

Biblical Sociology. III

Author(s): Louis Wallis

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### BIBLICAL SOCIOLOGY. III.

LOUIS WALLIS  
Ohio State University

In the first instalment of material under this head it was proposed to begin by treating ancient Israel in its earlier character as a system of institutions common to Semitic antiquity. The second instalment accordingly took up the subject from two standpoints, "The Approach to Israelite Society," and "Kinship Institutions of Israel." Carrying with us the facts thus far brought out, we shall now investigate this ancient society from two other points of view in succession—the economic, or industrial, and the religious, or ecclesiastical. Having accumulated these data as the fundamental terms of our treatise, we shall then be ready to consider the central problem of biblical sociology—the process by which the original Semitic institutions of Israel were transformed into the distinctive system of Judaism.

#### I. INDUSTRIAL INSTITUTIONS OF ISRAEL

The Israelites present the spectacle of nomadic, desert clans invading and occupying a circumscribed area. In so doing they left behind the primitive life of the wilderness and gradually acquired the habits of settled civilization. In leaving the desert, they were drawn into the complex network of ancient eastern culture. They were forced into the center of a great stream of progress which had carried oriental society upward from barbarism into the earliest of the great historic civilizations. The incomers could no longer live the life of petty, self-centered clans of the wilderness. They found themselves in the midst of new conditions in which their environment contrasted greatly with the desert. They must now face new problems, and must bear their part on the broader stage of world-history, whether they would or not.

This being the case, it follows that in order to grasp the sig-

nificance of Israel's problems in the new home, we must envisage the larger social process with which Israel became involved upon entering the land of Canaan. It is now a commonplace that civilization is the result of a development, or upward evolution, from lower levels. This movement began long before the times of written record; and it goes on around us today. It commenced below the level of that rough-stone age whose remains are widely distributed over the world. It went on through the smooth-stone age, and passed into the age of metals. At this period a *part* of the human race entered the age of written history. The earliest of the great historic civilizations came upon the stage of the world; and it is with this movement that we must articulate the problem of ancient Israel.

Whether or not human progress runs back to some lower animal species, we must at least accept the view that men once lived on the earth without knowledge of the industrial arts, and scattered about in small, wandering groups. We have pointed out that the clans of Israel in the desert were necessarily small groups of people. Now, the conditions that made it impossible for the nomadic Israelites to live together in large masses also held men apart everywhere before the dawn of civilization. Extensive societies—large organizations numbering thousands and millions—were impossible in prehistoric times for two very good reasons: (1), the uncertain food supply offered by the uncultivated earth; (2), ignorance of the material arts by which the earth's resources are adapted to the use of man. With reference to the dispersed condition of primitive man we reproduce evidence given by Mr. Lewis Morgan, a sociologist and a careful student of Indian life, who was adopted into the Seneca tribe. The bearing of these facts on the condition of the nomadic Israelites is clear:

Numbers within a given area were limited by the amount of subsistence it afforded. When fish and game were the main reliance for food, it required an immense area to maintain a small tribe. After farinaceous food was added to fish and game, the area occupied by a tribe was still a large one in proportion to the number of the people. New York, with its forty-seven thousand square miles, never contained at any time more than twenty-five thousand Indians, including the Iroquois, the Algonkins on the east side of

the Hudson and upon Long Island, and the Eries and Neutral Nation in the western section of the state.<sup>4</sup>

Not only were great social bodies impossible in prehistoric times; but, as we saw in the last paper, the earliest records and traditions of all peoples tell of migrations. It is, indeed, plain that the Israelites of the Arabian desert could not remain long upon one spot. For, ignorant of the industrial arts, dependent upon the uncertain gifts of the uncultivated ground, they were forced to wander about restlessly in search of food.

These considerations take us on to another important point: The early records and traditions of all peoples tell of conflicts which resolve themselves into struggles about the *natural base of supplies*. The facts of savage life tell the same story. The small, nomadic societies of prehistoric times must therefore have struggled with each other for the means of subsistence. The traditions of Israel tell of many fierce battles before and after the settlement in Canaan.

We know that natural goods, like water, fruit, and game, are not equally spread over the earth at the present time, and that the food supply could not have been equally distributed in prehistoric times. Thus, while some groups were finding enough to sustain life, others were getting little or no food. It is easy to see how natural inequalities, and human ignorance of industrial art, were at the basis of early struggles over the source of supply.

The issue of a conflict between two groups over the possession of a locality that would furnish food for but one group was of course the extermination of the vanquished by the victors. The defeated group could not be suffered to live, or the purpose of the struggle itself would be frustrated. Generally speaking, the attitude of competing societies in prehistoric times must have been that of absolute hostility, leading to utter extermination of the vanquished.

These conclusions respecting early society may be set with profit alongside some concrete pictures of the lowest savages at present on earth. We cite first the testimony of Mr. Darwin,

<sup>4</sup> Morgan, *Ancient Society* (New York, 1878), p. 111.

whose travels find record in his *Journal of Researches*. He is describing the Fuegians of South America. After showing the primitive conditions under which they live, he goes on to say:

The different tribes have no government or chief; yet each is surrounded by other hostile tribes, speaking different dialects, and separated from each other by a deserted border of neutral territory. The cause of their warfare appears to be *the means of subsistence*. In this extreme part of South America, man exists in a lower state of improvement than in any other part of the world.<sup>2</sup>

Crossing the Pacific into Australia we find savage tribes but little advanced over the Fuegians. We cite now from Ratzel's work, describing the races of mankind:

It is impossible to understand the Australians apart from their extensive nomadism, to which all the natural qualities of the land contribute. At the bottom of it lies the deficiency of water and the *unequal distribution* of food, plants, and animals, which partly results from this. The dry season causes a large number of places otherwise favorable to habitation to be simply impossible. . . . There are few permanent oases, and the arrival of damp monsoons, few and far between as they are, is an insufficient check upon *nomadism*. Vegetable food-stuffs are often to be sought at great distances. . . . The lack of mountains and large rivers over the largest part of the country makes for migration, and if we further regard its isolated position, the conditions of Australia are as unfavorable as we can conceive for the development of a settled population. Thus the nomad tribes go about, the men with their weapons in front, the women with the baggage and children in the rear. The length of stay at any place depends upon the quantity of food, water, and other conveniences; but even so they seldom remain in one place longer than a fortnight, owing to the pressure exerted by *other groups*. One can hardly speak of agriculture among the Australians. Only traces of it have been observed. The life of the Australian native affords little room for industrial activity. Infanticide was and is very widespread, and in any case the number of births is out of all proportion to that of the children who survive. . . . Nature, being for the most part unpropitious, renders *dispersion* compulsory; but, at the same time, knits the bonds of the *family group* closer.<sup>3</sup>

Very similar to the above is the primitive life of the Semitic

<sup>2</sup> Darwin, *Journal of Researches* (London, 1894, Ward, Lock and Bowden), pp. 213, 214, 215, 228.

<sup>3</sup> Ratzel, *History of Mankind* (London, 1897, Butler's translation), Vol. I, pp. 347, 348, 363, 365, 377.

race from which the Israelite clans emerged. The following passage is part of a quotation made elsewhere; but it is worth repeating:

The peculiar conditions of life which the Arabian deserts and oases have presented for millenniums are the matrix in which the Semitic character, as it is known to us, was born. It is a land of barren and volcanic mountains, of broad stretches of dry, waste, unproductive soil, and wide areas of shifting sand, interrupted by an occasional oasis—a land where, for the most part, water is difficult to obtain, where famine is always imminent, where hunger, thirst, heat and exposure are the constant experiences of the inhabitants. The Bedawi are always underfed. They suffer constantly from hunger and thirst; and their bodies thus weakened fall an easy prey to disease.<sup>4</sup>

Passages like these, carrying us far back toward prehistoric social conditions, could be multiplied indefinitely. The evidence is overwhelming that mankind once lived without knowledge of the industrial arts, widely dispersed in small, nomadic, intensely hostile societies, each of which was bound together by the ties of kinship.

