

## THE PROPHET AMOS.

### I. JEHOVAH, GOD OF ISRAEL.

THERE are many of opinion that the oldest written prophecy which we possess is that of the prophet Joel, which is assigned by those who consider it very early to the first quarter of the ninth century, in the beginning of the reign of Joash. The balance of modern opinion, however, inclines towards assigning a much later date to this prophet. The prophet Jonah lived and prophesied during the earlier part of the reign of Jeroboam II. ; but beyond the prophecy referred to 2 Kings xiv. 25, which was fulfilled by the warlike operations of Jeroboam, nothing of his has come down to us, for our present Book of Jonah is not a prophecy, but an historical episode. Some scholars, indeed, assign to him the two chapters xv. and xvi. in the Book of Isaiah, but this is only a conjecture. Consequently the earliest prophetic writing of which we can speak with certainty is the Book of the prophet Amos.

The heading to the prophecies of Amos states that he prophesied "in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake." The chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah is confessedly obscure. Jeroboam probably did not outlive the middle of the eighth century, though some place his death in the first quarter of the century. Uzziah or Azariah is supposed to be mentioned in the Assyrian records as late as 740, though the reference is disputed. The precise date, "two years before the earthquake," suggests that the prophetic career of Amos in

northern Israel was of short duration, and that he fulfilled his course when Jeroboam and Uzziah were both upon the throne. The Book supplies evidence that he prophesied in the reign of Jeroboam (ch. vii. 10 *seq.*), and a later prophet (Zech. xiv. 5) informs us that the earthquake referred to occurred in the reign of Uzziah, though we have no means of fixing its date more exactly. The prophetic work of Amos may therefore be assigned to the first half of the eighth century, before 750.

Little is known of the prophet more than that he belonged to the district of Tekoa and was a shepherd. Tekoa, from whence the wise woman came whom Joab employed to turn the heart of David again towards his banished son (2 Sam. xiv.), was a place twelve miles south of Jerusalem, almost the farthest village in that direction, all beyond it running into pasture and dipping into the desert, so that the district was well adapted for flocks and the valleys for the cultivation of the sycamore fig. The place has been identified from ruins still remaining. Here Amos was one of the herdmen. The term *noked*, rendered herdman, is not conclusive as to the prophet's position. He might have borne such a name though the owner of flocks, for Mesha, king of Moab, is so called, 2 Kings iii. 4, though the word is there rendered "sheepmaster." Amos, however, further says of himself that the Lord took him from behind the flocks (ch. vii. 14), which seems to imply that he kept the flocks, though perhaps it does not exclude his being the owner of some of them. He adds that he was a cultivator of sycamore fruit, a kind of food said to be used by the poorer class of people. He was thus a man of the lower ranks of life, unlike the three great prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, all of whom belonged to the higher or to the priestly class, and his history illustrates the freedom of the grace that called to the prophetic office.

Of the manner of the prophet's life before his call to

prophecy, beyond what we can imagine from his occupation, we know nothing, nor of the causes, if any secondary causes there were, that induced him to cross the border and testify against the northern kingdom. Though a shepherd, he was learned in the things of God. He shows such familiarity with the history of his people that we are justified in inferring that some historical work was in his hands. He cannot, one would fancy, be a specimen of the men of whom his class in the kingdom of Judah was composed. It could hardly happen that such knowledge of history and such power to generalize upon the principles of God's government of the world and men as he everywhere shows could have been common among the herdmen of his day. And yet the Spirit of God does not usually teach mere facts capable of being otherwise learned. And we may infer from the example of this prophet that the nation's history was known in its great turning points even among the common people, and that even those whose occupation was the meanest, and whose life was passed farthest from the centres of religious influence and what we should call civilization, were able to rise to lofty thoughts of God and to generalize very broadly on His ways. The prophet's history indeed compels us to be more careful than is usual in regard to the inferences which we draw from his own language in his prophecies. Reading him, or indeed any of the prophets, we are ready to conclude that the prophet stood on one side and the nation *en masse* upon the other, that besides him there was none righteous, no not one. The idea suggested to us by the prophets of each successive age is the idea to which Elijah gave expression when he said, "I only am left alone." Yet we know how greatly he was mistaken, and it is certain that we must be on our guard against drawing too sweeping conclusions from similar language in other prophets. The prophet's function was that of a *corrector morum*; he was "full of power by

