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HEBREW, GREEK AND ROMAN.

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PART I.

On the traverse beam of the cross the accusation of dying love was written in three languages — Hebrew (probably Aramaic), Greek and Latin, representing the three leading peoples of the Roman Empire. In this article we are not interested with the languages, but with the peoples who spoke them. For, on reflection, we are conscious that these peoples, or what they struggled for, are living still—in us and in our present civilization.

In God's plan in history it frequently happens that one sows and another reaps; and so a summary of what the Hebrew, the Greek and the Roman achieved may help us to lift our hearts in gratitude to those who were hewers of wood and drawers of water for our civilization, and may stimulate us to ask what we are doing for the generations yet to be born.

But how shall we present the Hebrew, the Greek and the Roman? Shall we take an ideal of each race? an ideal like an Isaiah, a Pericles, a Cicero, and by a sketch of such imagine we are effecting our purpose? These are

as near the *average* on the one side as a Judas, an Ephialtes, or a Caligula are on the other. An ideal and a type are different quantities. Shakespeare is not a typical Englishman, nor Robert E. Lee a typical American. Neither can we describe a people by their vices: Williams (described in De Quincey) is not an Englishman nor Aaron Burr an American. Yet we must surely estimate a people by the highest they accomplished, and not only so, but also by what they aspired to and failed to reach—their ideal. A people is largely what its leaders and prophets make it, though it is equally true it is the people themselves who produce the leaders and prophets. In fact, we might judge a people by the men they admired and idealized. Thus all the stories about the patriot Wallace are not historic; later tradition has added what the Scottish people thought necessary in order to complete their ideal hero.

And which Greek shall we take, Athenian or Spartan? clans that stand as wide as the poles apart. No, when we think of Greek we naturally mean Athenian. Then from which period shall we choose our Greek? Shall we take the ease-loving Ionian, or an Athenian of the Periclean period, or one of the Macedonian or of the Roman period? And from which period shall we pick a Hebrew? the nomad, the post-exilic or the merchant of Hellenistic days?

We thus realize our difficulty. And yet with a rich literature—and in the case of the Greek and the Roman a many-sided literature—with a knowledge of all these people fought for and lived for we might expect the better class or even the average Hebrew, Greek and Roman; but, taking the hint from Greek art we shall try to portray the *ideal*, the universal, relegating to a secondary place the individual and the particular.

These three peoples not only diverge widely from one another, but they also have their mutual points of contact and resemblances. They were all endowed with our hu-

man nature, men of like passions with ourselves; they loved and hated, succeeded and failed, and did their share in the world's work. They all alike endeavored to turn to most account the diverse talents committed to them. They all trod at their appointed times the paths of glory and again learned the bitterness of humiliation. They saw their heavenly vision and followed it, and, anon, absorbed by other interests, disobeyed it. Each believed he had a definite place to fill in the world's history and a definite work to perform suited to his genius; each—humanly enough—thought his task the most important and regarded himself as superior to his neighbors.

I don't know how a sculptor might chisel each of these three peoples. I imagine the Hebrew would be an elderly man with a long flowing beard, seated on a rugged hill, with a staff in his hand, looking out on the wilderness or great sea, lonely, and in the attitude of one engaged in a soliloquy, with eyes upturned to heaven or lips moving in prayer.

The subtle and many-sided Greek would present a greater problem to the sculptor. He would probably be a graceful, well-poised athlete, rejoicing in strength and youth, with a smile of contentment or self-satisfaction on his lips, standing by the seashore or in the palæstra with a disc in his hand. Or he might possibly be a philosopher with a book.

The Roman would be a well-built, sinewy man of middle life, with the *gravitas* and accoutrements of a statesman and general in one, with a stern face, accompanied by a licitor with the axe and *fascēs*.

It may be remarked in passing how much the world has been rendered debtor to small countries—to Israel (Judah), to Greece (Athens), and to the city on the seven hills.

We owe to Israel our religion, to Greece our culture and to Rome law and government. Of course this is

speaking in bold outline, for it is only in outline we may draw our picture.

