



The Concept Of Man In The Old Testament

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It has been said that of all wonderful things nothing is quite so wonderful as man. And man in the Old Testament is man as we know him, with the same hopes, fears, and passions as modern man. Although Old Testament man is a voice from the ancient Semitic world, he is, in many respects, as modern as a twentieth century man.

One cannot expect to find an organized anthropology in Israelite thought. There are different views of man in the Old Testament. The Book of Ecclesiastes, perhaps the most cynical of all the books of the Old Testament, has a very dark view of man. He is an untrustworthy animal, his heart full of vanities; his end will be death, for he is no better than an animal. This however is not the ordinary view of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament doctrine of man is completely incomprehensible unless one realizes that what unifies and supports it is the Israelite's belief in the living God whom only fools deny. The proofs for God's existence which can be sketched from the Old Testament are valid and are beautiful, but far more than the proof is the Israelite's living experience of God constantly active in his life. Unless we grasp this ready approach to God we cannot understand Israel's concept of man. What gives the Hebrew story, its unity and its impact is the mystic awareness of God and the understanding of what man is, reflected against Israel's vision of God. It is less the story of how man came to be than of what man is. It is important to see that man is like God, and yet not like God; he is like the lower forms of life, but he is not one of them.¹

There is no evolution of God in the Old Testament. He is from the beginning Jahweh. Hence man too in the Old Testament is different from man in Egypt or Babylonia. He is not, in Israel, as he is in surrounding countries, a product of the gods in the sense that he is born from them. Rather he is placed immediately over against the transcendent God in a position of incalculable honor and dignity, but very definitely subject to God. In no sense could he, by his natural powers, have communion with God; Jahweh must elect him to this. He is a living animal, created on the same day as the other animals, which indicates his close relationship to the animal world. But he is put in a position of particular dignity with regard to them, he is to subjugate and use them, educate, train them, to draw them to their final destiny.

¹ John McKenzie, S.J., *The Two-Edged Sword*, Milwaukee. The Bruce Publishing Company, 1955, p. 108.

Man is created out of the earth, the red earth, and is created by a direct and immediate intervention of the living God, Who breathes breath into his nostrils. Here, by one sweep, the Old Testament does away with all Platonic and neo-Platonic intermediaries, demi-urges, half-gods and lesser gods. It is the Supreme, Transcendent, wholly Unique God Who creates directly without need of demons, angels, or any of the descending emanations that are found in near-Eastern religions and philosophies.

The fact that man is brought out of the earth indicates his total contingency. Over against the absolute, the perpetually living God of Whom one can conceive no time when He was not living or will not be living, man exists in all his weakness and contingency, "made out of earth".

Israel contrasts God with man, not in terms of the created over against the uncreated or the contingent over against the absolute, but in terms of man's weakness in comparison with the power of God. Man is as the grass of the fields, here today and gone tomorrow, as the breath which disappears. It is because of his unspeakable weakness and fragility that God has compassion upon him, knowing how short is the span of his existence, how weak and subject to guile he is.

Yet he is also set at the center of the cosmos. He is given charge of the vegetable and animal world and calls the animals by name, which indicates his control over them. This is quite a different concept from that found in non-biblical religions, where there is great opposition between man and the world. In these religions the world is an unintelligible unit and man is thrown into its conflict, or is absorbed into the world of animals so that he is a mixture of the animal and of spirit. In the Old Testament, precisely because man is to dominate and educate animals, he is not allowed to have sexual intercourse with them. Nevertheless, his relationship with the animal world is friendly, as you would expect in an agricultural country. Their master, he is still fundamentally different from them, for only in man's creation does God directly intervene. God's living breath that is sent into man is not to be conceived of in terms of Western or Greek metaphysics, as if the

soul were blown into a body which contains it. Neither is the soul to be seen as the "form" of man's matter. Rather it is that which transforms earth into a living being. The soul is not thought of as a distinct principle which is capable of a separate existence. The breath put into man's nostrils, is not exactly what we would call a soul — it is simply that which vitalizes the man. Dust and flesh indicate the transitory character of man; that he is made of dust indicates that he will one day return to the dust.