The proposition upon which we are now advancing is this: The achievements of civilization are possible only when large numbers are embraced within the same social organization. The higher material and intellectual progress which is distinguished from barbarism has not been generated within dispersed and isolated societies. Accordingly, we must inquire what were the conditions under which the human species was crystallized into nations and empires. We shall find that economic factors of tremendous importance were involved in the process by which prehistoric family groups were consolidated into the vast social bodies of historic times. Moreover, we shall find that the underlying economics of Israelite society agree perfectly with corresponding items in the ancient Semitic world at large. The relation of biblical sociology to the facts now under consideration will shortly become clear.

Rising slowly above the savage condition, man learned how to fashion rough tools of wood and stone, then utensils of polished stone, and at length implements of metal. Meanwhile he became expert in hunting and fishing, acquired the use of fire,

<sup>4</sup> Barton, *Semitic Origins* (New York, 1902), p. 28.

domesticated some of the lower animals, and learned to save seeds for planting. Material progress, however, has not been achieved by mankind at an equal rate: some have shot ahead, while others have lagged behind. Progress, therefore, made more conspicuous the earlier inequality of natural advantages already emphasized. This must have operated to increase warfare. But it nevertheless increased the sum total of peace; for, through the greater and more certain food supply it secured the enlargement of societies by affiliation of clans and reduction of infanticide. The number living at peace with each other *inside of group limits* was therefore greater than before.

But in a profounder and more dramatic way did material progress change the direction of the social forces. Prehistoric warfare at its earliest verge, as already noted, was merely a struggle for *extermination*, wherein the vanquished were slain by the victors. But one of the effects of material progress upon society was to transform war from a struggle for extermination into a struggle for *control*. Let us notice closely the situation here developing, for it carries us upward by a direct route through the mists and uncertainties of prehistoric times into the light of that ancient civilization in which the people of Israel had their career.

Material progress endowed labor with the power of creating *surplus goods* over and above immediate needs. In war, the victors instead of slaughtering the vanquished, as hitherto, now began to spare life and to enslave their enemies. Thus we see that along with the rise of slavery came the rise of a ruling and proprietary class. In the struggle for existence, the larger, better organized, and more powerful groups conquered and absorbed the smaller and less powerful. And thus there came to be societies embracing affiliated clans, with an upper layer of freemen and a lower stratum of slaves. At last there appeared social bodies of national dignity, permanently settled in favored regions like the valleys of the Nile, the Tigris, and the Euphrates; and the curtain had risen on the stage of history. The ancient oriental civilization comes forward through the haze of myth and legend, out of the darkness of prehistoric times, with all the

marks of its earlier history strong upon it. The nations of the ancient East were engaged in wars of defense and conquest; and they were stratified into two principal classes, whereof the lower was the property of the upper.<sup>5</sup>

Before the beginnings of material progress the institution of slavery was not a factor in human life. It does not prevail, for instance, among the backward Fuegians of South America. The prime condition of slavery is that labor have the power to create a surplus over immediate needs. Slavery comes with surplus goods.<sup>6</sup> Generally speaking, it originates when society passes over from the nomadic to the settled state; and it continues until social evolution advances to higher levels. Slavery was one of the fundamental institutions of ancient Israel. It was one of the pillars upon which the structure of society in Old Testament times was based. Its prevalence in Israel is hardly realized unless we study the biblical narratives and laws critically. Many times the Hebrew term rendered "servant" should be translated "slave." The fact of human bondage in ancient Israel should be approached, not in the light of modern ideals, but from the standpoint of the social process at large. It is well understood by scientific investigators that slavery was a great step in progress. We can truthfully represent ancient civilization under the figure of an *oasis* in the midst of a desert of savagery and barbarism. One of the functions of upper classes in ancient civilization was to undertake military campaigns against outside barbarians in order that the lower classes might enjoy the peace necessary to productive industry. If the enslaved classes had withdrawn, and attempted to set up conditions of equality and liberty, they either would have reverted to the primitive struggle for existence, or would have at once formed a new stratified society. No race ever could, or did, work its way up from the stone age into civilization on the basis of equality and liberty. It would have been impossible for free societies to organize and achieve

<sup>5</sup> Cf. paper by the present writer, in this *Journal* for May, 1902 (Vol. VII, pp. 763 f.), entitled "The Capitalization of Social Development."

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Nieboer, *Slavery as an Industrial System* (The Hague, 1900), p. 387: "Slavery as an industrial system is not likely to exist where subsistence depends on natural resources which are present in limited quantity."

the progress that has led up through the oriental, classic, and western civilizations into the social system of today. Modern democracy is as yet ignorant that it is a heavy pensioner upon despotic institutions.

In surveying the social process already sketched, we naturally go on from prehistoric beginnings into the circle of communities which included Israel as a late comer among them. Oriental civilization was the first group of societies to come forward into the light of history and work out a culture of sufficient strength to propagate itself onward in human experience. Here we discover the earliest beginnings of organized industry, education, politics, religion, and law that are known to us from written records. The Israelites themselves, upon settling in Canaan, became the beneficiaries of many centuries of progress.

We saw that when the people of Israel invaded Canaan they were unable to sweep the land clear of its earlier inhabitants. The walled cities mostly remained in possession of their former owners. But the incomers appropriated a large part of the country districts in the highlands. Some of the country Canaanites were, of course, killed in battle. But some were enslaved. The institution of slavery was already established in Canaanite society, as it was throughout the Semitic world. After the settlement of Israel, and the reduction of many Canaanites to bondage, later generations tried to account for the servile condition of the Canaanites by circulating a story about their putative ancestor, the youngest son of Noah. In accordance with the ideas of punishment common at that period, the Canaanites were said to be doomed to bondage as the penalty of a mistake made by their father Ham, wherefore the sentence was pronounced, "Cursed be Canaan. *A slave of slaves* [i. e., lowest of bondmen] shall he be unto his brethren" (Gen. 9:25). In this passage, as in many others, the English versions render by the word "servant" a Hebrew term, *ebed*, עֶבֶד, which is more accurately translated "slave." For instance, Ex. 21:2 is commonly translated "If thou buy a Hebrew servant," etc. Now, it is manifest that a servant, according to the modern idea of that word, cannot be *bought*. The Hebrew term here is the same as in

the other passage; and the Revised versions candidly put the word "bondman" in the margin.

In building up our conception of Israelite society, then, we must put the idea of slavery alongside the idea of kinship. Society consisted primarily of kinship groups, each of which was held together by the facts and fictions of the blood bond. The distinctions between the groups themselves had no reference to superiority or subordination, but merely to nearness or remoteness of kinship. The dividing lines were drawn through the vertical plane, so to speak, and left the groups on the same level with reference to each other. Within the groups, however, lines were drawn through the horizontal plane, above and below which were masters and slaves. In a community like ancient Israel a slave had to be attached to a family. Ancient society was always the political union of kinship groups which accumulated a lower class of slaves.

Slavery, however, is not the only basis for economic superiority and subordination. At first glance it does not appear that the social situation can be much affected by individual possession of the soil. But the institution of private land ownership is a great factor in the social problem. When the Israelites entered Canaan, the earlier population of the open country was in part exterminated, as the Book of Judges testifies, and partly enslaved, as in Gen. 9:25, cited above. The farm lands which thus became the spoil of war fell into possession of the heads of the families, or "father's houses," composing the clans of Israel. The upper class, therefore, in addition to its ownership of slaves held ownership in the soil. The effect of this institution was not so noticeable in the first few generations after the settlement as it was two or three centuries later, for instance at the time of Elijah. The amount of land was, of course, limited; and in time, through various causes, ownership of the soil concentrated in the hands of a small, wealthy class.

