THE RISE AND FALL OF THE 'MESSIANIC' HOPE IN THE SIXTH CENTURY

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AS the origin and history of the hope of a personal Messiah are matters of no little importance, and as they still seem to leave room for considerable difference of opinion, it may be worth while to risk treading where others have trodden in order to throw fresh light on the subject by tracing step by step the development of the idea during the sixth century, which was perhaps the most formative period of its growth, although it is probable that the elements in it of permanent religious value did not for the most part develop till later.

The 'Messianic' hope of the sixth century arose in the first place out of the larger and more fundamental hope of the Restoration and Regeneration of Israel which was the burden of the prophecies which followed the destruction of the Judean church and state. But it had an important secondary source also, in a certain prediction current during the time of the monarchy. This prediction is one which promised perpetuity to the then reigning house of Judah, the Davidic dynasty. The earliest form in which we now have it is probably of the seventh century, but in its original form it is probably much earlier. and there is no insuperable reason why it might not have been first enunciated in the time of David himself. It is in 2 Sam. 7 attributed to Nathan the prophet.

The prediction runs as follows;--Jahveh telleth thee [David] that Jahveh will make thee a house. When thy days be fulfilled. and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will

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set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.[1] [He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever].[2] I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chastise him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my mercy[3] shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure for ever before thee. Thy throne shall be established for ever.[4]

This same prediction is found in a somewhat later form in Ps. 89 which in all probability belongs to the beginning of the sixth century. The whole prediction is there somewhat elaborated and the promises of perpetuity in particular are reiterated and emphasized with more hyperbole. As this prediction, which is in the Psalm treated as a covenant believed to be binding on Jahveh, is of first rate importance for our subject, we will quote the greater part of it in this form also.

I found David my servant;
With my holy oil I anointed him . . .
I made a covenant with my *chosen*,
I swear to David *my servant:*
For ever will I establish thy seed,
And build thy throne for all generations . . .
He will call me my Father,
Yea I will make him My first born,
Most high above the kings of the earth.
For ever will I keep my kindness[5] for him,
And my covenant shall be firm for him.
And I will set his seed for ever,
And his throne on the days of heaven.
If his sons forsake my Law,
And walk not in my judgments;
Then will I visit their transgressions with a rod,

[1] i. e. the Kingdom of the seed. [2] Probably secondary.
[3] חַסְדִּי 'my covenant love'. [4] 2. S. 7 12–16.
The reference is to David. In the earlier form of the prediction, however, the reference was to David's successors.

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And chastise their iniquity with stripes.
But my kindness I will not remove from him,
And I will not belie my faithfulness . . .
I will not lie unto David;
His seed shall be for ever,
And his throne as the sun before me.
As the moon shall it be established for ever,
And (forever as) the sky be firm.[6]

Now with regard to this prediction, it should be noted that it is spoken of the historical king David, though not a few expressions in it, especially in the later form, if taken out of their context, seem to have a 'Messianic' ring. 'I will make him my firstborn and high above the kings of the earth', or 'Thy throne shall be established for ever', sound like Messianic prophecies, but are clearly nothing of the kind in their settings.[7] The David then of these passages, though idealized, especially in the Psalm, can be none other than the popular hero. Neither is there any suggestion of a 'Messiah' in the references to his 'seed'. Rather otherwise, the insistence on the probable misdemeanors of David's successors makes this abundantly clear. The 'seed' will apparently deserve Saul's fate[8] and the fate of his dynasty, but for David's sake will be treated leniently and not dethroned.

The forms of the prediction in which we have it show us that the reigning dynasty in Judah had come to be popularly looked upon as sacrosanct. This had come about, partly because kingship was in its own way deemed as mysteriously sacred as priesthood, partly because there had been an unbroken line 'of kings of the same royal family' for so many centuries, and especially because the founder of the dynasty was David, by then much idealized, who was believed to have been under the special protection of Jahveh, which for his sake was also extended to his successors. The royal Davidic succession appears in fact to have come to be regarded before the

[6] Psalm 89 20, 3f., 26—33, 35—37.

[7] Five other instances.

[8] These references to the sins of the later kings of the Davidic house must almost certainly emanate from a period when the kings of Judah had given evidence of a very different spirit from David's.

