And perhaps what we all most need to lay to heart as we study this difficult theme is, that, by every inward act of resistance to the Spirit of all truth and goodness, we are tending toward the state in which forgiveness, and therefore salvation, become impossible to us. An unfaithful Christian, an untruthful, dishonest, worldly-minded, selfish, or sensual believer, is in a much more perilous condition than the man who, while he ignorantly rejects the Christian Faith, is true to conscience and duty—true, that is, to the voice of God, even though he does not recognize it as the voice of God. And I, for one, would rather be an agnostic, walking sorrowfully but faithfully under the burden of life, with no heaven above me to shed down strength and consolation, and no hope of immortality to allure me along the steep and difficult path of duty, than I would be a Christian learned in all the creeds, and for ever prating of my immortal hopes, yet living as though I had no Father on high, and no outlook beyond the narrow bounds of earth and time.

S. Cox.

STUDIES IN THE MINOR PROPHETS.

III.—Amos.

Lord Macaulay, in his celebrated essay on Milton, put forth the theory that the poetry of a nation belongs to its stages of incipient culture. He himself lived to retract that opinion, yet there was probably a truth at the root of it. It seems to us that poetry has indeed something to do with the beginning of things. It may be as perfect in an age of civilization as in an age of primitive culture, but, alike in the one case as in the other, it must find its stimulus in some new experience.

Poetry, we should say, is generally the child of reaction.

There are three phases of reaction in the life of every developed nation; they may be described respectively as physical, intellectual, and moral. The physical reaction of a nation is the birth of its national freedom, the hour in which it first awakes to the sense of its own independence; that hour is ever an outburst of song. The intellectual reaction of a nation is the period in which it begins to wrestle with antiquated forms of thought; that hour is also vocal, though the song is naturally fraught with some strains of sadness incidental to the vanishing of old associations and cherished ideals. The moral reaction of a nation is the first breath of its national conscience, the waking of its sense of responsibility, the earliest conviction that it has a work to do; and that hour is perhaps its period of highest poetic enthusiasm.

There have been times in the history of the world in which these three phases have been contemporaneous. Three such periods stand out very prominently—the age of the Lutheran Reformation, the age of the Buddhist Reformation, and the age of the Jewish Reformation. Separated as these are by long intervals of time, there is yet between them a common ground of unity; they are all movements which concentrate in one focus the physical, intellectual, and moral aspirations of humanity. In all of them we see the tendency towards the emancipation of the individual life, in all of them we witness the struggle for the freedom of the human intellect, in all of them we behold the desire for the liberation of the moral consciousness. The rise of Luther, the rise of Buddha, and the rise of the prophets of Israel, widely different as were their internal aims, had yet their origin in a common external necessity. Each movement originated in the reaction of man's threefold nature against the bondage of authority. Each took its rise in the dawning conviction that the individual had a life of his own, which refused to be regarded as a mere drop in the ocean of humanity; that the intellect had a life

of its own, which could not accept truth on any basis but that of self-revelation; and that the conscience had a life of its own, which demanded the right of private judgment in performing the duties of the day and hour.

It is the third of these great periods that we are here specially called to consider. We have styled it the age of the Jewish Reformation to mark its features of similarity with the religious movement of the sixteenth Christian century. It was essentially an outburst of freedom. The facts are briefly these. Between seven and eight hundred years before Christ there appeared in the social firmament of Judea a galaxy of great souls. They appeared in reaction to the spirit of their age. The tendency of Judaism had all along been to suppress the instinct of individual independence. Man had been taught to think of himself, not so much in the light of his personality, as in the light of his membership. He had been trained to view himself as the part of a tribe, as the member of a family, as the citizen of a nation. He had not been suffered to have any individual interests; the only interests allowed to him were those he shared with the community. There was doubtless a moral good in this subordination of personal interests, but in Judaism it had been carried to an extreme which transformed the good into evil. Man had ceased to recognize himself in his individual attitude towards God. He worshipped the God of the nation, the God of the theocracy, the God of the Messianic kingdom, but not the God of the personal life; the man had been absorbed in the Jew. It was in reaction to this tendency that these great souls arose. They came to remind Judaism that she was neglecting one element, and that the most important element, of the religious life. They came to tell her that God had a mission, not only for her children collectively, but for her sons individually; that the Divine Voice was speaking to each man in the nation, not simply because he was a member of the