the Spirit of the Lord, to declare unto Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin" (Mic. iii. 8), and it was the blots on the face of society and its perversities that attracted his eye. Those evils to which he applied his scourge undoubtedly existed; probably they were practised by the majority of the nation, but there was at all times a minority likeminded with the prophet, and how large the minority was cannot be inferred from his words, which are those of despondency or indignation. The existence of such a right-minded minority may be inferred, not only from the principle laid down by St. Paul, as applicable both to his own times and those of Elijah, that there was a "remnant according to the election of grace," but from many other circumstances. Too often no doubt the minority wanted courage, or they were scattered and unable to make their power felt against the ruling classes when opposed to them, or special circumstances prevented them from acting in the way to be expected from them. For example, the permission granted by Cyrus to the exiles to return home was not taken advantage of by nearly all who remained true to the religion of their fathers, for a second colony returned nearly a hundred years later under Nehemiah. Acting on the advice of Jeremiah in his letter to the exiles (ch. xxix.) they had probably formed connexions which could not easily be severed, and they might not feel assured that the Lord's set time to favour Zion was fully come. Men's actions are often not those which we should have expected from their position in history, because circumstances of which we are ignorant influenced their conduct. The great proof, however, of the presence of this right-minded minority in the nation at all times is just the fact of the existence of the prophets. We cannot account for the appearance of a succession of such men otherwise than on the supposition that they arose out of a society in the main likeminded with themselves and fitted to give them birth—

that they were the efflorescence, season after season, of a tree whose roots always stood in the soil. Something immediately extraordinary in the case of each individual prophet being fully admitted, something which is not to be quite explained by the operation of the mind upon truth already committed to it under the influences of Providence and life, still this operation is a thing on which the strongest emphasis must be laid. For this operation is but another name for religious life, and the history of Israel is a history of religious life, and not a history of successive external Divine interpositions merely which never succeeded in translating themselves into conditions of the human mind. Each prophet is the child of a past stretching back indefinitely behind him, and if so this past must have put forth its power in the forces and religious life of the society which gave the prophet birth. Several well known modern writers on prophecy, using as argument the strong language of the prophets just referred to, have concluded that such a prophet as Amos stood virtually alone in the nation; that there was a great gulf fixed, on one side of which stood the prophet and on the other the people in a mass, and that what the prophet did was nothing less than to enunciate and introduce a new religion, which had almost nothing in common with that hitherto professed by the people beyond the name Jehovah employed by both. This theory is not only opposed to all the representations of the prophets themselves and the universal tradition among the writers of Israel, but it entirely fails to account for the prophet. The old view, according to which each prophet was a simple isolated miracle, out of all connexion with the life and thought of his time, really offered an explanation, if the view could be accepted; and if the choice lay between the two theories, we should be driven to accept the old theory as necessary to the satisfaction of our understanding. The fact, however, that the prophet Amos himself arose out of

the lowest ranks of the people is sufficient evidence that there existed no such gulf between the prophets and the universal mass of the nation as the modern writers referred to represent.

Returning to the prophet, we find him familiar with the history of his people. From a single word, "his brother," we infer that he was acquainted with the story of Jacob and Esau (ch. i. 11). From another expression, "Moab shall die with tumult" (ch. ii. 2), we perceive that the prophecies of Balaam were familiar to him (Num. xxiv. 17). The prohibitions of the law are insisted upon when he is denouncing the sins of the people, such as retaining pledged garments over night: "They lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar" (ch. ii. 8)—in defiance of the law (Exod. xxii. 26). These laws were no doubt in his hands in a written form. He knows of the forty years' journeys in the wilderness and the traditions about the gigantic bulk of the Amorites (ch. ii. 10). He is acquainted with the history of David, and knows that he was a poet and musician (ch. vi. 5). Besides all this, he is familiar with the history of the nations around Israel, and even of those far off, such as Calneh, Kir, and Hamath (ch. vi. 2); his eye is attracted by the movements among the nations and their migrations from one land to another, on which he bases broad religious generalizations, seeing in them the directing hand of the God of Israel, "who brought the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir, and Israel from Egypt" (ch. ix. 7). Though the earliest of the canonical prophets, his view of the world is perhaps broader than that of any of them, just as his definitions of religion surpass in incisiveness and clearness those of the majority of his successors.