Old Testament Psychology

Israel does not have anything like a spiritualistic philosophy; the concepts are somewhat vague and consequently Israel associates man's spiritual activity with bodily organs. All spiritual activities have a definite seat in man in one of his bodily organs; but sometimes conflicting testimony is given. One is not certain what emerges from what organ. Intelligent men are men of heart; to steal one's heart does not mean exactly what it means in modern terminology — it means rather to deprive the other of *judgment*. Because of its function of knowledge, of understanding, the heart can also be placed somewhere between what modern man would call conscience and memory — reflective conscience and memory. The heart is the seat from which actions spring; it is the deviser of action. But again, we must not interpret this in terms of Platonic trichotomy, where there are three parts to the soul, or dichotomy, where there are two parts to the soul. Hebrew man is always a unit and it is impossible to think of him otherwise until very late biblical thought when Hellenic ideas enter in.

The heart is also represented as the seat of the emotions, "My heart thrills with joy in the Lord . . ." (*1 Kings 2, 1.*). But more than being the seat of the emotions, the heart in the Old Testament (400 examples) symbolizes reason and plays an important role in the activity of 'thinking'. "David said unto his heart" means David thought unto himself. (*1 Kings 27, 1*). God is spoken of as "true judge that can read the inmost thoughts of man's heart". (*Jer. 11, 20*). The heart then is less representative of sentiment

than of that ethical core which determines the conduct of man.² Holding so great a place in Israelite thought, the heart is so far the quintessence of what this particular individual is, that we may be tempted to go so far as to say: man is worth what his heart is worth.

As far as the body is concerned, there is no essential difference between man and the animal. Both are '*basar*', flesh. The end of man and beast is the same, at least if we judge by appearances, for they both return to the earth from which they came and God recalls the spirit of animals just as He recalls man's, "All flesh shall perish together, and man shall return to ashes." (*Job 45, 15*). However, the Old Testament points out a fundamental difference between man and beast. Only man is created in the *image and likeness* of God. Modern research claims that it is primarily man's physical appearance which resembles God. This does not mean that God has legs and eyes, but that man's upright posture and beauty distinguishes him from the animals and likens him to God. Man is beautiful by the will of God. It is well to note that the Old Testament values corporal beauty, in spite of all the dangers which it brings with it.³ The image of God refers then to the composite man, body and soul. If a choice must be made the Semite would choose the body since this is the way Israelite thought regards man. It is not only his immortal, spiritual soul which is the image of God.

This image means that man has a unique relationship to God. He is the viceregent of God in the world. The first sign of this is his calling the animals by name. Those qualities which enable man, under God, to assume rule over the lower creatures, we call intelligence and free choice. The Israelite, who did not distinguish the psychic powers of man in this way, saw the difference between man and beast in this, that man rules the animals, taming and directing their activity and vitality to his own purposes. In the second chapter of Genesis we have a similar idea where man

² Pidoux, Georges, "*L'homme dans l'Ancient Testament*, Switzerland,, Delachaux and Niestle, 1953, p. 23.

³ Ludwig Kohler, *Hebrew Man*, New York, Abington Press, 1953, p. 31.

is shown, by a parade of the lower animals, that there is not among them "a helpmate for him".⁴ The image of God is not lost by sin, because after the flood man still retains it. His vocation is to be a child of God, and yet the only individual who is called the Son of God directly in the Old Testament is the king. The race is primarily the child of God.

One must hold a middle way between medieval scholasticism and modern research in thinking of the cultural situation of Adam and Eve. Medievalists seem to think that our first parents were in a state of extraordinarily high culture and had all kinds of infused knowledge. It is not necessary to overemphasize the natural or infused knowledge of Adam and Eve in the paradisaical state. Early Israelite man was probably at a low cultural level. But in no sense was man ever so associated with animal life that he could have sprung from animal life. By granting to man dominion over the animal world God grants him dominion over the world of evil, because throughout the Old Testament, from Genesis to Daniel, evil is associated with the world of beasts. There is no indication in the Old Testament, as there is in so many other near-Eastern religions, that man evolved directly from animals as their child, or that he was born from God and an animal, or that the cosmos was some kind of a peculiar combination of matter and spirit, parts of which evolved into man, and other parts into God or animals. Man is distinct from the animals from the beginning. The likeness of God which God confers on man is not the likeness of God to which the devil tempts Him, namely, "You shall be as gods." That was the sin of *hubris*, overweening pride in which man wished to be like God — to be the author of the moral order and to establish for himself his own final end or purpose. The image of God that man has is a likeness to God as His ambassador and viceregent, primarily through his intelligence and spirituality. The word likeness which follows image may be simply hendiadys, or the word may restrain the materialistic concept usually associated with the word image, which in Old

⁴ McKenzie, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

Testament Theology generally means a representation of the individual, a copy.

