

*impossible to show that we have any writing of this people produced before the year 800 B. C.* In the century following this date some efforts were made to gather up the floating traditions relating to early times and mould them into a connected narrative. Now we must know that writers of history of that age and race did not do their work in the manner of modern historians. They had no idea of tracing the *development* of customs, institutions, ideas of government or of religion. Their stock of historical material consisted of tales, more or less legendary, which had passed from mouth to mouth for hundreds of years, some of them possibly for a thousand years. The longer these stories had been preserved in this way the more they had grown in marvels, creating an impression that in the early time Jahveh had manifested himself\* much more freely on behalf of his people. Thus the old time came to be thought the best time, the time when God mixed with men and made known his will. It was the idea of the writers of the legal and historical

\* It is always to be observed that the miraculous element in religious history requires for its evolution a vista of past time. A clearly supernatural event has never yet been recorded by competent eye-witnesses. Such transactions are always more or less remote from the time of the person who narrates them. The Bible books themselves are a conspicuous illustration of this. The men who write of what is passing under their own observation, though they are, in the spirit of their time, of the opinion that a miracle is as likely to happen as anything, give us generally a narration of purely natural events; as, for instance, Ezra, Nehemiah, Jeremiah. Only those who undertake to relate what happened before their day, embellish their accounts with miracles. This is a very important consideration in handling this troublesome question, as it goes far to explain the currency of such stories and at the same time saves the writers from the charge of inventing them. The miracle-stories were found ready-made.