And so a few brief epigrammatic statements may be permitted to throw into relief these three great peoples. The Hebrew is one-sided (simplex); the Greek is the most human and many-sided. The Roman is the hardest to describe; he is prosaic and of *high mediocrity*, but exceedingly useful. The Hebrew lived a moral and spiritual life—his ideal was holiness and righteousness; the Greek lived an intellectual and æsthetic life—his ideal was wisdom and beauty; the Roman a practical life—his ideal was power and law. Israel gave prophets and psalmists, Greece artists and philosophers, Rome statesmen and legislators. Israel prayed for the world, Greece thought for the world and Rome kept order and acted as policeman. As to religion—in religion the Hebrew found an essential for his life and being; the Greek treated it as one interest of many; the Roman mostly as an educative force for social and political purposes. In the Hebrew religion the *divine* predominated, in the Greek the *human* and in the Roman the *secular*; or—otherwise stated—righteousness dominated in the Hebrew, the æsthetic in the Greek and—what for lack of a better term we may call—“common sense” in the Roman. With the Hebrew the *right*, with the Greek the *ideal*, and with the Roman the *practical*. Hegel* treats the Hebrew religion as the historic example of the Religion of Sublimity, the Greek as the Religion of Beauty, and the Roman as the Religion of Utility or of Understanding. The Hebrew looked *upward*, directing his attention to an external Being and to worship; the Greek looked *inward*, directing his attention to man and self-culture; the Roman looked *outward* on the world which he desired to possess even if it cost him the price of his own soul.

It is interesting to note that religion with the Israelite was the only real religion; it was spiritual and emo-

*Phil. of Religion, Eng. Tr. by Spiers & Sanderson. vol. II.

tional, affecting his whole life. With the Greeks it was philosophised into theology. The Romans used it to make an institution; they made a church of it.

The favorite and indispensable words in the Hebrew vocabulary are: God, soul, sin, pardon, joy, holiness, glory, hope, righteousness; with the Greek: Man, state, politics, wisdom, reason, beauty, or the good and the beautiful, complete, change, realization, nature, culture (education), literature, virtue, idea; with the Roman: Authority, power, law, justice, order, dignity, duty, courage.

The Hebrew was lonely, the Greek social, the Roman political. Hebrew genius expressed itself characteristically in lyric religious poetry; the Greek, in sculpture and the plastic arts; the Roman, in architecture. The Hebrew lived in a kind of religious mystery; "they owned the spiritual more than they understood it*;" the Greek lived in the fullest knowledge he could find, while the Roman walked in the light of this world.

The Jew belongs of course to the Oriental world—a world not noted for energy, but for lethargy, where life is not so full and so many-sided as in the West; where no theory of evolution bothers and the idea of progress or revolution is less familiar; where, as the Oriental proverb puts it, "Hurry is of the devil, leisure of God." One cannot escape taking on color from one's environment and from the kind and stage of civilization amid which one lives. These Orientals were accustomed to despotic rule, and, as a consequence, to unquestioning obedience to authority. It mattered little to the Oriental under what political system or non-system he lived if he were only let live and worship his God. They were in a sense disconnected atoms. Life was more solitary—the life not of the busy city, but of mountain, desert and plain; the amenities of life were at a discount. Life was often lived on a level but little above bare existence. Toil and misfortune were silently accepted as the inevitable human

*Forsythe: *Christ on Parmassus*, p. 52.

lot. Monotony, wearisome to the Western world, seemed not to rankle the mind. Life was not expected to offer much if anything new. As it was in the days of the fathers so must it remain to all generations. Imagination worked untrammelled, playing the part which intellect played in the West. The Oriental mind worked in pictures and symbols; it was unquestioning and passive. In the East men "loved to move in a region of twilight, content with that half knowledge which stimulates the religious sense. They had thought it impious to draw aside the veil which hides God from man."* Their thoughts were constantly occupied with religion of a somber and serious character, demanding on the whole self-repression rather than self-realization and in some countries conducing to the extinction of the personality or its loss in a Nirvana. Such are some of the more striking characteristics of the Oriental world to which the Hebrews belonged, though they insisted on regarding themselves as a peculiar people.

In considering the Jews† we must remember how much we owe to them in our religion, though we cannot adequately conceive how much poorer our lives would be without their contribution. The Jews are still our pedagogues, for from our earliest years we are taught to use their words and prayers and think their thoughts of God and the soul again at an age before we care anything for either Greece or Rome. And as the cask long retains the odor of its earliest contents, so we throughout life remain more or less Jews—mostly to our advantage, but also to our loss as our lives cannot be rounded without regard to the Greek view of life and perhaps even Roman "common sense." Let us remember that these ancient peoples, generally speaking, elaborated a one-sided view of life, forgetful of man's rich and multifold nature, phys-

*Butcher *Some Aspects of the Greek Genius*, p. 2.