The leading industries among the ancient Semites were agriculture and cattle raising. These occupations were organized under the proprietorship of the upper class. The head of each Israelite family held land in the interest of his immediate circle

of relatives and dependents. So far as we can learn, there were no isolated farmhouses where single families dwelt alone. Such an arrangement would have been dangerous at that period of the world's history. The unsettled state of society, and the frequent inroads of desert clans, make a single establishment impracticable. Instead of this, a number of related families, constituting part of or all of a clan, would unite to form a rustic village. This was not a city in any sense, but merely a rural hamlet set in the midst of the fields and hills. The country districts were dotted with these tiny villages. They were collections of houses built close together without regard for architectural beauty or symmetrical arrangement of streets. Every morning all who could do so went forth to work in the adjacent fields; and at night they returned to the shelter and protection of the hamlet. A good illustration is found in the village of Gibeah, which lay a few miles northeast of Jerusalem in territory pertaining to the Benjaminite clan. This was a very small place, having only one main street. In Judges 19:16 we read, "And behold, there came an old man from his work *out of the field* at even." Gibeah was the home of Saul, who became one of the rulers of Israel. In I Sam. 11:4, 5 is the following: "Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul. And behold Saul came following the oxen *out of the field*." Israelite life in the country has this disposition wherever we catch sight of it. The boy David cares for the sheep of his father Jesse in the Judean hills; but the family headquarters are at the little village of Bethlehem (I. Sam., chap. 16). The home of Nabal the sheepmaster was in the village of Maon; but his work was in the adjoining fields of Carmel, "the garden land" (I Sam., chap. 25). The home of the great prophet Elisha was in the village of Abelmeholah; but his work was in the fields outside; for we read that when a visitor came to seek him at the village "Elisha the son of Shaphat was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him" (I Kings 19:16, 19). Likewise, the residence of the prophet Amos was at the hamlet of Tekoa; and his business was that of a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore trees (Amos 7:14). The identification of the unwallled villages with the open country is nowhere

more clearly indicated than in Levit. 25:31, thus: "The villages that have no wall round about them shall be reckoned with the fields of the country." To the inhabitant of the walled city, with its broad ways and streets, the villages were likewise a part of the rural districts: "Let us go forth into the fields; let us lodge in the villages" (Song of Sol. 7:11, cf. 3:2, etc).

All of the leading characters of the times covered by the books of Judges and Samuel were men belonging to the upper class in the country districts. They had kinship connections with the family system of Israel; and they were usually well-to-do with reference to material goods. Some were, of course, wealthier than others. We reproduce a highly instructive passage concerning the sheepmaster Nabal, mentioned above. The quotation comes from I Sam., chap. 25:

And there was a man in [the village of] Maon, whose business was in Carmel [the garden land]. And the man was very great. And he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. And he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. Now the name of the man was Nabal; and he was of the clan of Caleb. And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. And David sent ten young men, and said, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name. And Nabal answered them and said, Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There be many slaves now-a-days that break away every man from his master.

This passage exhibits a number of the characteristic social factors already pointed out: Nabal was a free man of the Israelite upper class. He belonged to a clan which was known as "Caleb." His home was in the rustic village of Maon. His business was in the neighboring fields. He possessed much property, which included slaves, as the narrative indicates. His reference to the truant habits of slaves was probably suggested by personal experience within his own establishment. Nabal's wealth may have been above the average. He is, nevertheless, a type of the class that controlled ancient Israelite society.

Another good example is the patriarch Abraham, whose religious and theological significance has been so much emphasized that the importance from other standpoints of the biblical material referring to him has been overlooked. In the first place, it needs to be borne in mind that while the Book of Genesis relates

to prehistoric times, it was not written until after the Israelites had been settled in Canaan a long time. This point was brought out in our study of the nature of the biblical material. The Bible is not to be taken as a historical narrative in the ordinary sense, but as a narrative written for an ulterior, non-historical purpose. Not only this, but the Israelites were nomads during the period covered by Genesis; and in the nomadic state there is no writing of history. Although the Abraham narratives are not now accepted as prehistoric authority by the foremost scholars, they are excellent sources of information about the structure of the society in whose midst they were composed and circulated. We have classified Abraham with Nabal from the sociological standpoint; and we will now examine the data in order to see how the two cases compare. It is said that when the patriarch heard that his nephew Lot was taken captive, he went forth to the rescue at the head of three hundred and eighteen men, born in his own house, or family (*beth*, בֵּית, Gen. 14:14). Evidently, he was not the lonely wanderer sometimes pictured, but rather the "noun of multitude" of the critics. In accordance with this we read that "Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold" (Gen. 13:2). Of like wealth was Lot. "And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together; for their substance was great. And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abraham's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle" (Gen. 13:6, 7). With the exception that Abraham was a wanderer, while Nabal had a fixed location, the social status of the two men is identical. Abraham's nomadism was imposed by the conditions of the narrative, which purported to deal with the patriarchs of Israel before the invasion and settlement of Canaan; but otherwise Abraham and Lot could have been leading nobles of the time of David.

In the same class comes the famous Job, another great biblical character. It is entirely beside the point to ask whether Job was a real historical person or not. He is a typical figure, whether real or ideal; and the material relating to his position in society can be handled as in the case of Abraham. In the first chapter of the book bearing his name we read that he had eleven

thousand cattle, and a great multitude of slaves. Although deprived of his possessions, he became, according to the story, doubly rich in the end.

Owing to the fact that characters like Nabal, Abraham, and Job stand in the forefront of the biblical scene, it is no easy matter to learn how far the economic activity of that period was developed along the lines of commerce and manufacture. For these men were identified with pastoral and agricultural pursuits. The more advanced forms of industry, which have had such a tremendous development in western civilization, were comparatively backward in Semitic society. Nevertheless, long before the arrival of Israel in Canaan, a large trade in manufactured goods and natural products had sprung up between Egypt, Arabia, Canaan, Mesopotamia, Greece, and outlying barbarian tribes.<sup>7</sup> The conditions promoting commerce and manufacture are everywhere the same. No locality is likely to supply everything that its inhabitants want or can utilize. Differences of soil, climate, and mineral deposits result in more products of a given kind in one region than its people can use. At the same time another part of the world has a deficiency in respect of the same products and an over supply of something else. Such differences lead to the exchange of goods. In connection with trade it becomes convenient to have definite centers where exchange can be regularly carried on. Hence the growth of *cities*. Another stimulus to city life is manufacture, which tends to centralize at the points of exchange.

We have seen that the land of Canaan was dotted with walled cities long before the Israelites came in from the desert; and it has been pointed out in the course of our survey that they were unable to take these Canaanite strongholds. The confinement of Israel to life in the country districts for many generations excludes notice of commerce and manufactures from the narratives of Judges and Samuel. And although country and city were at length politically united under the kings, the narratives of the Books of Kings are preoccupied with the interests of re-

<sup>7</sup> Breasted, *History of Egypt* (New York, 1905), pp. 260, 237; Rogers, *History of Babylonia and Assyria* (New York, 1901), Vol. II, p. 280.

ligious conflicts; so that even at the later period, when cities played a more direct part in the social situation of Israel, we find much difficulty in tracing out the influence of commerce and manufactures. One fact, however, is clear: The country people soon made peace with the Canaanites of the cities and came into economic relations with them. The Israelite rustics are said to have had such goods as axes, forks, mattocks, plowshares, spears, knives, goads, razors, locks, cords, ropes, wagons, harness, yokes, harrows, sickles, baskets, dyed stuffs, etc. They might have made the rougher and simpler forms of these goods at home. But they could hardly resist the temptation to exchange country produce for the better-made articles that were to be found in the ancient cities. And it is certain that they could not have manufactured such iron implements as those mentioned in I Sam. 13:20, 21. In time the relations between the Israelites and the inhabitants of the walled cities thus became closer.

The Semitic families of ancient descent usually retained personal control of commerce and manufactures, managing these forms of industry through their slaves. Even the kings were not ashamed to become traders by proxy, as in the case of Solomon, who in this respect merely followed the example of the rulers of Egypt and Babylonia (I Kings, chaps. 9, 10). In the management of industry through slaves there were of course distinctions made between the slaves. Some were necessarily of higher position than others. The steward of Abraham, as already noticed, was Eliezer of Damascus. He was the chief slave, who ruled over all that Abraham had (Gen. 15:2; 24:2). The figures of the noble and his steward are familiar in the literature of both the Old and the New Testaments. The chief slave of Abraham typifies an entire class which, by reason of talent, stood near the top of the social system. Leading slaves of this kind were favored in proportion to their importance. In order to stimulate them to the most faithful service they were given commissions on the business which they handled; and they were thus able to acquire property of their own. Such men might buy their freedom, and set up independently of the ancient nobility, as in Lev. 25:49: "If he become rich he may redeem himself." But they

generally preferred to stand connected with some old family of established social position.