The image in Old Testament thought functions as a representative of the person: the king would set up his image in a town which he did not intend to visit and in some sense this not only represented the king but it was considered as being the king; this is a much more dense notion of identity between symbol and reality than our modern idea. While man governs the world somewhat as God governs the world, he always governs it underneath God. In the Old Testament he is never exalted into a superman, but is characterized precisely by flesh, weakness and set in contradiction to God, Who is strength.

There is the possibility that the original derivation of the notion of image is allied to the Egyptian idea, namely that man is the image of God because man is born from God, or is His son. If this is so, then the Old Testament has simply purified another one of its many sources. Man is the representative of God both by his body and his soul. He is only a little less than the angels and yet he is quite different from them. Most significant of all is the intimacy with God which man enjoys; God walks with him in the garden in the cool of the evening as the lord of the manor strolls over his acres to refresh himself after the heat of the day. This intimacy was lost when man was expelled from the 'garden of God', the place where one finds God. However, a vast gulf still separates man from God, and in His presence he must ever be filled with awe. If the gulf is bridged by fellowship, it is by God's grace that it is bridged, and man is filled with the sense of unspeakable privilege in the enjoyment of God's closeness. The dignity that man has is his only because God conferred it on him. He may have it only so long as his heart is right with God, so long as he bows himself before God in worship and reflects the will of God in his life.

Man is an autonomous free being, independent of and sovereign to the animal world, having the dignity of intercourse with God and belief in God. This belief is not natural but is founded upon God's freedom. The man who is barred from the animal world

will yet bring the animal world to salvation where the lamb will lie down with the leopard. Here is a vast difference between the Hebrews and their neighbors. All the oriental religions placed man subject to nature; nature is deified while man creeps about in a world over which he has no dominion and before which he is terrified. The Old Testament presents man as one who dominates nature and who is supposed to enjoy it. He is to enjoy all natural phenomena including work, marriage, the begetting and bringing up of children. He is in a sense a stranger to the world because his most direct and immediate relationship should be with God Himself.

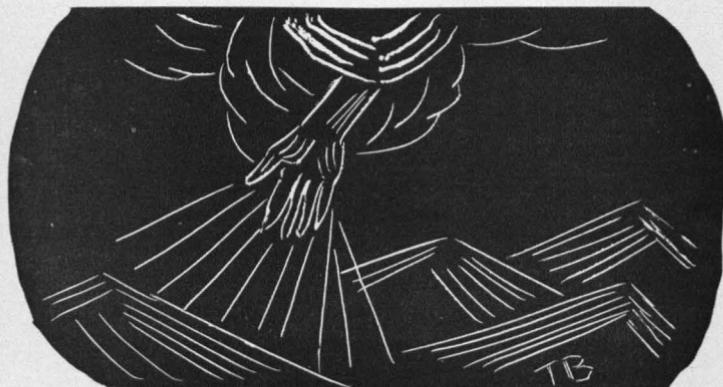
Old Testament Man And Society

Hebrew man is gifted by God with fertility and the reproductive life has received a special blessing in the Old Testament. From the beginning Hebrew man is orientated towards society; he is oriented towards the family in Genesis since he cannot have companionship from the animals. A woman is taken from his ribs, that is to say, is made his *socius*, his companion, his equal with the same spiritual destiny. Both are blessed and are intended to produce a family, the normal state of affairs. Children too have a role in Israelite thought, unlike, for example, Arabia or other Eastern countries. One is not free to drown one's children like kittens. This is forbidden because they constitute a blessing from Jahweh and will one day stand in their maturity face to face with God to answer a personal vocation and call from Him. The fact that Hebrew man is blessed in his fertility also indicates the realistic Old Testament evaluation of all natural values; the Old Testament never promotes an attack upon natural values. It is in fact at times even hyper-natural. The love of poverty, for example, which is cultivated in Christianity is relatively foreign to the Old Testament. The Old Testament never ceases to reiterate the danger of riches which induce injustice and hardness of heart, but it does not raise poverty to a mystique as does the New Testament. Natural values are accepted and given their proper place. Nor should we view the reverence the Old Testament has for human life, for children, for sexuality and reproduction in the

