardly a period of peace and prosperity. But he was the worst of the Judæan kings. He introduced Assyrian star-worship into Judah; he revived the Canaanite idolatries and encouraged the appalling rite, borrowed from the Canaanites and others, of sacrificing children in the fire to the deity; and sent superstitious preachers everywhere to work upon the fears of the people. All this religious degradation poisoned the moral and social life of the age.

In the traditions of a later age Manasses became a legendary figure of iniquity, but

through it all there runs, like a golden thread, the belief that even for him the way of repentance is not closed. This belief created the fragment now before us. We have space only for a few verses :—

Thou, O Lord, that art the God of the just, hast not appointed repentance to the just, to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, which have not sinned against thee : but thou hast appointed repentance unto me that am a sinner : for I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea. My transgressions are multiplied, O Lord : my transgressions are multiplied, and I am not worthy to behold and see the height of heaven for the multitude of mine iniquities. I am bowed down with many iron bands, that I cannot lift up mine head by reason of my sins, neither have I any respite : for I have provoked thy wrath, and done that which is evil before thee : I did not thy will, neither kept I thy commandments : I have set up abominations, and have multiplied detestable things. Now therefore I bow the knee of mine heart, beseeching thee of grace. I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, and I acknowledge mine iniquities.

VIII

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

The Second Book of Esdras

ONE book in the Apocrypha still remains for consideration. Little as these writings are generally known or understood, this last one is known least of all: and yet in some ways it is the noblest of them all. In the Second Book of Esdras—as it is usually called—we seem to move into another world. The sky is overcast and very dark, though with strange gleams and flashes of light overhead; and we see the visions of a dreamer, and hear his converse with heavenly powers.

The book belongs to a class of literature, of which the finest example from purely Jewish sources is the Book of Daniel in

our Old Testament. And Second Esdras comes, perhaps, next in order of merit. Such books are called "apocalyptic" (books of revelation), and though differing very much from one another, they are nearly all composed according to the same general plan and method.

What the writers of these books had at heart may be told in the words of a poet of yesterday :—

Careless seems the great Avenger; history's pages
but record
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old Systems
and the Word;
Truth for ever on the scaffold, wrong for ever on the
throne;
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the
dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch
above his own.

The apocalyptic writers had a method of their own. They try to give a dramatic statement of the history of their people down to their own day; but the history is put in the form of prophecy attributed to some famous character of ancient times,

often one of the patriarchs. In the book before us, the prophecies are revealed, in dialogue and in vision, to the Esdras (Ezra) of the Return. The man who wrote it was one of the noblest of Jews. The purpose is the same as that of all the apocalyptic books: to confirm and strengthen the true believers in their patience, their courage, their confidence, by urging that the sufferings of the time will last only for a little while, and that the present troubles are already the beginning of that end when sorrow and suffering will be transformed into glory unspeakable.

He wrote after the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple by the Romans.¹ Prophecy of the older type—speaking in the name of God straight to the needs of the time—had long ceased. Judaism as a political state was done with; and Judaism as a nation seemed crumbling to decay. His revelation is given in seven visions granted to Ezra, who had sought them and

¹ His own message is contained in chapters three to fourteen.

prepared himself in special ways to receive them. We shall understand him best if we pay special attention to the first three of the visions. The others are more interesting to the critical historian than for our present purpose.

The first vision opens with the awful thought of the world's long story of misery, folly, and evil. A disposition to evil was actually created in human nature. Why did God make all this sin and sorrow ?

And the angel that was sent unto me, whose name was Uriel, gave me an answer, and said to me, Thy heart hath utterly failed thee in regarding this world, and thinkest thou to comprehend the way of the Most High ?

Then said I, Yea, my Lord.

And he answered me, and said, I am sent to shew thee three ways, and to set forth three similitudes before thee : whereof if thou canst declare me one, I also will shew thee the way that thou desirest to see, and I will teach thee wherefore the heart is wicked.

And I said, Say on, my Lord.

Then said he unto me, Go to, weigh me a weight of fire, or measure me a measure of wind, or call me again the day that is past.

Then answered I and said, Who of the sons of men

is able to do this, that thou shouldest ask me of such things?