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close of the monarchy with as much veneration as is accorded to the Apostolic succession in the Roman Catholic Church; and a doctrine of its unbreakable perpetuity had come to hold a place, in some quarters at least, more or less parallel the doctrine of the Inviolability of the Temple, which Jeremiah combatted so strenuously. Both doctrines were among the chief articles of the popular faith.

The greater prophets do not appear to have shared the belief in either the sanctity or the divinely guaranteed perpetuity of the Davidic house. Isaiah, for example, showed no special reverence for the Davidic succession, but on the contrary plainly indicated that he regarded it as a degenerate stock that had outlasted its usefulness. 'Hear ye now', he said, 'O house of David; is it a small thing for you to weary men that ye will weary my God also?'[9]

Jeremiah likewise ran counter to the belief, and definitely prophesied Jahveh's final rejection of the dynasty of David as such.

> Thus saith Jahveh, behold I will fill all the inhabitants of this land, even the kings that sit upon David's throne[10] and the priests &c. with drunkenness . . . I will not pity . . . that I should not destroy them.[11]

Even more specific is Jeremiah's prophecy with regard to Coniah (Jehoiachin) the last king of the Davidic dynasty to sit in his own right on the throne of Judah.[12]

> As I live, said Jahveh, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck it thence: . . . write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper sitting upon the throne of David and ruling any more in Judah.[13]

Ezekiel speaks in like manner with regard to Zedekiah though after his manner more obscurely.[14]

[9] Is. 7 13. [10] Lit. for David upon his throne.

[11] Jer. 13 13; cf. Jer. 22 1 seq.

[12] Zedekiah his uncle who followed him was not king in his own right, but a vassal prince of Nebuchadnezzar's.

[13] Jer. 22 24, 30. [14] Ezek. 17 9; 19 11, 14.

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In accord with Jeremiah's prophecies, one of the results of Nebuchadnezzar's conquest was then the shattering for the time being at least of the legend that any special divine protection and sanctity belonged to the Davidic line as such. Holy Temple and Sacred Dynasty were both overthrown and destroyed, the latter irrevocably.

In spite, however, of the doom spoken by Jeremiah, and of the disastrous and shameful record of so many of the later Davidic kings, which had anything but endeared them to their people, there came a time when men began to dream of the restoration of the dethroned and degenerate royal race, and the discredited prediction of dynastic perpetuity took a new lease of life, and began again to exercise its influence on men's minds.

This revival of royalist hopes, however, did not take place for some time and then arose very gradually.

For a time, indeed, hope of any kind seemed dead in the hearts of the ruined and exiled people, who had before the final destruction of their state deluded themselves so often with false hopes.

Ezekiel was the first prophet who pierced through the darkness which shrouded his fellow exiles, and caught the first faint gleam of a new day which God had in store for them.

His new message was in its earlier stages a gospel of the resurrection for his nation and church, which was not only dead, but even disintegrated. The nation would be brought back to life and its scattered members gathered together and welded into a new unity.[15]

With this thought of 'Resurrection' was combined the promise of Return. In chapter 34, Ezekiel pictured Israel as a flock of scattered and lost sheep, and prophesied that they would be searched out and gathered together and led back to their own land. The point to be specially noted here is that in this prophecy Jahveh is represented as promising to be Himself the agent for the Restoration of his people to their own land. It is he who is to be the Champion and the Deliverer, the Good Shepherd of his flock.

[15] Ezek. 37.

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v. 11. Behold *I myself* will seek for my flock, and search them out.

v. 12. As a shepherd searches for his flock on the day when his sheep are scattered in the day of cloud and darkness;

v. 13. I will gather them from the lands and bring them into their own habitable land . . . *I myself* will be the shepherd of my flock . . .

v. 20. Behold *I myself* will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep.

The fact is stressed that it is Jahveh himself who is to shepherd his people. In the earlier part of the prophecy it is made clear why this is necessary. Jahveh himself had to shepherd his people 'because there was no one [else] to shepherd them' (v. 7). 'My flock was scattered because there was no shepherd' (v. 4). Jahveh had appointed shepherds as his agents, but they had been false to their trust. ('Ye have eaten the milk and clothed yourselves with the wool, ye have killed the fatlings, but my flock ye have not fed' (v. 3). My shepherds cared not for the flock, but the shepherds fed themselves.')