It is not quite easy to give any outline of the prophet's Book or sketch of its contents, because the same general ideas occur very frequently. These general ideas are in the

main : the injustice done to the poor of the people and the oppression of them by the great, in forgetfulness of the law of Jehovah and His goodness to them in bringing them up out of Egypt and destroying the nations before them, and in raising up prophets and spiritual guides among them ; then threats of judgment and the downfall of the state because of these sins ; then warnings against such hopes as they cherished regarding Jehovah's relation to them as His people, whom He could not cast off. Such hopes were vain : the anger of Jehovah could not be appeased by sacrifice and offering, nor was He one to be bribed by the fat of fed beasts. He sought righteousness. And their longing for His appearance at the day of the Lord was a delusive desire. He would appear, but for their destruction, not their salvation : " Wherefore will ye have the day of the Lord ? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light ; as if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him " (ch. v. 18). Jehovah was their God, but this was no mere national relation ; as a nation they were no more to Him than other nations : " Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto Me, O house of Israel ? " (ch. ix. 7;) only as a righteous nation could He be their God, and it was not their need of deliverance but their sins that would draw Him forth from His place to chastise them : " Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel " (ch. iv. 12). Yet He could not cease to be their God, and in the far off future, when judgment had done its work, and He had sifted them among all nations, He would return and build again the tabernacle of David that had fallen down, and plant the people on their own land, from which they should no more be plucked up (ch. ix. 11).

The prophecy might be divided into five general sections, each containing a principal idea, though not to the exclusion of the conceptions found in the other divisions.

Chap. i.-ii. A universal view of the sin of the nations and the judgment of Jehovah. Jehovah shall roar out of

Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem, and the breath of His anger shall wither up Carmel and the pastures of the shepherds. The lion's lair is Mount Zion, and his roar is that with which he springs upon his prey (ch. iii. 4). The judgment is universal, upon all the nations of the world as it lay under the eye of the prophet, and each nation is judged for its particular sin. The cloud laden with disaster trails round the whole horizon, discharging itself upon the nations in succession, Syria, Edom, Ammon, Moab, the Philistines, and Phœnicia, Judah included, till it settles at last over Israel. The judgment comes from Jehovah, who dwells in Zion, it falls on all the nations, and it falls on them for their sin. This sin is regarded chiefly as inhumanity or injustice, though to this on Israel's part is added ingratitude and forgetfulness of Jehovah's will.

Chap. iii.-iv. 3. The second section contains threats of judgment upon the people because of their injustice to one another and because of the oppression of the poor by the privileged classes. This oppression is such a flagrant breach of the natural law of mankind that even the heathen would shudder at it: "Publish ye in the palaces of Ashdod, and in the palaces of the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold what great tumults are therein, and what great oppressions are in the midst of her" (ch. iii. 9). The spirit of cruelty and oppression has taken possession not of the men only, but of the women, who are indifferent to the sufferings of others if they can but gratify their own voluptuous desires: "Hear, ye kine of Bashan, in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say unto their lords, Bring and let us drink" (ch. iv. 1). Therefore destruction shall be on men and women alike—on men: "Thus saith the Lord, An adversary shall there be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled" (ch. iii. 11);



and on women: "The Lord hath sworn by His holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that they shall take you away with hooks, and your offspring with fish-hooks. And ye shall go out at the breaches, every one straight before her" (ch. iv. 3).

Chap. iv. 4-v. Threats of judgment because of the false worship of the people, and their misconception of the nature of Jehovah and the true meaning of His relation to Israel.