† The name Jew was of course later than Hebrew, but for my purpose it matters little which I employ. See articles *Jew* and *Hebrew* in *Hastings D. B.*

ical, moral, intellectual, spiritual. God committed to each a talent, endowed each with a particular genius, and we have the results and we are the heirs of all. And it is where we feel noblest and most divine that the Hebrew speaks to us—in our spiritual and religious being where sweet memories, purest motives and deepest, most imperious needs have their playground. We are debtors to the Jew most of all in our religion. His unique genius was toward spirituality. It may be a slight exaggeration to say with E. J. Romanes, “If it had not been for the Jews the human race would not have had any religion worth our serious attention as such.” The temple and the synagogue are the precursors of the Christian church. When we worship and pray and stand face to face with God, we are still prompted by the Jew. His was not the restless, all-penetrating mind of the Greek, but he had a hungry soul. And so the Hebrew religious books are our priceless religious classics. In our prayers we can often, like the ancient Hebrew, find no language but a cry, and if we use language or endeavor to translate the cry into language we often can’t do better than use the words which rose to Jahweh from Israelitish hearts many centuries since. The people, who from a low form of naturalistic religion rose to grasp the conception of Jahweh as a personal God, a spiritual Being demanding spiritual worship, a zealous God hating sin, but willing to forgive repentant sinners, loving the righteous, hearing and answering prayer, registering heart thoughts, cannot perish from the earth. Those who have voiced the needs and cries of the heart as they have done have raised mankind to a higher plane: “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.”—“Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth whom I desire beside Thee. *My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*” “With Thee is the fountain of Life: in Thy Light shall

we see light.”—“For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.”—“Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy Presence? If I ascend up into heaven Thou art there, if I make my bed in Sheol, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me.” These and other such words are priceless religious

“Jewels,

Which on the stretched forefinger of all time
Sparkle forever.”

These Hebrews dreamed of the beauty of holiness, “the beauty of Jahweh our God, and experienced the ecstasy of the Vision Beatific and the perennial joys of communion with God without falling into the vagaries of Neo-Platonism. “And to all time this Jewish people will live because it is to them we owe the triumphant assertion of the moral spirituality of the Divine and the worthlessness in comparison of every embodiment of God whether in act or creed or institution.”* They felt the need not only of God’s power and strength and mercy but also craved for His love. They were conscious of that Infinite in man, of which Carlyle speaks, which cannot be buried under the Finite. Israel preached that when all is said and done “man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever.” In fact at all times the thought of God was nearer to the Oriental and to the Hebrew in particular than to the Greek. Compare the multitude of theophorous names in Hebrew and Oriental languages. This phenomenon is considerably less prominent in Greek, there being few theophorous names even in the Greek Bible (Homer) and the Romans used even fewer such names. The Jew recognized no distinction between the secular and the sacred.

*P. T. Forsythe, *Christ on Parosus*, p. 56.

The Hebrew reached nearer to God than did the Greek, because it is not so much by the profoundest thinking but by feeling and emotion that we come nearer to God. The Greek thought his way to God; the Hebrew came naturally that way, he flew up on wings to God. The Israelite longed to dwell in the secret place of the Most High *not* to pry into His secrets but to behold His face and be satisfied and find rest to his own *Nephesh* (soul). The Greek tried to make his God answer all his questions. All men are instinctively religious, but in some individuals and nations the instinct is stronger than in others. It was stronger in the Hebrew than in the Greek. The former commenced with God where the Greek ended. The Hebrew was like a man who, brought up in a Christian home surrounded by Christian influences, never knows what it is to be far away from God; the Greek is like a man who amid distracting cares reasons his way to the Father.

We cannot rightly estimate the Hebrew without reference to his conception of God and man and the relation between God and man. The Hebrew conception of God in its prophetic setting is very high. One who is essentially a person like man but on a larger scale, endowed with passions and within the reach of suffering, and moral. Being moral He requires His worshippers to be not only religious but also moral or righteous. God is a terrible God toward unheeding and obstinate sinners on whom righteous wrath must exact satisfaction. This God is the *only God*, the gods of the nations being dumb idols, but then God was Jahweh who created the heavens and the earth. Thus Israel was the first to enunciate pure spiritual monotheism. "Hear, O Israel; Jahweh is our God. Jahweh is One."* Jahweh not only created all things by an act of His will, but He is omnipotent to sustain and embrace all. He holds the waters in the hollow