And he said unto me, If I had asked thee, saying, How many dwellings are there in the heart of the sea? or how many springs are there at the fountain head of the deep? or how many ways are above the firmament? or which are the outgoings of Hades? or which are the paths of paradise? peradventure thou wouldest say unto me, I never went down into the deep, nor as yet into hell, neither did I ever climb up into heaven. Nevertheless now have I asked thee but only of the fire and wind, and of the day, things wherethrough thou hast passed, and without which thou canst not be, and yet hast thou given me no answer of them.

He said moreover unto me, Thine own things, that are grown up with thee, canst thou not know; how then can thy vessel comprehend the way of the Most High? and how can he that is already worn out with the corrupted world understand incorruption?

And Ezra cried in agony, "Why then was understanding given to me?" Surely "it were better that we were not here at all, than that we should come hither and live in the midst of ungodliness, and suffer, and know not wherefore." The things he desired to understand were "things that pass by us daily." And he claims his right to carry even to the throne of the Almighty

the question, "What will God do for my people who are called by his name?" The Angel answers that these are the darkest hours before the dawn. This world, or this age, is fast passing away, and in the next age the answer will appear.

In the second vision the question is pressed again:—

And now, O Lord, why hast thou given this one people over unto many, and hast dishonoured the one root above others, and hast scattered thine only one among many? And they which did gainsay thy promises have trodden them down that believed thy covenants. If thou dost so much hate thy people, they should be punished with thine own hands.

Now when I had spoken these words, the angel that came to me the night afore was sent unto me, and said unto me, Hear me, and I will instruct thee; hearken unto me, and I shall tell thee more.

And I said, Speak on, my Lord. Then said he unto me, Thou art sore troubled in mind for Israel's sake: lovest thou that people better than he that made them?

And I said, No, Lord: but of very grief have I spoken: for my reins torment me every hour, while I labour to comprehend the way of the Most High, and to seek out part of his judgement.

And he said unto me, Number me them that are not yet come, gather me together the drops that are

scattered abroad, make me the flowers green again that are withered, open me the chambers that are closed, and bring me forth the winds that in them are shut up, or shew me the image of a voice : and then I will declare to thee the travail that thou askest to see.

And I said, O Lord that bearest rule, who may know these things, but he that hath not his dwelling with men ? As for me, I am unwise : how may I then speak of these things whereof thou askest me ?

Then said he unto me, Like as thou canst do none of these things that I have spoken of, even so canst thou not find out my judgement, or the end of the love that I have promised unto my people.

But the final judgment and solution of all these problems shall be the act of God alone :—

In the beginning, when the earth was made, before the outgoings of the world were fixed, or ever the gatherings of the winds blew, before the voices of the thunder sounded and before the flashes of the lightning shone, or ever the foundations of paradise were laid, before the fair flowers were seen, or ever the powers of the earthquake were established, before the innumerable hosts of angels were gathered together, or ever the heights of the air were lifted up, before the measures of the firmament were named, or ever the footstool of Sion was established, and ere the present years were sought out, and or ever the imaginations of them that now sin were estranged, before they were sealed that have gathered faith for

a treasure: then did I consider these things, and they all were made through me alone, and through none other: as by me also they shall be ended, and by none other.

The third vision has been described as perhaps the finest of the seven for power of conception and lofty thought. It opens with a picture of the wonders of creation, and sets forth the faith that all this was for the sake of God's people. Why, then, do not God's people possess the world? The answer is that God's people now tread a difficult and narrow road, but it shall open out into a better future:—

Then said he unto me, There is a sea set in a wide place, that it might be broad and vast. But the entrance thereof shall be set in a narrow place so as to be like a river; whose then should desire to go into the sea to look upon it, or to rule it, if he went not through the narrow, how could he come into the broad? Another thing also: There is a city builded and set in a plain country, and full of all good things; but the entrance thereof is narrow, and is set in a dangerous place to fall, having a fire on the right hand, and on the left a deep water: and there is one only path between them both, even between the fire and the water, so small that there could but one man go there at once. If this city now be given unto

a man for an inheritance, if the heir pass not the danger set before him, how shall he receive his inheritance? And I said, It is so, Lord. Then said he unto me, Even so also is Israel's portion. Because for their sakes I made the world: and when Adam transgressed my statutes, then was decreed that now is done. Then were the entrances of this world made narrow, and sorrowful and toilsome: they are but few and evil, full of perils, and charged with great toils. For the entrances of the greater world are wide and sure, and bring forth fruit of immortality.