nation, but mainly because he was a man. They came to proclaim to her people the doctrine of an universal priesthood. They told every man in the State that he had a life independent of the State, and that, in virtue of that life, his individual soul exercised a priesthood of its own, enjoyed an immediate communion with the Father of spirits. In proclaiming that revelation they at once commended themselves to the popular ear. Their message had in it somewhat of a republican ring. It broke down the middle wall of partition between the rich and the poor, the king and the subject, the priest and the people; for, in making every man a medium of divine revelation, it elevated to an equal rank the lives of all. And if anything were wanted to complete the popular character of the movement, it was found in the fact that it expressed itself in the voice of the poet. The leaders of the Jewish Reformation, viewed from the divine side, were prophets; but, viewed from the human side, they were singers. Just as the Lutheran Reformation passed into the literary renaissance, so did the Jewish Reformation find expression in poetry. The difference between them lay in this, that, unlike the reformation of the sixteenth century, the prophetic movement did not become secular in becoming poetical; it was at one and the same moment a literary and a religious revival. The poetry of Judea is the utterance of a religious faith. The Greek was led to his religion by the inspiration of his poetry; the Jew was inspired to poetry by the breath of his religion. The symbols of the Jewish prophets have come down to us as poetic images, but they were to them sober realities. When they spoke of nature as alive, they did so, not by way of metaphor but, because they believed her to be alive. Nature was to them not only a veritable voice of God, but the sweetest of all his voices, because it was that in which He spoke to the heart of every man; that whose accents annulled the distinction between soul and soul, and lifted each individual

life into the participation and the privilege of divine communion.

Foremost amongst this group of early Jewish reformers stands the form of Amos. We say foremost, not because he was the greatest of them, but because his figure is the most characteristic type of the new movement. In Amos we see in its perfection the rising of the spirit of Jewish Protestantism; it is more pronouncedly marked in him than in either Jonah or Joel. His attitude towards his Church and nation is one of individual independence. He professes to bear the personal responsibility of everything he utters. Not only has he no connexion with any official priesthood; he has no connexion with any prophetic school. He declares in so many words that he is neither a prophet, nor the disciple of a prophet, that he has not received the education or training or apostolic succession supposed to be necessary to a master in Israel,—that on the contrary he has been called out of humble circumstances by a special voice addressed to his individual soul. He claims to speak in obedience to that voice alone. He boldly introduces himself in the meanness of his worldly surroundings. He tells the Jewish people that he is only a herdsman, and a "gatherer of sycamore fruit." He tells them that he brings no credentials for his mission beyond those of the personal life,—that he has been associated neither with the court of kings nor with the guild of prophets,—that he has been called from the spade and from the goad to speak to the educated ranks of men. He lays claim to a call inaudible to human ears; he rests his authority on the mandate of the King of kings. On the strength of that authority he proceeds to rebuke the kings of the earth, and his rebuke is searching and terrible. There is no attempt to soften down, no effort to palliate or modify; Amos seems to grow personally bold in proportion to his consciousness of personal lowliness. This

herdsman of Tekoah, this prophet unordained by earthly episcopate, this teacher unsupported by social rank or influence, speaks with an authority which no previous teacher had ever wielded. He lashes the kingdoms all round with his scourge of ridicule and his rod of chastisement; he spares neither his own land nor the land of the stranger. The kings of the earth have violated that law of righteousness which is his standard of human dignity, and by that law of righteousness he judges and condemns them. He deprives them of their crowns, he blots out their dynasties, he fulminates the thunder-bolt of divine wrath against the empires that have served them. He sits upon the circle of the earth, and the sovereigns thereof are as grasshoppers; the herdsman of Tekoah is the autocrat of the world.

Yet we should greatly err, did we suppose that in all this, the spirit of Amos was revolutionary; it was, on the contrary, strictly constitutional. Let it not be forgotten that the king had been originally crowned by the prophet; that coronation itself expressed the subordination of the civil to the religious power. The prophet, and not the king, had been recognized from the outset as the true leader of the Theocracy; he stood as the representative of God, and as such he alone had the right to constitute earthly royalty. Yet in this coronation of the king by the prophet there was symbolized a thought deeper and more enduring still. The prophet was not only the representative of God, he was the representative of the idea of ministration; he embodied in his own person the sacrificial element of humanity. That the prophet should anoint the king was therefore a deeply significant circumstance; it said, in the plainest language, that all physical power existed only to be the instrument of divine and human ministration. Here, in the very heart of Judaism, we catch a premonition of the Christian day. The majestic power of the Theocracy

is made to flash before us, but we are told that the power exists not for its own sake; it lives, and moves, and has its being in the life of sacrifice. The king has received the crown in order that he may bear the cross, and the empire over humanity already begins to be prefigured as a power of universal service: "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister."