*This is the correct translation of the Hebrew (Deut. 6:4) and of the LXX cf. the margin in Amer. Rv.

of His hand. The earth is Jahweh's and the fullness thereof. He performs His will *immediately* so that the Hebrew needed no second causes. He dispenses both the blessings and the ills of life. His glory and majesty are visible everywhere: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork." "O Jehovah, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth, who hast set thy glory upon the heavens." This God is also omniscient, so there is no escape for the sinner except by way of forgiveness and our iniquities are set before Him, our secret sins in the light of His countenance, our sin will find us out. His attributes are not only might, power, wrath, but also mercy and love. He has His chosen race of Israel, whom He loves as a Father and punishes in mercy for their backsliding; all His dealings are for their good. But being a righteous God He cannot permit the wicked to escape under the ægis of their race; so God selects for the objects of His love the righteous from among Israel. But though He hates wickedness He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but prefers to show mercy. It is not thus a matter of indifference to God whether the sinner will seek mercy. Rather He is pleading to every thirsty soul to come and experience that the river of God is full of water. He delights in mercy when men will have mercy. He was a God at first interested only in the peculiar people as such, but gradually became a God to whom the individual Hebrew soul was of extraordinary value; He could be a God both of the society and of the individual. In their thought at first only a local tribal God of Israel, He later came to supervise the affairs of all other peoples, but was always supposed to accord a premier place to Israel. Jerusalem was always to be the religious center of the world and the God of Israel "the God of the whole earth shall he be called." His worship is spiritual, though around this point priest and prophet were not always in accord. The prophetic view commended itself to the best conscience

of Israel; magical formulæ, holy places, the reverent preservation of hallowed customs, the new moons and sabbaths and the sacrifices are of much less importance than a united heart, pure purpose and upright living. Not lip worship, but heart devotion. "For thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it. Thou hast no pleasure in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O Lord, thou wilt not despise."

Herein lies the grandest characteristic of the Israelitish religion—its inseparable union with morality. Religion must be a life. A religious man must be a moral man—a truth which Christianity later emphasized. A worshipper of Jahweh must not oppress the widow nor take advantage of the fatherless, nor take a bribe. This is the negative side, to which the positive is, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee but to do justly and to love kindness and to walk humbly with thy God?" Hence the Hebrew, though he built up no proud system of ethics, lived on the whole a moral, upright life. His practice outstripped his theory. But it may be noted that his religion and ethics were often of a negative rather than of a positive complexion. His moral law was at first laid down on negatives: Thou shalt not * * *—a law which he must not break. "Do not to others what you would not have them do to you." But the best seers felt this defect and jumped to a positive foundation: "Thou shalt love Jehovah, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might." "Cease to do evil, learn to do well." The ideal of the Hebrew is divine law absorbed until it becomes freedom. "More to be desired are (the ordinances of Jehovah) than gold, yea, than much fine gold: Sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honey-comb." The refrain of the 119th Psalm is "Thy law is my delight;" "I will delight myself in thy statutes;" "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of

thy law;" "Thy law have I hid in my heart;" "I shall walk at *liberty*, for I have sought thy precepts;" "O how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day." It was not only something which restrained but something which benefitted—"a lamp unto my feet and light unto my path." Matthew Arnold sums up the religious history of Israel in "a conscience of the not-ourselves which makes for righteousness."

God and man are the complements of each other, so that the conception of man is dominated by the conception of God and *vice versa*. To the Hebrew, man is the immediate creation of God. God and man are both endowed with personality, which personalities can hold intercourse. Never was man apparently more highly rated than in the first chapter of Genesis. God could not look upon the beauty of a manless firmament: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," so "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him"—"*das Ebenbild der Gottheit*." It may be questioned, I think, whether these noble words were not uttered with man as the standard rather than God—another form of Hebrew anthropomorphism. Yet even so, it assigns to man a worthy place. But the general impression from Hebrew literature would seem to be that man was regarded as insignificant compared with God, that he was dwarfed by the majesty of God. This is attributable to several causes; the increasingly purer and worthier conceptions of God, the riper monotheism by which God was regarded as the one moral Governor, the characteristically Hebrew sense of sin as lowering man in God's sight. The words "What is man that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that thou visitest him?" were uttered in contemplation of the *works* of God, not God Himself, and are followed by the sublime words: "Thou hast made him but little lower than God"*