This, however, only prepares the way for another answer—the revelation of the final Judgment. In this part of the book there are occasional expressions which suggest revision by a Christian hand; but the original author's view is unmistakable. He believes in the coming of the promised Messiah, whose advent shall bring in the New Age; he believes that the dead shall awake and arise for Judgment, and his vision reveals a place of happiness and a place of torment:—

And the Most High shall be revealed upon the seat of judgement, and compassion shall pass away, and longsuffering shall be withdrawn: but judgement only shall remain, truth shall stand, and faith shall wax strong: and the work shall follow, and the

reward shall be shewed, and good deeds shall awake, and wicked deeds shall not sleep. And the place of torment shall appear, and over against it shall be the place of rest: and the furnace of hell shall be shewed, and over against it the paradise of delight. And then shall the Most High say to the nations that are raised from the dead, See ye and understand whom ye have denied, or whom ye have not served, or whose commandments ye have despised.

Here and during the rest of the dialogue which accompanies this vision, we feel that Ezra is less submissive to the explanations that are given him; and the source of his trouble, for him the question of questions, is this—*Are there few that shall be saved?* To his eyes the answer is all too clear:—

Who is there of them that be alive that hath not sinned, and who of the sons of men that hath not transgressed thy covenant? And now I see, that the world to come shall bring delight to few, but torments unto many. For an evil heart hath grown up in us, which hath led us astray from these statutes, and hath brought us into corruption and into the ways of death, hath shewed us the paths of perdition and removed us far from life; and that, not a few only, but well nigh all that have been created.

He is reminded that a few precious stones are worth more than many things of lead and clay :—

So also is the judgement which I have promised ; for I will rejoice over the few that shall be saved, inasmuch as these are they that have made my glory now to prevail, and of whom my name is now named. And I will not grieve over the multitude of them that perish ; for these are they that are now like unto vapour, and are become as flame and smoke ; they are set on fire and burn hotly, and are quenched.

He exclaims that man is worse off than the beasts : “ we perish and know it,” but they “ look not for judgment.” But the only answer given to him is a declaration, once more, of the grounds of judgment :—

They that dwell upon the earth shall be tormented for this reason, that having understanding they have wrought iniquity, and receiving commandments have not kept them, and having obtained a law they dealt unfaithfully with that which they received. What then will they have to say in the judgement, or how will they answer in the last times ? For how great a time hath the Most High been long-suffering with them that inhabit the world, and not for their sakes, but because of the times which he hath foreordained !

He turns aside for a while to raise questions about an intermediate state between natural death and final judgment, and about the possibility of intercession for the departed; but the great question, still unanswered, soon occupies his thought and feeling again. Surely the Character of God is the assurance of a larger hope:—

I know, Lord, that the Most High is now called merciful, in that he hath mercy upon them which are not yet come into the world; and compassionate, in that he hath compassion upon those that turn to his law; and longsuffering, for that he long suffereth those that have sinned, as his creatures; and bountiful, for that he is ready to give rather than to exact; and of great mercy, for that he multiplieth more and more mercies to them that are present, and that are past, and also to them which are to come; (for if he multiplied not his mercies, the world would not continue with them that dwell therein;) and one that forgiveth, for if he did not forgive of his goodness, that they which have committed iniquities might be eased of them, the ten thousandth part of men would not remain living; and a judge, for if he did not pardon them that were created by his word, and blot out the multitude of offences, there would peradventure be very few left in an innumerable multitude.

