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BIBLICAL SOCIOLOGY. I

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The relation of the Bible to pure sociology has been considered in this *Journal* under the titles "The Sociological Significance of the Bible" and "Sociology and Theism." It has been suggested that pure sociology and the Bible have such an intimate relation that either may be so handled as to introduce the other. The treatment given the subject thus far has been brief. It presupposes a large amount of material which is wholly omitted. We now undertake a more systematic treatment with special reference to the pedagogical demands of the subject. The plan is to issue a textbook; but publication in the present form is needed in order that we may have the benefit of as much discussion and criticism as possible.¹

I. INTRODUCTORY SURVEY

The discipline crystallizing under the name "biblical sociology" may be defined as that branch of pure sociology which exhibits the formation of the biblical idea of God as an inci-

¹The two papers mentioned may be found in *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XII, No. 4 (January, 1907), and No. 6 (May, 1907). To these should be added a paper entitled "Professor Orr and Higher Criticism," in *The American Journal of Theology*, Vol. XII, No. 2 (April, 1908). The subject has also been treated in the writer's *Examination of Society* (1903) and *Egoism: A Study in the Social Premises of Religion* (1905). The proposed title of the new work is *Biblical Sociology: An Examination of the Social Process in Relation to the Idea of God*.

dent of the social process. This is distinct from biblical history and theology, although it has much in common with these disciplines. It approaches the Bible from the standpoint of pure sociology, showing how the forces at work in the social evolution of ancient Israel are assimilated with the forces everywhere operative in human society. The distinctive religion of the Bible is not a mere appurtenance of that section of ancient society which we know as "Israel." In its ultimate nature it is not a local fact. For the religion of the Bible has been propagated onward through history; and it is rapidly becoming a world-wide phenomenon. This proves that the religion of Israel contains elements of universality which are not found in other ancient systems of belief and worship. In considering biblical religion, we need temporarily to exclude the New Testament from the field of view. Our first concern is with the Old Testament. This is not to say that biblical sociology has nothing to do with the newer section of Scripture. It is merely recognition that the Old Testament comes first in order of time, and that it must be thoroughly comprehended before we can fully understand the later work. The Old Testament was the only Bible in the hands of the founder of Christianity. The place of Jesus in the world's history is determined by the universal way in which he applied the terms of Israel's religion to the human race. The Old Testament may be called the world's great manual of religion while the New Testament is important as its first great application. In study of the biblical problem we are therefore thrown back first of all upon the earlier composition. The question for us is, How came it that the religion of Israel possessed elements that were susceptible of common application to human society? We are told in the first book of the Old Testament that when God called Abraham he said to him, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." It is not so important for us to inquire whether Gen., chap. 12, is literally true, as it is to ask what was the social situation in which a passage like this could be written. Whence came Israel's consciousness of a world-wide mission? The universal character of biblical religion indicates the general

nature of the subject-matter treated by biblical sociology. The new discipline is concerned not merely with antiquities, for the Bible and its religion are the possessions of today. The spread of biblical religion throughout the world proves that there is in some way a community of nature between all the social situations in which it has figured. Biblical sociology is therefore a discipline having a broad reference. It can easily be taken as a concrete introduction to the standpoint of pure sociology. Its position gives it strategic importance in the sociological campaign, for it appeals to the religious material in the mental furniture of everybody in the modern world, and it is directly involved in the spiritual problems of personality up to which pure sociology leads.

When European civilization received the Bible from the ancient eastern world, there was inherited along with it a philosophy of biblical origins. This philosophy became—and still is—a part of the official orthodoxy of the Christian church. Its terms are those of *dualism*. According to the official view, the religion by which ancient Israel is distinguished from the rest of ancient society was imposed upon it at the beginning of the national history by the one God of the universe, acting under the name of “Jehovah,” or Yahweh. The immanent purpose of this action was to make Israel the teacher of true religion to all the world. The worship of Yahweh was therefore thrust upon Israel from the outside. It was an extraneous fact. It had no connection with existing forces of human society. It was a foreign thing, intruded from another world into the life of humanity. So much was it outside the habits of the children of Israel that they resisted this religion, and earned the titles, which are applied to them so frequently by biblical writers, of “rebellious house” and “stiff-necked people.”² Other opprobrious terms applied to Israel are “harlot” and “adulteress,” which indicate the unfaithfulness of the people to the service of Yahweh. Many biblical passages describe the Israelites as apostates from the beginning, having always turned away from

² Cf. Exod. 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; Num. 20:10; Deut. 9:6, 13; 31:27; Jer. 4:17; 5:23; 17:23; Ezek. 2:3, 5, 6, 8; 3:9, 26; 12:2, 3; 17:12; 24:3.