The passage is probably an answer to a thought which the prophet felt might rise in the people's mind to obviate the force of his former threats. They deemed that they could avert the anger of Jehovah by increasing the richness of His sacrifices and the splendour of His service (ch. v. 22). The same delusion on the people's part is met by Hosea with similar words: "With their flocks and their herds shall they go to seek Jehovah; but they shall not find Him: He hath withdrawn Himself from them" (ch. v. 6). The prophet ironically invites the worshippers to redoubled assiduity in their ritual service of Jehovah: "Go to Bethel, and transgress; to Gilgal, and multiply transgression; bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes every three days; proclaim freewill offerings and publish them: for so it liketh you, ye children of Israel" (ch. iv. 4); and then suddenly turning round he bids them judge what Jehovah thought of such service: "And I on My part have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places. . . . I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: . . . I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: . . . I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt." This assiduous ritual service of their God was in truth nothing but so much sinning; and Jehovah appeals to the people to cease from it, and *seek Him*.

Chap. vi. A threat of destruction because of the luxury of the ruling classes, their self-confidence and national pride,

and their blindness to the signs of the times and to the operations of Jehovah, which, though in a far off region as yet, were alarming enough to all who had eyes.

“Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and that feel secure on the mountain of Samaria; that lie on beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches; that eat lambs out of the flock, and sing idle songs to the sound of the viol; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments, but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph; who rejoice in a thing of nought (their national power), and say, Have we not taken to us horns? Therefore shall they go captive with the first that go captive.”

Chap. vii.-ix. The last three chapters contain the same idea of the destruction of the nation, but conveyed in a variety of symbols seen in vision. In chap. vii. there are three of these symbolical visions, the locusts, the fire, and the plumbline. The Lord's resolution to destroy His people and His compassion are represented as struggling with one another. The prophet intercedes twice for the people: “O Lord God, spare, I beseech thee: how shall Jacob stand? for he is small!” and twice the judgment is deferred: “The Lord repented, saying, It shall not be.” At last the plumbline, the line of rectitude, must be applied to Israel: “I will not pass by them any more.”

In chap. viii. there is a single symbol, that of the ripe summer fruit (*kaits*), suggesting by a play of sound that the end (*kets*) is come upon the nation, it is ripe for destruction and the harvest of Jehovah's wrath. And chap. ix. consists of a still more graphic symbol with its interpretation: the false worshippers are represented as gathered together in the temple at Bethel, and Jehovah commands to smite the pillars that the fabric may fall upon the heads of all of them—they are buried in the ruins of their false religion. And if any escape, the sword of the Lord shall pursue them, that

not one shall save himself, and all the sinners of the people shall be cut off. Then follows the bright picture of the restitution: the tabernacle of David that is fallen down shall be raised up; the kingdom shall assume its old boundaries from the sea unto the river; nature shall be transfigured; and the people shall dwell in the land given them by their God for ever.

In the prophets the two subjects that meet us are the people and Jehovah their God. The prophetic teaching is not abstract, but consists always of concrete statements regarding these two great subjects and their relations to one another. We cannot, therefore, begin by asking, What is the prophet's doctrine of God? we must inquire what his doctrine in regard to Jehovah the God of Israel is. When that is seen we may inquire what his doctrine of Jehovah implies or amounts to as a doctrine of God.

1. It does not need to be said that to the prophet Jehovah is a self-conscious Person: He swears by Himself (ch. vi. 8), or by His "holiness," that is, by His godhead, or by Himself being God (ch. iv. 2). His name is God, or Jehovah, or the Lord (*Adonai*), meaning the Sovereign (ch. iii. 7), or the Lord Jehovah (ch. viii. 3). Another name which the prophet frequently uses is Jehovah the God of hosts (ch. iv. 3; v. 16; vi. 8, 14), or Jehovah whose name is the God of hosts (ch. v. 27), or the Lord Jehovah the God of hosts (ch. iii. 13), or finally, the Lord Jehovah of hosts (ch. ix. 5). It is not quite certain how the name God or Lord of hosts took its rise, whether it was from the idea that the Lord led the armies or hosts of Israel, or from the idea that He commanded the hosts of heaven. At all events in later usage the name referred principally, if not exclusively, to the hosts of heaven. These hosts to the eye were the stars; but the stars were idealized as living, and were, or at least symbolized, the armies in heaven. To command and move these armies required omnipotent

power and suggested it; hence Isaiah says, "Lift up your eyes and behold, Who created these things? who bringeth forth their host by number, and calleth them all by their names. By the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power, not one faileth" (ch. xl. 26). The name God or Lord of hosts is equivalent to the Almighty or Omnipotent, as the Septuagint, according to its tradition, rightly rendered (*παντοκράτωρ*). The term hosts, Sabaoth, appears to have been considered sometimes a proper name. It is remarkable that Amos never calls Jehovah the God of Israel; the nearest approach he makes to this is when he says, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" (iv. 12).