And then, in spite of the assurance that there are but few who shall be saved, we

hear his voice raised in passionate prayer for a wider and a larger mercy :—

We and our fathers have passed our lives in ways that bring death : but thou because of us sinners art called merciful. For if thou hast a desire to have mercy upon us, then shalt thou be called merciful, to us, namely, that have no works of righteousness. For the just, which have many good works laid up with thee, shall for their own deeds receive reward. For what is man, that thou shouldest take displeasure at him? or what is a corruptible race, that thou shouldest be so bitter toward it? For in truth there is no man among them that be born, but he hath dealt wickedly; and among them that have lived there is none which hath not done amiss. For in this, O Lord, thy righteousness and thy goodness shall be declared, if thou be merciful unto them which have no store of good works.

The end of the vision means that Esdras is not satisfied. His angelic guide has been speaking as it were on behalf of the Almighty. The great question is still unanswered; he is only assured that the fact is so, not why it is so :—

And I answered and said,

“I have said before, and now do speak, and will speak it also hereafter, that there be more of them

which perish, than of them which shall be saved : like as a wave is greater than a drop."

And he answered me, saying,

" Like as the field is, so is also the seed ; and as the flowers be, such are the colours also ; and such as the work is, such also is the judgement thereon ; and as is the husbandman, so is his threshing-floor also. For there was a time in the world, even then when I was preparing for them that now live, before the world was made for them to dwell in ; and then no man spake against me, for there was not any : but now they which are created in this world that is prepared, both with a table that faileth not, and a law which is unsearchable, are corrupted in their manners. So I considered my world, and, lo, it was destroyed, and my earth, and, lo, it was in peril, because of the devices that were come into it. And I saw, and spared them, but not greatly, and saved me a grape out of a cluster, and a plant out of a great forest. Let the multitude perish then, which was born in vain ; and let my grape be saved, and my plant ; for with great labour have I made them perfect."

This is the voice of Nature, mistaken for the voice of Nature's God.

The explanations and assurances given to Ezra are based on the assumption that the only thing to do with the good man is to *reward* him, and with the evil man, to *punish* him. This is supposed to be the

real use of immortality—that the Almighty may carry on this business of “reward” and “punishment.” As the dialogue proceeds the assumption is made into a dogma and simply repeated against Ezra’s questions.

What we miss is any vision of growth or progress either in this world or the next—any vision of the gradual improvement of the race, and of the progress of the individual source towards perfection in another life after the life on earth. This twofold faith and hope will not fit into the “apocalyptic” vision of the world. The apocalyptic vision has its rightful place; but the questions it raises, and tries to answer, remain in impenetrable darkness unless some vision of growth, of movement which is progress, is added on to it. Let us close with the words of two modern poets who express the twofold faith which alone gives meaning and value to life.

Arthur Hugh Clough, in his last poem, speaks of the progress of the race:—

Say not, the struggle naught availeth,
 The labour and the wounds are vain ;
 The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
 And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars ;
 It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
 Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
 And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
 Seem here no painful inch to gain,
 Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
 Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
 When daylight comes, comes in the light ;
 In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
 But westward, look, the land is bright.

And Alfred Tennyson, in his poem called
 "Wages," thus speaks of the progress of
 the soul:—

Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
 Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless
 sea—
 Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the
 wrong—
 Nay, but she aim'd not at glory, no lover of glory
 she :
 Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

ITS STORY AND MESSAGES 139

The wages of sin is death : if the wages of Virtue be
dust,

Would she have heart to endure for the life of the
worm and the fly ?

She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the
just,

To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer
sky :

Give her the wages of going on, and not to die

AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE author wishes to express his gratitude to the authorities of the University Presses of Oxford and Cambridge for permission to use the text of the Revised Version in the extracts of the Apocrypha given in the foregoing pages.

The original plan of the book was to publish a series of extracts, with notes on each passage, but further consideration showed that the book would be just as useful and probably more interesting if the extracts were woven into a continuous narrative, historical or expository as might be required. The author's obligations to previous writers on the subject are extensive, but do not call for mention here in detail.

This opportunity may be taken to add notes on two statements which might be misunderstood. The reference on page 22 to Aramaic as a later local dialect is not to be understood to imply that this language was a mere dialect, and was limited to a locality. As a matter of fact it was widely spread. And again, on page 122 (top) the author wishes to add a reference to 2 Chronicles, chapter xxxiii, verses 12 and 13, where definite mention is made of the repentance of Manasseh.

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