Consequently Jahveh would no longer leave these shepherds in charge of his flock, but would himself act as shepherd. — 'I will cause them to cease from tending my flock. No more shall the shepherds feed themselves, for I will rescue my flock from their mouths (v. 10). I myself will seek for my flock &c. (v. 11) and feed them (v. 14).

The shepherds referred to are the rulers of Israel, more particularly the line of kings to whom God had entrusted the care of his people, but who had miserably betrayed their trust and had battened on their flock instead of living for it.

In effect Jahveh is represented as saying, Instead of kings who betrayed you and failed you, ye shall have Me. Instead of the shattered and discredited monarchy there was to be a theocracy; instead of a kingdom of David, a kingdom of God.

Elsewhere in Ezekiel's prophecies, the same note is struck; Jahveh Himself is to be the agent for the deliverance and restoration of his people.

In the later stages of Ezekiel's prophecies (chapters 40–48, 572 B. C. and after), reconstruction rather than restoration is

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dealt with. The prophet sketches out what is perhaps the earliest picture of the Kingdom of God on earth. He as it were drafts an ideal national and ecclesiastical constitution for the Israelite people, when it shall have been restored to its own land.

There is in this prophecy of Ezekiel no hint of the restoration of the monarchy, still less of the former dynasty. Kings are mentioned but not as in the new scheme of things. Rather are they spoken of with contempt, while the ancient practice of using part of the Temple as a burying place for the kings of Judah is accounted as a pollution which must be purged away, although in all probability the honoured remains of David and Solomon, to mention no others, had been among those which rested there.

> 'The house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they, *nor their kings*, by their whoredom, and *by the carcasses of their kings* . . . Now let them put the carcasses of *their kings* far from me, that I may dwell in the midst of them for ever.'[16]

Jahveh is to be enthroned in the new Jerusalem, and is evidently to be the sole King of Israel.

(Behold the glory of Jahveh filled the house . . . And I heard one speaking to me out of the house . . . Son of Man, this is the place of my throne.)[17]

Provision is however made by Ezekiel in his ideal scheme for a civil administrator called a 'Nasi' (נָשִׂיא). The title of 'king' is carefully withheld from this person. The word 'nasi' means a chief or leader, or ruler. It may be translated 'prince' as here in the English Bible; it could be used to describe a king, but it is normally used for persons who have no possible claim to royalty of any kind, e. g. 'These are they that were called of the congregation, the princes (נְשִׂיאֵי) of the tribes of their fathers.'[18]

Even of this 'prince' Ezekiel is most suspicious, and he does his best to safeguard the people against any encroachments on the 'prince's' part. As far as possible the prince is to be prevented from taking undue advantage of any privileges that

[16] Ezek. 43 7, 9. [17] Ezek. 43 5, 6. 7. [18] Numb. 1 16.

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may accrue to his position. He is to have an estate assigned to him with which he must rest content. He must in no wise filch land from his fellow-subjects, the people of God. 'As for his inheritance, it shall be for his sons. Moreover the prince shall not take of the people's inheritance to thrust them out of their possession: he shall give inheritance to his sons out of his own possession, that my people be not scattered every man from his possession.'[19]

In the same connection, those who will hold this position of 'prince' in Israel are sternly warned against the besetting sins of rulers, injustice and oppression.

'And no more shall my prince (נְשִׂיאִי) oppress my people . . . *Let it suffice you*, O princes (נְשִׂיאֵי) of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice; take away *your exactions* from my people, saith Jahveh God. Ye shall have just balances' &c.[20]

It is perfectly clear that Ezekiel has no thought of pourtraying a 'Messiah', in the technical meaning of the term, in his description of this functionary who was apparently necessary to the nation's life but liable to abuse his position. Nothing could be less inherently sacred, or noble, or heroic, than this person. He is neither a divinely anointed King, nor a heaven-sent Deliverer. His most exalted function was to make due provision for the upkeep of the Temple worship. ('It shall be the 'prince's' part to give the burnt offerings and the meal offerings &c. He shall make the sin offering and the meal offering and the burnt offering.')[21]

Nevertheless it did not take many stages for this vague official to be transformed into a Deliverer and King, essential to the Restoration of Israel and to the setting up of the Kingdom.