There was thus a tendency in Semitic society toward the formation of a distinct merchant and manufacturing class, or "third estate," as it has been called in European history. But this tendency never got full expression because the currents of ancient eastern trade never became powerful enough to detach commerce and manufactures from the old clanships. Much can be learned at this point by comparison. In ancient Greece and Rome, and again in modern Europe, commerce and manufactures began under the conditions just outlined; but their evolution proceeded so much farther that the tendency toward the formation of a new social class became irresistible. The third estate sprang into existence outside the limits of the old noble families. An interesting situation resulted. The machinery of government is always at first in charge of the ancient clan organizations; and the nobility discriminated against the new social class through its control of the taxing power and the courts. Great historic collisions resulted, the outcome of which was the admission of the new class to a voice in the government. The basis of the state, in Greece, Rome, and modern Europe, was thus transferred from Family to Property regardless of descent.<sup>8</sup> In Semitic society, however, nothing of this kind occurred. Government remained on the family basis, controlled by the ancient clanships, and there never appeared a third estate over against the old nobility. The noble class always has a limited capacity for assimilation. That is to say, it offers family connections to talented persons of humble birth who have succeeded in acquiring wealth. This holds true not only of ancient Semitic society, but of all civilization. Among the Semites the assimilative capacity of the ancient families kept ahead of the tendency toward the formation of a new social class. The chief slave of Abraham is recognized as his heir in case the master dies without male issue (Gen. 15:2). Likewise the aristocrat Sheshan, who had no sons, gave one of his daughters to

<sup>8</sup> With the further transfer of political power from Property to Manhood we are not, of course, here concerned.

his chief slave as a wife (I Chron. 2:34). In the same way, the slave Joseph married a daughter of a priest belonging to the nobility (Gen. 41:45).

It has been claimed that under the ancient system of slavery there could be no "mobility of labor," as there is in modern times when the lower class enjoys personal liberty and can come and go in response to the demands of the market. As a matter of fact, however, an active trade in slaves located skilled and unskilled labor where it was wanted, and the mobility of labor was perhaps as great, in proportion to the development of the world, as it is today among the most advanced nations. This is an example of the erroneous ideas that gain currency in modern times respecting the social economy of the ancients. We are often tempted to think of ancient society as immovably fixed, when it illustrates the law of development in its own way as fully as does modern civilization.

The earliest legal codes in the Old Testament make no mention of hired labor, but assume that slavery is the universal condition of the lower class. These codes are in Ex., chaps. 20 and 21. Worthy of special notice is the seventeenth verse of the former chapter. In our English translations it reads: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, nor wife, nor man-servant, nor maid-servant, nor ox, nor ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's." The words rendered "man-servant" and "maid-servant" would be much better translated "bondman" and "bondwoman," or "man-slave" and "woman-slave," respectively. For, even without the help of the Hebrew text, the slightest inspection of this familiar law is enough to show that it has no meaning with reference to the terms in question if the persons referred to are not held as property. There is nothing wrong in desiring, or "coveting," your neighbor's hired help. An employer can have no property right in a free laborer. Manifestly, then, this famous injunction presupposes property in human beings. Likewise, wherever the words "servant," or "man-servant," or "maid," or "maid-servant" occur in the English translation of Ex., chap. 21, they should be replaced by "slave," or "bondman," or "bondwoman," or terms to the same effect. These in-

stances are in vss. 2 (once), 5 (once), 7 (twice), 20 (twice), 26 (once), 27 (twice), 32 (twice). In some of these passages the English and American Revised versions explain correctly in the margin. Sometimes the context itself is enough to show the nature of the term without the help of the Hebrew. Thus, in vs. 2, "If thou *buy* a Hebrew servant," the servant must be a slave or he could not be subject to sale and purchase. Likewise, in vs. 7, "If a man *sell* his daughter to be a maid-servant." And in vs. 26, "If a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, he shall let him go *free* for the eye's sake." So much for the earliest legal codes of Israel.

Provisions for slavery are also found in later documents. A notable passage occurs in Lev. 25:44-46, in the translation of which the very nature of the material forces *all* the versions to make use of the terms which all avoid as far as possible.

And as for thy bondmen and thy bondmaids whom thou shalt have. Of the nations that are round about you, of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover, of the children of the strangers that sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they have begotten in your land; and they shall be your possession. And ye shall make them an inheritance for your children after you, to hold for a possession. Of them shall ye take your bondmen forever. But over your brethren the children of Israel ye shall not rule with rigor.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> An important fact in this connection reveals the animus of the King James translators. We remarked that none of the versions of this passage could escape using the term "bondmen." Even the King James version is compelled to render correctly the identical Hebrew words which it elsewhere incorrectly translates "servant," etc. Our quotation, however, is from the Revised versions, which, although they give these terms correctly in common with the King James Bible, differ therefrom in one important particular. The revisions make the last part of Lev. 25:44 to read as follows, the italics being ours: "Of the *nations* that are round about you, of them shall ye buy bondmen," etc. The old version at this point reads: "Of the *heathen* that are round about you, of them shall ye buy bondmen," etc. Being forced in this passage to show that slavery was sanctioned by the laws of the Old Testament, the translators try to set afloat the idea that slavery is a punishment for heathenism. This is not only gratuitous; it misrepresents the Hebrew text itself. For the term here in question is the word *goy*, גוֹי, meaning "nation," or "people," exactly as the Revised versions have it. In other cases where this term occurs the King James translators render it correctly, as in Gen. 12:2, where the promise is made to Abraham, "I will make of thee a great *nation*." If they were here consistent with their practice in Lev. 25:44, they would have to make the promise to Abraham read,

Provision is made for the free hired laborer in Deut. 24:14, 15 thus:

Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren [the children of Israel], or of thy sojourners that are in thy land within thy gates. In his day thou shalt give him his hire; neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor and setteth his heart upon it.

Likewise Lev. 19:13 lays down that the wages of a hired servant shall not remain with his employer over night. These laws were made in full view of a condition in which the status of hired labor was fixed by the overshadowing influence of slavery. When slaves were plentiful and cheap, as in Israel, it would not profit the upper classes to pay free labor much more than slaves got—that is, a bare living. This deduction agrees with the laws just cited; for laborers who had to be paid from day to day could not have stood above the economic level of slavery.

Our general conclusions regarding the industrial phase of Israelite society may now be summed up:

*The industrial institutions of Israel developed under the forms of the clan state. In spite of a progressive tendency, the economic side of life always remained primitive. The social classes which became prominent in later civilizations were nascent in Israel and throughout the Semitic world. The Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat were never differentiated within the social mass. They existed potentially; but they acquired no machinery for*

"I will make of thee a great heathen." Again, in Gen. 25:23, where Yahweh says to Rebekah, "Two nations are in thy womb," they would have to translate, "Two heathen are in thy womb." We make these explanations because the old version is in the hands of many of our readers; and its defects ought to be advertised as widely as possible. It has been of great service in the past when better versions could not be had; but it ought now to be everywhere replaced by the better translations. The sociological student should by all means avoid the King James version. Its defects are due to ignorance rather than to dishonesty. In the present case, for instance, the seventeenth-century scholars do not understand that the law in question, prohibiting enslavement of Israelites but permitting enslavement of foreigners, is a manifestation of primitive group-selfishness. For in the seventeenth century the nature of primitive society was not known to the scholars of western civilization. The law in question is in the same category as the law of tainted meat: "Ye shall not eat of anything that dieth of itself. Thou mayest give it unto the sojourner that is within thy gates that he may eat it. Or thou mayest sell it to a foreigner" (Deut. 14:21).

*self-expression and therefore no class-consciousness. Society being conceived only as a brotherhood group, the social problem is formulated in the Bible only in terms of individualism.*<sup>10</sup>

## II. PRIMITIVE RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS OF ISRAEL

We now take up another standpoint with reference to our material. It was observed in our first paper that one of the most remarkable and interesting suggestions of modern scholarship is that the distinctive religion of the Bible is a growth on the basis of ideas and practices common to the ancient world. On this view, the *official* religion of Israel down to the Babylonian exile was level with the religions of antiquity, and not until some time after that epoch did it become distinct from the religions of surrounding peoples. We are aware that our indorsement of this proposition carries us into the center of the controversy over the so-called "higher criticism." But it will become clear that biblical sociology is more than a mere indorsement and reformulation of the results of previous investigation. It represents the passage of higher criticism into a form which its opponents will have less difficulty to understand and more difficulty to overthrow. All great truths are fundamentally simple. The movement of biblical scholarship is in the direction of a great truth which will be reduced to such a form as will find easy lodgment in minds of average culture. We are content, then, to take our stand with the critics in drawing the outlines of Israel's earlier institutions of religion, believing that the future course of our treatment will answer the objections of opponents.

