

numbers and influence. The translation of the Law into Greek helped to keep the dispersed Israelites faithful to Judaism, while the commerce and communion of the scattered Jews with Jerusalem helped to keep alive the intellectual life of the homeland. Greek influence of a direct kind may not be proved in the case of the Books of Job and Ecclesiastes, but it is clear that the Jews have come to have something of the Greek spirit in their method and style of dealing with weighty problems. Their contribution is theology, not philosophy, as they seek to work always from the thought of God out to the details of thought and life. They do not analyse things and the mind in the same way as the Greeks, but in their own way they are seeking to link all things to a central principle, and they are becoming more critical in temper. The writer of Job attacks the common dogma of sin and retribution which pervaded all the theology of his time. The prophetic message had been taken so much to heart that the thought of "sin" had become the central thing in Jewish theology. The belief in a reasonable retribution, ethical in its character, was an advance on the idea of capricious, arbitrary action of gods or demons, but it became too systematic, or, in other words, too simple. Men in many ages have made large sacrifices to a narrow, severe logic and a vain craving for uniformity in religious thought and practice. Against this the great poet protests; more than any particular solution of the problem suggested by the various statements in the Book of Job is the spirit of the great speeches and the demand for full expression of the soul even in the presence of God. "Sin" is not everything, man is not the centre of the world; the mighty Creator is just, though His ways may perplex us. Man may come to silence in the presence of God's majesty, but he must not be crushed by a wooden, mechanical system in which men attempt to confine their thoughts of God. This is not scepticism, it is simply a more robust faith. The writer of Ecclesiastes goes much further in the direction of scepticism, and the ground tone of the book is pessimistic. He is a man who cannot find escape from perplexity and disappointment along either of the two avenues that have been opened; he deliberately rejects the thought of