Yahweh to the worship of other gods. The entire history of Israel—from the invasion of Canaan to the great Babylonian exile—is regarded by this philosophy as a period of *discipline*. During this long period the people were chastised again and again for their inveterate rebellion, and were slowly prepared to become the exponents of true religion. Various punishments of increasing intensity were inflicted upon them. Spasmodic but ineffectual efforts at reform were made by the people themselves. At length, after a discipline of more than six hundred years, during which most of the Israelites had been scattered in foreign parts, the remainder were carried away into the great Babylonian exile. The Holy Land was thus denuded of its inhabitants; and the “rebellious house” was politically extinct. Israel in captivity suffered the supreme penalty for past sins. The exile was the turning-point in this remarkable history. In due time the remnant came back to their old home in Judah, and founded the Jewish church. This ecclesiastical polity represented the old Israelite kingdom. But unlike its pre-exilic parent, the Jewish church embraced the principle of complete devotion to Yahweh, the one God of the universe. Before the exile the Israelites had failed to put into practice the religion which had been thrust upon them at the beginning of the national history. But after the exile the Jewish Israelites made fanatical reparation for the shortcomings of their ancestors. Not until the return from Babylonia was the system finally established which had been commanded by Yahweh so many centuries before. According to this philosophy, moreover, the Bible itself is the literary deposit of these remarkable events. Holy Scripture is an infallible record, inspired by God, and therefore thrust into human history from the outside. This view of the subject sets up a sharp antithesis—a distinction in terms—between the history of ancient Israel and the history of the rest of the world. Accordingly, the history of Israel is *sacred*, while the history of the world at large is *profane*. By the same token the Bible is *holy*, while other literature is *secular*.

This philosophy of the history of Israel expresses the conceptions that most of us have been taught to associate with

the general subject. It is the first systematic philosophy of history ever promulgated; and it ought to be specially interesting to the sociologist, as it is the earliest recorded attempt to generalize a social situation. We are not just here concerned to ask whether it is a valid rendering of the facts. We are simply emphasizing it as a matter for preliminary attention. It is more or less familiar to all of us. For most people it is a commonplace which is either accepted as literally true, or ignored as if it were unworthy of serious thought. Whatever be our attitude with reference to it, we must admit that its terms are most remarkable. God himself bends down from the transcendent heaven, and, amid portents of awful power, binds a nation to his worship, and makes them his ministers to the world. As one biblical writer says:

For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and from one end of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it. Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that Yahweh your god did for you in Egypt before your eyes? (Deut. 4:32 f.)

The traditional philosophy of Israel's history stood unchallenged for many hundreds of years after the Bible had been imported into Europe. The Book and the Tradition came down the centuries hand in hand. There was no scientific investigation of Scripture during the "Middle Ages" that lie between ancient and modern history.

But at last, along with the revolutions that led out from the mediaeval period into the modern world, there began to be a new kind of biblical study. Careful, scientific investigation of Scripture now claimed a place for itself. Although it commenced in a very small, modest way, and although it made no atheistic professions, there was much prejudice against it. Those who cultivated it were persecuted by the Catholic and Protestant churches alike. The new investigation (as indicated in the former of the papers mentioned above) was at first

confined to inquiry into the nature of the documents composing the Old Testament. It was shown that these writings were compiled from a number of documents far older than the Bible itself; that the biblical writers were, in some cases, more than five hundred years distant from the events described; and that the authorship of the sacred book, instead of being simple, was a much more complex matter than had been supposed. This first phase of scientific biblical research is known as the *literary criticism* of the Bible. Investigation did not stop at this point, but led naturally to inquiry into the circumstances under which the different biblical documents came into existence. Biblical study thus gradually passed from the literary stage into a period in which the center of interest was transferred from the book itself to the history of the people who gave the book to the world. As one of the papers mentioned above gives the main facts connected with establishment of *historical criticism* of the Bible, we need not now reproduce them. The great, outstanding result of the new research is briefly reported as follows: The system of religion whereby ancient Israel is distinguished from the other peoples of antiquity was not imposed upon Israel from the outside at the beginning of the national history. On the contrary, it grew up out of the life of the people, and did not reach its final form until after the Babylonian exile. The religion of Yahweh was at first only a local cult, standing on the level of ordinary Semitic heathenism; and its transformation into a higher and purer system was a matter of slow development.

Thus we see that since the opening of the modern period the official philosophy of biblical history and religion has been challenged by opposing views. Although many conservative scholars defend the older doctrine, the new proposition has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of most biblical specialists in the great universities. The problem is the actual *origin* of biblical religion. Here is a definite area of ancient Semitic society wherein most remarkable events of *some* kind occurred, and from which came religious influences that have spread throughout the world. Now, what accounts for this whole situation—

there and here? What made the religion of Israel arise where it did? Why and how did it come to us? What brought Holy Scripture into the world? And why is the Bible the official sacred book of western civilization? Many are unwilling to admit the existence of the problem indicated by these questions. Some are offended by the suggestion that there is a problem where they find no difficulty whatever. The official view is that the religious conceptions and institutions of the Bible were "handed down from above." This we are told is the only adequate "explanation" of biblical religion. In the view of the older orthodoxy we have no ground for finding a problem here. The matter is very easy and simple. We already understand all that we can possibly understand about it; and there is no occasion for asking such questions. The traditional philosophy of Israel's history stands today as part of our official theology. But the modern intellect is in revolt against it. Now the fact that the older philosophy survives in the majority of religious people, and in the official formularies of theology, indicates as clearly as anything can that no rival has yet succeeded to its empire. This interesting situation demands careful study.