2. Further, Jehovah not only possesses all power, He constantly uses it. First, in nature: He is the creator of all that exists, the most gigantic masses in the universe, as well as its most subtle influences: He made Orion and the Pleiades (ch. v. 8), He formeth the mountains and createth the wind (ch. iv. 13); He is the mover in all the movements which we observe: He turneth the darkness into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night, He calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth (ch. v. 8, iv. 13, ix. 5); His angry breath withers up Carmel (ch. i. 2); He withholds rain, sends locusts, mildew, pestilence, and overthrow (ch. iv.); He touches the earth, and it melts, and rises up, and sinks (in the oscillations of the earthquake) like the river of Egypt (ch. ix. 5). Secondly, He puts forth His power equally in the rule of the nations, moving them upon the face of the earth and according to His will, like pawns upon a board, bringing Israel from Egypt, the Philistines from Capthor, and the Syrians from Kir (ch. ix. 7). And as He brought the Syrians from Kir He sends them back whence they came (ch. i. 5), and Israel He causes to go into captivity beyond Damascus (ch. v. 27). It is at His command that the Assyrian comes up and overflows the land like a river; it is He that breaks for him the

bar of Damascus and launches him upon the sinful kingdom of Samaria, causing him to afflict it from Hamath unto the river of the wilderness, the border of Edom (ch. vi. 14). And the omnipresence of His power is expressed in chap. i.-ii., where He smites one nation after another, all the peoples of the known world, and in such passages as chap. ix. 8: "Behold, the eyes of the Lord Jehovah are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth"; and particularly in the terrible passage (ch. ix. 4 *seq.*) where His wrath is represented as pursuing the sinners of the people and plucking them out of every refuge, heaven, hell, the top of Carmel, the bottom of the sea, captivity among the nations; for He sets His eyes upon them for evil and not for good. And His glance penetrates equally into the spirit of men, for "He declareth unto man what is his thought" (ch. iv. 13).

3. These passages contain the expression of what is called personality in Jehovah, that He is creator, that He is ruler over all, that He has all power, is omniscient and omnipresent. Some of them also suggest what the essence of His personality is, and what the spring is which moves and guides His power and rule: it is His ethical Being. It is because of three transgressions and of four that He will overthrow nation after nation around Israel. It is because they sell the righteous for money, and turn aside the meek from his right within Israel that He will press them down as a cart presses that is full of sheaves (ch. ii. 13). It is because of the oppressions in the midst of Samaria, and for that they know not to do right that the Assyrian enemy shall encamp on the land and bring down their palaces to the ground (ch. iii. 11). It is because they turn justice to wormwood and fling righteousness to the ground (ch. v. 7); because they turn eternal principles upside down, acting as madly as if men were to drive horses upon the rock or plough the sea with oxen (ch. vi. 12), that Jehovah is raising up a nation that

will afflict them from Hamath unto Edom. There are almost no positive statements made as to what Jehovah is ; we must infer what He is from what He does and what He desires : " I hate, I despise your feasts ; take away from Me the noise of thy viols : but let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream " (ch. v. 21). " Seek ye Me, and ye shall live : and seek not unto Bethel. Seek good ; and so Jehovah, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye say. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish justice in the gate " (the court of justice, ch. v. 5, 14). What " good " is will appear immediately. " What Jehovah demands is righteousness, nothing more and nothing less ; what He hates is injustice. Sin or offence to the Deity is a thing of purely moral character. Morality is that for the sake of which all other things exist, it is the alone essential thing in the world. It is no postulate, no idea, but at once a necessity and a fact ; the most intensely living of personal powers—Jehovah the God of Israel." <sup>1</sup>