According to the view here taken, the facts of Israel's early religion must be cited with reference to the common religious ideas and practices of Semitic antiquity—it would be better to say, with reference to *all* primitive religion. For, in substance of doctrine and ritual, the ancient Semite had little or nothing

<sup>10</sup> This apparent contradiction in terms is due to the fact that the clan was disintegrating when the distinctive religion of Israel was coming into existence. Hebrew society outgrew the swaddling clothes of the clan without being measured for a new suit. Hence, the social problem was expressed as a matter lying between the *individual members* of society (i. e., the clan brothers) when, in reality, the problem had become an institutional matter outside the purview of the clan.

to distinguish him. His gods were no more powerful, or more base, or more spiritual, than the other deities of the pagan world. His mode of approach to them was not distinctive. His conception of the influence of the gods upon human life and the world was not peculiar to the Semitic race. Since all religions turn upon ideas concerning relations between gods and men, we will commence our discussion by considering the general subject—*the gods*.

It is a commonplace that all ancient nations had religions of some kind, and that they all worshiped what were supposed to be real, objective beings called "gods." The same is true of present-day savages who have not been converted to a higher faith. Ancient nations and modern savages, then, have this in common: they are what we call "pagans," or "heathen." From the standpoint of primitive religion, there is no single, true God, beside whom no other god exists. For in the view of primitive religion all gods are objective realities: one god is as much a real existence as another. All written records, including the Bible itself, are prepared in view of this impressive fact. The idea *that there are gods* became established in the human mind before the dawn of history. No book—not even the Bible—has ever laid open to us, as a matter of record, how the human mind became possessed of the god-idea. As we emphasized at the outset, it is no part of the work of biblical sociology to account for the existence of religion in general. Biblical sociology presupposes the idea of the gods and the practices of religion. Its task is to show the objective social conditions under which primitive ideas of the gods were displaced by the distinctive religious ideas of the Bible. In other words, biblical sociology is that phase of pure sociology which exhibits the transformation of primitive religion into a form adapted to the universal demands of social life.

It is a matter of profound significance for the sociologist that in primitive religion the gods were always conceived as members of the social body. According to the belief and practice of their worshipers, the gods had as real a place in the social fabric as the worshipers themselves. In modern terms, church and state were always united in ancient society; religion and politics were in-

timately connected. The separation of church and state was unknown to the ancient mind. The divorce of religion and politics was impossible. Everybody was religious. Atheism, skepticism, and agnosticism in the modern sense of these words were absent. The practice of religion was held to be vitally necessary to the welfare of society. If a man refused to participate in the religion of his group he thereby ostracized himself. As non-conformity could not be tolerated he became an outcast. The good-will and blessings of the gods depended upon the customary acts of worship on the part of all members of the group. Each group was responsible, as a corporation, for the maintenance of religion. It was the sense of corporate responsibility that was outraged by refusal to participate in the customary acts of religion; and it was this that led to expulsion of the non-conformist. If he were not cast out as a visible expression of disapproval, society would be sympathizing, or having fellowship, with impiety; and this would bring down the divine wrath upon all. The sense of corporate responsibility had a great deal to do with persecution of Protestants by Catholics at the time of the Reformation. For at that period the idea of the union of church and state was one of the controlling social doctrines.

In view of the ancient connection between religion and politics, it is not surprising that primitive thought looked upon the gods in a very intimate and familiar way. There was, indeed, no essential, or qualitative, distinction made between divinity and humanity, as there has been in later times. The gods were, in fact, magnified men. In the ancient mythologies they are said to have lived with men on the earth in early days. The gods were looked upon as personal beings, essentially like men, but more powerful. The root meaning of the Hebrew term which we translate "god" is *power*, or *might*. There is a great deal of uncertainty regarding the significance of this word and its derivatives. In the singular it is *el*, אֱל or *elo*, אֱלֹהִים. In this form it appears in Ex. 6:3, and is transliterated in the margin of the Revised versions, where the reader is told that "*El Shaddai*" is the equivalent of "*God Almighty*." In the New Testament it reappears many times, for instance in the words of

Jesus on the cross: *Eloi*, meaning "My God" (Mark 15:34). It is found in many Hebrew proper names, for instance Beth-*el*, meaning "house of God" (Gen. 28:19). A striking illustration is the name Isra-*el*, which is said to mean "God strives" (Gen. 32:28). Consideration of this word *el* introduces one of the most important factors in the biblical problem, for there is much uncertainty about the meaning of the word in its various forms.

In the first place, one who is not acquainted with Hebrew would seem to have good grounds for supposing that the term *el*, or *eloh*, in the singular form, is the term which we always translate by the word "God" in the singular. This assumption, however, is not correct. For it is not the singular *el*, but the plural *elohim*, אֱלֹהִים, which is most frequently rendered "God." We have already learned that the syllable *im* is a plural suffix in Hebrew; so that, if we have regard to appearances alone, the word *elohim* should always be rendered "gods." This, however, is wrong again. For in the picturesque Hebrew usage the plural is sometimes only a kind of superlative of the singular, heightening its function, but not changing its number. In most cases where the plural form *elohim* occurs, the evident reference is not to many gods, but to one God. Thus, in the opening sentence of Genesis we read that the heavens and the earth were created by *elohim*. In this case the context proves that the writer intends the singular usage. And since *el* indicates *power*, the use of the plural form in this passage means merely that the creation of heaven and earth was accomplished by Superlative Power, i. e., God.<sup>11</sup> In other cases precisely the same plural form, *elohim*, has the plural sense. Take, for instance, the words of David in I Sam. 26:19: "They have driven me out this day. . . ., saying, Go, serve other *elohim*." Here the word is correctly translated "gods" by all versions; yet it is the same combination of letters that occurs in the opening sentence of Genesis referred to a moment ago. We have to judge the meaning in many cases from the context alone.

While there is no difficulty in most cases, this term is fre-

<sup>11</sup> The singular forms occur about 200 times; while the plural is found over 2,500 times.

quently used in ways that embarrass translators who seek to produce popular versions. But the difficulty of those who try to make a translation that will not shock modern conventionality is the opportunity of scholars whose problem is interpretation of the material from a purely scientific standpoint. Consideration of these embarrassing *elohim* passages takes us a step farther into the subject.

The first case that we shall take up under this head occurs in the account of King Saul's visit to the witch of Endor, an ancient spirit medium (I Sam. 28:7 f.). The king wanted to consult the ghost of the prophet Samuel, who had recently died. We reproduce a part of the passage:

Then said Saul unto his slaves, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his slaves said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor. And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night. And he said, Divine unto me, I pray thee, by the familiar spirit, and bring me up whomsoever I shall name unto thee. Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice. And the king said unto her, What seest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I see *elohim* coming up out of the earth. And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a robe. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel. And he bowed with his face to the ground, and did obeisance. And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?

We are not concerned here to discuss the truth or falsity of this narrative as a matter of history, but merely to examine the ideas attaching to the term *elohim* which occurs in such a startling way in this remarkable passage. In modern versions prepared for the masses a case like this tries very sorely the patience of the translators; and the result serves only to distract the devout. In the King James Bible the translators make the woman say, "I saw *gods* coming up." This is immediately followed by the question "What form is *he* of?" or "What is *his* form?" If the word *elohim* ought to be rendered "gods," then the question ought to be, "What is *their* form?" But the Hebrew text would not permit this, for it goes on with singular constructions

to talk about one person, i. e., *Samuel*. Accordingly, both Revised versions change the main text of the translation to the singular, and make the woman say, "I see a *god* coming up." This brings the text into agreement with the inquiry, "What is *his* form?" But the Revisers thereupon indicate "gods" in the margins. So that the wayfaring man is left in much perplexity. No only this; but he is given a shock to encounter the term "god," or "gods," in application to a human being. Leaving this matter open we proceed to another interesting case in the same category.