light of primitive religion, as though it were some sort of baal worship or fertility cult. It is a respect for the gift of life given originally by Jahweh Himself. We know that this is not connected with any fertility cult because of the constant pressure that the Old Testament and the prophets exercise against such cult. There were however periods of syncretism and what was thought officially was not always practiced in popular religion.

The Place of Woman

Woman in the Old Testament is always a partner, helpmate and equal; she is the *ishah* of the *ishman*. She is the equal of man because she is drawn from his body. He is the exemplary cause of woman; hence, she has the identical intelligence and will, the same spiritual character as man. She stands in the same relationship to the eternal God as does man. Woman cannot be bought nor is



the dowry a buying of woman; neither can she be sold because she is not a chattel. The original relationship was obviously intended to be one of love; Adam is given Eve and is intended to love her. The scene in Genesis is unintelligible without a background of monogamy. This does not mean that all the Israelites had but one wife. But the theory of monogamy is held; in fact the practice of polygamy is attributed to the sons of Lamach, of the despised race of Cain. Woman has a personal relationship to God just as man; and he is not her steward as he is over the animals. *Agar* is very definitely an individual and has a spiritual purpose to ful-

fill. Woman is forbidden to take an active part in the cultic ceremonies, but she is present at them. There is nothing which forbids her to prophesy, as the example of Deborah shows. The reason that woman is excluded from activity in cultic ceremonies is doubtless the horror that the Israelites had of the Canaanite's prostitute services. The Talmud, however, does in one place suggest thanks to God that one is not a heathen, a dog, or a woman.

Juridically, woman's station in Israel is low. That her relation to man is an intimate one is evident throughout the Old Testament, but that it was at the same time a relation of subordination cannot be disputed. The man is the centre of the family, woman his helpmate; her desire is towards the husband, but "he rules over her". Woman often had to use cunning to have her way, as can be seen in the example of Rebekah who makes the blind father give Jacob his blessing. She is a being in permanent tutelage: before her marriage she is subject to the will of her father, after marriage to that of her husband, and after her husband's death she falls under the tutelage of the eldest son.

Celibacy is not the normal state of man in the Old Testament; the relationship of fruitful love is the normal relationship. Jeremias was forbidden the tender joys of marriage because God had set him aside for a particularly trying task — the prophecy of the destruction of his own people as a nation. For that he needed all his energies. The Song of Songs speaks of the tenderness of marital love and also of the sadness experienced by the Israelite at parting from the beloved. Some have thought that originally Israelite life was organized as a matriarchate, but this seems unlikely. We find no positive proof or evidence for it in the Old Testament, on the contrary, the authority of the father is extremely strong. Woman is forbidden to attempt the role of a military leader. Yet on occasion, for example in the lovely story of Judith, we see a woman occupying something similar to the role of a military leader. Woman's place in the Old Testament is at home; the ideal woman is portrayed in Proverbs, "Who shall find a valiant woman? Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her . . ." (*Proverbs* 31, 10-31).

The unmarried woman and the widow are considered unfortunate, and the law attempted to assist their wretched lot. It did not provide them with husbands but tried to relieve their painful situation. The Old Testament does not however object to widows, who after the death of their husbands decide to remain widows, provided they devote their widowhood to the service of the Temple.

