

distribution of wealth and the lack of unselfish leadership. A strongly-marked feature of the genuine oracles of Micah is their fierce denunciation of the wickedness and folly of the ruling classes.

Neglecting for the moment any special theological peculiarities of particular prophets, we may sum up their teaching as referring to this world and being social and moral in its character. They do not face the question of personal immortality, and it is doubtful whether they give any clear programme as to the future of the nation beyond the fact of an imminent severe judgment, which will partly destroy and partly purify the community. When we speak of their message as *social*, we mean that they are dealing with men not in their individual capacity as separate souls, but as members of the community, and that they set forth religion as the right discharge of social obligations. When we say that it is *moral*, we give prominence to the fact that they denounce the attempt to make ritual a substitute for social goodness. They are not denouncing Baal-worship or discussing the value of symbolism; their position is that this is not the kind of worship and service that Yahweh requires (Am. 4/4, 5/21-24, Hos. 6/6, Is. 1/10-17, Mi. 3/10). It has been settled that there is only one God for Israel; the question of the nature of the worship and service that He can require and will accept is now lifted to a higher plane. How far and in what way these men would have abolished or reformed the existing cultus we cannot say. We may conjecture that Isaiah loved the Temple, and found many sacred associations with it; that Micah hated the pretentious ritual used by the oppressors of the people; that Amos found God more easily in the silence of the desert than in the noisy religious festivals; and that Hosea would have shown more æsthetic feeling and poetic sentiment in handling such a subject than the stern prophets from the country were capable of displaying. This is legitimate speculation, guided by our actual knowledge of the men. But, after all, we have to say that they were engaged in a conflict against shallow, sensuous ritualism, and that in their polemic there is no discussion of fine distinctions, but a simple demand for honesty in private