In the first place, the question is often raised *why* the older philosophy of the Bible was ever called in question. The implication here is that the reaction against the official view is a very special and mysterious thing. But it is neither special nor mysterious; for, as already hinted, it is merely an incident of the tremendous intellectual uplift that marked the transition from the mediaeval to the modern period. With the precise conditions leading up to the modern awakening we, of course, are not here concerned. Suffice it to note that the comparative stagnation of the middle ages gave place to a movement which recovered the literature of the ancients and made way for modern scientific discovery. The mediaeval teacher supported his propositions by appeal, not to facts, but to books. The modern awakening brought gradual emancipation from blind subservience to authority. Criticism of received ideas, upon the basis of observation and comparison of actual facts, led to the establishment of the sciences of astronomy, physics, chem-

istry, and biology. Meanwhile the study of ancient literature was going forward; and under this head came the *Bible*. The problems that have been raised with reference to biblical matters are no different in principle from those that have been raised in modern times about everything. The revolt against the older philosophy of Israel's history and literature is a part of the general modern reaction against ancient ways of thinking.

The next question that suggests itself is, Why does biblical criticism remain admittedly an *academic* movement, with little or no influence upon the rank and file of the people, and no effect upon official theology? As Professor Brown observes in the passage quoted in our paper on "Sociology and Theism," "the new phases of truth are not paralleled in the church by that careful attention and enthusiastic interest which alone can make them effective in the production of character. The people have not assimilated them. They appear indifferent to them." This frank admission by a biblical scholar of the front rank does not exaggerate the facts. Although biblical criticism has made its presence felt in the world, it is a movement among professional scholars. It lacks popular support. Here and there we find laymen whose views are affected by it; but it remains an academic fact. When we look at this remarkable situation from the standpoint of scientific research in other fields, we begin to see it in its true proportions. For we find that scientific results elsewhere have been thus far popularized more extensively than have the conclusions of biblical science. The people at large know nothing about the literary and historical criticism of the Bible. But the main, ruling conceptions of modern astronomy, of physics, of evolution, of the germ theory of disease, etc., filter down and strike root in the soil of the popular mind. Although the Bible is in all our homes and our churches, and although we have heard it read and preached from our youth up, the new knowledge about this book may be said to be almost hermetically sealed within the limits of the academic and professional world. The scholars know what is taking place. But the laity have neither part nor lot in the movement. This is no fault of the people. It is in the situation. Not only do the

results of modern biblical science fail to be popularized rapidly: but there is a vast ignorance of Scripture even as viewed from the older, traditional standpoint. We know the Bible, and yet we know it not. Let us be frank. Are we not, most of us, under the influence of the ancient dualistic view that the Bible and its religion were put into this world from an outside world? We carry about with us an impression that the Bible is a book specially adapted to the uses of aged saints, who are about to depart "this life" and who must prepare for the "world to come." We are taught to nourish our piety on scattered passages, wrenched from their context, and brought together for purposes of spiritual edification. We are familiar with the proposition that it is our duty to read the Bible. We know of saints who plod through the sacred volume once a year. Our minds are full of Bible verses and sentences that we are unable to locate. Our whole attitude toward this book is a paradox. As a people, we buy more Bibles than any other book. It is more familiar to us than any other literary composition. But we don't know much about it. When we hear the Bible referred to, we connect it at once with solemn-faced clerical persons, and churches, and coffins, and graveyards, and the "other world." The question before us, then, is not merely, Why do not the people know more about literary and historical criticism of the Bible? It widens into the comprehensive question, Why does the Bible count for so little in culture?

This question is not a hard one to answer if our premises are granted. According to the view here taken, the Bible is a fact for pure sociology. If this be true, the mystery of Scripture cannot be resolved until a good beginning has been made in scientific understanding of human society. Whatever the immediate cause of it may be, sociology in the abstract is the result of assumption of the natural science attitude with reference to society as a definite object of attention. The task of sociology does not suggest itself until those earlier sciences have been established which deal with what may be called the stage setting of society—i. e., the world outside of human life. It is necessary that we learn to take up the natural science attitude

toward the worlds of space, toward matter, toward organic life, and toward mind, before we can properly or profitably assume it with reference to such a complicated thing as human society. And not only this; but in order that the standpoint of sociology as the general science of social organization and evolution be reached, it is necessary that numerous attempts be made to solve special problems relating to government, law, industry, the family, the state, etc. Such attempts are essential to advertisement of the strict *interdependence of all social problems*.⁸ Perception of this truth reveals our need of correlating special problems of society within a single perspective. And this is the work of sociology. The amount of time required to start the sociological movement explains delay in comprehending the Bible as a part of the social process. Biblical criticism has just reached the point where it can pass into the sociological stage.