The Community And The Individual

In Israelite thought man is regarded as a member of a community. Here again we must be careful not to exaggerate. It was popular up until twenty years ago to say that there was no such thing as an individual in Old Testament thought until Ezechiel created the idea for his own reasons. This is not true. The Israelite is seen as an individual from the very beginning. The normal word for man in Hebrew expresses the double relationship: '*adam*' is he who is taken from '*adamah*', the ground — a weak, ephemeral being — and this name is also regarded as the proper name of the first man. On the other hand the sociological setting of man is expressed by the term '*ben adam*', — son of man or son of humanity.⁵ The Israelite obviously has a more profound sense of community than the modern Christian. The family is an important social unit in Israel. The clan and the nation are considered as a big family, and the relationship between nations should be the relationship between families. From the beginning we notice that Adam is not considered complete until he has Eve. The clan or nation does not spring from any kind of social contract, but is built upon blood relationship, primarily upon the idea of Jahweh Who forms this family unto Himself. The Israelite concept of the community is a Jahwist idea. The individual draws his strength, is dependent upon, and draws his meaningfulness from the community in which he lives. From the very beginning God intended that he marry and form a community.

Jahweh did not however directly create the *city*. In other Eastern cultures we find that the gods first made a city, and then the

⁵ Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1955, pp. 156-157.

individuals to fill the cities. In the Old Testament God made the individuals, and the city is looked on with a certain amount of horror. This is because the oriental city involved a king, and Jahweh was the unique King of Israel. The formation of different nations and languages is due primarily to sin. Israel is not therefore the result of a social contract, nor of consanguinity, but of Jahweh's covenant with her. The end of the chain in which one Israelite is linked to another is God Himself. That Israel cannot be destroyed as a people becomes clearer in the later prophets. It will be difficult for Israel during the Exile to realize that she is to be destroyed as a nation and state and to survive only as a people. Because the very link is Jahweh, the eternal, indistructible God, because of Jahweh's personal relationship to each Israelite, she cannot fail to survive as a people. Unlike the other nations who lose their religion by assimilation when destroyed, Israel's religion will survive in Exile. She will retain her religion and remain a *quahal*, a congregation, a people of God.

The family too is highly esteemed in Israelite thought and a closely knit family was strongly urged in Israel's religion. That the parent represents God on earth and shares His authority is familiar to us in Christianity, but it was not so to all near-Eastern cultures. In Israel if a child rebels against his father he could be punished by death, for such a misdemeanor is an attack on the divine institution of the family, upon the figure of the father who represents Jahweh Himself. In a certain sense the father in the Old Testament is a priest since he offered sacrifice. In the decalogue, directly after the commandments concerning Jahweh Himself there follows the commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother." Many admonitions in Proverbs testify to the strictness of the Israelite concept of obedience to parents. Parents are reminded of their duties toward their children: they are obliged to nourish and train them to live God-fearing lives. This religious training which begins in early infancy insists upon obedience to God's commandments, particularly the commandment to love Jahweh with all one's heart. Parents who train their children well will be gladdened by them and honored by their acquaintances as well. The parent who is remiss will suffer much grief as is

seen in the example of Heli who failed to correct his sons although he was aware of their wicked deeds.⁶

The relationship of Israelite man to the kingship and the state is somewhat peculiar and undergoes considerable development during Israel's history. To begin with, man is not closely allied to the king but rather directly to the chosen people formed by Jahweh's intervention. Neither Jahweh nor the pious Jew wholly approves of the institution of kingship. When kings appear in Israelite history it is because a rebellious and difficult people had insisted upon having a king; Jahweh tolerates the King. Israel was originally formed by Jahweh as a theocratic unity, of which He is the unique King. Some scholars of the Scandinavian school insist that in Israel the king is a sacred image and that the common near-East pattern of kingship applies to Israel as well. But this thesis does not seem to be defensible when we consider Israelite history or the peculiar relationship which Israel had with God. This ambiguity in Israel's attitude toward kingship is seen in the words of Samuel, "And the Lord will not hear you in that day, because you desired unto yourselves a king". (*1 Kings 8, 18-22*). Originally the leaders destined for Israel were to be charismatic leaders, prophets particularly; David however is a king after God's own heart. He is the one who makes kingship acceptable to the Israelite people; and because of the fact that the Redeemer is to come from the line of David, Israel will accept kingship. Solomon, along with some of the less traditional ideas which he introduced into Israelite life, added many of the Eastern court customs of dealing with the king. The king is often considered as a usurper upon God's rights.