Like all the prophets, Amos is first of all a theologian and then a moralist. His doctrine of God, or rather of Jehovah the God of Israel, is the primary thing ; his doctrine of men or of the people is secondary, and but a reflection of his doctrine of Jehovah, or a deduction from it. The people must be what their God is, or they can be no people of His. The relation between them is that of mind to mind, nature to nature. Hence, while he speaks abundantly of Jehovah and what He is and requires, he never takes occasion to contrast Him with other deities ; and while he reprobates severely the worship of the people, it is the spirit of it, the wrong state of mind which it manifests, rather than particular practices, that he dwells upon. He differs from his successor Hosea in this respect ; and hence it has been supposed that, because he does not expressly condemn the golden calves, he found nothing offensive in

<sup>1</sup> Wellhausen : *Hist.*, p. 472.

them. This view has been repeated so often that it may be called traditional. "Amos expresses no dread of the religious symbolism prevalent in northern Israel; like Elijah and Elisha, he lets the 'golden calves' pass without a word of protest."<sup>1</sup> It is questionable if this representation be true, even in the letter. Several passages are hard to reconcile with it, as this: "When I visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Bethel, and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground" (ch. iii. 14); or the ironical invitation, "Go to Bethel, and transgress" (ch. iv. 4); or this: "They that swear by the sin of Samaria (probably the calf of Bethel), and that swear, As thy god, O Dan, liveth, shall fall and never rise up again" (ch. viii. 14); or the graphic picture of the worshippers gathered together in the temple at Bethel, which Jehovah smites and brings down upon their heads. These passages appear to carry in them a formal repudiation of the calves. Minds may differ, but if the prophet's language be not a verbal protest against the calf worship, it is because it is a great deal more; it is a protest which goes much deeper than the calves, and is directed to something behind them. The calves, and the whole ritual service as it was practised, were but symptoms of that which gave offence to the prophet, which was the spirit of the worship, the mind of the worshippers, the conception of Deity which they had in worshipping, and to which they offered their worship. Jehovah distinguishes between this service and the worship of *Him*: "Seek Me, and seek not to Bethel." Jehovah as He knows Himself, and Jehovah as He sees the people worship Him, are not one but two. They possibly thought Him their national god, to whom they were in a sense as necessary as He was to them, whose prestige and credit were involved in their preservation and prosperity; or they judged Him a sharer in their own sensuous being, and

<sup>1</sup> Cheyne: *Hosea*, p. xxxi. Comp. Stade: *Hist.*, p. 579.

therefore one that smelled with satisfaction the smoke of their sacrifices, and who could always be called back, when offended, by more abundant offerings, which were what He sought, and what was felt to be due: while in truth He was a purely spiritual Being, to whom sacrifices of flesh were inappreciable, whose sole desire was righteousness, being Himself, as might be said, the very ethical conception impersonated. Therefore He says, Seek good, and the Lord shall be with you, as ye say. The term "good" is used in other prophets, just as in Amos, to describe moral in contrast to ritual service, as by Micah: "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? . . . He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (ch. vi. 7.)

The truth appears to be, that the difficulty does not lie where it has been laid, namely, in Amos' failure to protest against the calves, as if he stood on a lower platform than his successor Hosea, who does protest against them; the difficulty lies in an opposite quarter: the prophet doth protest too much. His stringent doctrine of the moral Being of Jehovah appears to lead him to discard all ritual service as worthless or even false. The service which Jehovah desires is a just and humane life among one's fellow men, and humility before Himself (ch. vi.). The prophet has already transcended his own economy, and stands by the side of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." To us, with our views of the central place of sacrifice in the old economy, this is rather perplexing; not, of course, that he should speak thus, but that he should speak only thus. The explanation possibly is, that he had in view merely the people's abuse of the idea of sacrifice; what its just uses were it did not fall to him



to state. If, however, it were objected to him that he sets too great store by good works, he would probably reply with the apostle, Forgive me this wrong.