The term *elohim* occurs in Gen., chap. 6, in a passage which we quote in part:

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of *the elohim* saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also, after that, when the sons of *the elohim* came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same were mighty men which were of old, the men of renown.

In this case the old and the new versions alike turn the Hebrew phrase "sons of *the elohim*" into "sons of God," omitting all marginal reference to the troublesome term here under consideration. The Hebrew text of this passage, as we have indicated, places the definite article *the, ha, הַ* before the plural *elohim*.<sup>12</sup> In justice, therefore, the phrase "sons of the *elohim*" ought to be rendered "sons of the gods." What we have here, in fact, is a fragment of primitive religious literature, standing in the same class with the passage already quoted from *Samuel*. It is a bit of ancient mythology which came down to the editor of *Genesis* from Semitic heathenism. The sons of the gods mingle with men, choose wives, and beget a progeny of giants. The passage is too embarrassing for even the Revised versions to attempt a marginal explanation.

This discussion prepares us to take up a passage in *Ex.*, chap.

<sup>12</sup> It is true that the definite article, when placed thus, is intended sometimes to indicate *the* one, true God, as in *Isa.* 37:16 and 45:18. But would any Hebrew scholar assimilate these lofty spiritual passages in *Isaiah* with the sensually suggestive passage in *Gen.*, chap. 6?

21, which was considered from another standpoint in our study of kinship institutions. It relates to the liberation of Hebrew slaves after six years of service, but provides that if the slave shall say plainly that he loves his master and will not go out free, "then his master shall bring him unto *the elohim*, and shall bring him to the door, or unto the doorpost, and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall serve him forever" (vs. 6). The question here is, What is the meaning of the phrase *the elohim* in this passage? How is it to be translated? The King James version replies with the rendering "His master shall bring him unto the judges." Both revisions, however, translate "His master shall bring him unto God," saying in the margin, "or *the judges*." Here again the plain reader, who desires to fathom all the meaning of the Bible, is left at sea. As a matter of fact, it should now be pointed out and emphasized that the word *elohim* is applied both to divine and human beings. The ghost-story in Samuel gives us a hint of this, when the spirit of the prophet is called *elohim*. But in the passage under discussion it is not certain whether the term has a human or a divine application. Hence the difference between the new and the old versions: the translators reveal their perplexity, and know not which way to turn. If the Revisers have their suspicions they dare not incorporate them either in text or in margin. It should be noted that the Hebrew text of this passage puts the definite article before the noun, as indicated in our quotation: "His master shall bring him unto *the elohim*." This fact will come up again presently.

In considering the interpretation to be put upon this passage it should be borne in mind that the Bible, as it now lies before us, consists of ancient material which has come down through the hands of editors and authors who occupy a late historical standpoint. In many ways they are out of sympathy with their forefathers. They judge earlier stages of the social process from the standpoint of later stages of the process. The law of Ex., chap. 21, regarding master and slave is not peculiar to Israel. It formulates a general Semitic usage going back to remote antiquity. In our study of kinship institutions we saw that the

adoption of an outsider by an ancient family carried with it acceptance of the family worship on the part of the newcomer. In harmony therewith we have emphasized, in the present part of our work, the rule that all the members of a primitive social group should conform to the religious institutions of that group. Consequently, when a slave became part of a household he had to accept the family religion. This is presupposed by the Deuteronomic law (Deut. 12:18 and 16:11). To the same general effect the priestly code incorporated in Genesis commands the circumcision of slaves: "He that is born in thy house, *and he that is bought with thy money*, must needs be circumcised. And the uncircumcised male *shall be cut off from his people*" (Gen. 17:13, 14).<sup>13</sup> These data are sufficient proof that the religious usages of Israel, as regards the integrity of the social group, were similar to those of primitive society in general. As we conclude that the Exodus passage here in question points to a primitive religious rite, it will be clear that we side with the Revised versions rather than with the older translation. For the later versions, as we have seen, prefer to contemplate the slave's master as bringing him before "God" and not before "the judges." The ceremony prescribed by this law is the sign of a permanent connection between the Hebrew slave and his master's family. He has been previously taken into the family for a period of six years only; but he is now solemnly received into a covenant which lasts until death. The master takes him to *the elohim* (the gods), to the door of the house. If we interpret the passage correctly, it introduces one of the most common practices of primitive religion, according to which the slave swears allegiance forever to his master and to the family religion.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Driver, *The Book of Genesis* (Westminster Commentaries, Methuen, London), pp. 187 f.

<sup>14</sup> Discovery of the significance of *the elohim* in this passage is complicated by the fact that the editor is working from the standpoint of the later Israelite monotheism, and adapting a primitive regulation to consistency with a higher form of religion. He makes no provision for a lasting covenant on the part of the slave at the *beginning* of service because, according to the late legal theory presupposed by the editor, the time of service is limited and the slave, being a Hebrew, is already an adherent of his master's religion. *This part of the regu-*

Whether our interpretation of this particular case be correct or not, it is absolutely certain that the most fundamental form of primitive religion is worship of the gods peculiar to the family or clan. For ancient society is always an amalgamation of clanships, and although there were national and imperial gods in ancient history, claiming the adherence of many clans, yet the nature of society is such that the more humble and intimate forms of religion came first. Family religion at first is ancestor worship. This is well represented by the Chinese, with their "ancestral tablets," before which they bow in worship and leave offerings of food. In ancient Rome we find the "lares and penates," which were nothing more than private, family gods. Concerning these the historian Mommsen writes:

Of all the worships of Rome that which perhaps had the *deepest hold* was the worship of the tutelary spirits that presided in and over the household and the store-chamber. These were in family worship the gods of the household in the strict sense, the Lases or Lares, to whom their share of the family meal was regularly assigned, and before whom it was, even in the time of Cato the Elder, the first duty of the father of the household on returning home to perform his devotions. In the ranking of the gods, however, these spirits of the house and of the field occupied the *lowest* rather than the highest place.<sup>15</sup>

A careful study of primitive religion has been made at first hand by the Rev. Duff Macdonald, a Presbyterian missionary in central Africa. His work among the Soudanese natives brought him into contact with ideas and practices that carry us far back toward the origins of pagan religion. Mr. Macdonald shows that the prayers and offerings of the natives are presented to the spirits of the important dead. "It is here," he says, "that we find the great center of the native religion. The spirits of the dead are the gods of the living." To the same effect, Weber, the historian of philosophy, writes: "We find the belief in immortality and the worship of the dead, as beings that continue to live  
lation had, therefore, to be recast; but the part relating to the actual ceremony at the door of the house is the really significant feature; and it is here that *the elohim* are found.

<sup>15</sup> Mommsen, *History of Rome* (New York, Dickson's translation), Vol. I, pp. 213 f.

in spite of all, intimately connected with all religions."<sup>16</sup> In view of such facts, we now begin to see why it is that primitive religion always regards the gods as actual members of the social body. Mr. Macdonald writes:

In all our translations of Scripture where we found the word God we used *Mulungu*; but this word is chiefly used by the natives as a general name for spirit. The spirit of a deceased man is called his *Mulungu*, and all the prayers and offerings of the living are presented to such spirits of the dead. It is here that we find the great center of the native religion. The spirits of the dead are the gods of the living. Where are these gods found? At the grave? No. The villagers shrink from yonder gloomy place that lies far beyond their fields on the bleak mountain side. Their god is not the body in the grave, but the spirit, and they seek this spirit at the place where their departed *kinsman* last lived among them. It is the great tree at the verandah of the dead man's house that is their temple; and if no tree grow here they erect a little shade, and there perform their simple rites. The spirit of an old chief may have a whole mountain for his residence, but he dwells chiefly on the cloudy summit. There he sits to receive the worship of his votaries, and to send down the refreshing showers in answer to their prayers. It is not usual for anyone to approach the gods except the chief of the village. It is *his relatives* that are the village gods. Everyone that lives in the village recognizes these gods; but if anyone remove to another village he changes his gods. He recognizes now the gods of his new chief. Ordinary ghosts are soon forgotten with the generation that knew them. Not so a few select spirits, the Caesars, the Napoleons, the Charlemagnes and Timurs of savage empires. A great chief that has been successful in his wars does not pass out of memory so soon. He may become the god of a mountain or a lake, and may receive homage as a local deity long after his own descendants have been driven from the spot. When there is a supplication for rain the inhabitants of the country pray not so much to their own forefathers as to the god of yonder mountain on whose shoulders the great rain-clouds repose.<sup>17</sup>

