

ness could arise that here was something of more than national significance. This was, in the meantime, merely a new fixed point in the midst of a political life that was still restless and unstable. One needs to remember the difference between the small communities in Palestine and the large empires of Assyria or Babylonia. In great regions covered by one complex civil and military organization officialism reigned supreme; there were millions of human beings that were severely drilled to take their part as units in an immense machine. This made possible the network of canals, the great cities and lofty towers, magnificent products of human skill, that were a cause of astonishment and religious reflection to simpler peoples (Gen. 11/1-9). On the other hand, the tribes had not been subject to any such "steam-roller process" as tended to crush individuality and destroy local peculiarities. They were a "stiff-necked people" (Dt. 9/13). That appropriate phrase, spoken in blame, suggests to us something that is not altogether evil. Their great religious contribution to the world could never have come from a soft, pliable people, easily influenced and easily losing impressions. The separateness of family and clan, which lent itself to the easy formation of "faction," had its advantages from the point of view of religious progress. We see now, more clearly than ever, that it was not a smooth, easy movement; there was fighting at every point, against external foes and internal division. No new stage was gained without a fierce contest, and when a great truth was conquered it was fixed in forms that would easily die. Thus we can understand the reaction against the united kingdom which led to the disruption immediately after the death of Solomon. Religion, politics, and what we now call "economic" causes all played a part. There was an objection to rapid centralization, forced labour, and heavy taxes for the glory of the king and the enrichment of the capital city. There was always a democratic vein in prophecy, and the oriental deification of the actual king could not easily find a place in the religion of Yahweh. An interesting anticipation of the impression produced by the tyranny of the king and the extravagance of the court has been placed in the mouth of