It is no injustice to say that the traditional view of the Bible is unreal or unnatural. It sets the history of Israel off in distinction from all other history. It insists on contrasting "nature" and the "supernatural." It goes on the assumption that the religious movement in Israel's life was controlled by forces different from those that preside over human life elsewhere. In many ways this dogma runs counter to the results of modern culture in such wise that, although we can philosophically assent to the underlying truth expressed—i. e., the guidance of a personal God in human history—we are unable to combine it, in its traditional form, with what is now known about the world and about human history at large. The old view claims that God acted through the history of Israel in a fundamentally different way from that in which he acts through history elsewhere. It sets up an antithesis between Israel and the rest of the world. And it claims that any rendering of the biblical situation which is not strictly in accord with its own terms drives God out of the Bible and out of human life. There can be no doubt that the philosophy which our fathers inherited

⁸ Under this head will come numerous writers like Hobbes, Montesquieu, Adam Smith, Buckle, Maine, etc.

along with the Bible has alienated from the church, and kept away from the Scriptures, many cultured persons who are glad to believe that there is a personal Providence at work in the world. So long as we take the Bible and its religion as if they were put into *this* world from *another* world—so long as we regard them as imposed upon us from the *outside*—just so long shall we regard the Bible as a thing essentially *outside* of our main interests in this present life.

Biblical criticism has been a noble preparation for the break-up of the older, "outside" view of the Bible. It has been taking many steps preliminary to final displacement of the ancient philosophy by a more natural rendering of the biblical situation. As we remarked a little while ago, the whole movement of modern scholarship with reference to this problem centers upon the proposition that the religion of the Bible, instead of being put into the life of Israel from the outside, arose from and within the life of Israel by a process of natural development. Notwithstanding its emphasis upon the *fact* of development, biblical criticism has not been carried far enough to show *how* and *why* the Bible and its religion are actually involved in the history of Israel and in the wider life of mankind. It has exhibited the characteristics of the different biblical documents. It has done much toward showing the relation of the documents to the actual course of the history. But it has not given us a clear-cut, connected view of the fundamental forces that controlled the history of Israel and shaped its ecclesiastical system. It has not given us a vivid insight into what may be called the *dynamics* of the biblical situation. This it cannot do so long as it remains a process of literary and historical criticism in the present conventional sense of these terms. It has been well said by Professor Robertson, of Glasgow, that modern biblical criticism is very strong in minute analysis, but weak in the face of great controlling facts.

The distinctive task of biblical sociology is to explain the actual origin of the religious constitution of ancient Israel. According to the philosophy which we have inherited along with the Bible, there was given to the people of Israel, at the beginning

of their national history, a system of religion which was composed of two distinct elements. One of these elements was a very elaborate ritual organization presided over by the priesthood. It consisted of a circle of institutions revolving about the sacrifice, the altar, and the sanctuary. It was a complex machinery of worship, intended to fix the mind and heart of Israel upon Yahweh. This element of elaborate ritual organization is called in a general way the *priestly element*. The characteristic of this phase of the religion is that it is the external, objective element in the system. It is the part that makes appeal to the physical senses—the part that can be seen by the eye and handled with the hands. But along with the priestly, objective, external phase of the constitution there was another feature of a different kind. This was the remarkable and powerful emphasis upon the demands of morality between man and man in the common walks of life. This feature of Israel's religion was in special charge of the prophets. Hence it is called the *prophetic element*. The original meaning of the Hebrew term which we translate "prophet" is that of a speaker or preacher on behalf of another person. The work of the prophet had but little to do with forecasting the future. The prophet was first of all a teacher of morality. He stood for the ethical qualities which we describe by the terms "justice," "kindness," and "righteousness." The characteristic of the prophetic element is that, instead of appealing to the physical senses, like the priestly element, its appeal is to the heart. It is, therefore, the internal, or subjective, element in the constitution.

The point of contact between these two elements is the worship of Yahweh, the god of Israel. Priest and prophet united upon the platform of service to Yahweh; but they differed seriously in their emphasis upon the *nature* of worship. The course of biblical history shows a wide breach between prophet and priest. The priests emphasized their own special work of external organization and forms of worship, but paid little or no attention to the demands of personal morality and social regeneration. In other words, the priests tended to

identify religion with mere outward acts of worship, in which the soul approaches God and leaves humanity behind. On the other hand, the prophets identified the worship of Yahweh with moral righteousness, and made small account of the external machinery of religion. In other words, the prophets represented the tendency to identify religion with the universal struggle for social reform and moral development. Every candid student of history will admit that the principle of organization is necessary in human society; but it was just at this point that the prophets of ancient Israel were weak. Prophets are never good organizers. They stand for ideas rather than for machinery; and Israel's prophets were no exception to this rule.

In exhibiting the rise of the biblical idea of God as an incident of the social process, biblical sociology undertakes to explain the development of the priestly-prophetic system. It ought to be emphasized here that this discipline has nothing to do with the origins of religion and of the idea of God apart from ancient Israel. We are not investigating the origin of *religion* but the origin of *biblical* religion. It is no part of the business of biblical sociology to account for the existence of the idea of God in the human mind, or for the origin of religious worship in human society. For religion in general is one of the primary data upon which biblical sociology works. Religious ideas and worship were not peculiar to ancient Israel. All the peoples of antiquity were religious. The origin of religion in general is a fascinating problem; but it falls outside the sphere of investigations like the present. For we proceed upon the assumption that the people of Israel had religion to start with before they acquired the *distinctive* religion of the Bible. The problem before us is to show how a religion standing on the common level of ancient heathenism could be transformed into the religion which is peculiar to Israel. The final solution of this problem, we maintain, is not a matter of literary or historical criticism, but a task for pure sociology. And pure sociology, in the attitude of treating this problem, becomes *biblical* sociology.