What is probably the next stage in the development towards a 'Messianic' hope is represented in a section of a Restoration prophecy inserted in the book of Jeremiah.[22] Ezekiel's constitution had provided for a civil governor in the restored community, but in any case Judea was at that time ruled over by

[19] Ezek. 46 17, 18. [20] Ezek. 45 8, 9, 10. [21] Ezek. 45 17; cf. also 46 4 &c.

[22] Jer. 30 1—22. The passage follows directly upon a prophecy of restoration which is probably a genuine utterance of Jeremiah'

a Babylonian governor or prince. Ezekiel had not specifically said that the 'prince' should not be of foreign blood, though this might have been inferred from the stress laid on the Temple being kept free from the service of aliens. This prediction specifically safeguards this point, declaring that the prince will be of Hebrew stock.

> 'I will turn again the captivity of Jacob's tents . . . their prince shall be of themselves, and their ruler shall proceed from the midst of them: and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me'.[23] The 'drawing near' &c. probably had reference to the functions of the prince in connection with worship and the Temple sacrifices.

It should be noted however that the word here translated 'prince' is not נשיא but אַדִּיר[24] so that one cannot be quite certain that we have here a definite reference to Ezekiel's 'prince' as such.

In any case, however, we have here the title of king carefully avoided as in Ezekiel and the prediction that when the Jews are restored to their own land they shall have a ruler of their own race instead of having their affairs administered by a governor of alien stock. It should further be noticed that there is here no suggestion of the restoration of the fallen royal family, still less of the advent of a 'Messiah'.

Sometime after these hopes had been aroused, though how long after it is impossible to say, the belief in the perpetuity of the Davidic dynasty, which had seemed to have been shattered once for all, began to revive again, in spite of the fact that the predictions with regard to it had been falsified by events as well as solemnly contradicted in Jeremiah's prophecies.

There are few things harder to kill than romantic and pious loyalty to a dethroned royal family. Of this our own experience of the Stuarts is sufficient evidence. Past tyrannies and shortcomings are readily forgotten, and the representatives of the race are invested with a glamour that hides their defects, tends to their idealization and makes their restoration to the throne

[23] Jer. 30 18.

[24] lit. 'Majestic'. The word, when used as a title, normally refers to nobles rather than to royal persons or kings.

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seem desirable above all else, a task worthy of God himself, a sacred duty for men. So it seems to have been towards the Davidic house, among a certain section at least of the Jews. In any case men began to dream of the restoration of the fallen fortunes of their late royal family and to refurbish the discarded predictions.

There is an important group of 'prophecies',[25] attributed, quite wrongly, to Jeremiah, which are representative of this phase. They are really amplifications of certain elements in the original perpetuity predictions.

In the first of these, the point that is chiefly emphasized is that the descendants of David will never be allowed to die out, and on the contrary they will be multiplied as the sand of the sea, so that there should never be lacking an heir to David's throne.

> 'Thus saith Jahveh: If ye can break my covenant of the day and my covenant of the night . . . then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne, and with the Levites the priests my ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me.'[26]

There is also the implication here that, just as it was considered profanation for any others than those of Levitical descent to act as priests, so it would be profanation for any other than a descendant of David to sit on David's throne.

The next of these predictions betrays the conviction that the fortunes of the chosen people were inextricably bound up with

[25] Jer. 33 14–26. This is a collection of four kindred but distinct Messianic or rather royalist predictions. The collection is omitted entirely by the LXX. The outlook and phraseology (e. g. the expression 'the Priests the Levites') do not however point to any later date than the sixth century. So it would seem to be a case of omission rather than of non-interpolation on the part of the LXX. Motives of political caution would be sufficient to account for its suppression. It is to be noted that it is in prose not in poetry like genuine Jeremianic oracles.

[26] Jer. 33 [illegible]

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the fortunes of the Davidic dynasty. The restoration of the one involved the restoration of the other. It voices the hope of such restoration, The covenant believed to have been made with David is evidently the basis of this prediction also.

> 'Thus saith Jahveh: If my covenant of day and night stand not, . . . then will I also cast away the seed of Jacob and of David, my servant, so that I will not take of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for I will cause their captivity to return, and will have mercy on them.'[27]

By far the most important of these predictions is the one we have left to the last. For in it we find a combination of Ezekiel's 'prince' who should be responsible for the upkeep of the Temple sacrifices[28] with this unlimited succession of scions of David's line.

