

times of trouble, of threatened war, of pestilence or drought, or when some defection from a recognized law of righteousness was made apparent, there sprang up spontaneously men who, filled with an enthusiastic belief in their intuitive discernment of Jehovah's will, did not hesitate to declare either to king or subject the message of their God.

The earliest prophets had to deal with the idolatry of the people. As we have seen in David's time, Baal worship was still prevalent in the Hebrew nation. So much under the influence of their olden forms of worship were the people at that time that they not only preserved in their houses images or idols in the form of a man (which are called "teraphim" in the Bible), one of which David had in his own home, but they also gave honor to the gods of other nations by naming their children after them—*vide* I. Chron. viii., 33, where a son of Saul is called Esh-baal, *i. e.* "Man of Baal"; ix., 40, where Jonathan's son is named Merib-baal, *i. e.*, "Baal's Warrior"; xiv., 7, where a son of David is named Beel-iada, *i. e.*, "Baal Knows." Nor did Solomon, David's son and successor, banish Baal worship; instead he encouraged it, being influenced by his foreign wives to build temples in honor of their gods (See I. Kings xi., 1-8). After Solomon's death came the rebellion of the northern tribes under Jereboam, an Ephraimite, and the disruption of the kingdom about the year 975 B. C. Reheboam, grandson of David, found Judah only faithful to him, whilst ten of the tribes declared their allegiance to Jereboam. Reheboam, however, retained Jerusalem with its sacred temple, and this made it necessary that Jereboam should establish for the northern tribes sacred shrines, which he did by erecting magnificent temples at Dan and Bethel—and at both these shrines images of the Deity were shown in the form of a golden bull.

As Dr. Wellhausen says in the article "Israel" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, ninth edition: This was not an

innovation, for up to that time image worship was common to all the tribes, and "so far as the religious and intellectual life of the nation was concerned, there was no substantial difference between the two kingdoms." When our new Bible is published with its several parts chronologically arranged, we shall find no Book of Deuteronomy, with its rigid denunciation of image worship preceding the reigns of David, Solomon and Jereboam, and making it appear as if these kings had sinned against a known law of Moses. The monotheistic idea in religion was developing in the minds of the prophets at this time, but Solomon's altars to the gods of Sidonia, Egypt and Moab, alike with Jereboam's golden bulls at Dan and Bethel, were not repugnant to the religious sense of the Hebrews generally. Had there been no men of Israel of nobler views of religion than these kings possessed, Israel's Jehovah would have passed into history as representative of a not much higher order of religion than did the Baals, whose altars were found in every tribe.

The prophets who recognized the moral demands of Jehovah and who, during the reigns of all these kings, declaimed against their immoralities, and denounced immoral forms of worship, were the inspired and holy men to whom is due the religion that culminated in Christianity. We must seek, therefore, for the evolution of the Hebrew conception of God along the lines of development revealed to mankind by the prophets, whose work we shall find, by investigation, not to be so much valuable in the line of prophecy as it is in the way of moral and religious instruction. The Christian world has magnified their character as predictors of future events, and in doing this has lost incalculable value by putting in the background the dominant burden of their teaching that "God is infinite holiness and salvation is personal righteousness."

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