Amos, then, is no innovator; he speaks in the true spirit of the earlier Judaism. That spirit contains already the germ of Christianity. Moses, the representative of the prophetic office, was at once the meekest of men and the lawgiver of his people. The conjunction of attributes so dissimilar was no accident in the history of the Jewish nation; it expressed the very spirit which was to animate the life of her prophets. The meek were ever to be the lawgivers, the rulers of the people were to be the servants of all. The prophet was to anoint the king because he was to represent the Head of the Theocracy; and he was to represent the Head of the Theocracy because he was to embody, in its highest form, the divine life of ministration. If we look at the prophecy of Amos in this light, we shall see how true it is to the traditional Mosaic spirit. This herdsman, who lashes the kings of the earth with the scourge of divine judgment, has been roused into wrath purely by the departure of the nations from the sacrificial standpoint. He is angry because men will not see that the true road to personal greatness lies in ministration to the wants of others, that the lawgiver must be a man of meek and lowly spirit. He declares that the curse of the land is its self-sufficiency, its luxury, its self-appropriation of the superfluities of life (Amos vi. 4). He accuses the rich of trampling on the interests of the poor (*ibid.* v. 11), and says that in so doing they have forgotten the true character of the Being whom they worship (*ibid.* v. 8). Then he turns round upon them to point out a start-

ling inconsistency: "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness and not light" (Amos v. 18). It is as if he had said: "You are looking forward with fond desire to the advent of a great day of national glory; you are anticipating with rapture the time when the Lord shall descend from heaven to give the final revelation to his people. You are not wrong in your anticipation; there is indeed coming such a day of divine glory and such an hour of revelation to the human soul. But if you knew what the divine glory is, if you had any conception of the character of this coming revelation, your feelings would be the reverse of joyful. Do you know what is meant by the day of the Lord, the light of the Lord, the revelation of the Lord? It means what the world calls darkness. The day of the Lord is the day of ministration, of sacrifice, of self-surrender. The light of the Lord is the light which is to reveal to the human soul its own poverty and its own nothingness; it is a revelation of pain. The glory which shall break upon the mind of the nation will be precisely that experience which the nation now deems the most inglorious of all things—the vision of a cross. The joy which awaits the people of God is just that surrender of self which to the worldly man is identical with misery. In desiring, therefore, the day of the Lord, you are desiring the woe of your sensuous nature; you are seeking the crucifixion of that animal life which is now the sum of your being; you are praying unconsciously for that power to lose yourself which seems to you to-day to be the power of suicide?"

Such we understand to be the meaning of Amos in this remarkable passage. The thought is indeed so remarkable and so interwoven with the whole texture of Jewish history, that it may not be altogether out of place to enquire a little more closely into its meaning and origin. First of

all, we have to face the fact that a nation which was essentially pervaded by a conservative spirit had yet the goal of its aspirations laid, not in the past, but in the future. The experience is one somewhat unique in history. There have been Eastern races as conservative as the Jews, and races which, like the Jews, have traced their origin from a garden of Eden; but, unlike the Jews, they have for the most part refused to be driven out of the garden. China is the incarnation of Conservatism, but China has consistently clung to the past, and never deviated from her reverence for the changeless. Judæa, too, has incarnated the conservative spirit, but she has ever striven to leave her past behind her. She has refused to see any final glory in the lost garden of Eden. The Paradise on which her eye has rested is a Paradise to come. The goal on which her aspirations have centred is not the closed gates guarded by the cherubim and flaming sword, but the gates of an approaching morning which are yet to open and reveal the light of God. Judæa is ever travelling towards a golden era, which she calls the "day of the Lord." She expresses in that name her conviction that it is an age of light, an age of revelation, an age of purity. Throughout the long and intricate labyrinth of her history she holds by this hope as by a thread of gold, and when at times, like Abraham, she has lost country, and kindred, and father's house, the promise she has derived from Abraham keeps her heart alive, "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