Not only then was the prince to be of Hebrew stock, but he was to be of the blood royal and there was to be divine provision made for an unending succession of such princes. Apparently also the princes are to be kings.

'Thus saith Jahveh: David shall never want a man (לֹא יִכָּרֵת לְדָוִיד) to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel; never shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings and to burn and to make sacrifices continually.'[29]

It should be noted that in none of this group of prophecies is any particular person in view, the main point being the divine provision of a succession of persons suitably qualified as regards pedigree. Also there is hardly a hint of any kind that any of these scions of the house of David will be agents of Jahveh for the restoration of Israel.

In the next stage we find the Nasi (נשיא) as not only a prince of the house of David, but as a personage in the very forefront of the hopes of Restoration and Return. He now appears as the representative of Jahveh in the rôle both of Shepherd and King. In the former capacity he is apparently

[27] Jer. 33 25, 26.

[28] Ezek. 45 17. It shall be the prince's part to give (יהיה לנשיא) the burnt offerings and the meal offerings . . . he it is who shall make the sin offering; cf. also Ezek. 46 24.

[29] Jer. 33 17, 18.

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to be the agent of Jahveh in bringing the scattered exiles home to their own land. He is spoken of as 'my servant David', which would seem to mean not merely that he was to be the representative by birth and position of David's dynasty but that his qualities would be akin to those of David the great king of Israel. Even as a David had been needed to deliver his people from their surrounding foes, and to build up and consolidate the original kingdom of Israel, so again a David was needed to build the ancient kingdom anew from its very foundations and to deliver his people from the enemy people who had engulfed them.

The most important passages representing this phase are to be found in Ezekiel. They have been added to his earlier restoration prophecies and now appear as part of them.[30]

[30] The main reasons for judging these passages to be later additions are as follows: (a) It may be taken for granted that Ezek. 34 and 37 are earlier than Ezek. 40—48. The later prophecy introduces the 'prince' who is, as has been seen, a vague person of second rate importance, who is incidental rather than essential to Ezekiel's restoration hopes. In chapters 34 and 37 as we have them now, however, the 'prince' is in the forefront of the picture. Everything seems to depend on him. Next to Jahveh he is the one person essential to the restoration of Israel's hopes and to their welfare in the restored kingdom. It is altogether unlikely that this outstanding David-like personality should in the course of the development of Ezekiel's hopes and plans shrink into the shadowy and subordinate figure of the chief civil functionary sketched in chapters 40—48. (b) In Ezek. 34 in particular, as we have shown above, the whole point of the prophecy is the insistence that Jahveh himself is to be his people's deliverer, their shepherd who will himself gather them from the lands whither they have been scattered and pasture them in their own land. 'Behold I' (הנני) 'Behold I myself' (הנני אני) and 'I myself' (אני) occur again and again throughout the prophecy as if to leave no loophole for misunderstanding. The new order of things is to be the theocracy. The introduction of the thought of David as the one shepherd cuts right across the argument and obscures the main issue. (c) The text of 34 23 is itself suspicious with its extraordinary and unnecessary series of repetitions and its confusion of genders. 'And I will raise up over them *one shepherd* (רעה אחד), and he will *shepherd* them (fem.), namely my servant David (in ordinary prose this should not have been later in the sentence than directly after 'one shepherd'). He it is (הוא) who *shall shepherd them* (masc.), and he it is (והוא) who shall be *to them (fem.) a shepherd*. These irregularities are probably due to more than one attempt

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One of the passages is inserted in Ezek. 34, the prophecy we have already discussed in which Jahveh declares that as His agents for the care of Israel had failed Him, He Himself would be personally responsible for the care and oversight of the nation, and would himself deliver them and be their Shepherd. The later addition seems as follows:

> 'And I will set up one shepherd over them and he shall shepherd them, even my servant David: *he* shall shepherd them and *he* shall be their shepherd. And I Jahveh will be their God, and my servant David 'prince' (נשיא) among them.'[31]

It is to be noted that this second David is still to be identified with the 'prince' (נשיא) of Ezekiel's earlier prophecy.

The other of these Ezekiel passages is found in additions to Ezek. 38, the prophecy of the new unity that is to come about between Judah and Ephraim in the Restoration.

> 'And my servant David shall reign (sic Syr.) over them and they shall all have one shepherd (38 24 a) . . . and my servant David shall be their prince (נָשִׂיא) for ever (38 25 c).