As soon as the Bible is understood from the sociological

standpoint, the respective provinces of science, theology, and philosophy will be marked out more plainly to our vision than at any earlier time. We are far from claiming that biblical sociology will inaugurate a revolution. It will merely help to crystallize a visible tendency. It will not tell the leaders of thought anything essentially new. It will help to organize the material of culture into shape fit for assimilation by a larger public. As we have published in this *Journal* two papers on biblical sociology we feel a greater freedom than would otherwise be possible in voicing the implicit demand of the scientific spirit for explanation of the mystery of Scripture. Our stand on the relation between science and religion is indicated sufficiently in the second of these papers. Enough has been said to show that while biblical sociology subverts many opinions held in the name of theology, it is a thoroughly constructive proposition which does no violence to the essentials of Christianity. After a period of reaction against the claims of religion, the modern world is undoubtedly advancing into a return movement. The phenomena of religion are being examined from the standpoint of science with more care than at any previous time. Not only this; but the earlier materialism and agnosticism is being replaced by a growing faith. It is our hope that biblical sociology will be a factor in the present revival of interest in spiritual things. "There are not lacking signs in England and America, as well as in other countries," writes Professor F. M. Davenport, "that the so-called age of skepticism is warming toward an age of faith. The gentle heat has touched already some mature men of science and many young men in the colleges and universities. The transformation is at once intellectual and spiritual."

The method of biblical sociology is, of course, largely inductive. There was a time when the western world knew practically nothing about the ancient eastern civilization. But the Bible is no longer our only source of knowledge about the Orient. Modern research has disclosed a tremendous mass of material relative to the life and customs of the ancient East. The Israelites were simply one of the families of the great

Semitic race; and, like other nations, they came forward into the light of history out of the darkness of prehistoric barbarism. Their fundamental institutions were not in any sense peculiar to Israel, but are found in all the Semitic nations. Biblical sociology therefore makes use of material inside and outside the Bible. It approaches Israelite society as a system of institutions common to Semitic antiquity. Accordingly we examine the situation from the standpoints of kinship, life, industrial organization, and religious practice. In this way we obtain the data necessary to a survey of the remarkable and profoundly interesting *social process* that brought the distinctive religion of the Bible into existence.

II. NATURE OF THE BIBLICAL MATERIAL

Before turning to the programme sketched above, some further introduction is necessary. If the sociologist is to examine the institutions of Hebrew society, he must know how to handle his principal source of direct information. Although great help is now had from researches into the general field of eastern history, the Bible is the main depository of the facts directly in question. In order to work intelligently upon this problem, the sociologist needs to acquaint himself at the outset with what modern research has discovered about the nature of the biblical material.

When we first approach the Bible, the material that comes before us is perplexing and unwieldy. We are in a strange land that has but little in common with the experiences of the life of today. The succession of events appears to be interminable. The perspective is confusing. It is a matter of great difficulty to get our bearings in such a way as to obtain a satisfactory view of the situation. We hardly know where to begin. The Bible comes to us from a nation called "Israel;" and at first thought it would seem to be a history of this people. But if we turn to the introduction, and begin reading its remarkable statements, we find nothing about Israel.

The opening book of Scripture carries us far back to a dateless time when the visible universe was created, or fashioned, by

God, who appears under the designations "Elohim" and "Yahweh." According to the cosmology of ancient times, the earth on which we live is not a small part of the scheme of things; it is in the center of the system. Therefore, after the earth has been created and fitted up with vegetation, the sun, moon and stars are brought into existence for the purposes merely of giving light on the earth, and regulating its times and seasons. After this the creative work centers again upon the earth, and the lower animals come into being. Presently God creates man out of the dust of the ground, and then gives him as a companion a woman. The first human pair are placed in the midst of a garden; but hardly have they begun housekeeping before they transgress the divine command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of *good and evil*.

It is aside from our purpose to inquire into the specific interpretation of this passage. But its general meaning is made clear by an inductive study of all the biblical material before us. An examination of the Book of Genesis in the light of the following divisions of the Bible yields this important principle, which must be carried firmly in mind along with any course of scriptural discipline, literary, historical, theological, or sociological: *The Bible is not a history, but a work of edification.* In form it is a history of Israel, prefaced by a brief account of the world at large before the appearance of the people of Israel upon the scene. But the Bible is history in form alone. In substance its purpose is not historical. Its real object is moral and spiritual edification under the guise of history. It begins innocently enough, as if it were a mere disinterested narrative without ulterior purpose. But we hardly have time to reflect upon its opening sentences before we are plunged into the midst of the world-wide struggle of *good and evil*. The very first human pair go wrong. They do *evil* in the sight of God. There is no hint of the ethical problem so long as one man is taken by himself. But as soon as two human beings come in contact, the problem emerges. *The Bible assumes the conventional ethical categories without philosophic criticism; and it employs these categories as the fundamental terms of its*

philosophy of the social situation. From the standpoint of this fact, the work of biblical sociology is to trace out the influence of these categories in the organization and evolution of the distinctive religious system of ancient Israel. The descendants of the first man and woman overspread the earth, and are themselves evil. Finally, mankind comes into such a terrible case that there is only one *good* man to be found in the welter of universal wickedness. "Noah was a *righteous* man, and *perfect* in his generations." As for the rest of the world:

Yahweh saw that the *wickedness* of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only *evil* continually. And it repented Yahweh that he had made man in the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And Yahweh said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground. (Gen. 6:5 f.)