In the worship of the dead it is usual to prepare some physical token or symbol toward which the worshiper may direct his prayers and offerings. Thus the idols of paganism originate, and they take many forms. The dead body itself, or part of it, is sometimes embalmed and worshiped. In ancient Egypt the gods are frequently represented by a mummy. In that country the god Osiris was said to have lived on the earth in early

<sup>16</sup> Weber, *History of Philosophy* (New York, 1904, Thilly's translation), p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Macdonald, *Africana*, quoted by Allen, *Evolution of the Idea of God* (New York, 1897), pp. 25-28.

ages and to have been killed by his brother. Of this god, Professor Breasted writes:

The original home of Osiris was at Dedu in the Delta; but Abydos, in Upper Egypt, early gained a reputation of peculiar sanctity, because the head of Osiris was buried there. He always appeared as a closely swathed figure, enthroned as a Pharaoh, or merely a curious pillar, a fetish surviving from his prehistoric worship. The external manifestations and symbols with which the Egyptian clothed these gods are of the simplest character, and they show the primitive simplicity of the age in which these deities arose.<sup>18</sup>

Bearing in mind the facts adduced above, we shall now consider the traces of household, or family, religion in ancient Israel. The private gods of the Hebrews were known in their language as the *teraphim*. It will be noticed that this is a plural form, but it may indicate many gods or one, as its usage is similar to that of *elohim*. We find a very instructive illustration of household religion in the family of Micah, an Israelite peasant living in the hill country of Ephraim. His date is not known; but he is said to have lived before the time of the monarchy. We quote a part of the text of Judges, chap. 17:

And there was a man of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah. And the man Micah had a house of *elohim* (gods), and he made an *ephod*<sup>19</sup> and *teraphim*, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. And there was a young man out of Bethlehem-Judah who was a Levite. And the man departed out of Bethlehem-Judah to sojourn where he could find a place; and he came to the house of Micah as he journeyed. And the Levite was content to dwell with the man. And Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest.

The following chapter (Judges, chap. 18) relates the circumstances under which the tribe of Dan, consisting of six hundred warriors, robbed Micah of his priest and his *teraphim*. At first the Levite objected, but the Danites bade him hold his peace, asking, "Is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man or to be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?" No answer to this question is recorded, but the narrative continues: "And the priest's heart was glad; and he took the *ephod* and the *teraphim* and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people."

<sup>18</sup> Breasted, *History of Egypt* (New York, 1905), p. 60.

<sup>19</sup> A plated image.

Here we find the cult of the *teraphim* in a private family, after which it is indorsed and appropriated by an entire tribe. Another trace of the *teraphim* is found in the home of David. We reproduce I Sam. 19:11-16:

And Saul sent messengers unto David's house, to watch him, and to slay him in the morning. And Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, If thou save not thy life tonight, tomorrow thou wilt be slain. So Michal let David down through the window. And he went and fled and escaped. And Michal took the *teraphim* and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goat's hair at the head thereof, and covered it with the clothes. And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick. And Saul sent the messengers to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him. And when the messengers came in, behold the *teraphim* was in the bed, with the pillow of goat's hair at the head thereof.

From this passage we learn that the *teraphim* must have been images having a human form, or they could not have been put to the use indicated. Another instance is found in Gen., chap. 31, which we quote in part:

Now Laban was gone to shear his sheep; and Rachel stole the *teraphim* that were her father's. And Laban said to Jacob, Wherefore hast thou stolen my gods? And Jacob answered and said to Laban, With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, he shall not live. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them. Now Rachel had taken the *teraphim* and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban felt all about the tent, but found them not.

The real nature of the *teraphim* is involved in obscurity. They were clearly a species of god. Laban asks, "Wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?" They were represented by images, probably human in form. They were a part of the private household religion that is found in all ancient societies. Before them were cast lots (Ezek. 21:21). Their worship could be transferred from the auspices of the private family to those of the clan or tribe, as in the case of Micah, whose religious outfit was appropriated by the Danites. But beyond these considerations we know nothing about the nature of household religion in ancient Israel.

Above this humble form of worship there developed in ancient times a great superstructure of religious institutions which commanded the devotion of many families in common. The

genesis of these more extensive cults is easily understood, for we can often see them in process of construction. A god who has at first but a few adherents may attract a wider circle of worshippers. We have seen illustrations of this not only in the case of Micah and the Danites but in the African evidence brought forward by Rev. Duff MacDonal. It should be emphasized that, since the gods are members of society, a god can do anything a man can do. In other words, if a man can be chosen chief of a clan or tribe, or king of a nation, so can a god be chosen as a tribal or national deity. If this very simple rule is once mastered, it will clarify a large part of the mystery of primitive religion. A number of clans may unite against their enemies, taking the god of the leading clan as an object of common worship for all the clans in the confederation. Or, as Mr. Macdonald writes, in the passage already quoted, "a great chief that has been successful in his wars does not pass out of memory soon. He may . . . receive homage as a local deity long after his own descendants have been driven from the spot." The rise of a wider worship outside the limits of the household group does not imply abrogation of the humbler forms of religion. Two or more grades, or degrees, of religious institutions may thus coexist within a social body.

When the Israelites entered Canaan they adopted from the older inhabitants a form of worship that stood midway in degree between family and national religion. This was the worship of the *Baalim*, already noticed incidentally. We have seen that this term in the singular form indicates the master and proprietor of the Hebrew family. In the same way, each of the Canaanite districts had its local god who was its divine Baal, its owner and proprietor. The Israelites intermarried with the Canaanites, and adopted the worship of the Baalim quite naturally as a part of their system of religion. This notice is introductory. We shall recur to the highly important subject of Baal worship at different points in the course of our study.

We now come to the widest form of Israel's religion—to a cult which overtopped that of Baalim and teraphim. At the time the Hebrew clans entered Canaan there was diffused through

all of them a general, or common, worship. When they finally succeeded in forming a nation under the kings this worship became the national religion. The name of the national deity of Israel has not yet become familiar to the modern ear. Its first syllable is found in Psalm 68:4, as follows: "His name is *YAH*." This is pronounced as in the Hebrew phrase *hallelu-jah*, which means, "Give praise to Yah." The syllable is frequently a part of the names of Israelite persons, thus: Isaiah (Yah is help), Hezekiah (Yah is strength), Elijah (Yah is my god). The full form of the name is *Yahweh*. It occurs in the Hebrew text more than 6,800 times as the peculiar name of Israel's national god.<sup>20</sup>

This notice of the name is preliminary to a view of Yahweh himself in his earlier character. The idea of him found in the earlier parts of the Old Testament is primitive. The later documents (like Genesis) regard him as the creator of heaven and earth, and the one, true God. It is from these later parts of the Bible that we derive our conventional impressions. But the earlier documents embodied in Judges, Samuel, and Kings are identified with a different view. Here he is called "the *elohim* [god] of Israel." For, just as the Israelites were only one people among the nations of the earth, so Yahweh was at first regarded as a god among other gods. Not only were the Baalim and the teraphim worshiped along with him; but the Israelites also admitted the reality of the gods of other peoples. His original character in this respect comes out with startling distinctness in several passages. Thus, in the time of the Judges, one of the

<sup>20</sup> All that we have in the original Hebrew is the *consonants* Y-H-W-H. The *vowels* were not written at the time the Old Testament was composed, but were supplied many centuries later. In many cases there is uncertainty about the original pronunciation of words. Nobody knows just what is the correct pronunciation of YHWH. Sometimes vowels have been inserted making it read Yehowah, sometimes Yehowih. Again, modern translators have often rendered it Yehowah, or Jehovah. Although we do not know the correct, or original, way of pronouncing this name, we do know that the last is wrong, and should be avoided in a scientific treatise. When the King James translators found the word YHWH they generally rendered it "the LORD." This practice was followed by the English Revised; but the American Revised consistently translates "Jehovah."

military chiefs of Israel addresses the king of the neighboring Ammonites to this effect: "So now, Yahweh, the god of Israel, hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his people Israel, and shouldst thou possess them? Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess?" (Judg. 11:23, 24). The argument of Jephthah, the Israelite leader, is based upon the divine right of conquest. Israel ought to keep the territory which has been won by the help of Yahweh, and in the same way the Ammonites ought to keep the territory which has been given to them by their god Chemosh. This god appears to have been worshiped both by the Ammonites and the Moabites.<sup>21</sup> He reappears in another passage: "Woe to thee, Moab! Thou art undone, O people of Chemosh. He hath given his sons as fugitives, and his daughters into captivity" (Num. 21:29). The early Israelites believed in the reality and power of Chemosh and other foreign gods just as they believed in the reality of Yahweh.