These are obvioulsy closely related to the additions in Ezek. 34. Here as there we have 'my servant David' who is to be the shepherd and 'prince' (נשיא). The context shows the further thought that just as the first David unified north and south Israel, so would this second David be the instrument for the re-uniting of the two nations—'they shall all have *one* shepherd.'[32]

There are two other passages which may be grouped with these, which have been added to Hosea and Jeremiah respectively, probably about this same time.

to combine the later addition with the original passage. (d) These last two arguments apply only to the verses in Ezek. 34, but if these are proved to be a later addition the results will apply to the clauses in question in Ezek. 37 inasmuch as they are obviously from the same source. It should be further noticed that in both Ezek. 34 and 37 these David clauses can be removed without leaving any break.

[31] Ezek. 34 23, 24.

[32] If נשיא in v. 25 is deliberate, the words in v. 22 'and one *king* shall be king over them' would appear to be a still later addition. This addition was probably called forth by the clause in the same verse, 'neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.'

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Both of these similarly introduce David and give him a prominent place in the restored kingdom. It is to be noticed that they now speak of him as king not as prince. They are therefore presumably a little later than the Ezekiel additions. That in Jeremiah runs, 'And they shall no more serve strangers, but shall serve Jahveh their God and David their king.'[33]

The Hosea passage is much to the same effect

> 'Afterwards shall the children of Israel return and seek Jahveh their God and David their king.'[34]

By this time it would appear that attention had gradually come to be concentrated on the particular individual in whose person David's line should be re-established, and who, as began to be expected by some at least, would be in some sort the agent and guarantee of the national restoration and reformation.

A descriptive title applied to this personage which apparently came into general use was that of ṣemaḥ (צמח) (the 'Sprout' or Shoot', RV. wrongly 'Branch'), signifying 'one who should *spring forth* from the stock of David.' What is perhaps the prophetic oracle which coined this title for the hoped-for scion of the house of David is embedded in a restoration prophecy which has found its way into the book of Jeremiah.[35]

> 'Behold the days are coming, is Jahveh's oracle, when I will raise up for David a *righteous* ṣemaḥ and he sall *reign as king* (מָלַךְ מֶלֶךְ) and deal wisely; and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah shall be delivered, and Israel dwell safely. And this is the name by which he shall be called, Jahveh our righteousness.'[36]

Here 'righteous' means the opposite of 'degenerate'. The thought of kingship is by this time emphasized[37] as are also the proper virtues of a king. The ṣemaḥ is not only to be of the

[33] Jer. 30 7, 8.

[34] Hos. 3 5. The reference, to judge by the context, appears to be to North Israel. The words are a 'restoration gloss' on the text 'The children of Israel shall abide many days without king', Hos. 3 4.

[35] Jer. 23 5–8. As it stands it is obviously placed as a correction to Jeremiah's message of doom which precedes. The oracle occurs again in a slightly modified form in Jer. 33 15, 16, where it is omitted by the LXX

[36] Jer. 23 5, 6. [37] This clause is omitted in Jer. 33 15.

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lineage of David but all that a king ought to be. It is evident that his advent is regarded as the prelude of the national deliverance, while the hope is again to the fore that under him the two alienated sections of the Israelite people will be once again reunited.[38]

There are still no extraordinary or supernatural features attributed to this personage. The expectations connected with him are mainly political and royalist. There is certainly no suggestion that he is some mysterious figure foretold in ancient prophecy and hoary oracle. The only prediction with which he is evidently connected is, as has been shown, the prediction that the Davidic House would never be dethroned.

The attempted identification of the ṣemaḥ, with whom the hopes of Restoration seemed to be so closely connected, appears to have been the last stage in this chapter of the history of the 'Messianic' hope.

As has long been recognized, expectation seems for a time to have centred on Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, son of Jehoiachin, the last legitimate king of Judah, who had sat on David's throne as king in his own right in virtue of being David's heir.

It had been the person of Jehoiachin in whom David's line had been dethroned and of whom Jeremiah had prophesied that though he were the *signet* (חותם) upon the right hand of Javeh, yet Jahveh would pluck him thence.