So too with the notion of the state. We recall that Babylon arose from the revolt against God. In the East kingship is inseparable from the city and states and cities fall under the same condemnation in early Israelite thought as that of kingship. It was Cain who invented the city. Nathan made kingship tolerable by saying that David's line would last forever; but in holy

⁶ Paul Heinisch, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1950, p. 195.

Israel the notion of kingship is considered to be a pagan notion. Israel should be a theocracy—"And he (Gideon) said to them: I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you, but the Lord shall rule over you." (*Judges* 8, 23). When court formulae are adopted in speaking of the king, he is often treated as any other Oriental despot; he is referred to as son of God, but he *becomes* the son of God by his enthronement. His kingdom is sometimes regarded as lasting perpetually. This however does not imply strict perpetuity or Bethseba would not have been clamoring for her son's rights when she greeted her royal lover with the wish "May you live forever." By Osee's day opposition to kingship had faded in Israel.

It is probably in the Old Testament's concept of man's personal dignity that we have the clearest testimony to the notion of personality itself. Many of the elements of Israel's life: the position of woman, the notion of family, and relationship to the sovereign king are derivatives of near-Eastern culture. There are however elements which are due exclusively to Jahwism and therefore have a place in an Old Testament theology. One of these is the notion of human personality which was born in Israel. Israel is extremely aware of the fact that each individual stands in a relationship to God directly and personally. The decalogue presupposes that each individual will obey it; there is a spirit of freedom, personal commitment and surrender to God right from the beginning. Israel also demonstrates her realization of the dignity of the individual by the humanity of her laws. Concerning slaves, the Israelite could be held as a slave only for six years, "if thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years shall he serve . . ." (*Exodus* 21, 2). Basic to this is the notion that the slave and stranger are still persons, that by virtue of personality itself one has certain relationships to God which may not be infringed upon. The whole exhortation in *Deuteronomy*, Chapter 6, 5—to love God with all one's heart, all one's soul, all one's mind assures us immediately that it is not only the people as a whole that bears a relationship to God, but also each person, each individual, and that which is most central to him, namely his freedom, his heart, his love. The prophets insist that all that reflects and

expresses the whole man, his inner being, must be committed to Jahweh.

The humanity of Israel in war, for example, makes clear how much she esteems the notion of the individual. There are no outrages such as the Assyrians practiced, such as the slaying of prisoners, or grosser forms a mutilation. This is due to the Israelite respect for basic, human dignity; and this could only come about if Israel had a strongly formed concept of the individual and the personality.

Again, the bondsman and the bondswoman have rights; one might not, for example, treat slaves in Israel as was done elsewhere, selecting the more beautiful among them to be concubines; this is specifically forbidden in Israel. The bondsman, even if he is a bondsman, still has rights, and these rights as put down in the law must be observed by the Israelite master. When authors say that man is merely a social entity in Israel and has no consciousness of his individuality, until Jeremias, they are mistaken. *Exodus* 21, 23 forbids substituted punishment, "But if her death ensue thereupon, he shall render life for life." This does not imply that punishment was not substituted. It was. If one had done something wrong to an Israelite, he might well seize one's son and murder him. But this is forbidden by the law, so that already the punishment must fall not upon the family but upon the individual; relationship to God is always personal. That every man is answerable to God for all his activities is often stressed throughout the Old Testament. It is true that there exists also the notion of corporate punishment. But despite this notion of corporate personality there is still a strong sense of individuality in Israel's religion, and the forerunners of the relationship between the individual and God are Abraham and Moses, whose dealings with God were highly personal. The prophets too realized that they themselves had been personally called by God, and that a message had been personally committed to them. They were constantly stirring up the people to realize their personal responsibility, especially the later prophets who feared the common people's tendency to absolve themselves of all guilt. Jeremias rebukes them strongly on

this score. One cannot come and offer sacrifice while leading an immoral life, thinking that thereby the sacrifice made by a group of its representatives, will absolve him from guilt. Jeremias is simply stressing a current of thought which has been present from the beginning. All are one, the Israelite is closely tied to his community, he shares in its responsibility, there is a guilt consciousness of the community. But there is also individual responsibility. Most religions, except Judaism and Christianity, do not emphasize group responsibility. In the story of Cain and Abel we have not only the first account of murder but also the first record of a recognition of social responsibility. This Hebrew recognition received emphasis in Christianity.⁷