Another instructive reference to the god of Moab is given in II Kings, chap. 3, where a battle between Israel and Moab is described. The conflict was going against the Moabites. "And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew sword, to break through unto the king of Edom, but they could not." So closely were the Moabites besieged in their capital city that they found it impossible to break out and escape. Goaded to desperation, King Mesha now resolved upon a measure of the last extremity: "Then he took his eldest son, that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall." This was done with all solemnity upon the wall of the city in full view of the Israelites, who knew just what it meant. The king was giving up to the god Chemosh his dearest son in the hope that the god of Moab would thus be stimulated to fight harder for his people and pour his wrath upon the Israelites. After giving full details up to this point, the biblical narrative ends abruptly in embarrassment. King Mesha had seized the psychologi-

<sup>21</sup> Other passages name the god of the Ammonites as *Milcom*; but the point is not worth discussing here.

cal moment for his awful sacrifice: "And there came great wrath upon Israel; and they departed from him and returned to their own land" (vss. 26, 27).

The gods of Moab and Israel reappear in the background of the first chapter of Ruth. An Israelite widow, Naomi, who had been living in Moab, set out to return to Israel. Seeing her two daughters-in-law following, she bade them return to Moab. One of them obeyed; but the other, whose name was Ruth, refused. Naomi thereupon said to Ruth: "Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people *and unto her god*. Return thou after thy sister-in-law." In other words, Naomi urged her Moabite daughter-in-law to return to Moab and to the worship of Chemosh. But Ruth replies, "Where thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people; and thy god my god." From these words the older commentators deduced that Ruth was a convinced worshiper of the god of Israel. But we have to judge her attitude, not from the standpoint of what she says about Yahweh, but from the standpoint of her devotion to Naomi. She emphasizes that whatever people, or place, or god Naomi chooses will be chosen by Ruth. As Rev. Mr. Macdonald says, in the passage already quoted, "If anyone remove to another village he changes his gods. He recognizes now the gods of his new chief." Exactly the same attitude was taken both by Ruth and by Naomi. Any interpretation which does not proceed in view of the admitted reality of both Yahweh and Chemosh does violence to this beautiful tale of ancient Israel.

Our present object is to become acquainted with the atmosphere of primitive religion before taking up the social process of the Bible. To this end we shall find it instructive to consider a few passages from the famous Moabite Stone. One of the factors in the consolidation of the Israelite clans under a national government was the pressure of external social groups, among whom the Moabites were prominent. Anything that illustrates the religious ideas and practices of the Moabites helps us to reconstruct the social situation of the Old Testament. The Moabite Stone was discovered in 1868 in the territory of an-

cient Moab. Its language differs but little from the Old Testament Hebrew. The translation, which we quote in part, is by Professor Driver, of Oxford University:

I am Mesha, son of Chemosh, king of Moab. And I made this high-place for Chemosh because he had saved me from all the assailants. Omri, king of Israel, afflicted Moab for many days because Chemosh was angry with his land. And Chemosh said unto me, Go, take Nebo against Israel. And I went by night, and fought against it from the break of dawn until noon. And I took 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. And I went down.<sup>22</sup>

The inscription explains itself. The king and the god have been previously introduced by the Old Testament. The attitude of the Moabites toward Chemosh is the same as the *earlier* attitude of the Israelites to Yahweh; and if the name of the god of Israel were substituted for that of Chemosh one might suppose the inscription to be taken out of the Bible itself.

The Israelite conquest of Canaan signified not only that Israel had acquired the land, but that Yahweh, their divine leader, had acquired it also. In time, Canaan became "the inheritance of Yahweh" (I Sam. 26:19); and Yahweh became "the god of the land" (II Kings 17:26). Removal from a country was equivalent to leaving the presence of the god of the land, as in the case of Ruth and Naomi, who thought it a matter of course to worship the deity of any people among whom they took up their abode. This idea is illustrated by David's attitude at the time King Saul was pursuing him to take his life: "They have driven me out this day that I should not cleave unto the inheritance of Yahweh, saying, Go, serve other gods. Now therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth *away from the presence of Yahweh*" (I Sam. 26:19 f.).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Encyclopedia Biblica* (New York, 1902), Vol. III, cols. 3045 and 3046.

<sup>23</sup> This is the correct translation and is given so by the English and American Revised versions. The King James Bible renders the last sentence incorrectly thus: "Let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD." This is due rather to general ignorance than to dishonesty. It seemed incredible to the

The god of the Old Testament, then, was not at first regarded as the only God of the Universe. Originally he was, at the most, what the older documents call him, "the god of Israel," just as Chemosh was the god of Moab, and as Dagon was the god of the Philistines. His worship was not thought to be incompatible with worship of the local teraphim and Baalim, nor with service of the gods of other lands if Israelites removed from their own country. Not only this, but a foreign god could be worshiped within the limits of Israel if his altar were built on earth imported from his own land (II Kings 5:17). Even in some of the stories that seek to exalt Yahweh over other gods, the basis in primitive religion is clearly to be perceived. In Ex., chaps. 7 and 8, there is a contest between Aaron and the magicians of Egypt. Aaron, working by the power of Yahweh, casts his rod on the ground, and it becomes a serpent. The Egyptian magicians, working by the power of their gods, cast down their rods and turn them into serpents. Then the serpent of Aaron swallowed up the serpents of the magicians. This proved, according to the logic of the story, that the other gods had power to do great things; but that Yahweh could do still greater and more wonderful things. The early Israelites knew nothing of any commands to worship Yahweh to the exclusion of other gods, as provided in the so-called laws of Moses. There was no movement against the other gods until about two hundred and fifty years after the Israelites had settled in Canaan. Not until the time of Elijah did any man arise in Israel whom we can identify with that struggle of Yahweh against other gods which is characteristic of the Old Testament. Not only this, but in the period of Elijah there began to be *social* movements, in harmony with his claims; and a careful examination of the biblical data shows that the causal factor of the situation was the state of society, and not the man Elijah. The prophet gave expression to social forces which began to operate in his day to an issue unlike anything in the previous history of Israel.

scholars of three centuries ago that David could suppose that the jurisdiction of the God of the universe was limited to Canaan, and that by leaving Canaan one passed away from his presence.

This is not the point at which to show why affairs took a new turn in the time of Elijah. We are simply calling attention to the *fact* in order to emphasize that before the age of this great prophet there was no movement against the other gods. This movement finally succeeded in establishing the official religion of Israel upon the proposition that the service of other gods beside Yahweh is heresy. But until this purpose was accomplished, Elijah and his successors were themselves treated as heretics; and the worship of Yahweh was held to be compatible with service of other gods.

Our preliminary view of this phase of the subject may be brought to a close by the following statement:

*Study of Israel's primitive religious institutions is valuable to us because the distinctive religion of the Bible grew out of them. Their main features, as well as the fact of their development into a higher form, have been emphasized by the literary and historical criticism of the Bible. But it is impossible to show how and why the distinctive biblical religion developed unless the history of Israel is treated categorically as a social process.*<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup>The inability of literary and historical higher criticism of the Bible to solve the problem of Israel's religion has at last been acknowledged by Wellhausen, the leader of the critics, as follows: "Even if we could trace the development [of Israel's religion] more closely and more surely, at the most only a very inadequate explanation would really be given. Why, for example, did not Chemosh in Moab become the god of righteousness and the creator of the heavens and the earth? A satisfactory answer to this question cannot be given." Quoted in the *Biblical World* (University of Chicago Press), July, 1908, p. 71. We of course take direct issue with Wellhausen; but his statement is a frank admission of what we have been claiming about literary and historical higher criticism.