The hope now arose that in the person of Jehoiachin's grandson and heir of line, Jahveh was about to reverse the doom pronounced on his House. This is clearly seen in Haggai 2 23. 'In that day ('tis the oracle of Jahveh of hosts) will I take thee, o Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel ('tis the oracle of Jahveh), und will make thee as a *signet* (חותם), for I have chosen thee ('tis the oracle of Jahveh).[39] The triple נאם יהוה ('tis the oracle of Jahveh) is probably intentional and meant to emphasize the verity of the asseveration.

From Zechariah it appears that Prince Zerubbabel was def-

[38] In the parallel passage Jerusalem is substituted for Israel.

[39] Jer. 22 24 30 and see above.

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initely recognized as the ṣemaḥ and that an attempt was actually made to re-establish the Davidic Monarchy by crowning him, and thus to compass the Restoration of Judah, and bring in the new era of peace, prosperity and righteousness.

> 'Behold I am about to bring forth my servant the ṣemaḥ, for behold the stone that I have set before Joshua, upon one stone[40] are seven facets (lit. eyes): behold, I will engrave the engraving thereof, saith Jahveh of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of the land in one day. In that day, saith Jahveh of hosts, ye chall each invite his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.[41]

It may be that the stone spoken of was a heptahedral seal or signet, engraved after the manner of Babylonian seals. The reference might then very well be to Zerubbabel as the seal of Jahveh.

The second Zechariah passage with the emendations now generally accepted, crucial though it is, need only be quoted as it has so offen been thoroughly discussed.

> 'Take from them of the captivity . . . silver and gold, and make a crown,[42] and set it on the head of Zerubbabel[43] the son of Shealtiel. Thou shalt say to them,[44] Thus saith Jahveh of hosts, Behold the man whose name is the ṣemaḥ, and he shall grow up (יצמח) out of his place, and he shall build the Temple of Jahveh . . . and he shall bear the glory (i. e. royal majesty), and shall sit and rule upon his throne: and he (i. e. Joshua) shall be a priest by his right hand,[45] and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. And the crown shall be for a memorial in the temple of Jahveh.[46]

After this episode Zerubbabel disappeared from history, and royalist hopes from prophecy, if indeed they had ever had a legitimate place there. Isaiah 40—66, which is probably in the main later than Haggai and Zechariah, has no place for a Davidic prince or king in its glowing pictures of Return and Re-

[40] מְפֻתַּח פִּתֻּחָה cf. Ex. 39 מְפֻתַּחַת פִּתּוּחֵי חוֹתָם. [41] Zech. 3 8—10.
[42] M. T. 'crowns'. [43] M. T. Joshua the son of Jozadak the high priest. [44] M. T. 'him', but LXX 'them'. [45] M. T. And he shall be (or there shall be) a priest upon his throne.
[46] Zech. 6 9—14.

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construction. There, exactly as in Ezekiel, it is Jahveh himself who will shepherd his people home, it is Jahveh himself who will be all that Israel can desire as King.

Only in one passage in II Isaiah, a passage which is almost certainly later than the sixth century, is there any reference to any hopes based on the Davidic 'covenant'. 'I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David (חסדי דויד). Behold I make thee[47] as a witness to the peoples and commander to the peoples. Behold thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and a nation that knew thee not shall run unto thee because of Jahve thy God'.[48]

It is evident that the prophet holds that the members of the Davidic House as such have been disinherited, that he puts their claims out of court and recognizes the servant nation as heir to the grace of God of which there had been such abundant promise in the grace bestowed on his faithful servant David.

There are two other important passages, Is. 9 1–7, ('Unto us a son is given' &c.) and Is. 11 1–10 ('There shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse' &c.), to which reference must be made since not a few critics assign them to some time towards the close of the Exile. One of the principal reasons for this dating is that they, like the series of predictions we have just examined, presuppose the downfall of the Davidic dynasty and predict that Jahveh is about to raise up a worthy successor to David.

There are various considerations, however, which make it difficult to accept this dating. Some of these objections may be broadly stated as follows. The two prophecies are of a totally different quality from the other royalist oracles and are on an altogether higher level. The only one of these with which they have any true kinship is that of the ṣemaḥ in Jer. 23 5, 6, but even on this they represent an enormous advance. The personage depicted in both of them, although the details are quite different, is an exalted being, endowed with godlike attributes and excellencies, who is almost if not quite superhuman in the perfection of his qualities. The restoration of the monarchy as such.