When we observe two ideas expressed by a writer, one of which might be a deduction from the other, the temptation is great to regard the ideas as so related. The prophet's universalistic conception of Jehovah, his view that He is God over all, might be the natural conclusion from Jehovah's purely ethical Being. For it is not easy to see how a purely moral being can have any relations but those which are moral, and therefore universal—unless, indeed, the other relations be of a temporary kind, and existing for the purpose of realizing the universal relation. And there are some signs in the prophet's Book that his general conception of Jehovah put his faith in His special relation to Israel under a certain strain. His principles would have led him to ask with St. Paul, "Is God the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles?" And in point of fact he does put a similar question: "Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto Me, O house of Israel? saith the Lord." The remark has been made in regard to Hosea that "as a rule, like Amos, he speaks of Jehovah as the national God of the Hebrews."<sup>1</sup> The remark needs modification, or at least interpretation, in regard to both the prophets. The term "national" carries an ambiguity in it. All the prophets and Old Testament writers operate with nations or peoples. The nation is to their minds the unit of organization and life. Even the new covenant of Jeremiah is made with the people; though it operates first upon individuals, it is in order to gather them into a people. This is partly a mode of thought and need not have any religious significance at all. The religious *differentia* lies entirely in the nature of the relation between the god and the nation. In the heathen Shemitic religions this relation is natural or

<sup>1</sup> Cheyne: *Hosea*, as above.

even physical ; in both the prophets referred to it is moral or spiritual. The prophet Amos does not even make use of the expression Jehovah, " God of Israel," he employs the term God of hosts, which expresses his broad conception of Jehovah. The first two chapters of the Book are of particular value in regard to this point. There Jehovah chastises all the nations because of their breach of the natural law of humanity and mercy written on men's hearts, of which law He is the guardian because He is the impersonation of it. His relation to the heathen nations is not mediate but direct ; He does not punish them as God of Israel and because they have offended against His people. Even when their cruelties have been committed on Israel, this is not the point that calls forth the judgment ; it is the inhuman cruelty itself, the breach of a law known to all men. But it is not only offences against Israel that He resents ; He watches the conduct of the heathen nations to one another, such as Moab and Edom, and upholds among them the law of the human mind, throwing His shield of protection even over those feelings of men which though sacred might seem in some sort sentimental : He destroys Moab because they burnt the bones of the king of Edom into lime.<sup>1</sup>

The question of the relation of God to the people Israel is a difficult one, on which men even now differ. Our Lord teaches that salvation is of the Jews, as the prophets taught before Him (Isa. ii., xlii., etc.). And we might suppose that the Saviour of mankind having come forth from Israel the purpose of God in its election had been fulfilled, and that Jew and Gentile now stood on a level as common sharers in God's love to " the world." There are many devout Christians who think differently, believing that

<sup>1</sup> The passage 2 Kings iii. 27 is probably to the same effect, and is even more remarkable, inasmuch as the " indignation " was against Israel, who had pressed their ruthless warfare so far as to drive the king of Moab to the inhuman act of immolating his son.

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God's relation to Israel is still in some sense "national," and that the results of it are not yet exhausted. At all events, when Amos, though upholding the special relation of Jehovah to Israel, speaks to the people in the name of the Lord, "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore will I visit your transgressions upon you"; and when he teaches that Jehovah will sift out all the sinners of the people, that at last He may be God of a righteous nation,—he introduces an element which modifies the idea of "national" to such an extent as almost to reverse it, and which makes the use of such a term to describe the prophet's conception of the relation of Jehovah to Israel very misleading.

Very probably the prophet did not make the use of his conceptions that we think he might have done. His picture of the final condition of the world looks contracted. It is certainly a miniature, but possibly it suggests as many thoughts as if it had filled more canvas.—The broken fragments of the people shall be restored, and the house of David shall rule over a united Israel; the people shall be all righteous, and nature transfigured shall be supernaturally kind; the kingdom of Jehovah shall regain its widest boundaries, from the sea to the river, and embrace all the nations on which Jehovah's name had ever been named.—This extent of the kingdom of the Lord might seem petty; yet it was virtually the world as Amos knew it. His successors, who saw the vast empires of Assyria and Babylon, have a larger idea of the world, but not another idea. Their wider view of the world might enlarge their thoughts of Jehovah, but this prophet's conception of the relation of Jehovah to the "world" does not differ from their conception of it.

A. B. DAVIDSON.

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