Accordingly there comes a deluge of water which drowns all mankind save Noah and his family, who float safely in a great boat. After the water has done its deadly work and subsided, God waits to see if the children of Noah do any better than their fathers. But with a perverse atavism the descendants of Noah inherit the evil tendencies of the first man rather than the good character of their closer parent.

It now becomes plain to God that he has to deal with the same situation that he encountered before the flood. He had tried to wash away the world's evil by water; but the flood would not work. He now changes his entire plan of dealing with the problem. The flood represented the method of *destruction*; but instead of this it is decided to try the method of redemption. The first plan was *physical*; the second was ethical. The new method consisted in choosing a certain family, and educating that family to be so good that the rest of the world should follow their example. The first person to become a part of the machinery of redemption is Abraham. He is instructed to come out from his father's house, and go into the land of Canaan. His descendants are to inherit this land, becoming a great nation through which all the families of the earth are to be blessed. Abraham begets Isaac and other children; and Isaac in turn begets Jacob. The divine purpose of

redemption descends through this line of Abraham's progeny. Other branches of the family are brought forward for brief treatment, and then dismissed from the main stream of the biblical narrative, attention being centered upon Jacob. Here, for the first time, the name *Israel* comes before us. It is another term for Jacob. This famous character becomes the father of twelve sons. A famine drives Jacob and his children out of Canaan into the land of Egypt. Here they increase and multiply until they become the conventional twelve tribes of Israel. At last they leave Egypt, under the leadership of Moses, and set out for the land of Canaan. Stopping at Mount Sinai, or Horeb, they enter into covenant with God, receiving at a single stroke a large body of law regulating all their social institutions. This law binds them to the service of God alone, and forbids them to worship false gods. It identifies the service of God not only with a stated system of ritual, but with the principle of moral righteousness; while the service of the false gods is identified with the principle of evil. Here the contrast between ethical categories recalls again the motive dominating the Bible. The people are told that as soon as they enter the land of Canaan, they shall stand between the two mountains, Ebal and Gerezim, and shall pronounce a *blessing* upon the one, and a *curse* upon the other. The blessing is to be theirs if they worship the true God; the curse is to blast them if they serve the false gods.

This brief sketch gives us a closer view of the biblical philosophy of history spoken of in an earlier connection. It carries us to the end of the Pentateuch—the first five books of the Bible—and leaves the children of Israel standing on the borders of the land of Canaan.

Immediately following the Pentateuch is the Book of Joshua. The formal object of this book is to give an account of the Israelite invasion of Canaan. According to this narrative, the children of Israel enter Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, and carry everything before them with a high hand. They make a clean sweep of the territory, and then divide it by lot among the twelve tribes. The general impression conveyed

by the Book of Joshua does not agree with that of the next following books. Its account of the invasion is not credited by the leading biblical scholars, many of whom regard the book as in the same class with the Pentateuch. Joshua is in fact so closely assimilated with its predecessors that for some purposes we regard the first division of biblical material as a "hexateuch," or six-book group, instead of a "pentateuch," or collection of five books.

Leaving the first six books behind us, we immediately come upon another group of related narratives. This collection goes by the names of Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Going back over the ground covered by Joshua, it gives the history of Israel from the invasion down to the great Babylonian exile; in other words, from the time at which the Israelites acquired the land until the time at which they lost it. The period covered by Judges, Samuel, and Kings is therefore a long one—more than six hundred years in duration. A course on biblical sociology holds the material of this group in the center of attention. On the one side of the long narrative contained in Judges, Samuel, and Kings, is the Hexateuch, which may be taken as an introduction to it. On the other side stand the prophetic books, from Amos to Ezekiel, which may be taken as a commentary on the period covered by it.

The narrative of Judges, Samuel, and Kings, equally with that of the Hexateuch, bears out the proposition that the Bible is not properly called a history, but a work of edification, written from the standpoint of the worship of Yahweh as against the worship of other gods. Sentences, and even paragraphs, here and there throughout these books indicate that Judges, Samuel, and Kings are prepared under control of the same leading ideas that we find in the Hexateuch.

We have spoken of the prophetic works, from Amos to Ezekiel, as a commentary on the history of Israel from the time of the invasion to the time of the Babylonian exile. When we reach these works, it is as if a mask were taken away from the Bible. There we encounter material which is not even historical in form. The writings of the prophets contain abundant inci-

dental reference to history; but in both form and substance these works are exhortations to serve Yahweh and forsake other gods, to seek righteousness and shun evil conduct.