All this is patent and indisputable; but there is another, and in one sense a contrary, side of the question. The "day of the Lord" to the national mind is a day of cloudlessness, the realization of the national dreams of glory. But when we turn to the prophetic mind, we find a very different view of this Messianic future. The prophet too expects a "day of the Lord," but he commonly speaks of it as a source rather of fear than of hope, a day coming

with clouds. The language of Amos is not an isolated phenomenon; it is in harmony with the whole tone of the Hebrew poetic literature. The future of the poet is commonly gilded with imaginary glories; to the poets of the Bible it is draped in the most sombre shadows. To Amos, to Joel, to Jeremiah, to Zephaniah, the "day of the Lord" is a period of terror, and the identification of the Messianic age with an age of suffering and pain finds its climax and its completion in that chapter in which the evangelical prophet proclaims the "Son of man" to be the "Man of sorrows." The question is, how are we to account for this conception? How are we to explain the seeming discrepancy between the national and the prophetic expectation of the Messianic day? Above all, how are we to solve the problem of that dualistic conception which exists among the prophets themselves? Why is it that at one time the coming Messiah is represented in an attitude of kinghood, and at another in the garb of a servant? Why is it that the advent of the Messianic day is described now as the approach of victory, and now as the herald of woe? Why is it, in short, that one and the same Being, in one and the same act of his life, is represented as the ruler to whom every knee shall bow, and as the "Man of sorrows," "despised and rejected of men."

Behind all these questions there lies another on which the answer to them depends. If we would understand the seeming inconsistencies in the Jewish notion of the Messianic age, we must first ask what was the origin of the Jewish expectation. We find Joel, Amos, and Hosea, at so early a date as eight centuries before Christ, formulating a definite conception of the coming day of the Lord. Where did they get that conception? Not manifestly from private or internal vision; in that case they would have alluded to it as a new thing. They do not, however, so allude to it; they speak of it as something which is already a current

thought of the national mind; nay, in the passage specially under consideration, we find Amos distinctly asserting that even the selfish men of his day were looking forward with longing to the day of the Lord. The conclusion is indisputable; the expectation must have been derived, not from private vision, but from national promise. Is there any evidence that such a promise was known to the prophets of the eighth century? It seems to us that there is. When we read the prophecies of Joel, of Amos, and of Hosea consecutively, we must be struck with the accumulation of references they contain to the past history of the Hebrew nation. In the view of these references we shall be forced to adopt one or other of three conclusions—either that the book of Genesis was in existence, or that there were in existence the documents out of which it was compiled, or that the leading facts now embodied in the book were even then embraced in the national tradition. It matters little for the present inquiry which of these views we follow; let us be content with the lowest ground. We find that Joel, who in all probability is earlier than Amos, was perfectly familiar with the tradition of a garden of Eden. We cannot say with certainty that he derived his tradition from the book of Genesis, but we can almost with certainty affirm that he had in his mind those incidents of the Paradise and the Fall which the book of Genesis now contains. Accordingly, when we find him and Amos, and the prophets in general, alluding to the advent of a "day of the Lord," and alluding to it in terms which shew it to have been a general expectation, we are almost forced to conclude that the prophecy was based upon the promise which our present book of Genesis associates with the expulsion from Eden. If it be so, we are on lines which must lead us to light on this matter. If we want to know why the conception of the "day of the Lord" was so differently apprehended by different minds, the best way to reach our object is to find

the original terms in which the promise was given. If we concede that, in the mind of Amos, the expectation of a "day of the Lord" was grounded upon the traditional prophecy of the Garden of Eden, are we able by a reference to that prophecy to explain those clouds and shadows with which, to his inspired imagination, an epoch so glorious is invested, to account for this strange association of the trial of humanity with its triumph?

If we look at this primitive prophecy, we shall indeed find the secret of the seeming paradox. It must have struck every reader of Genesis that there is a double note in the promise of Eden. On one side, it is certainly a message of glory. It is a promise given not to a family, not to a tribe, not to a nation, but to man as man; a promise of ultimate, complete, and permanent victory, of final emancipation from slavery; the seed of the woman is to bruise the head of the serpent. Yet we cannot fail to perceive that this prophecy occurs in a very strange connexion; it is inserted amongst the denunciations of the Fall, it is placed in the very midst of the woes which are predicted as the result of man's disobedience. It is plainly intimated that the triumph of humanity shall only be achieved by its own sacrifice, that the seed of the woman must be bruised in the very act of bruising. But the idea of sacrifice lies even deeper than this; if we are not mistaken, it will be found in the triumph itself. What is that triumph? It is described as the bruising of the serpent. But was this promise at the time when it was spoken, descriptive of a joy? Was the serpent in the narrative of Genesis an object of loathing to humanity; on the contrary, was it not the very object which humanity had selected as its special gain? The serpent had been chosen by man as the source of a new life, a life which embodied the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of self-consciousness. It had suggested to him the thought