[47] see Syr.
[48] Is. 55 4, 5.

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and especially the reinstatement of the Davidic house, is a side issue. There is moreover no suggestion in either that the king is to be the agent for the redemption of his people. The interest is concentrated on the perfection of the ideal of kingship set forth. If either or both of these prophecies were promulgated before Haggai and Zechariah, it is difficult to understand how these prophets could have connected such a person as Zerubbabel with so exalted and wonderful a being as is depicted in them. On the other hand it is extremely unlikely that there would be a revival, in so noble a form, of any kind of royalist hopes until long after the Zerubbabel fiasco had become a thing of the past, and the memory of it practically obliterated. It seems likely then that both these prophecies belong to a comparatively late post-exilic date.

There is another consideration with regard to Is. 11 1 10 which would seem further to debar a late exilic date, and which has a special bearing on the exilic Royalist aspirations. V. 1 reads, There shall issue a shoot from the stump of Jesse (הִטֶּר מִגֶּזַע יִשַׁי) and a sapling shall spring up from his roots (נֵצֶר מִשָּׁרָשָׁיו). At first sight this appears to be an elaborate way of referring to the ṣemaḥ, while emphasizing the fact that the Davidic house had fallen and that the royal line was well nigh extinct. The picture is of course that of the stump of a tree that had been cut down but whose roots have sprouted again. But the phrase 'branch out of his roots' is found also in Dan. 11 7: 'But from a *shoot from her roots*' shall one stand up in his place וְעָמַד מִנֵּצֶר שָׁרָשֶׁיהָ. The woman referred to is Berenice of Egypt, the 'shoot from her roots' was her brother Ptolemy III. The phrase therefore is used to imply common ancestry, while *excluding lineal descent*. By analogy the shoot from Jesse's roots would signify someone who was *not* a lineal descendant of Jesse, still less of David, but one who had ancestors in common with David's father. How far back the common ancestor was is not indicated. There is nothing in the phrase to show that it might not have been Israel the reputed common ancestor of the whole nation.

This prophecy then, although it presupposes the downfall of the Davidic dynasty, so far from being in accord with the ṣemaḥ

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oracle and the other predictions which point to the reinstatement of the house of David, rejects lineal descent from David as a *sine qua non* of the ideal king. If the prophecy is properly Messianic, as seems most probable, it teaches that Messiahship is not dependent on pedigree. If the prophecy should prove to belong to the second century, as Prof. Kennett believes, it might be suggested that here we have a counterpart to the priesthood 'after the order of Melchizedek' which was apparently attributive to Simon the Hasmonean Priest-King in Ps. 110. Simon, though neither of the high priestly succession nor of the blood royal, yet became lawful High Priest, and rightfully sat in David's throne. We would not however press the application of the prophecy to Simon, though in this particular it seems curiously suitable.

The results arrived at in the course of this enquiry into the rise and fall of the Messianic hope during the exile go to conform the theory that *there was no pre-exilic Messianic hope.*

On the one hand we have found the origin and evolution of these exilic expectations completely accounted for otherwise.

On the other hand we have not found in any of the several stages the slightest trace of the knowledge of any previous promises of a Heaven-sent Deliverer or Ideal King that was to come which had been handed down from ancient times. Had any such prophetic promises been known, especially had they the imprimatur of a prophet of such repute as Isaiah, it seems inconceivable that they should not have been obviously basic to these exilic expectations, or at least that they should not have colored the later hopes in some way or other. At it was, the only relevant pre-exilic material at the disposal of the exiles was the thread-bare covenant of David which, as has been shown, was in no proper sense Messianic.

They furthermore point to the fact that there was strictly speaking *hardly any Exilic Messianic hope* either. That is to say, there is almost nothing in all the exilic predictions we have studied which rises appreciably above ordinary constitutional aspirations on the one hand, or superior on the other hand to the fervid dreams of the adherents of any dethroned royal house which it is hoped may one day be reinstated. The hope that

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God had in store for his people Someone to come, some Heaven-sent Deliverer, some ideal divinely endowed King, did not develop until a later age. Exactly when and how is difficult to determine. It is probable that this new hope was in some measure suggested by these earlier oracles, the historical background of which had been lost. It is certain that the earlier oracles had the new hope read into them and that they thus in part influenced the form of the real hope of a Personal Messiah.

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