The next important fact that we shall notice with regard to the biblical material may be formulated as follows: *The Bible expresses judgments upon earlier stages of the social process from the standpoint of later stages in the process.* This fact will call for emphasis in this form later. At present it may be re-stated in another form thus: The Bible as it stands before us has plainly come through the hands of writers who lived many centuries *after* the events described. It hardly seems fitting to exhibit the proofs of a point like this in the main text of a sociological treatise. The truth expressed is a commonplace of biblical criticism, and is fully covered in modern introductions to the literature of the Old Testament. But it cannot be taken for granted that sociological students are familiar with this fact; and they need a vivid introductory impression of the *post-eventum* nature of the biblical material as it now lies before us. To this end we give here a few of the proofs that the larger part of the Bible is the work of authors who are not contemporary with the events described.

In Gen. 14:14 we read: "And when Abraham heard that his brother was taken captive, he led forth his trained men, born in his house, and pursued as far as Dan." This passage relates to events that are said to have occurred far back in the patriarchal period, hundreds of years *before* the Israelite invasion of Canaan. If we now turn to Judg., chap. 18, we find that the city called *Dan* in Gen., chap. 14, did not receive that name until *after* the Israelite invasion of Canaan. There we read:

And the Danites came unto the city of Laish, unto a people quiet and secure, and smote them with the edge of the sword, and they burnt the city with fire. . . . And they built the city and dwelt therein. And they called the name of the city *Dan*, after the name of Dan, their father, who was born unto Israel. Howbeit, the name of the city at first was Laish.

This comparison of passages indicates that the Book of Genesis in its present form has come down to us through the

hands of a writer who knew the city in question by its later name. Instead of saying that Abraham pursued as far as Laish (the earlier name), he says that Abraham pursued as far as *Dan* (the later name). This indicates that the authorship of Genesis was many centuries distant from the events described. The same fact, in even more palpable form, is brought out by further scrutiny of the passage above reproduced from the eighteenth chapter of Judges. After mentioning the settlement of the city by the Danites, it continues thus: "And Jonathan, the son of Gershom . . . , he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan *until the day of the captivity of the land.*" Now the captivity of Israel was an event far along in the history. It was at least four hundred years after the events described in Judg., chap. 18. Hence, the Book of Judges, in its present shape, has come through the hands of authors who look back over several centuries upon the facts with which they deal. Many other instances of the same nature occur; but after the above citations we need not canvass them in detail. We find a large part of the biblical material in the Books of Kings. Much of our information regarding more than four hundred years of Israelite history comes from these books alone; but we need to bear in mind that the narrative of Kings carries the history down to the Babylonian exile. The authorship of Kings, therefore, must be at least as late as the exile. And the same observations apply even more emphatically to the Books of Chronicles, which go back to the first man and then come down to the exile.

We pass now to another fact, equally impressive and convincing, which not only buttresses the proposition about lateness of authorship, but throws light upon the method by which the biblical material was brought together. In many passages the authors of the Bible cite by name earlier books upon which they depend for their facts. In the twenty-first chapter of Numbers the writer transfers into his own text a passage from an ancient work known as *The Book of the Wars of Yahweh*. The tenth chapter of Joshua reproduces a passage from an earlier work which was called *The Book of the Upright*. The

same book is also cited in the first chapter of the Second Book of Samuel, where a long passage is quoted from it called "The Song of the Bow." The First and Second Books of Kings are very brief summaries of the reigns of successive monarchs. The reader is referred many times to writings now lost. One of these is called *The Book of the Acts of Solomon*. Another is referred to as *The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel*; another, as *The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah*. The last two named are not the "Chronicles" now found in the Bible, but are independent earlier works which have been lost. Outside the biblical references no traces of them are now to be found.

These observations about the lateness of biblical writers, and concerning their dependence upon earlier works, apply more to the Hexateuch, Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles than to the literary prophets from Amos to Ezekiel. The prophetic books are more nearly the productions of writers who were contemporary with the events described. It is true that these works of the prophets also bear marks of having passed through the hands of later authors; but their treatment in this respect is not so extensive, nor so systematic, as that of the other biblical material just named. This distinction between the prophetic books and the other works is parallel to the contrast already noted in regard to the Bible as a work of edification.

With regard to the actual authorship of the biblical material, except the work of the prophets, we have no information. For, as just emphasized, the Bible, as it stands before us, is evidently the work of *secondary* writers, who collected and arranged the compositions of earlier authors. This method of book-making, so foreign to the modern mind, was not strange to antiquity. It was a common practice in ancient literature; and the Bible is nothing exceptional in this respect.

Not only is the Bible a product of many hands; it is written from a variety of standpoints. In some places we encounter views of the history of Israel that conflict with views found elsewhere. A remarkable instance is found in connection with the bloody revolution of Jehu in the ninth century B. C. At

this time the house of Ahab was in possession of the throne of Northern Israel; but there was a powerful party that wanted to see the family of Ahab deprived of the crown. Accordingly, some of the prophets of Yahweh incited the army officer Jehu to exterminate the reigning house and seize the kingdom. In the ninth chapter of the Second Book of Kings we read the commission as follows:

Thus saith Yahweh, the god of Israel, to Jehu, I have anointed thee king over the people of Yahweh, even over Israel. And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master. . . . For the whole house of Ahab shall perish.