of his own greatness. It had opened up to him the hope of satisfaction through the pleasures of sense, of repletion through the liberty of self-indulgence. That hope no doubt was a delusion, but it was not yet seen to be a delusion, could only begin to be so seen in the light of future experience. Accordingly, to promise the bruising of the serpent was to promise misery to the natural man. It was to threaten him with the death of that which he had begun to call his life. It was to tell him that his pride must be crucified, that his lust of the flesh and his lust of the eye must be suppressed. It was to presage the coming of a time when he would require to give up his self-indulgence, to abandon his present standard of happiness, to confess that, in the sphere of sense, his search for pleasure had been a failure. This was the "day of the Lord" which had been promised to the primitive man; this was the "day of the Lord" which loomed in the imagination of the prophets.

And now, perhaps, we can understand the full and deep significance of the words in the fifth chapter of Amos. Let us try to throw ourselves into the position of the men to whom he was speaking. The Jewish world of that day was a world of self-indulgence; man was seeking to live unto himself alone. He had obtained much of the good things of life, but he was still conscious of something wanting; there was a Mordecai at the gate, who would not bow down before him. In these circumstances the man of Judæa was discontented, and it was out of this discontent that he conjured up his vision of the Messianic age. There were still things which were withheld from his possession in the present scene of life, but there was a future scene about to open in which he would receive even these. There was coming a great "day of the Lord" in which his possessions would be overflowing, in which his senses would be abundantly satisfied with the luxuries of land and

sea, in which his physical power would be recognized from shore to shore. For this "day of the Lord," he ardently longed; he looked forward to it as that which was to complete his possibilities of selfish enjoyment, to fill up the few wants of outward existence which the present state of things had left unsatisfied. It was on this popular and national delusion that the sword of Amos broke with crushing power. He told his countrymen that the "day of the Lord," when it came, so far from deadening their sense of want, would deepen and intensify that sense. He told them that, in running from the present into the future, they were like men who in seeking to escape the lion, are encountered by the bear, like men who are bitten by the serpent on the very wall on which they lean for support (Amos v. 19). They are coming to the day of the Lord in order that they may have fewer wants, and behold, they shall have more! They shall be given a divine sense of want, the infinite thirst of love. Unless men be awakened to this love of humanity, the "day of the Lord" when it comes will to them be darkness and not light; for the "day of the Lord" is the day of ministration, and can only be hailed by the unselfish heart. The serpent must be crucified, however painful be the crucifixion. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life must be rooted out, dear as they are to the natural soul; and in their room there must be planted that love which to the selfish man is pain, the love which "seeketh not her own."

Such was the message of Amos. It will be found concentrated in a single verse of his prophecy, which has become the popular text of many sermons: "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel!" He was essentially the prophet of preparation. If it was the mission of Jonah to tell that the kingdom of God was a reign of pardon; if it was the mission of Joel to tell that the region outside the kingdom of God was a reign of locusts, a gnawing of constant care;

it was the mission of Amos to tell that men were not ready for this kingdom. His province was to reveal to the human soul its need of preparation. He had to proclaim that men could only get rid of the gnawing of worldly care by taking on another care which was not worldly. If they would be released from their personal burden, they must bow their heads to an impersonal one—the burden of humanity. God was about to reveal Himself in his deepest and essential nature; but that nature was love. No man could see the revelation unless he himself had love in his soul. Therefore to the world of selfishness, the prophet cried, Prepare! He called upon men to make themselves ready for the vision of a life which was a contrast to *their* lives. He told them that if the divine life came to them at that moment, it would come to them as darkness and not light, it would be an enigma which they could not solve. He bade them prepare for the vision by the destruction of their old ideal, by the bruising of the serpent, by the crucifixion of the flesh; and he told them that, in the abandonment of that which constituted their selfish joy, they would behold in its veritable glory, the "day of the Lord."

GEORGE MATHESON.

THE FEAR OF FATHER ISAAC.

GENESIS xxxi. 53.

IN our Authorised Version the last clause of this Verse is rendered, "And Jacob sware by *the fear* of his father Isaac." The rendering is accurate enough, and would convey the true sense of the passage were the word "fear" printed with a capital F. While Laban sware, at the Heap of Witness, to keep faith with Jacob by "the God of Abraham," *i.e.*, Jehovah, and "the God of Nahor," *i.e.*, the