*Ps. 8:5 Eng. and Amer. Rv. correctly following the Heb. Elohim. The margin angels follows the LXX. Βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους.

a worthy prelude to "Beloved, now are we children of God and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be." God is truly exalted; He is in His holy temple, yet from His throne in heaven looks down into the details of affairs on His footstool. God is high, but has respect to the lowly. It is only *in comparison* with His majesty and ineffable holiness that man is of lower rank, but never insignificant or without dignity. So it seems to me an injustice to Hebrew thinking to say that it exalts God at the expense of man or degrades man to magnify God, and that the Greek more truly exalted man. It is only *relatively* that "man is a thing of naught crouching in terror before God's terrible majesty, awe-struck." God is indeed exalted but surely man is also exalted as being capable of communing with God, delighting in His love and glorying in His light. If we estimate man by the privileges and blessings he may enjoy with his God the Hebrew is not dwarfed, but inspired. When God and the human Soul are the two great and almost only realities man is assigned his rightful place. What is meant by saying that to the Greek man counts for more is that *Man* is the center of Greek thought—anthropocentric, *God* the center to the Hebrew—theocentric. Consequently when the Greek center was once disturbed, the result was pessimism and disaster. Kohler (an American Rabbi) runs into the other extreme when he considers the chief difference between Judaism and Christianity the Jewish belief in the "*Gottesebenbildlichkeit der Menschen*"—the capacity of man to bear the image of his Maker, Judaism deprecating in the present day that man is under the power of sin and asserting strongly on the other side man's moral freedom.*

With the moral problems relative to God's government of the universe the Hebrew did not deeply interest himself. This was partly due to his unquestioning mind

*Kaufmann Kohler, *Grundriss einer systematischen Theologie des Judentums auf geschichtlichen Grundlage* (1910), p. 21 (10).

and the sense of his own littleness and inability to grasp things too high for him. He shrank reverently from seeming to pry into the secrets of the Most High. It was also partly due to his social consciousness and belief that what God denied to one generation of His folk He would bestow upon their progeny. He had also a keen sense of divine justice and was buoyed up by the faith that all would be righted in the "Day of Jahweh"—the day of the Great Assize. He was convinced that the Judge of all the earth would do right. This sense of justice also cried "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol." He knew that God executed righteous judgments. His consciousness of his own sinfulness also eliminated part of the problem. Consequently none ever bore more meekly God's judgments and protested less against what seemed divine oppression or divine negligence. But when he did protest, how sublime was that protest the Book of Job is witness surpassing, as it does, in sublimity Milton's *Paradise Lost* or Aeschylus' *Prometheus Vincit*.* No longer are suffering and punishment synonymous.† God will vindicate His moral purposes in some economy. Job is certain he has not merited his calamities; from the depths of despair he rises to walk the heights with the lofty utterance: "I know that my Vindicator (Goel) liveth and at last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin, even this body, is destroyed, then without my flesh shall I see God, whom I, even I, shall see on my side."

Of course evil in the *abstract* did not trouble the Hebrew. According to his view, evil is something which the Lord punishes, but with which He is not yet engaged in conflict.‡ It was more in its practical results the Hebrew grappled with evil; your iniquities have separated between you and God, or, your sins have withholden good things from you. Not *evil* in the abstract, but as he knew

*G. Butcher, *Harvard Lectures on Greek Subjects*, p. 17 ff.

†*Early Ideals of Righteousness* by Professors Kennett & Gwatkin, and Mrs. Adam. (T. & T. Clark, 1910). Ch. I.

‡Hegel op. cit. p. 217.

it in his conscience as *sin* came home to him. Sin was to him an act of disobedience, the exercise of man's will against God's law, the antithesis to righteousness. His conception of sin widened with his spiritual experience and with his desire to draw near to God.¹ It was something which hindered his communion with the Lord. The Jew was not dualistic in his view of evil till he came under Persian influence.² Then evil was personified and was represented as an adversary, a Satan, who was constantly in conflict with the Almighty. Gradually the hosts on either side increased until whole spiritual forces were engaged in unintermittent conflict around man's soul. The Hebrew faith never assumed the form of a belief in the ultimate triumph of *good* in the abstract, but of *God*. He formulated what might be called the Magna Charta of the human race. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel." The practical outcome would be a Messianic Kingdom of righteousness upon earth.

¹A good article on Sin in Hastings D. B.

²Cumont. *Religions. Orientales dans Paganism, Romains*, p. 183.