Final Considerations

Turning now to a consideration of the Israelite's relationship with the Gentile, we observe that the fundamental idea of all history, of all Israelite theology, is the idea that the unique Jahweh rules the people whom He has elected. He has proved this by His action in history; primarily in Exodus, secondly in creation, and thirdly in His judgment on Jerusalem. Hence He will prove it again in the future. Israelite man is then orientated to the last things, to the day of the Lord. This eschatology is not highly individualistic, but rather corporate. The body of Israel will be saved. Israel is the gateway through which the nations shall be saved, and the channel of redemption for the nations. Israel is beloved by God not only for her own lovability, but for the mission which He has entrusted to her.

Only in Israel then do we get a genuine theology of history. To Israel time is orientated, is ordered to a term. It is not circular, as in Greece, but linear. It points towards the coming Messias and the salvation of the Lord. As history develops it gives a meaning and interpretation to events, because of Jahwism. Everything is seen as the will of God. It is He Who causes events to occur, it is He Who directs the currents of history.

⁷ W. Sloan, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, New York, Abingdon Press, 1957, p. 5.

Hence, there is a *finish*, a purpose, to historical events. They speak to us in telling us His Will. In other words, history is revelation. God fights for Israel and causes the sun and stars to fight for Israel. Israel's purpose in writing history is to celebrate the conquests of God and of His Goodness in intervening on behalf of His covenant. The song of Deborah, for example, celebrates Jahweh as the conqueror, and describes the sadness misfortunes and griefs which come to Israel as judgments of God upon His resistant people. Later on, it becomes evident that God is displeased with this people and that He is going to destroy it as a nation. Amos and Osee prophesy that the North country will be destroyed; Isaias, Micheas, and Jeremias prophesy that Juda herself will be destroyed because God is angry with this rebellious people. Along with this prophecy there immediately springs up in Israel a realization that even though she will be destroyed as a state, the remnant, those who are faithful, will be spared and God will preserve them. When it becomes evident that Israel is not going to overthrow the rule of foreign princes and potentates, her expectations become more eschatological. Isaias says, "A new shoot will come out of the root of Jesse." (*Isaias* 11, 1). Israelite man, because of Israel's history, possesses certain spiritual attitudes which are not common in other Eastern religions.

With regard to the present, the Israelite has always the certitude that God is active for his good.

Concerning the future the Israelite is marked by hope since he knows that God will intervene. Late in Israelite thought it was popular to assume that the present group of Israelites were suffering because of the sins of their fathers. This was a tendency to over-emphasize corporate responsibility, and when they sang the ironic song about the fathers' sins being visited upon the children, God spoke to the prophets and told them to desist from singing it.

The attitude of Israelite man to the past was one of joy. He celebrated the victories of Jahweh for His people in the past. As his thought becomes more eschatological, more directed to-

ward the Day of the Lord, this joy is extended towards the Gentiles, "And many nations shall come in haste and say: Come let us go . . . up to the house of the God of Jacob. . . ." (*Micheas* 4, 2). It will extend towards the material universe, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid . . . for the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord. . . ." (*Isaias* 11, 6-10). Finally, his joy extends towards the corporal resurrection of the individual for joy or punishment, ". . . all peoples, tribes, and tongues shall serve Him. . . . His kingdom shall not be destroyed" (*Daniel* 2, 14). Everything that God has made is good and all His creation will be transformed in His New Kingdom.

In many respects the Israelite is as modern as any twentieth-century man. However, the men of Israel will always be for us a remarkable people. Their ways are not our ways, nor are our thoughts their thoughts. In many ways they were radically different from us. Even in the ancient world Europeans found the Hebrews a difficult, puzzling, and unusual people. Wherever they settled they held together and refused to marry the Gentiles. Their customs were sometimes looked upon as superstitious, barbarous, and irreligious. The fundamental stumbling block was religious; Israel remained faithful to Jahweh. The Israelite would not sacrifice to any god but his own God Who was invisible. The Israelite adored one God only and regarded as impious those who made perishable images of God.⁸

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⁸ Henry St. Holt, *A Forward to the Old Testament*, London, Adam & Charles Black, 1951, p. 1.