Jehu carries out this bloody order by assassinating several hundred persons who either belong to, or support, the family of Ahab. He then mounts the throne, and is accepted as the legitimate king of Israel. In the next chapter we read:

And Yahweh said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.

This is positive and unequivocal. The bloody murders carried out by Jehu were supported by the prophets of Yahweh in the name of their god; and then Yahweh himself set the seal of his approval upon them. It should be observed here that part of the bloodshed caused by Jehu occurred in a place called "Jezreel;" and all of his murders were spoken of later under the brief and convenient phrase, "The blood of Jezreel." A hundred years after the time of Jehu we find that an entirely different view of the revolution is taken. We read in the first chapter of the prophet Hosea:

The word of Yahweh that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri. . . . And Yahweh said unto Hosea, Go take thee a wife. . . . So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived and bare him a son, and Yahweh said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu.

Here we find two standpoints with regard to the same thing. According to one view, Yahweh commanded and commended the bloodshed whereof Jehu was the cause. According to the other view, Yahweh regarded these murders as a great load of crime, whose dark shadow still hung over the land a hundred

years later. There is no reasonable reconciliation of these passages. We are dealing here with inconsistent positions. Conflicting views of this kind are frequently found in the Bible. Especially significant are the differences of opinion between prophets. A prophet would come forward in the name of Yahweh with a proclamation to the king or to the people. Another prophet, with equal confidence, would express a wholly different view in the name of Yahweh. The question of prophecy never took a form satisfactory to all the contemporaries of any given prophet. The author of a passage in Deut., chap. 18, attempts to deal with the problem in this way: "If thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word that Yahweh hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of Yahweh, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing that Yahweh hath not spoken. The prophet hath spoken it presumptuously. Thou shalt not be afraid of him." This is only a special form of the commonplace principle that opinions about what ought to be done are to be judged in the light of events.

This leads to the question of our attitude toward such expressions as, "Yahweh said thus and thus," or "Yahweh did thus and thus." For the biblical material frequently brings this form of statement before us. It needs to be emphasized that such expressions, instead of being peculiar to Israel, were common to antiquity. Let us go outside the Bible for a moment, and read some selections from the famous Moabite Stone. This interesting object was discovered in 1868 by Rev. F. Klein, of the Church Missionary Society. The translation is by Professor Driver, of Oxford.

I am Mesha . . . King of Moab. My father reigned over Moab for thirty years, and I reigned after my father. And I made this high place for Chemosh [the national god] *because he had saved me from all the assailants, and because he had let me see my desire upon all them that hated me.* Omri, King of Israel, afflicted Moab for many days *because Chemosh was angry with his land.* And his son succeeded him; and he also said, I will afflict Moab; but I saw my desire upon him, and upon his house, and Israel perished with an everlasting destruction. . . . *And Chemosh said unto me, Go take Nebo against Israel.* And I went by night, and fought against it,

and slew the whole of it . . . and I took thence the vessels of Yahweh, and I dragged them before Chemosh. And the King of Israel had built Yahas, and abode in it while he fought against me. *But Chemosh drove him out from before me. . . . And Chemosh said unto me, Go down, fight against Horonen.*

Turning at once to the eleventh chapter of the Book of Judges, we find the Israelite chieftain, Jephtha, addressing a foreign people in these words :

Yahweh, god of Israel, hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldst thou possess them? Wilt thou not possess that which *Chemosh* thy god giveth thee to possess?

In the twenty-first chapter of the Book of Numbers we read :

Woe unto thee, Moab! Thou art undone, O people of *Chemosh*. He hath given his sons as fugitives, and his daughters into captivity.

The point for emphasis here is, that foreign peoples took up the same general attitude toward *their* gods that Israel did with reference to Yahweh. Foreigners quoted their gods, and referred to their mighty deeds, in the same general terms that Israel used in speaking of the words and acts of Yahweh. If we would handle the biblical material intelligently, we must approach the Bible in full view of the fact that *the psychological and theological forms of its conceptions are nothing peculiar to it.*

The problem of the Bible and its religion is now fairly before us. In what terms are we to describe the forces that actually brought the Bible into existence? Who was Yahweh? If Yahweh was but a local god, as the earlier biblical documents declare, and as the earlier heroes of the history believed, how came his worship to be distinguished from that of Chemosh and the horde of other deities whose existence was acknowledged in ancient society? How did the antagonism between Yahweh and the other gods arise? How did this antagonism come to be a *symbol* of the world-wide conflict between "good" and "evil"? What accounts for the co-operation of the hostile interests represented by priests and prophets in the construction

of the system of religion which finally became the distinguishing mark of Israel in the world? What is the actual bond of community between the distinctive religion of the Bible, and the religious institutions of all societies that have adopted the Bible as their official sacred book? These are the questions that biblical sociology sets itself to answer.